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EDITOR'S NOTES

This issue of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (WTJ) begins with two papers that were originally given as plenary addresses. First, the essay by Rob Wall and Daniel Castelo was the 2018 Walls Lecture at Seattle Pacific University. Second, Karen Westerfield Tucker's essay was the plenary address for the 2017 annual meeting of the Wesleyan Liturgical Society. The WTJ has a long history of publishing plenary addresses and other lectures of interest to Wesleyans in order to make such presentations available to those who were not able to hear them in person. Following these essays, readers will discover articles treating themes and topics ranging from open theism, to the new birth, child dedication, entire sanctification, and more.

Finally, while we are presently accepting submissions for the fall 2019 issue; only a few slots remain open at this time. If you are working on an essay or otherwise thinking about making a submission to the WTJ, we strongly encourage you to do so as soon as possible. As longtime readers of the *Journal* know, the spring issue is dedicated to papers presented at the previous year's annual meeting.

Jason E. Vickers, Editor
Wilmore, Kentucky

RETHINKING THE BIBLE (WALLS LECTURE, 2018)

by

Robert Wall and Daniel Castelo

Response: Dr. Douglas Strong

Introduction: Robert Wall

The Bible is this planet's best-selling book. Christians of all kinds not only buy the Bible but gladly affirm it as God's word, and so seek out its teaching to secure their beliefs and practices. Bible reading, most Christians agree, is a Spirit-sanctified practice of an earnest discipleship. Some of you may suppose, then, that tonight's lecture about the Bible's future is tautological—a needless redundancy promoted by professional theologians with too much time on their hands.

But the rise of skepticism and disaffection of many who were raised as Bible-believing Christians has created a cultural atmosphere that has become flat-out hostile to the church's affirmation of scripture's authority and the presumption of its continuing relevance for the next generation of believers. We observe these same atmospherics on our campus today.

Consider also the embarrassing incidence of biblical illiteracy among professing Christians. Several recent surveys by Pew, Barna Group, Gallup, and the American Bible Society claim that fewer than 50% of those who regularly attend church read their Bibles, and even fewer admit thinking about how to apply its teachings to their daily lives. Eavesdropping on social media discussions of the church's engagement with the pressing issues of today often finds the Bible's teaching increasingly muzzled as irrelevant, and its wisdom replaced by sociology and therapy as the normative responses to all that ails us.

Polls and personal experience also indicate that scripture's practice has steadily declined. Clergy report that while scripture is sometimes read publicly in worship, it is rarely preached and its instruction no longer funds the curricula of Sunday school programs or new member classes, at least in the American church. All this suggests that the Bible's future is in trouble in our post-Christian and pissed-Christian world.

In response, tonight's lecture proposes a fresh way of thinking about the Bible—what it is and what it does. Dr. Castelo and I hope it will map a

way forward that breathes life into our campus community's life with God and one another. Our intention is to offer you a positive, constructive proposal that is shaped by JW's exhortation for us to search the scriptures as a sanctified and sanctifying means of receiving God's transforming grace.¹ We believe with Wesley that the practice of scripture as a means of grace, a sacrament of the word, will deepen our love for God and for *all* our neighbors.

A couple more introductory comments before we roll. Tonight's lecture continues last year's Walls Lecture, when I told a story of the Bible's past history at SPU. Tonight's lecture proposes to continue this narrative into the future. In my telling, the entire story of the Bible's history at SPU is plotted by this essential affirmation: we believe the church formed the Bible *under the direction of God's Spirit* in order to form the church. *Ours is a narrative of the Bible's providential production and its sanctifying performances that is grounded deeply in a pneumatology of scripture.*

Our recognition of the close connection between our faith community and its biblical canon—the one formed by to be formative of the other—issues in a second affirmation, and it is this affirmation that we want to unpack this evening. If we who are disciples of the living Jesus confess that we belong to a faith community that affirms itself as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, and if we truly believe that scripture is one of the Spirit's trusted auxiliaries in forming such a people, then our performances of scripture in worship, instruction, mission, and personal devotions presume that scripture's very nature—what it is—must *also* be

¹God's salvation-creating grace is not a magical performance. It's not an operation that God engages in without our permission to do so or in some mysterious vacuum as though, "salvation happens." God uses media to impart saving grace and the media that God employs to work out our salvation are *ordinary* creatures that God's Spirit has selected and sanctified for the *extraordinary* end of remaking us in Christ's image. Baked bread and fruit juice; literary texts that tell stories or sing hymns or send letters written by various prophets and apostles long ago; our heartfelt words spoken to God—bread, written texts, and spoken words are the instruments that God has selected and sanctified to impart God's saving grace to any who receive them.^[1] Yes, we receive these creatures freely with empty hands, but with hands extended toward God in faith.^[1] In this regard, then, we may say with Wesley that our salvation is by grace alone *through faith*. That is, our full salvation from the nasty effects of sin is worked out through our use of those ordinary media God has appointed as carriers of God's salvation-creating grace. For this reason, Wesley goes on to say that we must "search the Scriptures"—that is, we believe that a close and careful study of scripture's stories, poems, prophecies, and proverbs in the company of the Spirit will form in us the mind of Christ.

marked out by its oneness, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity. If this is what scripture *is*, then it must be practiced and paraded in ways that agree with what the church is. Simply put, *our Bible practices must be grounded in a Spirit-centered ecclesiology of scripture.*

Now a caveat: Tonight's lecture attempts to synthesize an extended conversation between two friends who come at the question, "what is the Bible?", from different disciplinary postures. Professor Daniel Castelo is a theologian and I'm a Bible teacher. I should also mention that a much fuller transcript of tonight's severely-gapped lecture is forthcoming next year in our co-authored book, *The Marks of Scripture: Rethinking the Nature of the Bible*. Wait for it!

We both think there are all kinds of implications and applications of our conception of scripture for its future instruction at SPU. Doug Strong, dean of SOT, will reflect on one or two of these implications for the future of theological education at SPU in responding to tonight's lecture. First up, Professor Castelo.

An Ecclesiology of Scripture: Daniel Castelo

Let me express appreciation to my colleague, Prof. Robert Wall, who has set up the situation before us in a very compelling way. I look forward to what he will go on to say, as well as the response by our Dean, Dr. Douglas Strong.

Given Dr. Wall's introduction, it is clear that the Bible is in some ways on precarious ground within our larger, northtransatlantic culture. I wish to point out from the start that this has very little to do with the Bible itself, but with the thought-world and intellectual frameworks that we inhabit. So, I would offer as a theologian the following first step: *We need to rethink ourselves before we rethink the Bible, and the degree and quality in which we do this will largely determine scripture's future at SPU.*

When I say "we" at this point, I am speaking of members of north-transatlantic culture. What I mean by this would be English speakers who are products of the European Enlightenment. The United States has sometimes been called an "Enlightenment experiment," and I think this point is apropos as we consider how we think of such things as truth, coherence, plausibility structures, meaning-making, and the like. Those of us who are long-time members of this society and this culture are heirs of an intellectual tradition that we cannot divorce ourselves from. Quite the contrary, we are purveyors of that tradition since we have been schooled in it, taught to think along its terms, and so forth. Therefore,

when we come to the Bible as members of northtransatlantic culture, we come already with certain lenses by which to see the biblical world. People in the Global South do so as well on their terms, and that is largely why they engage the Bible differently from those of us in this room. So at the very least, rethinking ourselves in relation to scripture requires us admitting that we are products of this intellectual tradition, and that this intellectual tradition shapes deeply how we come to the text in the first place.

What would be one of those ways in which this intellectual tradition shapes us deeply as we come to the biblical text? One way would be the sense of immediacy and distance. We are often taught to think that we can talk about things of grave importance within a contextual vacuum and in sheer abstraction. “God’s will” or “God’s love” or “truth” can be talked about in a speculative, abstract fashion in our case. But that sensibility is a huge disservice to the way all humans are grounded within their contexts, their ages, their languages, and so on. Case in point: We cannot simply pick up Job or Judges or Acts or 1 Timothy and start reading with the hopes that we can understand all that is there. We cannot understand all that is there, because in some sense we are not “there” and we can never be “there.” Now, we can engage in the hard work of trying to understand what “there” entails, and that hard work can yield good and important results. But most Christians aren’t willing nor do they often see the need for this hard work. Sometimes this unwillingness or inability is grounded in a theology surrounding scripture. But let me say this as clearly as I can as a theologian: *having a theology is no excuse for being intellectually lazy*. And when we are talking about reading as an act proper, we are talking about an intellectual exercise. When we are talking about reading the Bible, we are still talking about an intellectual exercise, not exclusively so, but certainly no less than such. A place like SPU can raise that point and help throughout, but it is a point worth keeping front and center as we think about the Bible’s future at our place.

Another way our intellectual tradition as northtransatlantic people affects us would be our collective sense of what the reading act involves. We often tend to think that reading happens largely in terms of an individual engaging a text. “I have to figure out Scripture for myself” is a common enough statement. Part of the reason why this claim is so obvious and common is that since the Enlightenment (and even further back), our culture has an exceeding distrust of institutions—of collectives that form opinion across the span of time. Now, I get that concern on a

number of levels. Oftentimes, collectives can be oppressive and conformity-seeking. We often celebrate in the media the person who seeks to be authentic to oneself despite the pressures from family, society, and so on. And I would say, yes, we do need to attend to ourselves and fight against oppression, injustice, and so on. But the sense of a self is not simply given; it is also formed. And institutions are things that form individual selves. And SPU, of course, is an institution.

Another institution worth registering when talking about the Bible is the church. When the Bible is cast as holy scripture, the church is the proper “we” that is at work. Now, the church is always located somewhere historically and culturally, but the church also, as an institution in some sense born out of the work of the triune God, has its own language, culture, logic, and narrative. And when we stop to think about it, the church in some sense precedes the Bible. To repeat the remark by Dr. Wall, “the church formed the Bible under the direction of God’s Spirit in order to form the church.” Now, look at how circular that kind of reasoning is. It certainly is not compelling to an Enlightenment model of establishing knowledge. But in terms of God working in and through the created realm, this is not a vicious circularity. The church forming the Bible to form the church is a vicious circularity. What makes Dr. Wall’s claim not viciously circular is the small but all-important phrase, “under the direction of God’s Spirit.”

What all of this means for rethinking the Bible and for thinking about scripture’s future at SPU is that we must consciously lift up an ecclesial reading of scripture. What does it mean to lift up an “ecclesial reading of scripture,” especially since SPU is not a church, *per se*? Emphasizing an “ecclesial reading of scripture” would mean at least the following points:

1) We must read and study scripture as a community

Again, this is not how we typically do it. We tend to think that reading is an individualistic enterprise. But reading has to be cast in communal terms given how limited we are in our perspectives and understandings. Furthermore, when talking about the Bible, we need to read in community this text because God typically acts in, for, and through community so as to shape community itself. Discipleship is a communal exercise. Worship is a communal exercise. Therefore, reading the Bible should be a communal exercise, too. Again, think about how the self is formed. Given how the Trinity has set up this entire process, finding true and authentic selves

involves going deeper within and also ever deeply embedded without. Followers of Jesus are the same: growth in Christ means going deeper within and without. The Spirit who worked through the community to shape the biblical text uses this text to shape the community.

2) We need a theology of scripture, not just a theology based on scripture

Rethinking the Bible and its future at SPU means that we need to be intentional not just about learning what the Bible says but also having some sense of what the Bible is and what it is for. The Bible is not simply a source for theology. That is how many people approach the Bible, and I think this approach contributes to the malaise surrounding scripture. After all, if one approaches scripture as a source for theology, one quickly notices that the Bible problematizes itself on a number of counts. Given the complexity and shape of scripture, it is not ready-made for use apart from some sense of what it is and what it is for. A theology of scripture answers those queries: what the Bible is and what it is for. And it is quite natural at a place like SPU that actively seeks to live into a Wesleyan heritage that a theology of scripture should be answered along Wesleyan lines. This should be part of scripture's future at SPU, namely the claiming of a Wesleyan heritage as we reflect on scripture. One way of stating a Wesleyan account of scripture would be to stress that it is a means of grace, used by God to form a holy people. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the phrase "means of grace," I recommend you read John Wesley's sermon by the same name. Quickly, a Wesleyan means of grace is a practice and channel instituted by God whereby God typically presents Godself for the sake of shaping a people into holiness. Along this vein, the sacraments would be means of grace; Christian conversation and collective worship are means of grace; scripture would be a means of grace as well.

3) The development of a theology of scripture invites different ways to think and talk about scripture

Once something is theologized, one can go on to think and talk differently about it. For instance, once one thinks of Christ's atonement extensively, different theories, images, and models of the atonement can come through. The same can be the case with scripture: Once one starts thinking about the nature and role of scripture, one can go on to employ different theories, images, and models for understanding scripture. We have highlighted the idea of means of grace so far because we are Wes-

leyans. But in line with the small pamphlet SPU produced some years ago, we can also think of scripture as canon, as history, as literature, as sacrament, and as a global book. We can use different metaphors for scripture. We can also engage in the work of analogy-making, stating that scripture is like or similar to something else.

In the book referred to already by Prof. Wall, he and I explore an analogy that connects the Bible and the church. Interestingly, this analogy is a building block for an ecclesial reading of scripture as it brings into relation the church and scripture as theological themes. What we essentially did in the book, prompted by an intuition Dr. Wall first had, was to use the marks confessed about the church in the Nicene Creed (that the church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic) in reference to scripture, that is to think of scripture as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. I cannot speak extensively about the shape of this analogy and all of its applications and suggestions, but let me at least speak as to why we did it.

This church-scripture analogy is important to register because it helps highlight features of scripture often lost by the academy, the church, and the culture at large. For instance, it is difficult to think about scripture as one, given how so many forces work to break it into disparate pieces. It is also difficult to think about the church as one, given how various pressures work to think of it as divided. But, interestingly, the skills and sensibilities developed in the theological exercise of reflecting on the church as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic can be utilized in the exercise of developing a theology of scripture. Such skills and sensibilities include not divinizing scripture, reckoning with the contextuality of scripture, and constructively reflecting about how the whole of scripture works together as a single textual body with many members. This textual body with many members has a mission and aim, and it has performative outcomes to be accounted for. In short, the church-scripture analogy helps us be more attentive to the shape of scripture, the content of scripture, and the role of scripture in our common life.

This is the kind of work that we need to intentionally pursue so that scripture has a future at SPU.

The Marks of Scripture: Robert Wall

If the church is the Bible's principal address and those who dwell at this ecclesial address routinely confess they belong to one holy catholic and apostolic church, then what ought we believe about this book that forms Christians into that kind of people?

We believe the Bible is one.

We can all reasonably affirm that the Bible is a one-of-a-kind book, evinced by both its distinctive two-testament form and definitive influence upon a global church, past, present, and future. Only the most hardened skeptics would dismiss the Bible as just another ancient anthology of disparate religious writings, bound together during its production without any sense of its special importance, whether as a cultural classic or a revelatory word.

The more difficult matter, however, concerns what might be called, scripture's "scandal of appearances": how can we claim the Bible is one book with a straight face, given its profound diversity and internal contradictions? More than any other settled claim of modern critical orthodoxy, biblical scholarship has established the Bible's seemingly intractable *disunity*. Scripture may be unique but surely its literary and theological diversity suggests that it is hardly unified.

Unity in diversity.

In response, consider the following two properties of a *pneumatology of scripture*. We read the complicated history of the Bible's formation as the achievement of God's Spirit. Scripture's witness to the Spirit's operations in history indicates that it routinely forms singular wholes out of disparate parts. One may point to scripture's opening story of creation, for example, when the Spirit swept over the waters as God remade a formless chaos into an interdependent cosmos.

No biblical analogy better illustrates this point than Paul's depiction of the Spirit's distribution of diverse spiritual gifts within one body of Christ according to 1 Corinthians 12-14. Paul argues that no one gift is more important for a congregation's graced growth than any other gift (1 Cor. 12:4-11). While there is a diversity of gifts (v. 4), ministries (v. 5), and empowerments (ἐνδύνημα; v. 6), he writes, they are each distributed (cf. vv. 8-10) and activated (v. 6b) by one and the same Spirit (v. 4), Lord (v. 5) and God (v. 6a). Critically, this entire process is the Spirit's achievement; the Spirit alone decides which gift to give to whom and it is the Spirit alone who decides when to animate the gift of each believer in contributing to the health of Christ's one body, the church (vv. 11-13).

I would argue that this biblical portrait of the Spirit's performances in choosing, distributing, and animating spiritual gifts within a single congregation is roughly analogous of the Spirit's performances in choos-

ing, forming, and sanctifying every text that comprises the church's biblical canon. Like spiritual gifting, scripture is not formed by a series of self-determined sociopolitical choices, but is God's charismatic gift to the whole church, which continues to receive and use it as a sacrament of God's word in a manner that is utterly dependent upon the Spirit's inspiring presence and power (cf. Webster, *Scripture*, 58-63).

Paul's use of the human body to imagine how the Spirit's gifts function within the community is also important to note. Even as a human body consists of many body parts, each of which has a definitive and important role to perform in a healthy human, so also is the physiology of Christ's ecclesial body maintained by the performances of different spiritual gifts, each with a distinctive role to perform (v. 22) in the proper care of a mature congregation (vv. 25-26).

Scripture's authority is not threatened in the least by its internal diversity when reimagined by its faithful readers as an interdependent whole whose coherence is discerned by the illumination of the one Spirit who produced it. Moreover, not only should the church's reception of its scripture presume the practical relevance of each part, OT *and* NT, but the reduction or hostile takeover of any one biblical part within this canonical whole for whatever reason may well fracture Christ's body rather than heal it. Only when the church reverently uses every scripture as divinely inspiring will the church fully witness the Spirit's inspiring presence.

Unity in interpretation.

We find no central theme within scripture that unifies and includes all of its different parts. Scripture's substantive unity is rather located in its Christ-centered referent, constructed with materials from the biblical Gospels but also from the church's creeds and from testimonies of our life-changing encounters with the living Jesus. According to Luke, when the risen Jesus opens the minds of his disciples on their road-trip to Emmaus to understand Israel's scripture, he does so by proposing an interpretive strategy and a Spirit-drenched use of scripture in the *missio Dei* that targets a single messianic event and its singular redemptive result. Scripture's unity is not a matter of proposing one particular portion of Scripture or one particular dogmatic theme that pulls all its parts together into a single but artificial unity. Scripture's oneness is rather a

matter of interpreting its diverse parts by one Messiah whose work liberates the world from its slavery to sin and fear of death once for all.

We believe the Bible is holy.

Professor Castelo and I agree that the right response to the skeptic's catalogue of what the Bible gets factually wrong or why its teaching is irrelevant for today's enlightened readers—the Bible's epistemic sins—is *not* apologetics. Arguing for the Bible's factual accuracy does not convince either the post-Christian or the pissed-Christian of its indispensability, and only distracts from scripture's proper role in forming disciples. Our response to skeptics is to invite them into a community of practice for a year where they can observe and experience a different kind of evidence: the holy ends of a practiced Bible, which is fellowship with God and a deeper love for all our neighbors.

This *holy* book is the byproduct of what John Webster calls a "*hallowing creaturely process*." God's sanctification of any material object to use for heavenly ends, whether a literary text, the icon of a saint, a church building, or a loaf of bread and chalice of wine, transforms ordinary creatures into extraordinary instruments of God's saving grace.

Therefore, we take it that biblical texts were composed, collected, and canonized according to the ordinary literary practices of antiquity. The Bible's production is not a magical performance. Nor is the Bible's holiness the result of divinely inspired authors or the literary artistry of their compositions. Rather, the Bible's holiness results from a holy God's purposeful decision to sanctify select but ordinary compositions long after they were written for the ongoing work of salvation.

Perhaps no passage in scripture helps us reimagine this idea better than Jesus's farewell discourse *according to John 14-17*. It tells the story of how Jesus responds to his disciples' interrogation of him following his stunning announcement that he would soon depart for a heavenly place where they could no longer follow him as his disciples. Thomas's poignant question frames their urgent concern: "Lord, if you depart, how can we know the way?" (14:5).

The Lord's response to Thomas's solid question underwrites our pneumatology of scripture: In his absence, Jesus promises his disciples "the *Paracletos*, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, who will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I said to you." Jesus confirms the Spirit's present work intends to illumine our

minds by reminding us of the way, truth, and life according to what Jesus taught and embodied.²

But we must wait for the ending of John's Gospel to learn how the Spirit will do the work Jesus promises. John tells us that he wrote his story of Jesus by using selected memories of what he had eyewitnessed him doing and saying, so that "by believing we may have life in his name" (20:30-31; see 17:2-3). What the church ultimately canonized as the Bible's Fourth Gospel is one piece of this creature of authored texts by which the

²Matthew's Jesus frames his teaching of scripture by admitting its scandal: evidently he is responding to his opponents in Matt 5:17-20 when saying to the disciples gathered around him that he did not come to abolish Israel's scripture (= "the Law and the Prophets") but to fulfill them. The pivotal irony of Matthew's Gospel is that it is in large part his self-referential (i.e., messianic) reading of Israel's scripture that results in the fierce opposition of Judaism's religious leaders and ultimately in his Roman execution. This execution, when reconsidered in faith, is properly understood as a messianic death that fulfills God's promise of Israel's restoration according to scripture. Luke continues and expands this idea of scripture in concluding his Gospel. At the end of his journey to Emmaus, the risen Jesus opens the minds of his disciples to read Israel's scripture with the same messianic hermeneutic he employed whilst among them. The Gospel's version of the so-called "Great Commission" is centered on this hermeneutic, which is what the apostles are instructed to employ when teaching Israel's scripture to the nations as a witness to the redemptive effects of Jesus's messianic ministry. This hermeneutics of Scripture is illustrated in the Book of Acts as the pivot point of the apostles' participation in the *missio Dei*.

What the synoptic Gospels plainly teach, then, is the necessity of Israel's scripture: Jesus taught it to secure his own teaching and work as messiah and he then commissioned his followers to do likewise following his departure as a Spirit-enabled witness to his messianic work in fulfilling God's promises to Israel. But the Fourth Gospel completes this theology of Scripture in a crucial way. In effect, Jesus's commentary on the Spirit in his final discourse expands dramatically what Matthew and Luke only indirectly imply: the Spirit's presence purposes to continue to teach the exalted Jesus's subsequent disciples during his indeterminate absence what he had taught his first disciples whilst with them on earth. In effect, as the Gospel's conclusion makes clear, Jesus underscores the indispensability of what is remembered of his teaching as well as to the events that illustrated what he taught about himself during his lifetime. That is, while Israel's scripture is necessary for a Spirit-formed discipleship, it lacks a record of what the historical Jesus, the divine Word incarnate, taught and did on earth, and is therefore insufficient as an auxiliary of the Spirit's ongoing ministry. A Christian biblical canon requires two testaments, the second of which contains a deposit of what the historical Jesus taught and did as the Son of God Messiah. John's Gospel completes what the synoptic Gospels only begin to articulate about scripture's importance in forming disciples.

Paracletos continues to come alongside the Lord's disciples to teach them the way and the truth so that they may have abundant life in *his* name.

Let me try out another biblical analogy from 2 Cor 3-4. Paul would have us *reimagine his apostleship and by implication his canonical letters as ordinary "jars of clay" that God has sanctified to demonstrate that the transforming effects of his apostolic ministry are the work of God and not of his own doing.* What explains the Spirit's continuing use of these ancient texts gathered in the Bible once for all to inform, form, and transform faithful disciples? When considering his apostolic ministry and how it "lights up" the minds and hearts of those who hear him proclaim the good news about Jesus and how they are "transformed by the Spirit into God's image" (2 Cor 3:18), Paul concludes with that famous line, "We have been given this treasure in jars of clay—Paul's memorable metaphor for his own frail humanity—in order to show that the awesome power that transforms lives belongs to God and not to us."

Likewise, we have been given scripture as a jar of clay, the literary creation of frail and fallible prophets and apostles, so that its awesome power evinced in transforming the lives of its faithful readers demonstrates God's salvation-creating grace and not the brilliance of those who wrote it or the wisdom of the church that formed it.

Christians have no need to apologize for the occasional artlessness of the Bible's narrative, or to harmonize away its textual contradictions, or to engage in special pleading to correct the Bible's occasional errors of fact, or to apologize for the theodicy or patriarchy of some of its stories, or any other theological problem that may offend those who seek a God-like scripture or those skeptics who ridicule it. It is the Bible's *ordinariness* when compared with the extraordinary results that flow from its life-transforming performances in worship, instruction, mission, and personal devotions that secure the transcendent ground of its enduring authority.

We believe the Bible is catholic.

We contend that the church's catholicity is analogous to scripture in the following two ways. First, scripture's divinely inspired usefulness and transformative results extend to every member of every congregation of Christ's global church without exception. Second, every biblical text without exception is sanctified by God's Spirit to function as a trusted witness to the risen Messiah and effective means of grace in forming his disciples in and for today's world.

Scripture is a precisely circumscribed book, a full gospel for the whole church. To marginalize any one member of either body, ecclesial or biblical, is to undermine God's redemptive intentions. Implicit in this conception of catholicity is the Spirit's active role in resolving tensions between texts and readers so that the whole scripture may clearly vocalize a word from God that has hitherto been silenced or ignored by the church. Let me briefly develop this idea of scripture's catholicity.

The catholicity of scripture's intended readership.

The term "catholic" was used early on as a geographical rubric for the inclusive scope of the church's membership. To confess our faith in the catholic church, as our congregation routinely does during Sunday morning worship, is to identify ourselves with all other believers from around the world irrespective of the particularities of their social, racial, sexual, geopolitical, or any other identity.

Our application of "catholic" to scripture, then, makes a similar point: that every member of every Christian congregation no matter its social location or make-up of membership receives and ingests the same scripture as a sacrament of God's word, whether by reading or hearing. Even a cursory history of scripture's translation and transmission, while certainly uneven, demonstrates the Bible's global reach and effectiveness as a means of grace.

In fact, the effect of canonizing scripture once for all is not only to universalize the scope of its circulation to every Christian but to universalize the particular circumstances that occasioned the writing of every biblical text. We all read every scripture in the present tense rather than about something that happened way back when, because the Spirit's sanctification and illumination of every text makes it forever relevant to every reader, albeit with different meanings for different moments and minds.³

³Even though the church collected these writings together to form a discrete canonical collection, called "catholic" for meta-theological reasons. I say for "theological reasons" because the ancient rubric given this collection has been recently problematized on literary grounds. If "catholic" refers to the geographical scope of the letters' original address or perhaps to the encyclical intent of their literary genre, then we also have problems with the use of "catholic" to name this canonical collection. The intended audiences of 1 Peter and certainly 2-3 John seem to be more congregational than "catholic" in scope; and the literary genre of 1 John (and some would add James) is not that of an encyclical "epistle" but more like a sermon or treatise intended for insiders of the community of "the beloved disciple."

One of the most evocative biblical analogues of the all-inclusive boundaries of this kind of catholicity is the vision of the great crowd in Revelation 7—a mosaic of embodied images here gathered at history's end to celebrate the victory of God in the same place and on the same ground. All kinds of creatures gathered before the exalted Lamb in common garb, wearing white gowns washed clean by the blood of the Lamb. They form a community of worship who sing the same songs and perform the same liturgical gestures in celebration of God's victory.

Despite their diversity, their public worship underscores a shared experience. All have come from "great hardship" (7:14) to stand together in the shelter of the throne to find relief from the scorching sun and to eat together from the same banquet table (7:15-16). The Lamb whose blood purifies them stands among them to comfort and lead them. This precious picture reminds us that the church's catholicity is grounded in the blessed hope of an eschatological and international people made whole by the mercies of the triune God. It is this same eschatological people in their various social and religious locations across the span of millennia who have prepared themselves to stand before the Lamb on that day by hearing God's witness from the same book.

The catholicity of scripture's canonized texts.

Besides emphasizing a "no reader left behind" catholicity, scripture's catholic mark also presses the point that no biblical text is left behind. Surely Paul has something like this in mind when telling Timothy that "every Scripture" is divinely inspired to enable the congregation's practices of Christian discipleship (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Paul's purposeful phrase "every Scripture" implies a substantive simultaneity; that is, even though the Bible's various writings are formed and freighted by different literary genres and shaped by different ideas and images of God, "every Scripture" is used by one Spirit to form the disciples of the risen One.

Early students of Paul, such as Ignatius (*Smyrn.* 6.2) and Clement of Rome (*Strom.* 7.17.107), take this idea of "every Scripture" to denote a *whole* or *complete* apostolic witness in large part to distinguish it from non-apostolic rivals such as Marcion. In fact, the claim of a community's *orthodox* faith was used interchangeably with catholicity. In a similar way, the formation of the whole Bible in its final form indicated its completeness as a self-sufficient witness to God's word.

From this perspective, the church recognized the revelatory word was complete, final and fixed only when the OT was combined with the

NT. The NT began its life as a collection of Pauline letters and added a collection of four Gospels by the end of the second century. By the end of the third century Acts had entered this inchoate NT with another collection of apostolic letters written under the names of those who led the church's mission to Israel: James, Peter, John, and Jude. And at long last—almost a millennium later in the East—the church finally recognized the Spirit's appointment of the Book of Revelation and so it too was attached at the end of this biblical canon as the fitting conclusion to scripture's meta-story of God's salvation. Not until all these collections came together over a protracted canonical process did the church catholic recognize by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that its Christian scripture was at long last fixed and finalized.

Here's my big-ticket idea: *The canonical process required the church catholic to catholicize its scripture by adding every text the Spirit had sanctified, one after another over an extended period of time, until the Bible was made complete with no text left behind.* The church recognized the Bible was a completed whole by its inspiring experiences of performing all these texts together in worship, instruction, mission, and personal devotion for holy ends. This caveat logically follows: to neglect any part of this canonical whole undercuts the Spirit's inspiration of every scripture and so threatens its intention to form every believer into a disciple who knows and loves God perfectly.

We believe the Bible is apostolic.

The late, great Brevard Childs argued that “*apostolicity became a dynamic term to encompass the historical, substantive, functional, and personal qualities at the most basic core of the Christian faith.*”⁴ We not only agree with Childs but contend that scripture's own snapshots of the apostles, especially gathered in that photo album we call, “the Book of Acts,” help readers to envisage what this substantive, functional apostolicity looks like at ground level.

Of course, the Lord's apostles were providentially privileged by God in a way that we are not: they were divinely chosen eyewitnesses and close friends of the incarnate Word. The Preface to the NT letter, 1 John, underscores the importance of the apostles' direct testimony of Jesus for us who read the gospels and letters of the apostles two millennia later.

⁴Brevard Childs, *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 21.

The opening verse of 1 John contends that the truth about God aligns with what the Apostle John eye and ear-witnessed during his travels with Jesus from the beginning. John's eyewitness of the incarnate Word became the raw material of the letter of 1 John, which the church much later then received and we continue to read as scripture. There is a straight line, then, between these historical moments—between the apostolic eyewitness of Jesus and the gospels they wrote down from memory about their experiences with him, which the ancient church reformatted into the Bible once for all, and we now receive as a sacrament of the word.

Let me offer a couple brief reflections on this affirmation from 1 John to conclude tonight's lecture.

1 John contends that the apostolic content of scripture secures our relationship with God. We have argued tonight that a pneumatology of scripture proposes that scripture was formed once for all by a process of ecclesial discernment led by the Holy Spirit. The church's initial discernment of those texts the Spirit had sanctified for holy ends was based in large part on recognition of their apostolic content. The reception of a truly apostolic text was not reduced to an historian's judgment about its authorship as is often the case today. Modern criticism's preoccupation with identifying the real author of a biblical text, whether its enduring authority can be linked to one of the apostles, is an intellectual dog that don't hunt.⁵ The apostolic character of any biblical text is determined by the apostolic content of its teaching, no matter who actually wrote it. John Webster rightly notes that "the church and all its acts are *ostensive*, pointing beyond and behind themselves to that which transcends and precedes them . . . the canonic decision of the Church is essentially its confession of the norm already given it (by the apostles), which was the standard by which (Scripture is) . . . measured."⁶ Spend your time *in* the text, not mucking about in the historical prolegomena behind the text!

1 John implies that a right interpretation of scripture is also apostolic. This not only commends that we follow the apostles hermeneutics of scripture since they learned and practiced it according to the risen Jesus's

⁵Most discussions of authorship end without a critical consensus and realization of the indeterminacy of such historical questions for lack of evidence. More importantly, these decisions rarely have an exegetical payoff worth the effort.

⁶Webster, *Holy Scripture*, 64. Italics are Webster's.

instruction, but that we do so with blinders on. The rules that regulate what we can and cannot bring from scripture to our life and faith consist of those theological agreements formulated by the apostles based upon what they saw and heard from the historical Jesus, the Messiah, God's Son incarnate.

Irenaeus calls this plumb-line the apostolic "rule of faith." It summarizes the theological grammar of God's way of salvation the church has received from those who witnessed the historical Jesus first hand. Even as the church canonized scripture because its content cohered to this apostolic rule of faith, so must the content of the church's ongoing *interpretation* and its embodied effects also cohere to this same rule. Right interpretation, if it is a word on target, will effect the full salvation of those who obey it. For this reason, the risen Jesus places both scripture and its Spirit-illuminated, Christ-centered interpretation at the pivot point of the *missio Dei*. Only then will the redemptive effects of God's victory in Christ be realized in the world.

An apostolic interpretation of scripture does not invalidate modern methods of interpretation. These are ancient texts originally written for communities located in very different places than 21st century Seattle. We learn to read scripture in light of its ancientness. But hear this: the church's canonization of these ancient texts recognizes their continuing relevance for subsequent generations of faithful readers. The primary act of interpretation, then, is not to figure out what these ancient texts meant when they were written and first read; rather, God's Spirit illumines the mind of the living Jesus for his current disciples so they can faithfully interpret scripture and speak God's truth into their own time-zones.

Professor Castelo and I encourage this community to cultivate those intellectual virtues, such as an honest handling of the evidence, humility, and a generous hospitality to other interpreters, which are necessary in a community's discernment of good news from fake news. At the same time, we reject the modern fiction that any honest investigation of scripture's special revelation of God's word is engaged with benign neutrality. *Every* interpretation of scripture must be vested with an apostolic bone to pick, which extends to our epistemological, theological, and sociological commitments. The real issue for discipleship is to discern which bone among others is truly apostolic. Only when we read scripture closely, carefully regulating what we retrieve and apply by this apostolic rule of faith, can we detect good news from fake news. And only in developing

this interpretive skill will our beloved church have a future *with* God and for this world whom God loves.⁷

Response: Doug Strong

Many thanks to Drs. Wall and Castelo for their excellent and provocative presentation. As mentioned, Dr. Wall is a Bible teacher and Dr. Castelo is

⁷This claim about apostolicity, which also marks out what scripture is, needs qualification. First, the apostles' eyewitness of the historical Jesus gave them direct access to God's embodied word that we no longer enjoy. Their witness of the risen Christ and appointment as Spirit-filled carriers of God's word privileged them within the divine economy—a privilege Paul himself recognizes when he greeted Titus (Titus 1:1-3). We can claim nothing like this. But what we can claim is ready access to this same witness in the gospels of these apostles received with the NT and their antecedent, the gospels of the prophets received with the OT. Scripture's appointment as a sacred auxiliary of the holy Spirit presumes a substantive continuity—as "apostolic succession"—between what the apostles heard and saw of the incarnate One and the effectiveness of this historical memory preserved by scripture in bringing readers into a saving relationship with the triune God.

But neither is the analogical relationship between the two claimed "in spite of" this qualitative difference between an unmediated and mediated reception of divine revelation. We recognize the Spirit has used the distinctive contributions of different media and messengers during different moments of salvation's history to accomplish God's single redemptive plan. In this case, the holy ends of the apostolic eyewitness and the apostolic church and its scripture are the same if also perfectly suited to a particular moment in time. This, too, is an aspect of divine providence according to which God appoints and orders every witness to God's word and work, whether mediated or unmediated, to align with this common end: "the self-presentation of the triune God, the free work of sovereign mercy in which God wills, establishes and perfects saving fellowship with himself in which humankind comes to know, love and fear God above all things."

Second, even though the following exposition depends on a NT depiction of an apostolic witness to construct the analogical relationship between the church's self-identity as an apostolic community and scripture as an apostolic text, we recognize and elevate the interpretive necessity of approaching the church's scripture as a two-testament witness. Paul writes that the church "has been constructed on a foundation of the apostles *and the prophets* with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20). The church's confession of itself as an apostolic community does not grant permission to exclude or minimize the OT gospels of the prophets as co-witness to God's redemptive work because of Christ.

While the nature of the working relationship between old and new remains contested, we would simply claim at the outset that the unmediated access of prophets to Israel's God, whose eyewitness to God's work in Israel was routinely glossed through theophany and divine speech, is in some sense repeated if also

a dogmatic and constructive theologian. I am not either, for I'm a church historian—which is yet another sub-discipline within the larger field of Theology. Together, then, the 3 of us represent 3 different perspectives on the question that's before us this evening.

And what is that question, specifically? The stated theme for tonight is: scripture's future at SPU. But what does that mean? I'm actually not sure that this aspirational phrase—"Scripture's future"—has been adequately parsed out for us.

Indeed, I actually think there are at least two different implicit questions embedded within this phrase: scripture's future.

The first implicit question is: How will SPU professors *teach* and students *learn* Christian scripture in the future?

The second question is: How will all of us at SPU—students and professors—*receive* what God's Spirit has to say to us through the scripture in the future?

These two questions reflect two extremely different ways of thinking about how we study the Bible within an academic environment. One question has to do with what *we do* (teaching and learning), and the other question has to do with what *the Spirit does* (infilling and transforming). At most universities, and even at most Christian universities, these questions are not addressed at the same time or by the same people. That is, the religion faculty answers one of the questions through their curriculum, while the university ministries department answers the other question through the co-curriculum—if at all.

On the one hand, what is taught about scripture on most American college campuses—whether progressive or conservative—is nothing more than a deep-dive into the historical origins and context of the biblical

made even clearer by the unmediated access of the apostles to the historical Jesus whose teaching and works perfectly instantiated the self-presentation of Israel's God to the prophets (cf. Heb. 1:1-3). The prophet's witness of the divine word and the apostles' witness of that word incarnate in Jesus are of a single, mutually-informing piece.

On this basis the risen Lord's hermeneutics of scripture asserts himself as the single referent of the gospels of the OT prophets, which requires the use of figural or typological readings to retrieve. In light of what we already have said, however, we are convinced that other meanings derive from reading the OT prophets according to their own address in the history of Israel. Any historical investigation that targets theological understanding is constrained by a purposeful desire to know the prophets' witness to Israel's God and God's way of saving Israel, for it is this God and this salvation that the apostles witness in Jesus.

authors, with very little emphasis on the contemporary relevance of scripture. This first implicit question states that we are the primary actors: we teach and learn about the Bible.

On the other hand, what is neglected by most professional academicians is any engagement with the application of scripture, even though the application of scripture is the approach that the Church has applied to the Bible for the vast majority of its 2000 years. More specifically, the Church has approached the Bible as a vessel (a clay jar, to use the terminology of Paul—and Rob) employed by the Holy Spirit to speak directly into our hearts and lives, a means of grace through which God’s Christ-centered people may be discipled. This second implicit question states that we are not the primary actors: rather, we are the ones who receive.

Our presenters this evening—Drs. Wall and Castelo—suggest that we here at SPU should be involved in the work of both questions: that is, we should both be teaching and learning *about* scripture and receiving from the Holy Spirit *through* scripture.

The reason that we’re in this predicament, this predicament in which most students of the Bible find themselves studying background *about* the text, rather than being transformed by the Spirit *through* the text, is due to what Dr. Castelo described regarding the influence of the Enlightenment—which is, as he said “an intellectual tradition we can’t divorce ourselves from.” The Enlightenment worldview assumed that modern people could be educated, through empirical ways, to figure out all that needed to be known. A problematic corollary resulted from the Enlightenment’s emphasis on all truth being scientifically discoverable, a corollary that tonight’s presenters didn’t have time to develop. The corollary is this: Since it was Euro-American culture that discovered the overarching set of supposedly universal truths, then it was incumbent on that dominant culture to colonially impose those ideas upon others.

Now, although it is true that SPU inherited this Enlightenment influence on our academic culture, it is also true that SPU’s Wesleyan Holiness heritage strongly mitigated against the Enlightenment academic hegemony. I’ll give four of many examples of how this Wesleyan Holiness tradition worked to counter modernist ideas, both here at SPU and at other Wesleyan Holiness colleges.

1. First, John Wesley castigated many of the modern theologies that arose during his day, such as Deism, Unitarianism, and what he termed “speculative latitudinarianism.” All of these modern theologies tried to minimize the role of miracles, the power of the Holy Spirit, and God’s

inspired presence in our lives. Wesley, by contrast, insisted on the immanent presence of God breaking into this world, and so did the founders of SPU.

2. Secondly, Wesley also pushed back against the modern theological tendency to make spiritual practice hyper-individualized. Instead, he stressed that discipleship happens best when it occurs communally. Wesley called the study of the Bible, “searching the scriptures,” and he believed that searching the scriptures was done best in community, through the body of Christ, the Church. SPU—and especially the School of Theology—has always stressed community Bible study, and it still does so today.

3. A third example also comes from Wesley. He harshly criticized the modern economic principles of systemic capitalism that promoted profit over the interests of people. He railed against any economic practice—such as slavery, distilleries, or gambling—that harmed men and women by turning them into consumable products. Seattle Pacific College also protested against such practices.

4. Fourthly, the Holiness movement—as represented by B. T. Roberts, the man who co-founded SPU, a century after Wesley—critiqued the reigning socio-political economy of the Gilded Age in America. Holiness evangelists like Roberts insisted that the poor should be privileged over the wealthy, that women should be given access to leadership as well as men, and that the liberative gospel of Jesus is particularly applicable to African Americans and other people of color.

SPU inherits all of these Wesleyan critiques of modernity, and so consequently *our own legacy* is—or at least should be—connected to an academic trajectory that challenges certain aspects of the modern, and now post-modern, scholarly agendas, while also accepting other aspects of the modern academy.

So what does this mean for the study of scripture?

1. First, as Dr. Castelo stated, as an academic institution that accepts the scientific method, we see the study of scripture, as we see the study of any area of knowledge, as an intellectual exercise. We should never be lazy in our scholarship regarding the Bible. As such, we work with, and accept many of, the insights derived from history, sociology, psychology, literary critical theory, and so forth—all of which are derived from the modern, and now post-modern, agendas. In this way, I would actually challenge Drs. Wall and Castelo a bit in their dismissal of the idea of apologetics.

While I agree that apologetics in the style of “evidence that demands a verdict” is wrongheaded, nonetheless apologetics can still be useful in the way in which it operated during the 2nd and 3rd centuries of church history. During that era, Christians proclaimed a winsome testimony of faith, and they invited others into that narrative. We need to revamp that kind of apologetics for our campus today. In fact, we need it more than ever.

2. Now, while we accept the modern stress on intellectual excellence, we also criticize those same modern and post-modern agendas for their colonialism, academic domination, and consumerist objectification—and we criticize those agendas by intentionally reading scripture in non-modern ways. Doing this kind of reading will be completely countercultural to the dominant scholarly project in the American academy today. I would say that this alternative, Wesleyan way of reading the Bible would look like this:

First, we ought to read the Bible with the poor and others who have been sidelined.

Second, we ought to read the Bible communally, as a *mutual exercise of discipleship* of the Church, the body of Christ. The goal for this communal Bible reading would be for God to transform us into a holy people whose lives are a testimony of Christ to the world.

Most importantly, we ought to read the Bible *expecting to hear from the Holy Spirit*. I would contend that this emphasis on an inspired reading of scripture, using the term that Dr. Wall has coined as a “pneumatology of Scripture,” should be the theological marrow of our university. Put simply: we believe that *God is still speaking by the Spirit to us through the scripture*, as well as through other means. To cite Wesley, the community of believers participates in the divine life when we experience “the continual inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit: God’s breathing into the soul, and the soul’s breathing back what it first receives from God; a continual action of God upon the soul, [and] the re-action of the soul upon God.”

This all sounds great, but how do the people of SPU actually participate in receiving God’s continual inspiration? Our Provost, Jeff Van Duzer, has suggested that our community should resolutely concentrate on specific spiritual exercises, or, as he puts it, to engage in “a set of communal practices that give expression to our faith.” These practices, traditionally called “means of grace,” have been used by generations of Christians to hear from God. In the Anglican and Methodist traditions, these means of grace include small group discipleship (which are already being

implemented in Foundation courses), worship, prayer, fasting, ministering with the poor, and searching the scriptures through devotional reading. I would suggest that SPU zealously reinvigorate these practices, so that we can hear from the Spirit what God has to say to us for today and for the future. That would mean, then, that scripture's future at SPU would be practicing the means of grace together so that we actually expect to hear God's Spirit.

“WESLEYAN”? “WESLEYAN TRADITION”? WORSHIP AND LITURGICAL PRACTICES AMONG THE SPIRITUAL DESCENDANTS OF JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY

by

Karen B. Westerfield Tucker

INTRODUCTION

In preparing to write this paper, curiosity compelled me one evening to go to WorldCat.org, which self-defines as the “world’s largest library catalog,” to see what would come up if I searched “Wesleyan Tradition” in the title field.¹ Among the first dozen or so listings of the more than 208 titles displayed, four entries caught my eye. One was Paul Chilcote’s edited work *The Wesleyan Tradition: A Paradigm for Renewal*, a collection of essays principally focused upon the writings of John Wesley and early British Methodism. The second was Thomas C. Oden’s *Doctrinal Standards in the Wesleyan Tradition*, which explores “Wesleyan” standards of doctrine represented mostly by American forms of the “Wesleyan” family of churches, though the book gives some attention to British manifestations. The third was a review of Jim Edlin’s *Daniel: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Edlin’s book is part of the New Beacon Bible Commentaries series that features (as noted on The Foundry Publishing website) “completely new scholarship from notable experts in the Wesleyan theological tradition.”² The fourth title was actually the first among all of the listings, and was a bit mystifying: Michael Collier’s *The Wesleyan Tradition: Four Decades of American Poetry*. Further investigation revealed that the book is part of an established series on “Wesleyan poetry” published by the press of Wesleyan University located in Middletown, Connecticut.

This little experiment confirmed what I already knew: the ambiguity that exists when the terms “Wesleyan” or “Wesleyan tradition” appear in

¹This paper was originally given at the 2017 meeting of the Wesleyan Liturgical Society.

²“The New Beacon Bible Commentary,” *The Foundry Publishing*, accessed April 14, 2018, <https://www.thefoundrypublishing.com/catalog/product/view/id/5424/s/new-beacon-bible-commentaries/category/1057/>.

historical, theological, and even liturgical writing. In using "Wesleyan," to which "Wesley" does this refer? John? John with Charles as the silent brother? Charles? John and Charles together? To expand the family circle, might "Wesleyan" refer to mother Susanna's practices of child raising and domestic pedagogy? From a musicological perspective, might "Wesleyan" indicate one or more of the musical Wesleys of a subsequent generation, namely, Charles' sons Charles, Jr., and Samuel as well as the more famous grandson Samuel Sebastian?

There is even more complexity when "Wesleyan" and "Wesleyan tradition" are used to indicate the eighteenth-century Wesleyan/Methodist movement but also British and American denominations derived from or influenced by it as well the missionary and ecclesiastical offshoots of those churches. For example, among writers affiliated with the United Methodist Church, "Wesleyan tradition" often appears as a shorthand for the genealogy of mainline episcopal Methodism in the United States. Across the broader spectrum of what is identifiable as within the "Wesleyan tradition," there is a great deal of diversity of thought and practice, some of it actually or seemingly contradictory. For example, Oden, in the previously mentioned *Doctrinal Standards in the Wesleyan Tradition*, includes as an example the 1878 Doctrines of the Salvation Army, thus placing the Army within the tradition.³ Yet, Oden does not square this with the Salvationists' rejection of the two outward and visible dominical sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Thus, how wide and deep is the net that holds the "Wesleyan tradition"? Would it be preferable, in the case of the Salvation Army, to speak of them only as a branch on the genealogical tree grown from the soil of the eighteenth century Methodist movement within the Church of England? Might the Army be included, as Oden claims, as part of the Wesleyan doctrinal or theological tradition (however defined), but not within a Wesleyan liturgical tradition? What would be included in such a Wesleyan liturgical tradition?

Here, I believe, it is helpful—perhaps even necessary—to make distinctions between a liturgical tradition drawn directly from one or more of the Wesleys and the new liturgical developments that arose after John Wesley's death in churches that identify themselves in some way with the Wesleyan/Methodist movement. Such a move would recognize the dynamic aspects of worship and liturgy—that in the face of theological,

³Thomas C. Oden, *Doctrinal Standards in the Wesleyan Tradition*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), 202-203.

socio-cultural, and contextual changes, theologies and practices of worship may also change—and also regard them as legitimately part of a [Wesleyan] liturgical trajectory or lineage, if not a “tradition.” Attention to such a distinction would also relieve some of the pressure to “prove” a connection of new liturgical understandings and practices to John Wesley or early Methodism. I have ceased being surprised at hearing from clergy and laity in Methodist/Wesleyan communities in the United States that John Wesley invented grape juice, their reason being that the “unfermented fruit of the vine” at the Lord’s Supper is a longstanding practice and therefore must come from the founder himself. They are often surprised to learn that John Wesley and the early Methodists in Britain and America had no such restrictions on the use of alcohol at the sacramental table. Indeed, in America in the eighteenth century and in much of nineteenth, communicants imbibed fruit wines of various types—or even hard liquor—from the chalice since that was what the communion stewards could obtain. Yet, grape juice at Holy Communion is also part of the “tradition” precisely because of its use from the late-nineteenth century onward and owing to the introduction of unfermented wine to Methodist and Wesleyan communities by a Methodist dentist: Thomas Bramwell Welch.⁴ Thus, both wine and grape juice at the sacramental table stand within a broadly defined “Wesleyan liturgical tradition,” though grape juice does not derive from the practices of John or Charles Wesley—and could not, since scientific understanding of the process of fermentation was not yet known.

To return to the image of the wide and deep net: How much can that net hold, particularly in the case of contradictory or opposing liturgical theologies and practices, all of which are claimed to be Wesleyan, in the Wesleyan tradition or possibly in a Wesleyan liturgical tradition or lineage? To explore this question, I examine musical performance practice and practices related to the church year and afterward speak to the question of what is at stake in defining these categories narrowly or generously.

MUSICAL PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

The Wesleys: Congregational Singing

Although they apparently never had formal training, John and Charles Wesley had strong musical interests that were cultivated in their youth by

⁴For a full study on this topic, see Jennifer L. Woodruff Tait, *The Poisoned Chalice: Eucharistic Grape Juice and Common-Sense Realism in Victorian Methodism* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2011).

sung settings of the psalms in the parish church and at home, and singing the scriptural paraphrases of Congregationalist Isaac Watts as part of familial and private devotions. The brothers evidently had some talent for playing the flute, which was probably a recorder and not a German transverse flute. The Wesleys' encounter with the Moravians on shipboard while bound for the American colonies only enhanced their interest in music and especially in spiritual songs. In 1737, while in Georgia, John published a hymnal with mostly Isaac Watts' texts under the title *Collection of Psalms and Hymns*, thereby defining the repertoire for sacred song in what would become the Methodist movement as psalms and hymns. Two years later, in 1739, the brothers together brought out *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, though the work of collector and editor belonged primarily to John. This book marked the first occasion for the publication of hymns written by Charles, who would continue until shortly before his death to publish new sacred poetry and hymns on his own or in collaboration with John.

Both Wesleys were insistent that singing in worship belonged to the entire congregation, contrary to the practice of the Church of England at the time, which for its vocal music relied upon soloists and/or choirs. To help the congregation toward that end, John issued two guides to music theory so that persons might teach themselves to read musical notation.⁵ From his study of the early church, John considered congregational singing to be the most primitive practice, and he wished to recover its simplicity and power for the Methodist movement. In addition, the singing of choirs, he believed, took away from the people what was appropriately theirs, namely, an opportunity to offer their praises, lamentations, and petitions to God and to share their faith with one another. In his Journal for the date of August 9, 1768, John noted his disgust when he preached at the parish church in the town of Neath because a dozen or so persons "kept the singing to themselves" and thereby "quite shut out the congregation." The next day, he was much relieved to hear an entire congregation "sing with the spirit and with the understanding also."⁶ This

⁵"The Gamut, or Scale of Music" (1761, 1765) and "The Grounds of Vocal Music" (1765). See Appendices F and G in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 7, ed. Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver A. Beckerlegge (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 739-64.

⁶Journal entry for August 9, 1768, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 22, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 151-52. See also Letter "To an Unidentified Man," September 20, 1757, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 27, ed. Ted A. Campbell (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015), 97-100.

Pauline ideal for singing (1 Corinthians 14:15), so central to both John and Charles, became the inspiration for a hymn text written by Charles that addressed the purpose of and engagement with music in corporate worship.

Jesus, thou soul of all our joys,
For whom we now lift up our voice,
 And all our strength exert,
Vouchsafe the grace we humbly claim,
Compose into a thankful frame,
 And tune thy people's heart.

While in the heavenly work we join,
Thy glory be our sole design,
 Thy glory, not our own;
Still let us keep our end in view,
And still the pleasing task pursue,
 To please our God alone.

The secret pride, the subtle sin,
O let it never more steal in,
 T'offend thy glorious eyes,
To desecrate our hallow'd strain,
And make our solemn service vain,
 And mar our sacrifice.

To magnify thy awful name,
To spread the honours of the Lamb,
 Let us our voices raise;
Our souls' and bodies' powers unite,
Regardless of our own delight,
 And dead to human praise.

Still let us on our guard be found,
And watch against the power of sound,
 With sacred jealousy;
Lest haply sense should damp our zeal,
And music's charms bewitch and steal
 Our heart away from Thee.

That hurrying strife far off remove,
That noisy burst of selfish love
 Which swells the formal song;
The joy from out our heart arise,

And speak, and sparkle in our eyes,
And vibrate on our tongue.

Then let us praise our common Lord,
And sweetly join with one accord,
Thy goodness to proclaim;
Jesus, thyself in us reveal,
And all our faculties shall feel
Thy harmonizing name.

With calmly reverential joy
O let us all our lives employ
In setting forth thy love,
And raise in death our triumph higher,
And sing with all the heavenly choir
That endless song above.⁷

In this hymn, Charles stresses that singing together is a sign of the “one accord” that joins the one body of Christ; it is not simply a matter of personal enjoyment. The harmony that exists among friends and strangers through Jesus Christ finds expression and realization by vocal unity in song. In addition, the chorus of praise offered on earth below serves as a training ground for that day when one participates in the heavenly congregation. Charles makes clear that music should stir feelings, but that those feelings ought to be in the service of God and not in the service of self or of the emotions.

The Wesleys: Musical Styles, Tunes, and Instruments

The Pauline ideal of “singing with the spirit and the understanding also” was best achieved, to John’s mind, by plain, unadorned singing. Similar to John Calvin before him and to the ancient Christian communities he strove to emulate, John preferred the unison singing of a melody to enable a clearer hearing and appropriation of the text. Nothing was to compromise the clear expression and hearing of the words and the faith expressed by them, and for this reason, John was especially critical of the use of polyphony or counterpoint in worship—where two or more voices

⁷The hymn, which first appeared as no. 189 in volume 2 of *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1749), carried two headings: the reference to 1 Cor. 14:15 and “The True Use of Musick.” The latter heading does not appear with the hymn in the 1780 Collection, which is the source of this version of the text (*The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 7, 326-28).

develop a musical subject by means of a series of imitations. A compositional device related to counterpoint is the multiple repetition of the same word in a sung line, a practice that John condemned in the Minutes of the 1768 Methodist Conference as contrary to the Lord's command to "use not vain repetitions" (cf. Matthew 6:7).⁸ In his treatise "Thoughts on the Power of Music," published in 1779, John deals more emphatically with the overlapping of choral texts and appeals to "common sense":

[M]odern music . . . is glaringly, undeniably contrary to common sense, namely, in allowing—yea, appointing—different words to be sung by different persons at the same time! What can be more shocking to a man of understanding than this? Pray, which of those sentences am I to attend to? I can attend to only one sentence at once—and—I hear three or four at one and the same instant! And, to complete the matter, this astonishing jargon has found a place even in the worship of God! It runs through (O pity! O shame!) the greatest part even of our [Church of England] church music! It is found even in the finest of our anthems, and in the most solemn parts of our public worship! Let any impartial, and unprejudiced person, say whether there can be a more direct mockery of God?⁹

Counterpoint not only obscured a clear hearing of the text and limited the number who could sing (because of the difficulty of the music). It also, to John's mind, inhibited the emotional power of music. He instead preferred the melodies of popular Irish and Scottish airs:

They are composed, not according to art, but nature—they are simple in the highest degree. There is no *harmony*, according to the present sense of the word, therein; but there is much *melody*. And this is not only heard, but *felt* by all those who retain their native taste, whose taste is not biased (I might say, corrupted) by attending to *counterpoint* and complicated music. It is this, it is *counterpoint*, it is *harmony* (so called), which destroys the power of our music. And if ever this should be banished from our composition, if ever we should return to the

⁸1768 Minutes of Conference in *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, from the first, held in London, by the late Rev. John Wesley*, vol. 1 (London: Printed at the Conference-Office, 1812), Question 23.6, 80.

⁹"Thoughts on the Power of Music," Appendix I in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 7, §9, 768.

simplicity and melody of the ancients, then the effects of our music will be as surprising as any that were wrought by theirs.¹⁰

John Wesley, observed musicologist Erik Routley, had “no use for the music of the intellect,” and was less than enthusiastic about the florid tunes that the early Methodists came to love largely through the instigation of his brother Charles.¹¹ While Charles was no more of a musician than John was, Charles had connections and an openness to a wider musical exposure; and, for a time, Charles had two young music prodigies in his home who required instruction and nurture. Through a Mrs. Rich who attended the Methodist chapel in West Street and whose husband was the proprietor of the Covent Garden Theatre, Charles came to know George Friedrich Handel, who set three of Charles’ hymn texts (among them “Rejoice, the Lord is King” to the tune “Gopsal”), all three of which were published by Charles’ son Samuel in 1826.¹² By a similar means, Charles met another German living in England, John Frederick Lampe, who was a bassoonist with the Covent Garden Theatre orchestra. Lampe eventually composed tunes for twenty-four of Charles’ texts, which appeared in the collection *Hymns for the Great Festivals and Other Occasions* (1746).¹³ Thus, the resources for Methodist singing came from Lampe’s florid tunes in a style admired by English theatergoers, from Handel or Handelian compositions, from existing German tunes or those newly composed in the German style, as well as from already existing English psalm and folk tunes, and the melodies of popular broadside ballads.¹⁴ Authorized books with tunes in these styles came into print for Methodist use: the *Foundery Collection* of 1742; *Sacred Melody*, first issued in 1761; and *Sacred Harmony*, first issued in 1780. There is no indication that tavern songs were ever a part of the authorized repertoire, though it is possible that the Wesleys and other Methodist leaders improvised tunes when preaching in the field, even though there are no exam-

¹⁰Ibid., §12, 768-69.

¹¹Erik Routley, *The Musical Wesleys* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1968), 22, 24-25.

¹²Ibid., 250-53.

¹³Carlton R. Young, “John F. Lampe and *Hymns on the Great Festivals, and Other Occasions*, 1746” in *Hymns on the Great Festivals, and Other Occasions*, facsimile with introductions (Madison, NJ: The Charles Wesley Society, 1996), 7-19.

¹⁴Robin A. Leaver, “Lampe’s Tunes,” in *Hymns on the Great Festivals, and Other Occasions*, facsimile with introductions (Madison, NJ: The Charles Wesley Society, 1996), 31-37.

ples from their journals or other writings to verify that they did so. The legend about bar or saloon songs apparently came about when later interpreters of the Wesleys mistook the medieval musical “bar form” represented by the dividing of stanzas into the sections AAB—a form that was used by the Wesleys—to mean a “bar” tune or drinking song.

The evidence makes clear that the brothers were not of a single mind regarding the topic of appropriate tunes for singing or even another subject, that of the use of musical instruments to accompany singing in worship. John insisted that unaccompanied, *a cappella* and congregational singing was ideal, since musical instruments could obscure the clear hearing of the text and threatened to be more of a distraction than an aid. Although his Journal indicates that on occasion he found spiritual benefit at the hearing of an organ solo during worship, for the most part he objected to the organ accompaniment of singing and to organ voluntaries.¹⁵ Yet, late in his life, John yielded somewhat to pressure in allowing a “set of singers” in public worship because of the increasing popularity of village choirs. Thus, the tune book *Sacred Harmony* that he first brought out in 1780 included harmonized arrangements in two and three parts scored for voice, harpsichord, and organ. Doubtlessly, his expectation was that these musical arrangements, sung either in parts or with instruments accompanying the vocal melody, would not be used in the context of corporate worship but rather for musical devotions in the home. Indeed, very few Methodist preaching houses or chapels would have had an organ because of the expense. Affluent Methodists and others might have had a harpsichord in the home to accompany such songs. On the matter of counterpoint, however, John held firm, as attested by the instructions on musical performance in the “Large Minutes,” a compilation of the “several conversations” between John Wesley and the Methodist preachers from 1744 to 1789.¹⁶

¹⁵See, for example, Journal entry for April 7, 1751, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 20, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 382; Journal entry for August 29, 1762, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 20, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 387; and Letter “To an Unidentified Man,” *The Works of John Wesley*, 27:98.

¹⁶*Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesley, and Others* (London: Printed at the Conference Office, 1811), Question 39, 24-25.

Performance Practice Post-Wesleys

The Large Minutes served as the foundation for disciplinary rules among the emerging American and British Methodist churches that claimed a connection with John Wesley. When the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States became a separate denomination in 1784, some of the advice on music in the Large Minutes transferred into the Methodist *Discipline*. In 1792, the Methodist Episcopal Conference modified the instructions and gave them a form that would continue, with only a few revisions, in that denomination until 1856 and in the African Methodist Episcopal Church until 1885. Fifteen points appeared under the general heading, “How shall we guard against formality in singing?:

1. By choosing such hymns as are proper for the congregation.
2. By not singing too much at once; seldom more than five or six verses.
3. By suiting the tune to the words.
4. By often stopping short, and asking the people, “Now! Do you know what you said last? Did you speak no more than you felt?”
5. Do not suffer the people to sing too slow. This naturally tends to formality; and is brought in by those who have either very strong or very weak voices.
6. In every large society let them learn to sing; and let them always learn our tunes first.
7. Let the women constantly sing their parts alone. Let no man sing with them, unless he understands the notes, and sings the bass as it is composed in the tune-book [part singing was permitted].
8. Introduce no new tune till they are perfect in the old.
9. Recommend our tune-book. And if you cannot sing yourself, choose a person or two at each place to pitch [line out] the tune for you.
10. Exhort every person in the congregation to sing, not one in ten only.
11. Sing no hymns of your own composing.
12. If a Preacher be present, let him alone give out the words.
13. When the singers would teach a tune to the congregation, they must sing only the tenor [the tenor had the melody].
14. The Preachers are desired not to encourage the singing of fuge-tunes [counterpoint] in our congregations.

15. Let it be recommended to our people, not to attend the singing-schools which are not under our direction.

N.B. We do not think that fuge-tunes are sinful, or improper to be used in private companies: but we do not approve of their being used in our congregations, because public singing is a part of Divine Worship in which all the congregation ought to join.¹⁷

Even with this long list, two of the rules from Wesley's Large Minutes were not included, though kept in practice at least for a time: namely, the advice to "sing no anthems" and to have no organs.

The spiritual descendants of the Wesley brothers in Britain likewise continued many of the restrictions delineated in the Large Minutes. The 1805 Minutes of the Methodist Conference did not allow recitatives by single men, solos by single women, fuguing tunes, and musical festivals, also known as "selections of sacred music," and did not permit musical instruments except for a bass viol "should the principal singer require it" for giving pitch and providing support. The Minutes apparently acknowledged the possibility of a "set of singers" because of a stated caveat that suggests choir anthems had a tendency to take time away from other parts of the service, especially preaching:

7. Let no Preacher, therefore, suffer his right to conduct every part of the worship of Almighty God, to be infringed on, either by singers or others, but let him sacredly preserve, and calmly maintain his authority, as he who sacrifices this, sacrifices not only Methodism, but the spirit and design of Christianity.¹⁸

The Bible Christians (also known as "Bryanites"), founded in 1815 by William O'Bryan and located initially in the areas of Cornwall and North Devon, were more restrictive still in their legislation:

15. Suffer no Choirs of singers in our preaching-houses; encourage singing by all the congregation. If singing be a part of worship, why not all the people join in it? But Choir-singing, not only cuts off a great part of the congregation, from this part

¹⁷*The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America*, 8th ed. (Philadelphia: Printed by Parry Hall, 1792), Section 24 "Of the Spirit and Truth of Singing," 41-42.

¹⁸"Music in Worship," in Rupert E. Davies, A. Raymond George, and E. Gordon Rupp, eds., *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol. 4 (Peterborough: Epworth, 1988), 313.

of the worship: but it has also a tendency to beget formality. Let none take the lead in singing, who do not fear God. Caution all against singing what they do not experience or understand. . . . Of all the parts of our worship, singing comes nearest to the heavenly worship; as it raises the affections to heaven when the soul is happy in God; and makes us almost forget that we are in the body.¹⁹

On the subject of musical instruments, the 1808 Minutes of the Methodist Conference legislated against the placement of organs in chapels, and, in locations where organs were already present, required that "they shall be so used as not to overpower or supersede, but only to assist . . . congregational singing"; organ voluntaries during worship were explicitly forbidden.²⁰ Even so, it was still possible to obtain permission for the installation of an organ, and such was the request made by the trustees of the Brunswick Chapel on the Leeds circuit. In what became known as the "Leeds Organ Case," in 1826, numerous preachers on the circuit protested against the installation. Inclusion of an organ, they declared, was a "change [to] the mode of conducting the devotional part of our religious services," a destruction of "the excellent form of our venerable founder," and a scheme "at variance with, and subversive of, that spirituality in our congregational worship . . . which we believe to be so acceptable in the sight of God."²¹ Yet by 1850, Frederick James Jobson argued regarding the organ in a book delineating appropriate architecture for the Wesleyan Methodists that "Christians ought to have their hymning melody as harmoniously attuned in the House of God, as when they gather in choral groups for social enjoyment, in their own homes."²²

Thus, over time, regulations relaxed in many Wesley-connected denominations in both Britain and America. Although, as noted,

¹⁹"Bible Christian Preaching Services," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, 4:380.

²⁰"Music in Worship," in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, 4:313-14.

²¹"The 'Leeds Organ Case,'" in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, 4:396. On how the organ controversy eventually led to a successionist connection known as the Leeds Protestant Methodists, see John T. Hughes, "The Story of the Leeds 'Non-cons,'" *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 35 (1965-1966): 81-87, 122-24; 37 (1969-1970): 133-39; 39 (1973-1974): 73-76.

²²F. J. Jobson, *Chapel & School Architecture, as Appropriate to the Buildings of Nonconformists, Particularly to those of the Wesleyan Methodists* (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1850), 41-42.

Methodist chapels in England sometimes used a bass viol to accompany voices in worship, most American Methodists at the beginning of the nineteenth century preferred to sing unaccompanied.²³ An exception was a Methodist Episcopal congregation near Detroit, which, in 1835, permitted a bass viol to assist singing in corporate worship, causing preacher James Gilruth to resolve to “break up this or break down in attempting it.”²⁴ In spite of such reservations about instruments, organs started to appear in those buildings where the leaders and people believed that the instrument was innocent of profane use. However the use in worship of other instruments, such as the “promiscuous mingling together of flutes, clarinets, and fiddles,” created a furor.²⁵ In 1846, some members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South tried unsuccessfully to establish official legislation against instrumental music in worship by arguing that it was contrary to “primitive” usage. Leaders of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the United States, after their first General Conference in 1844, recommended the elimination of musical instruments from worship, a provision that would stand until the turn into the twentieth century.

The use of choirs in worship remained controversial, and throughout the nineteenth century was a subject debated from local churches all the way to the floors of national bodies. Not only did choirs take singing out of the mouths of the congregation; persons outside of church membership who enjoyed singing might also want to sing with the church choir if it was the only choir in the vicinity. Many Methodists and Wesleyans questioned the appropriateness of non-Christians singing choral music during Christian worship. One evening after a difficult choral rehearsal, Methodist Episcopal minister George Coles of New York lamented, “Unconverted singers are more like porcupines than the ‘sheep of Christ’s fold.’”²⁶ In addressing this problem, the African Methodist

²³For a discussion of musical performance practice in corporate Methodist/Wesleyan worship, see my *American Methodist Worship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. 160-68.

²⁴“The Journal of James Gilruth, 1834-1835,” in William Warren Sweet, ed., *Religion on the American Frontier, 1783-1840*, vol. 4 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 428 [entry for March 18, 1835].

²⁵William P. Strickland, *The Genius and Mission of Methodism; Embracing What is Peculiar in Doctrine, Government, Modes of Worship, Etc.* (Boston: Charles H. Peirce, 1851), 107.

²⁶George Coles, Journal for January 19, 1830, Ms. Journal, Drew University Library, Madison, NJ.

Episcopal Church by 1840 added legislation to its *Discipline* with the instruction that "no person or persons shall be allowed to sing in our choir, who will not be subject to our authority," a provision that was kept until the end of the twentieth century. The Free Methodists, organized in 1860, were much firmer on the matter of instruments as well as choirs, and held to their position for almost 100 years out of the belief that a *cappella* worship with song only by the congregation was a Methodist distinctive. Free Methodist D. F. Newton considered choir singing unbiblical, unspiritual, and popish, and it, along with instrumental music, was a "clog to the wheels of salvation."²⁷ In concert with Newton's opinion, the Free Methodist *Discipline* included the instruction, "in no case let there be instrumental music or choir singing in our public worship," until 1943.²⁸

Yet, today, these restrictions are but a memory, which brings us back to our initial consideration: What defines, or what are the parameters of, a Wesleyan liturgical tradition, in this case, music in the spirit of the Wesley brothers or in a Wesleyan tradition? As shown previously, even the brothers Wesley took different approaches to music in worship, although both emphasized the importance of congregational song. John restricted performance practice in accordance with his desire to imitate what he believed to be early Christian approaches, while Charles embraced a variety of musical styles and performance practices, and did not question the use of the organ to accompany singers in worship—a position taken further by his musical family line. Early Methodists/Wesleyans in Britain and America followed John's instructions for unison, a *cappella* singing only or primarily by the congregation—yet gradually relaxed them over time in order to accommodate to the pressures of popular culture. Therefore, what can we say constitutes worship music in the Wesleyan tradition—performance practice as dictated by John, the circumscribed openness of Charles, or a post-Wesley view of musical accommodation? Any song with an evangelical or emotional appeal? To put the question to current practices in the worship of the spiritual descendants of the Wesley brothers: Is Christian song offered in currently popular idioms and

²⁷D. F. Newton, "Church Music," *The Earnest Christian and Golden Rule* 3 (May 1862): 138-41.

²⁸For a full study on instruments, see Keith Duane Schwanz, "The 'Wooden Brother': Instrumental Music restricted in Free Methodist Worship, 1860-1955 (Ph.D. diss, The Union Institute, 1991).

accompanied by guitars, drums, and synthesizers “in the Wesleyan tradition” as some do claim?

The textual component of song has not been the principal focus of the discussion here, but for both Wesleys, texts sung in worship needed to speak the fullness of Christian truth theologically and directly through the unity and diversity of the biblical canon—and many of Charles Wesley’s texts added literary richness, drama, and spiritual passion into the mix. The theological content of much contemporary Christian music comparatively lacks depth and richness, and sometimes functions as little more than isolated scriptural proof texts, though attention to this matter in the past few years has brought marked improvements. The use of bands and ensembles in the so-called contemporary worship of today can take the singing away from the congregation in much the same way as church choirs presenting anthems wittingly or unwittingly usurp the people’s song. In both cases, the “professionalization” of the singers has meant that those in the pews or seats sometimes keep silent since they perceive their voices unequal to those of the “experts.” The use of bands and ensembles need not mean that the congregation’s voice will be mute as long as those musicians and song leaders understand their function to be support of the song of the whole people of God and not entertainment. It is therefore essential that everything possible be done to encourage the participation of the congregation by teaching new music, providing musical notation along with words for music readers, and organizing music sets that are accessible even to the newcomer. Might doing otherwise be contrary to music in the “Wesleyan tradition”? Because John Wesley promoted music literacy, might that be an essential consideration for congregational music making “in the spirit of Wesley” today?

The use of strong melodies, sung in unison, in the performance practice of much of contemporary Christian music, does connect with the preference of John Wesley and the early Methodists. The use of musical instruments is another matter, and remains a subject of suspicion or concern in some congregations. The “worship wars” of the past decades—and still ongoing in some places—in churches with a heritage in the Methodist movement may not be simply a matter of difference in musical taste. A largely unarticulated concern about loss of Wesleyan identity may also be at play here, especially when combined with a decline in the number of hymns by the Wesley brothers—or of other poets and songwriters identified with the Wesleyan heritage—included in authorized denominational hymnbooks.

Another point of connection may exist between congregations that have adopted contemporary Christian music and the musical ideals of the Wesleys and Methodists/Wesleyans of later generations: the use of new and popular musical forms as a means of securing greater participation and energy around singing. This certainly promotes "singing in the spirit," but it should be asked whether the theological substance of these songs enable a "singing with the understanding [of the fullness of the Christian faith] also"? This is a concern that a committee overseen by the United Methodist Church's office on worship has addressed in a review of the top 100 contemporary Christian songs used by congregations as identified through Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI). This committee reviewed the top 100 songs for 2015-2016, and used what they identified as core Wesleyan/United Methodist theological commitments as the lens for judgment. Criteria for evaluation included whether or not texts demonstrated "an understanding of salvation in which ongoing sanctification and . . . use of the means of grace are seen as crucial" and "an attentiveness to doctrinal and biblical accuracy in lyrical form." Of the 100 texts, only thirty-three met the criteria for inclusion on the "green list," meaning no or minor reservations.²⁹ So, in answer to the question of whether or not the performance practice of much of contemporary Christian music is according to the Wesleys or even in a broadly construed Wesleyan tradition, the response may be no.

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

The observance of the Christian liturgical calendar provides a second example for consideration of practices in the "spirit of the Wesleys," or the "Wesleyan Tradition," or the "Wesleyan Liturgical Tradition." As Anglican priests, John and Charles knew well the *Book of Common Prayer's* collects and prescribed lectionary readings used in conjunction with the feasts and fasts of the Church of England's calendar. Charles wrote numerous hymns for these occasions; the 1739 collection *Hymns and Sacred Poems* contained his first published poems for the liturgical year with a single hymn each for Christmas Day, Epiphany, Easter Day, Ascension, and Whitsunday. In a nod to the importance of the principal christologically-

²⁹See "CCLI 2015-2016 Top 100 Songs for United Methodist Congregations," *Discipleship Ministries: The United Methodist Church*, accessed April 14, 2018, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/ccli-2015-2016-top-100-songs-for-united-methodist-congregations>.

focused days even for Methodists (since at this point Anglicans could not sing hymns in public worship), Charles brought out collections of hymns for Nativity (*Hymns for Christmas Day* [1744]³⁰ and *Hymns for the Nativity of our Lord* [1745]), Easter (*Hymns for our Lord's Resurrection* [1746]), Ascension (*Hymns for Ascension-Day* [1746]), and Whitsunday or Pentecost (*Hymns of Petition and Thanksgiving for the Promise of the Father* [1746]). The aforementioned *Hymns on the Great Festivals* with the tunes by Lampe was also published in 1746 and included texts for Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension, Whitsunday, and Trinity Sunday. For some of these texts, Charles drew upon the content of the Prayer Book's collects and prescribed lectionary readings, thereby linking the hymn directly with the Anglican liturgy.

John Wesley commented throughout his *Journal* on his observation of the primary Christological days of the Christian calendar, and had positive remarks for All Saints' Day, naming as superstitious those "who scruple giving God solemn thanks for the lives and death[s] of his saints," and identifying the day as a personally loved festival.³¹ Thus, it is surprising that in his abridgement of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, what he entitled *The Sunday Service of the Methodists*, he dropped All Saints' Day along with the numerous saints and Marian days in the Anglican calendar. But gone also were Lent and the weekday observances of Circumcision, Epiphany, Presentation, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, Annunciation, Transfiguration, and Holy Cross. The Puritan wing of the Church had found some of these observances highly objectionable, but Wesley offered this brief explanation: "Most of the holy-days (so called) are omitted, as at present answering no valuable end."³² He retained the collects and readings for the four Sundays of Advent, Christmas Day, fifteen Sundays after Christmas, the Sunday before Easter, Good Friday, Easter Day, five Sundays after Easter, Ascension Day and the Sunday following, Whitsunday/Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, and twenty-five Sundays after Trinity. If John intended to provide a liturgy that struck a middle ground between the Puritan wing and the high church party, then an adjustment to the

³⁰No copies of the 1744 collection survive; the ledgers of printer William Strahan indicate the publication of the collection.

³¹*Journal*, November 1, 1756, *The Works of John Wesley*, 21:81; and *Journal*, November 1, 1767, *The Works of John Wesley*, 22:107-108.

³²Notice dated September 9, 1784, cited in *John Wesley's Prayer Book: The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*, ed. James F. White (Akron, Ohio: OSL Publications, 1991), n.p.

liturgical calendar—but not a complete purging—was an understandable decision. His commitment to preserving the collects may find explanation in a comment made in a letter written June 2, 1789, wherein he indicated that he strove to "endear the Church Prayers" to the Methodists, for "if they were used wholly to extemporary prayer, they would naturally contract a kind of contempt if not aversion to forms of prayer."³³

Charles disapproved of the creation of the *Sunday Service* on liturgical and ecclesiastical grounds, and gave a scathing critique in a poem addressed "To the Revd.":

Your Liturgy so well-prepar'd
To E[ngland]'s Church proves your regard,
Of churches national the best
By you, and all the world confest:
(Why should we then bad counsel take
And for a worse the best forsake?)
You tell us, with her Book of prayer
No book is worthy to compare?
Why change it then for your Edition,
Deprav'd by many a bold omission?

A few lines later, he lamented:

The Saints alas & Martyrs are
All purg'd out of your Calendar[.]³⁴

Thus, as it was with musical performance practice, the brothers were of two minds when it came to the worship and preaching praxis of the people called Methodist in terms of the liturgical and sanctoral calendars.

John Wesley prepared versions of the *Sunday Service* for the Methodists in North America and in "His Majesty's Dominions," and both of these versions went through several revisions during John's lifetime, though the liturgical calendar largely remained untouched after the initial modification of 1784. In Britain, many of Wesley's followers were lukewarm to the *Sunday Service*, preferring instead the real thing—the authorized *Book of Common Prayer*. After Wesley's death, controversies about

³³"To the Printer of the 'Dublin Chronicle,' June 2, 1789," *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, A. M., vol. 8, ed. John Telford (London: Epworth, 1931), §6, 141.

³⁴Lines 81-90 and 99-100, "To the Revd.—[John Wesley]" in *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley*, vol. 3, ed. S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. and Oliver A. Beckerlegge (Nashville: Kingswood, 1992), 97.

sacramental administration and the role and status of traveling preachers were resolved with the issuance in 1795 of the Plan of Pacification, which effectively signaled the break of the followers of the Wesleys with the Church of England. One of the articles (I.10) of the Plan specified that “Wherever Divine service is performed in England on the Lord’s Day in Church-hours, the officiating preacher shall read either the service of the Established Church, our venerable father’s abridgement, or, at least, the lessons appointed by the Calendar. But we recommend either the full service, or the abridgement.”³⁵ The Wesleyan Methodist Connection continued to publish editions of the *Sunday Service* throughout the nineteenth century, with the last one dated around 1910. However, not all Wesleyan Methodist pastors and congregations followed the instructions of Conference and preferred instead preaching services with scripture readings locally chosen and extemporaneous prayer. Offshoots of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection typically shunned what they regarded as the ritualism and formalism of printed prayers and liturgies for seasonal observations, though the Christological (and biblical) aspects of the liturgical year remained for most of the denominations in the hymnals that they produced and used in worship. Even the Primitive Methodists’ *Hymn Book* of 1865, while not having explicit headings for the church year, does include in its outline of contents under the listing “Christ” a selection of hymns that address aspects of his life, including an abbreviated “Hail the day that sees him rise” (#110) under the subheading “Christ—His Resurrection and Ascension.”³⁶ By the turn into the twentieth century, most Wesley-related denominations had a printed worship resource that included materials connecting with the ecumenical liturgical calendar.³⁷ As the twentieth century progressed, more festal and ferial days and seasons came into liturgical practice.

A similar trajectory of rejection to recovery took shape in the worship practices of churches across the Atlantic, with the lyrical contents of the hymnals the chief and longstanding source for the preservation of the Christological calendar. In 1792, the year after John Wesley’s death, the

³⁵“Peace in Our Time,” in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, 4:265.

³⁶John Flesher, *The Primitive Methodist Hymn Book* (London: William Lister, 1865), 77-78.

³⁷David M. Chapman, *Born in Song: Methodist Worship in Britain* (Warrington: Church in the Market Place Publications, 2006), 23-34.

Methodist Episcopal Church laid aside John's provisions in the *Sunday Service* for a temporal calendar. However, they kept an instruction in the section of the *Discipline* on the "matter and manner" of preaching that was drawn from the Large Minutes and stated, "always avail yourself of the great festivals, by preaching on the occasion."³⁸ In their "explanatory notes" on this provision published in 1798, Bishops Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury commented:

Souls are of so much value, that we should improve every opportunity for their good. Shall the men of the world have carnal festivals on their birth-days, and shall we not commemorate the birth-day of our Lord? The primitive fathers of the church observed *the day*, which is *now* kept sacred by most of the churches of christendom. . . . Again, shall states and nations celebrate the day of liberation from slavery or oppression, or some other glorious event, from year to year? And shall we not celebrate by a holy festival the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord, and the mission of the Holy Spirit, to which we are indebted for blessings infinitely more valuable than any which the revolution of states can possibly afford.³⁹

Many Episcopal Methodists in the nineteenth century tended to observe one or more of the days of Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, and Pentecost, with preaching, prayer, and song. Some did not hesitate to criticize others (including other Methodists) who used those days, especially Christmas, as occasions to take "unusual liberties for self-indulgence and sinful associations."⁴⁰ However, these special days never took hold either as the governing framework in Methodist conceptualizations of the yearly calendar or as holy days elevated beyond special days of prayer. Some spiritual descendants of the Wesleys in other emerging churches eschewed observance of special liturgical festal and fast days altogether as Romish ritualism, preferring instead freedom to form, though their hymnals spoke otherwise, and many did not hesitate to participate in the increasing cultural practice of Christmas and in national days of fasting and prayer.

³⁸*The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America* (1792), Section 12, Question 3.11, 28.

³⁹*The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in America. With Explanatory Notes by Thomas Cokes and Francis Asbury*, 10th ed. (Philadelphia: Printed by Henry Tuckniss, 1798), 89.

⁴⁰Thomas A. Morris, *Miscellany: Consisting of Essays, Biographical Sketches, and Notes of Travel* (Cincinnati: L. Swormstedt and J. H. Power, 1852), 113.

An impetus toward greater attention to the Christian annual cycle came from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and its decision in 1866 to reissue parts of Wesley's *Sunday Service*. Under the guidance of Thomas O. Summers, pastor, editor, and professor of systematic theology at Vanderbilt, the *Sunday Service of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, was published in 1867, which included the collects, epistles, and gospels found in Wesley's version alongside the then-current ritual of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. While the breadth of use of Summers' edition is not known, the text did generate interest in the liturgical practices of the Wesleys, and with it a recovery of liturgical days and seasons. Awareness of a Christian calendar also came from the publication of *The Christian Year* (1937, rev. 1940) by the Committee on Worship of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, a project overseen by Methodist Fred Winslow Adams. Throughout the twentieth century, many of the Wesley-related denominations in America acknowledged in their worship some aspect of the liturgical calendar by set or improvised prayers around the occasion, by sermons, and/or by hymns or songs sung. For example, the Church of the Nazarene's second hymnal, *Waves of Glory* No. 2 published in 1921, included the topical headings of Christmas, Easter, and the Coming of the Lord in the index, the latter likely not used for Advent but for other occasions.⁴¹ Thirty years later in 1951, the Nazarene hymnal *Praise and Worship* offered in the back of the book responsive readings drawn from scripture for Christmas, Resurrection/Easter, and Holy Spirit/Pentecost, and the Topical Index listed hymns for those days as well.⁴² *Sing to the Lord*, published in 1993, listed under "Jesus our Savior" in the table of contents "Advent," "Birth," "Epiphany," "Triumphal Entry," "Suffering, Death, and Atonement," "Resurrection," "Ascension and Lordship," and "Second Coming." The following heading "Holy Spirit" listed as the first subheading "Pentecost." Within each set of hymns defined by a subheading, the hymnal editors included scripture-based responsive readings, with four different readings provided for the four Sundays of Advent.⁴³

⁴¹William J. Kirkpatrick, DeLance Wallace, and Clarence J. Kinne, eds., *Waves of Glory* No. 2 (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1921).

⁴²Church of the Nazarene, *Praise and Worship: The Nazarene Hymnal* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1951).

⁴³Church of the Nazarene, *Sing to the Lord: Hymnal* (Kansas City, MO: Lilienas Publishing Company, 1993). For more on the church calendar among Nazarenes, see Dirk R. Ellis, *Holy Fire Fell: A History of Worship, Revivals, and Feasts in the Church of the Nazarene* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 125-33.

Thus, one can reasonably say that observance of the liturgical year—at least the biblically supported Christological festivals—is part of a Wesleyan liturgical tradition, received directly from both John and Charles, and retained even in a limited manner across the Wesley-related denominations through the sung theology contained in the hymns. Churches within the British Wesleyan Methodist Connection never lost formulated and printed prayers that spoke to certain days and seasons in the Christian year. Recovery of the calendar or pieces of it came at different times in different churches after each displayed a period of concern about formal texts and a fear of ritualism, but the indication is that the festivals were never entirely lost (especially Christmas, for cultural reasons), though their observation in worship might be highly circumscribed. Rediscovery of the direct inheritance of a liturgical year via John's *Sunday Service* was an impetus to recovery in some cases, while in others it seems to have been a borrowing of the rediscovered calendar already embraced in other Wesley-related churches. In the late twentieth century, greater ecumenical awareness and a growing appreciation for ritual (as opposed to ritualism) likely prompted recovery in other churches, and in those denominations already acquainted with certain days, expanded the repertoire even to include, in some cases, the festival of All Saints' Day so beloved by John Wesley.

CONCLUSION

Is it much ado about nothing to be concerned about delimiting and defining "worship in the spirit of the Wesleys," "Wesleyan worship," "worship in *the* or *a* Wesleyan tradition," or a "Wesleyan liturgical tradition"? Is this purely a semantic game? I think not. As a researcher who focuses on liturgical history, and particularly on the liturgy-related output of the Wesley brothers—and their spiritual and musical descendants—I often find these broad categories unhelpful. First, they make certain assumptions about liturgical theologies and practices post-Wesley, which do not always hold true, such as my previous example that John Wesley invented grape juice. Second, in some cases, they mask the distinctive liturgical theologies and practices of some denominations who claim a link to the historic Methodist movement. Third, they may suggest a normativity for theologies and practices not found in the brothers Wesley or widely shared within the family of denominations, even broadly defined. A good example here is the sacramental rite of infant baptism, a subject that is complicated because of unreconciled approaches in John Wesley's writings.

John kept rites for infant and adult baptism in his *Sunday Service*, but deleted the Prayer Book's rite for infant baptism in private houses. Perhaps the most significant of Wesley's emendations—at least for developing theologies of baptism in Wesley-related denominations—was his deletion of post-baptismal references to regeneration, though he did retain the Prayer Book's pre-baptismal testimony to spiritual birth and the washing away of sin. Nevertheless, Wesley's editorial change, seen alongside his sermons related to the "new birth," raised questions about his adherence to a theology of baptismal regeneration. Wesley never doubted that infants were "born anew" in baptism. Adult regeneration might occur at baptism but also possibly before or after (even long after) the rite. Yet, according to Wesley, persons baptized as infants, who later through sin lost the "principle of grace," needed to be born anew a second time by a conscious experience of saving grace. Thus, two new births were necessary for most persons, one sacramental and objective, the other experiential and subjective. Unfortunately, Wesley did not thoroughly delineate the connection between the two, or identify the second birth as a recovery of what baptism granted.⁴⁴

The consequence generally for most spiritual descendants of John Wesley has been the absence of a strong understanding of baptismal regeneration in infants, since emphasis came to focus on the profession of personal assurance. Compounding this were other theological and social factors present in the American and European environments of the nineteenth century, such as a stress on the individual and her personal liberty, and a positive view of human nature, ability, and achievement (and with it a questioning of original sin). In this context, many baptismal rites produced by Wesley-related churches lost or further reduced the language of regeneration. In effect, the sacramental action of the divine grace took second place to human decision—though many descendants of the Wesleys were usually quick to defend the sacramentality of infant baptism in controversies with believer baptists.

Even with these complexities, I dare to say that to speak of the practice of infant dedication as falling within a broad Wesleyan liturgical tradition is problematic. The choice to delay baptism until a candidate can make public profession is one thing; an intentional, "dry" baptism focused on dedicating a child to God, welcoming her to the community of faith, and commissioning her parents to their parental responsibilities

⁴⁴For a fuller discussion, see my *American Methodist Worship*, 88-93.

before God is another. Certainly, the decision can be—and has been—taken to practice infant dedication, but to my mind it would need to be categorized as outside a broadly construed Wesleyan liturgical tradition.

Thus, not only is a delimiting important in terms of academic classification and research, but it also is crucial regarding pan-Methodist and wider ecumenical relations. Regarding the latter, I speak from experience as a member of both international and national bilateral dialogues with the Roman Catholic Church. Our Roman Catholic partners are frequently baffled by how much tends to be placed within the “Wesleyan tradition” net. On some liturgical matters, infant baptism being one of them, I have found it difficult to explain or interpret how the net can be large enough to hold such variety. The use of more narrowly defined categories can help to differentiate those practices traceable to the founders from those that developed at variance with the founders—and even with others who share in part a common ancestry.

THE ALTAR AND THE TABLE: A PROPOSAL FOR WESLEYAN AND PENTECOSTAL EUCHARISTIC THEOLOGIES

by

Chris E. W. Green

Introduction

Maggie Ross, the Anglican solitary, holds that delighted kenosis, self-giving self-effacement, is at the heart of everything because it is the nature, the essence, of God. Liturgically, this is realized for the church in the Eucharist-event when the sacred bread is broken: “All useful sacred signs efface themselves, even the Eucharist itself: at the Fraction, the Bread is held up and broken to reveal the emptiness that lies between its two halves, the ineffable from which fullness of life is returned.” The fraction, that most “visceral action,” reveals the great mystery of all things: “God gives himself into our hands and our lives to be broken.”¹ Ross suggests that the empty space between the two halves of bread recalls for us both the holy of holies and the empty tomb, both the cave of Elijah and the womb of Mary. “Love has infinite play with the resonances of the Word.” Emptiness is pregnant with the Presence of the infinite, the fullness that embraces our brokenness.

Wolfgang Vondey, in his recently published *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel*, contends that the altar is the heart of Pentecostal/charismatic spirituality. The Pentecostal “altar”—the space/time point of encounter with the living God, which often but not always takes place at the end of a sermon, and often but not always at the front of the sanctuary—is constituted by experiential practices that are “as varied as the manifestations of divine hospitality”:

the altar is the holy and anointed habitation of God, the place of Christ’s sacrifice, the presence of the Word of God and of the Holy Spirit, instrument of evangelization and the proclamation

¹Maggie Ross, “The Seven Devils of Women’s Ordination VII,” accessed: February 20, 2018, <http://ravenwilderness.blogspot.com/search?q=%22visceral+action%22>.

of the gospel, the anxious bench of the sinner, [the site of] public confession of faith, [the source of] invitation for baptism, [the] gift of sacramental worship, [the home for] the eucharistic table, fellowship and revival of the faithful, [and the] anointing of the church. . . .²

In conversation with Vondey and Ross, I want to contend that the altar and the table belong to each other. As Telford Work has already argued, they can and should be—and in many places, already are—experienced as one.³ If, as Ross suggests, the Fraction is the climax of the liturgy because in that breaking we know the one who cannot be known, then the altar call is the crux of worship because in that moment, in that space, *we* are broken by that knowing of the unknowable. If at the table God gives himself into our hands, then at the altar we give ourselves into his. We break God, and he breaks us. And in that breaking and being broken, God makes us whole.

Movement and Stillness

The altar call, as Wesleyans and Pentecostals know it, happens in four distinct movements: the always recurring call to the altar, the tarrying in the altar, the being transformed at the altar, and the being released, sent out, from the altar.⁴ Each of these movements bears deep theological significance, resonating with a wide range of biblical images. For example, just as the empty space between the halves of the broken bread speaks of Elijah's cave and Mary's womb, and the rending of the veil in the Temple at Christ's death, the call to the altar evokes, among other things, Israel's crossing of the Red Sea and the call of the disciples to follow Christ. And tarrying—"repetition, fervency, interiorization, diligence, letting go of oneself, and holding on to the coming of God"—bears no less significance, recalling Elisha's close following of Elijah before his translation, Peter's, James's, and John's bearing with Christ in Gethsemane, and the 120 waiting in the Upper Room for the promised Spirit.

The altar-event happens in movements; so, it is fitting that the altar call, the initiating moment within the event, invites worshippers to move

²Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 57.

³Telford Work, "Communion: A Pentecostal Perspective," in Michael Root and James J. Buckley, eds., *What Does it Mean to "Do This"? Supper, Mass, Eucharist* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), 123.

⁴Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 64.

to the symbolic space where the Spirit's "moving" is recognized. As Dan Tomberlin says, "Pentecostal worship has always been about movement. We pray that the Spirit will move among us. We come to church expecting to be moved by the Spirit. At some point in the service, we are invited to move from our seats to pray at the altar."⁵ But if the altar is about *movement*, then the table is about *stillness*. In the altar-event, the worshippers offer up their blessings and their laments, their petitions and their praises. In the table-event, they receive what they could never give. Hence, the Eucharist should be celebrated during the time Vondey describes as the "tarrying"—as the climax of that moment.⁶ Before coming to the table, we may be transformed in our affections, our desires and intentions drawn into alignment with the divine will. At the table, we are transfigured by anticipation of the fullness of the future promised to us. In the altar, we, by the Spirit, give ourselves to Christ and in him to the Father. At the table, Christ, by the Spirit, is given by the Father to us.

Manifold Presence

As I argued elsewhere, early Pentecostals, formed by Wesleyan-Holiness theology and spirituality, came to the Lord's Table not only impelled by the desire to obey but also drawn by the hope of blessing in the "sweetness of the sacred presence," confident that God's commands are but hidden promises. They gathered in joyfully expectant worship to "put His promises to the test." They were convinced that at the table a moment of genuine divine-human encounter takes place, an intimate exchange between the Triune God and the people gathered in his name. In the words of E. N. Bell, the Lord's Supper is always more than a memorial because "*Jesus is there in the Spirit* to bless, quicken, uplift and heal."⁷ Seen in this light, it comes clear that Jesus' words spoken over the bread of his Last Supper—"This is my body"—reveal how he keeps his final pre-Ascension promise, "I am with you always, till the end of the age" (Matt 28:20).

In the altar, and at the table, believers enter boldly into Christ's presence and Christ enters humbly into theirs. On this Luther was right, I believe: because he is eternally the one whom God raised from the dead, Jesus is *bodily* present—he could not be present otherwise and remain

⁵Dan Tomberlin, *Pentecostal Sacraments: Encountering God at the Altar* (Cleveland, TN: Centre for Pastoral Leadership and Care, 2010), 5.

⁶Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 64.

⁷*Weekly Evangel* 146 (July 1, 1916), 8.

himself. He does not move from absence to presence in the epiclesis, but from one mode of presence to another. And that “move” happens not by virtue of the church’s liturgical acts, but by virtue of God’s faithfulness. Bonhoeffer, drawing on the resources of his Lutheran tradition, presses this very point home, insisting that Jesus Christ is “completely present in the Sacrament, neither his Godhead alone, nor only his humanity.”⁸ For Bonhoeffer, there can be no doubt: the complete person of the God-Man is present, in his exaltation and humiliation.⁹ Or, in the words of E. L. Boyce, an early Pentecostal Holiness pastor, “the communicant, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, comes into spiritual contact with *the entire person of Christ* and he is thus fed unto life eternal.”

Christ’s presence is manifold. In different senses he is *on* the table (to be consumed sacramentally), *at* the table (to preside as high priest), and *around* the table (to give thanks as the gathered body).¹⁰ Can and should we go further than this claim? Many Pentecostals are convinced that we should not. Instead, we should settle for a “doxological agnosticism as to the metaphysics of how Christ is present.”¹¹ What matters most, after all, is not the theory of sacramental efficacy but the faithful enactment of the sacraments. As a rule, Pentecostals resist formalization and rigid structuralization. What is needed, then, is a sacramental theology concerned not with describing exhaustively *how* the sacraments are effective, but with naming *who* is present in the sacramental event and explaining *why* he is so present.

Receiving the Bread
On Jesus we feed,
It doth not appear
His manner of working; but Jesus is here.

To that end, Pentecostal theology should attend carefully to the church’s sacramental experience. As Drury rightly says, “a robust eucha-

⁸*Pentecostal Holiness Advocate* 46.46 (March 23, 1963), 15.

⁹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2009), 57.

¹⁰Nathan Mitchell, *Real Presence: The Work of the Eucharist* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2001), 60.

¹¹Brent Peterson, “A Post-Wesleyan Eucharistic Ecclesiology: The Presence of Christ in the Eucharist as the Memory of the Facing Between Christ and the Church,” *Proceedings of the North American Academy of Liturgy* (August 2011), 184.

ristic piety can embrace the dialectics of Christ's person and work in a way that no theory can."¹²

Even with this emphasis on Christ's "real presence," Wesleyans and Pentecostals are wise, I believe, to stay away from developing hard theories about how Christ is present. As Bonhoeffer would remind us, the critical question is not *how* but *who*. We should "deflate the importance of such theoretical accounts, regarding them as secondary and dependent on the living practice of the Eucharist." After all, "a robust eucharistic piety can embrace the dialectics of Christ's person and work in a way that no theory can."¹³ What matters, in the end, is that Christ, risen, exalted, is with us in ways we cannot even begin to imagine because he is with us as New Creation.

Waiting on the Lord

Wesleyans and Pentecostals are synergists—in the sense that we believe we do nothing for our salvation and yet it does not and cannot happen apart from our participation. Hence, we must say that the movements of the altar-event are ours and not ours. They do not happen without us or apart from our intentions, our affections, our actions, yet they are not anything we can boast in as our own doing. Yielding to the Spirit, we are carried along from the summons to the benediction, from the calling in to the sending out, not by our own passions but by Christ's. As Lord, the Spirit sovereignly makes the altar's liturgical and doxological movements

¹²John L. Drury, "Christology and the Eucharist," in Jason E. Vickers (ed.), *A Wesleyan Theology of the Eucharist: The Presence of God for Christian Life and Ministry* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2016), 120. Drury suggests thinking of the relation of Christ's work and the Eucharist along the lines of his threefold office (prophet, priest, and king) as it takes shape within time (past, present, and future). The key is to avoid focusing too exclusively on one office or one tense. Instead, we should seek for ways of speaking and acting that keep alive hope for Christ in all of these offices in all of these tenses. It is true that the Eucharist was mandated, but we do not celebrate it only because Christ prophetically commanded it. It is true that the Eucharist is a memorial, but our attention is not focused solely on what Christ our High Priest did for us during that first Holy Week. It is true that the Eucharist is an anticipation of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, but we do not only look "forward" to the coming of Christ the King. No, in the Eucharistic-event we are given by the Father's Spirit Christ in all of his offices, in all of his graces. He comes to us and works his will in us as we receive him faithfully. That, and nothing less than that, is what we expect, what we hope for and trust in.

¹³Drury, "Christology and Eucharist," 122.

happen for us, just as the same Spirit, in the same sovereignty, transfigures the bread and the wine for us.

Our works synergize with God's work in "waiting" on the Lord, whether in silence and stillness, in penitent self-examination, or in works of mercy and justice. As Vickers rightly notes, we are committed to this waiting in whatever form it takes, "within and beyond the sacramental life of the church, through speaking and through ritual touching, in the work of the ordained and in the lives of the laity."¹⁴ This waiting is not uncertain or insecure. Indeed, it is not a waiting *for* God to act so much as a waiting *in* the act of God. Not a waiting to see *if* God will "move," but a waiting *as* God is (always) "moving," a way of giving time for the work of God to "sink in," to go deep.

This returns me to my argument yet again: we Wesleyan and Pentecostals should not separate the altar-event from the Eucharist-event. Tarrying in the altar without gathering around the table breeds "enthusiasm," to borrow Wesley's term. And gathering at the table without tarrying in the altar too often entangles us in "formalism."¹⁵ The altar and the table belong to each other. The table is the center of the altar. The altar is the boundary of the table—a boundary that is promised to extend further and further through our ongoing intercession, encompassing more and more of creation. The calling down of the Spirit upon the bread and wine is inextricably bound up with our calling out to God at the altar and his always previous calling us in to his presence.

Conclusions

In conclusion, a brief summary: the Eucharist-event finds its home within the movements of the altar-event because the sacramental and the mysti-

¹⁴Jason Vickers, "Holiness and Mediation: Pneumatology in Pietist Perspective," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16.2 (April 2014), 192-206 (204).

¹⁵Here, I'm in agreement with Henry H. Knight III (*The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* [Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1992], 47): for Wesley, "the problem at the heart of formalism was forgetting God, and the solution was the experience of God's love in an ongoing relationship. The parallel problem in enthusiasm is self-deception, an imagined experience or relationship which is not actually of or with God. The means of grace of the church—scripture, the Lord's supper, the prayer book—are the solution to this problem as they enable us to remember *who* God is and *what* God has promised. God's presence through them is 'objective,' in that it evokes affections and invites imagination while it resists the projections of our own imagination and desires on to it."

cal are one as surely as Christ and the Spirit are one. The “free, dynamic, and unpredictable move of the Spirit” in the altar does not contradict or subvert the “ordered and predictable encounter with the Spirit” at the table.¹⁶ The table and the altar are one, and the encounter with God is one. We need not distinguish the sacramental experience from the mystical one. Because the risen Jesus is always with us, what happens in the Eucharist is always happening, and comes to focus then and there. Just as the body of Christ is both bread and ecclesial community, so the life of “feeding on Christ” is mystically eucharistic and eucharistically mystical all-at-once.

What Zizioulas says about the synthesis of christology and pneumatology applies in its own way to the sacramental and the mystical, the table and the altar. In some communities, christology takes priority over pneumatology, while in others the reverse is true.¹⁷ In the same way, in some communities the altar takes priority over the table, while in others the table takes priority over the altar. But in truth, without the altar, and the mystical encounter with the living God that it affords, there is no Eucharist, because the one who presents himself in the body and blood is always already present in the Spirit. And without the sacramental presence of Christ-in-the-Spirit at the table where we gather, there is no “altar,” because without Christ, there is no Spirit and without the Spirit, there is no Christ. One takes no priority over the other. The Spirit wants to baptize us into Jesus, and Jesus wants to baptize us in the Spirit; hence, the altar serves the table, the site of the reign of Christ, and the table serves the altar, the site of the reign of the Spirit, a reign that reaches all things. And so we pray to them and the Father as one: “Let your kingdom come,” “redeem the face of the whole earth.”

Thinking of the table and the altar in these terms affords a revisioning of the Wesleyan Pentecostal 4/5-fold Gospel. First, it makes possible a reimagining of Christ’s “coming” not only as the event that brings history to its telos, but as the continual sacramental and mystical coming of Christ to his church for the sake of his creation. And it makes possible a revisioning of justification and sanctification as happening to us as we make ourselves available to God’s presence and he makes himself avail-

¹⁶Wolfgang Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of the Theological Agenda* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 149.

¹⁷John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985).

able to us. Christ's "coming" happens again and again, in the manifestations of the charismata, in the reading of the scripture and the preaching of the Word, in the giving/receiving of the bread and wine, and in prayer. In that encounter, our imaginations are converted and our desires reordered so that our faith and hope are grounded in love. Third, it makes possible a reimagining of our doctrines of divine healing. Ignatius famously identified the eucharistic grace as the "medicine of immortality" (*Eph.* 20.2), and early Pentecostals insisted on the convergence between the celebration of the Supper, the work of salvation, and the healing of the sick and diseased. In the words of one witness, "Let us take the Lamb's body, through faith in our Lord, for salvation and healing of these bodies, as we honor His blood for saving and sanctifying our soul and spirit. Amen." But it is not enough to insist upon the relationship of the Eucharist to healing. We also need to revision our doctrines of healing. To that end, we have to bear in mind that a healed body is no nearer a resurrected body than a sick body is. And we have to recognize that both the unhealed and the healed body are *signs*, bearing witness to Christ's death and his resurrection. Providentially, both are needed in the church's testimony to the world God loves. It also helps to distinguish between healing and cure. Surely, Christ comes and is present in the altar and at the table in the fullness of his freedom, wisdom, and compassion. Depending on the purposes of God, he may come as the healing, delivering one, so that our bodies and our minds are made whole. Or he may come as the wounded, wounding one, so that our wounds are taken up as witnesses to his for the sake of the world. Regardless, our hope is that we are at-one-ed with him, his life and his death. Fourth, and finally, it makes possible a revisioning of Spirit baptism not only as a unique experience of empowerment, subsequent to conversion, but also as communion with Christ happening for us mystically in the altar and sacramentally at the table. Gathered in worship and scattered in mission, we are baptized in the Spirit again and again in anticipation of the eschatological transformation of all things.¹⁸ To be filled with the Spirit is to have Christ's divine-human life emptied into our lives as we carry out our mission.

¹⁸Here I'm following Frank Macchia's vision as outlined in his *Baptized in the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

ALTERNATIVE CHILD DEDICATION RITES FOR WESLEYANS: SOME MODELS FOR CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE

by

Constance M. Cherry

Introduction

The dedication of children in public worship has been practiced by a significant number of branches of the Wesleyan family tree for many years. Among them are the Wesleyan Church, the Church of the Nazarene, the Free Methodist Church, the Church of God (Anderson), the Salvation Army, and a number of others. Yet for all the widespread practice of dedicating children ceremonially among Wesleyans over many decades, it has largely been ignored in terms of the development of its liturgical rites. For instance, child dedication is not mentioned in the title of any article included in *The Wesleyan Theological Journal* since its inception in 1966 to today. Only two journal articles, twenty-six years apart in publication, mention infant baptism in their titles. Perhaps it is time to examine the fairly common practice of child dedication and offer some old and new possibilities for those Wesleyan groups that continue to observe the dedication of children in worship today.

While there are many denominations that perform child dedications, there are many that do not. The difference generally lies with the view a church holds concerning infant baptism. Those churches that hold to infant baptism rarely practice child dedication; conversely, those who dedicate children do not typically practice infant baptism. Some denominations within the greater Wesleyan tradition afford the option of either one; for example, *The Wesleyan Pastor's Handbook*¹ includes a service both for infant baptism and child dedication. Even so, either infant baptism or child dedication will normally predominate within a local church with very little attention given to the “opposing” view.

The purpose of this article is not to argue for the virtue of child dedication over against infant baptism. Rather, it will engage in historical,

¹ *Wesleyan Pastor's Manual: A Guide for Service Planning and Pastoral Care*, revised and expanded (Fishers, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2012).

biblical, and theological reflection upon the rite of child dedication for those who regularly practice it within the Wesleyan tradition for the purpose of situating the rite within an appropriate liturgical context and to enrich the ceremony itself for the sake of the worshipping community. Specifically, I will identify three historic practices, other than baptism, which were types of rites associated with the acknowledgement and welcoming of young children into the life of the church throughout the centuries. To these I will add a new alternative rite, suggesting its theological and pastoral merits for those who practice child dedications today.

Historical Foundations

The historical practice of rites related to the birth of children born into the Christian community is somewhat complicated but not without valuable and credible sources which shed some light on the subject. These rites cannot be considered independently from the development of infant baptism, for the rites either deeply and intentionally foreshadow baptism or neglect the connection to baptism altogether. With this in mind, I begin by noting that historians differ on when exactly infant baptism began to be in widespread practice.² Regardless, we may with fair certainty conclude that there was a period of time during the fourth century when there is little to no indication of infant baptism being normative due to the large numbers of adult baptisms resulting from Constantine's support of Christianity.³ As David F. Wright states, "All historians of the development of early Christian baptism are agreed that for a period of several decades in the fourth century the children of most Christian parents were not baptized in infancy.

²James White is emphatic that "infants were certainly being baptized by the beginning of the third century, if not long before that." (See James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1993, 51). David F. Wright, on the other hand, claims that it is all but impossible to pinpoint "the first known child of Christian parents who are baptized routinely, i.e., not clinically, as a newborn." (See David F. Wright, "Infant Dedication in the Early Church" in *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective: Collected Studies*, London: Paternoster, 2007, 118–119). Wright continues, "The absence of mention of baptism in contexts where modern investigators expect it is a repeated feature of early Christian literature" (Wright, "Infant Dedication," 121).

³David F. Wright asserts that there is very limited record concerning the half a century wherein offspring of Christian parents did not receive baptism. He states, "I find no more than the occasional footnote or paragraph" (Wright, "Infant Dedication," 116).

The significance of this conclusion for our purposes is to raise the question, what *did* happen during this period with respect to infants born to Christian parents? There were at least three rites that made their way into practice with varying degrees of popularity and historical documentation. First, there is some evidence that perhaps there was a regular liturgical practice of giving thanks for the birth of a child. In the second-century work, *Apology* of Aristides, we find: "And when a child has been born to [a Christian], they give thanks to God."⁴ In his analysis of this reference within *Apology*, Wright concludes, "the variety of settings in which 'thanking God' occurs . . . strongly suggests a non-baptismal but possible liturgical usage. We have here then a thanksgiving for the birth of a child. . . ."⁵ Assuming Wright is correct suggests one possible option for an alternative rite to the contemporary practice of child dedication: a service of thanksgiving for the birth of a child.

A second historical model that emerged during the fourth century was the enrollment of infants in the catechumenate, with baptism to follow upon personal declaration of faith during adulthood. Here we have a more substantive record to go on. In fact, many of the church fathers of the late fourth and early fifth centuries fell into this category including Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose and others.⁶ These notable church leaders "found the christian (sic) faith, as it were, installed in their cradle."⁷ Presumably their whole family had been converted or at least they were blessed with devout Christian mothers who saw to the spiritual training and nurture of their sons.⁸ (Monica's influence upon her son, Augustine, is well known.) Indeed, the point could be made that this approach to child dedication during this period yielded remarkable leaders of the church—leaders that were dedicated to God by virtue of infant

⁴"The Apology of Aristides the Philosopher," Early Christian Writings, accessed February 13, 2016, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/aristides-kay.html>).

⁵Wright, "Infant Dedication," 125. Wright admits that some have interpreted this passage to imply infant baptism—a viewpoint which Wright rejects as a result of historical debates he cites in his chapter.

⁶Wright, "Infant Dedication," 124.

⁷Jean Daniélou and Henri Marrou, "The First Six Hundred Years" in *The Christian Centuries*, Volume One (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 305. Translated by Vincent Cronin.

⁸Ibid.

enrollment in the catechumenate with baptism following as an adult. Augustine is a prime example.⁹

A third development belongs to this general time period, that of dedicating infants—even before birth—to lives of virginity for the purpose of vocational service to the church.¹⁰ Some parents made a vow to give their children to monastic life (*oblati*).¹¹ Ambrose was particularly aggressive in urging boys and girls to a life of celibacy. As a result, “It was not uncommon for pious parents to dedicate their children to a life of virginity from their birth.”¹² Jerome was familiar with this practice also.¹³ Germane to this discussion is that infant baptismal rites do not seem to be normative for those pledged very early to virginity or clerical ministry.¹⁴

We have here historic rationale for some type of child dedications. But is it the type with which we are most familiar in Wesleyan practice today?

Modern Practice

The modern beginnings of child dedications are not easy to pinpoint with any degree of accuracy; hence, exactly when and how they originated within the Free Church tradition is not altogether clear. It is much easier to identify denominations and/or movements that practice child dedication as opposed to infant baptism. Child dedications tend to be performed widely in denominations from within the Free Church tradition which baptize believers exclusively, many of which do not view either rite—child dedication or baptism—as sacramental in nature. Various Baptist denominations, the Christian Church/Churches of Christ, Assemblies of God, most Pentecostal groups, and many others are representative of the current practice of child dedication. Even some denominations stemming directly from the influence of John Wesley have opted for child dedications over infant baptisms as mentioned.¹⁵

⁹See also David F. Wright, “Augustine and the Transformation of Baptism” in *The Origins of Christendom in the West*, ed. Alan Kreider (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 2001).

¹⁰Our discussion is limited to the church in the West though there are similar practices in the ancient Eastern church also.

¹¹*The Catholic Encyclopedia*: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11188a.htm>.

¹²F. Homes Dudden, *The Life and Times of St. Ambrose*, Volume I (Oxford: Clarendon, 1935), 150.

¹³Wright, “Infant Dedication,” 131.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁵In some cases, while some of these denominations favor child dedication over infant baptism, they do not forbid infant baptism, which was Wesley’s practice.

Biblical Foundations

Congregations that affirm child dedications today commonly appeal to the same few biblical passages for the foundations upon which they ground this practice.¹⁶ The most commonly cited passages include Hannah's presentation of young Samuel to the Lord (1 Sam 1:24–28), Joseph and Mary's presentation of Jesus in the temple when he was eight days old (Luke 2:22–24), and Jesus blessing children during his earthly ministry (Mark 10:13–16). In the first two instances it becomes obvious that the action is instigated and taken by the parent(s) of the child. However, the child is not *dedicated*; rather, the child is *presented* in order that parents fulfill their spiritual obligations (they dedicate themselves, so to speak). Hannah made a vow to God that if her barrenness was reversed and she bore a son, he would be presented to God for a lifetime of religious service in thankfulness for this miracle. Hannah's gift of Samuel to the priest Eli was a means of keeping *her* vow. It does not represent a normative practice expected of all parents and all children in Old Testament times since few parents made this vow. Samuel wasn't dedicated; he was presented as an offering to fulfill a vow made by his mother as a result of *her* dedication.

As for the instance of Joseph and Mary, their presentation of Jesus in the Temple was also the result of parental faith; in this case, they were fulfilling three requirements of the Mosaic Law. First, all males were to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth (Gen 17:12); second, the couple's gift of doves or pigeons was the required sacrifice for Mary's purification (women being considered "unclean" after child birth; see Lev 12:8); and third, as the first-born male of the family (the Levites being the exception), a fee of redemption would have needed to have been paid (see Num 3:44–48).¹⁷ On this occasion, like that of Hannah, *parents* exhibited *their dedication* as they presented their child for God's purposes. What we see modeled in these instances is not the dedication of the child (as we

¹⁶In researching child dedication services the author found overwhelming use of the same three biblical passages cited in this section. Deuteronomy 6:4–9 also appears somewhat prominently but less often than the three mentioned here. It will be discussed later in the chapter.

¹⁷Even if someone tried to build the case for child dedication on the basis of the firstborn male in Israel belonging to the Lord (dedicated to Yahweh, so to speak), the argument falls apart for (1) it only applied to males, (2) it only applied to *firstborn* males, and (3) it was negated in New Testament practices as a result of Christ's atonement.

think of it today); rather, what we see modeled are parents of faith who desire to live out their faithfulness to God and God's laws. In light of all of this it seems more in keeping with these passages to think of "*parent* dedication" rather than "*child* dedication." Here we see that both Samuel and Jesus were presented by means of ritualistic sacrifices (1 Sam 1:24–25; Luke 2:22–24) that were undertaken by their parents for the purpose of offering themselves to the Lord as a means of fulfilling their vows.

In Mark's passage, parents seek a blessing for their children. They do not bring their children for dedication purposes; instead they simply want Jesus to place his hands upon them and to bless them. Here again, the faith of the parents is the key. They long for the great teacher and miracle worker to impart a special blessing; after all, like most parents, they want the best for their child. Dedication is not inferred anywhere in this passage. What *is* explicitly affirmed is that Jesus loved and valued young children. Consequently he desired that they should not be prevented in any way from coming to him whereupon he would hold them in his arms, place his hands upon them, and pronounce a blessing. Jesus loves the little children.

What seems obvious from these passages so commonly used to undergird the practice of child dedication is that the ritual is really more about the *parents* and their fulfillment of spiritual obligations on behalf of their child. It is *their* dedication that is the key ingredient to child dedication; it will be *their* actions that will be most apparent to the church and, in time, to the child. With these things in mind, perhaps the term "child dedication" is misleading. This ritual may better be referred to as "parent dedication."

Theological Foundations

What are the theological underpinnings, then, of child dedication? Perhaps we should summarize what it is not, to be clear. First, child dedication is not baptism. Baptism signifies several important truths; one of which is that it is the primary rite of initiation into Christ's holy church. (This is true for both infant and believer's baptisms.) Membership in the church universal is achieved on the basis of the covenant. We become heirs of this covenant through baptism. Child dedication is neither a sacrament nor ordinance; therefore it cannot be performed as a sign of the covenantal relationship established between God and God's people. To confuse child dedication with becoming a child of the covenant is to

drastically mix the meaning of two very distinct rituals. One signifies initiation into Christ's holy church (baptism); the other signifies a parental pledge to pursue Christlikeness in order to influence their young child(ren) toward Christian faith.

Second, child dedication today is not an offering of the child for full-time Christian service as was the case for Hannah and for the ascetics in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. While parents may have aspirations that their girl or boy will enter the ministry or other avenue of vocational service, that is not theirs to determine. Pray for it, yes, if they feel led; offering their young child without her or his consent, no. A child dedication service alone does not comprise a call to ministry.

So what theological principles *can* serve to undergird the practice of child dedications? Some denominations outright forbid them on scriptural grounds while others encourage them on scriptural grounds. Who is right? I would like to suggest the circumstances around which child dedications seem to make sense within the bounds of Wesleyan theology; then I will describe three approaches to child dedications that may be pastorally *and* theologically appropriate for various Wesleyan groups today.

Under what circumstance might child dedications seem to make sense? Child dedications may be appropriate if one's family belongs to a church in the Wesleyan tradition that practices believer's baptism exclusively (a church where infant baptisms are never performed). In this case, when a newborn child theoretically has a number of intervening years between birth and her or his personal experience of salvation followed by baptism, it may be beneficial to have a service of child dedication. Under these circumstances, a child dedication can serve several purposes: (1) an occasion for the child and family to receive a blessing from God; (2) a recognition of the gift of life; (3) welcoming the child into the local Christian fellowship; (4) emphasizing the child's importance to the fellowship; and (5) celebrating with the parent(s), for the church always seeks to rejoice with those who rejoice (Rom 12:15). A child dedication could also be profoundly significant if parents re-dedicate themselves by renewing their Christian vows publicly as a means of accepting their spiritual parental duties as prescribed by God (Deut 6:6–9; Prov 22:6; Eph 6:4).

Rites to Recognize the Birth of a Child

(For those congregations that do not or seldom practice infant baptism)

Re-thinking the Emphasis of Child Dedication Services

Given that child dedication is not explicitly demonstrated or commanded in scripture, we might be quick to conclude that it serves no purpose and should be disposed of. On the other hand, there may be enough precedence by way of scriptural implication to commend it when infant baptism is not an option. However, it will take some reorientation in thinking about its purpose and participants. I see three different types of “child dedication” services that have potential value under the right circumstances. Each will be given a new name to more accurately describe its nature. The first and third alternative rites mentioned below make no real connection to future baptism. The second alternative rite is strongly connected to the baptismal event.

A Service for the Blessing of a Child

First is “The Blessing of a Child” (or “The Blessing of Children”). There are several biblical instances of the ritual blessing of children. When John the Baptist was born, his father, Zechariah—a priest—pronounced a “prophetic blessing” upon the baby; in fact, the message seems to be among the first words he spoke when he was finally permitted to do so after being struck mute for his disbelief concerning the circumstances of Elizabeth’s pregnancy (Luke 1:20). While Zechariah’s words are viewed as prophetic in nature (Luke 1:67), they are also a blessing directly pronounced upon the child:

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke 1:76–79)

The blessing received at John’s birth held promise that was realized for all Israel.

Jesus also received a blessing as a newborn. Simeon, a righteous and devout saint who was in the temple when Joseph and Mary presented him for circumcision, took Jesus in his arms and praised God in the form of offering a “prophetic blessing” similar to that of Zechariah: “Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of

all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:29–32). That this is a blessing becomes crystal clear as Luke writes, "Then Simeon blessed [the family]" (Luke 2:34), continuing with more prophetic words (see Luke 2:34–35).

So far I have proposed that "child dedications" make sense if the emphasis shifts from *dedicating* the child to *blessing* the child. With this shift in purpose, re-naming the ritual also makes sense; "The Blessing of a Child" (or other similar title of your choice) is more in keeping with the event than "Child Dedication." An example for an order of service for "The Blessing of a Child" appears below as Service 1. Note that this alternative is not viewed as a precursor to baptism as is the case for the second alternative rite.

A Service of Welcome for the Young Disciple

A second alternative rite exists for rethinking child dedications. Instead of focusing upon the blessing of a child, this service officially enrolls the infant as a "disciple-to-be;" it functions as a sort of first step toward baptism, which would occur years later upon personal confession of faith. This service may be referred to as "A Service of Welcome for the Young Disciple."¹⁸

Geoffrey Wainwright recommended this type of service decades ago as a viable option for those parents, pastors, and other leaders who prefer that baptism is administered upon confession of faith of the one baptized.¹⁹ If it is determined by those responsible for a child that baptism is delayed until personal conversion, the question is then raised as to the infant's official relationship to the church. A ceremony whereby the child is received as an official member of the church and whereby he or she is identified as a candidate for baptism in its earliest stage of progression is advantageous here. Wainwright points out that this is not unlike the catechumenate process of the ancient church²⁰ as discussed earlier. In early Christianity, a potential believer was enrolled as a catechumen, underwent years of spiritual preparation and intentional discipleship and

¹⁸Perhaps you will find a different name for the service to suit your community such as "A Service of Initiating Discipleship," etc.

¹⁹See Geoffrey Wainwright, "The Need for a Methodist Service for the Admission of Infants to the Catechumenate" in *The London Quarterly & Holborn Review* (London: Epworth, 1968), 51–60.

²⁰Wainwright offers the church father Augustine as an example of this. See *ibid.*, 53.

then ultimately, upon his or her sincere profession of faith, was baptized as a culmination of the process.

One may wonder if there is any connection between the enrollment of infants in the catechumenate and the development of “the cradle roll,” a very common practice among many churches in the Free Church tradition in the early to mid-twentieth century. The cradle roll was a registry of names of infants, often posted on a wooden board or paper certificate somewhere in the church, to publicly note which young children were either dedicated or baptized and thereby formally under the care of the church for their Christian education. There seems to be no direct connection between the historic enrollment of infants to the catechumenate and this later practice. For one thing cradle rolls were used in some cases to register children who were already baptized; for another, it seems to have emerged from the Women’s Christian Temperance Union as a way of assisting young mothers to raise children who abstained from drinking alcohol.²¹

Either way, the cradle roll does not seem to have future baptism as its overt goal.

The first two types of services mentioned thus far, the blessing of the child and the enrollment of infants in the catechumenate, though perhaps not very widely practiced, have precedence and, I would argue, real possible value to Christian communities that embrace the idea of believer’s baptism and yet wish to give attention to the relationship between the youngest members of the community and the church.

A Service for Parental Renewal of Baptism

A third way to think about child dedications is an option that is new. Instead of emphasizing the blessing of the child or his or her trajectory toward baptism, this third way emphasizes instead the parents’ role of spiritual nurture, thus becoming a sort of “parent dedication” rather than a “child dedication.” The emphasis in this service is one of recommitment by the parents of their allegiance to Christ and their intention to continue with new resolve their pursuit of holiness so that the child in their care is influenced in becoming a true disciple of Jesus Christ. I call this service “A Parental Renewal of Baptism.”²²

²¹“The Cradle Roll and its Ephemera” in Presbyterian Research, accessed February 03, 2016, <https://preshist.wordpress.com/2010/08/20/the-cradle-roll-and-its-ephemera/>.

²²Again, feel free to find a different name for the service such as “Parent Dedication on the Birth of a Child,” etc.

A Remembrance of Baptism service helps believers remember the importance of baptism in their daily lives. So many times baptism is viewed as a one-time event in which the significance is quickly forgotten. In fact, persons who were baptized as an infant *cannot* remember their baptism in the literal sense. A Remembrance of Baptism service reminds believers that their baptism matters every single day. To “remember our baptism” is to “walk in our baptism”—every moment of every day.

When a baby is born to or adopted by Christian parents, it is a perfect opportunity for the parents to re-examine their walk with Christ. A Remembrance of Baptism service for the parents could hold profound meaning as they publicly accept the responsibility for raising their young child—a gift from God—by virtue of their baptism. With baptism comes responsibility; this is true for all believers. As a result of our baptism we increase in faith, grow in love to God and others, and commit to greater service in the kingdom of God. These virtues become all the more important when the shaping of new generations of believers is at stake. Perhaps as parents renew their baptismal vows in light of raising their children—as they dedicate themselves anew to pursuing the character of Jesus especially in light of family life—young children may be spiritually formed with greater intentionality and love than ever before. The greatest benefit a child can receive is that of parents who daily walk in their own baptism to the glory of God.

A word of caution is in order when speaking of a Remembrance of Baptism service for parents. Though in the context of this service parents or guardians will make personal statements of intent about how they intend to raise their child, this service should *always be viewed as a corporate service*. It does not necessarily have to be a Remembrance of Baptism service for the whole congregation (though that too would be fitting); but it certainly must be a corporate service in that the community is called upon to participate fully throughout the liturgy. Care must be taken to ensure that the community does not simply watch as parents remember their baptism, but that they are active members of the community in the event, reflecting upon their baptisms as well. Care must also be given that there is no confusion between remembering one’s baptism and re-baptism. If water is used symbolically to enrich the service (which is very common), it must not be used in any way to suggest re-baptism.

With this third shift in emphasis regarding child dedication, we have moved from dedicating the *child* to dedicating the *parents*. An example of “A Parental Renewal of Baptism” service is offered below (Service 3).

Three separate services are described below.²³ There is some overlap in the content of these three services; the key is in what they emphasize.

Service 1: An Order for “The Blessing of a Child”

For those churches that do not practice infant baptism, a separate but different rite may be pastorally helpful when an infant or very young child is new to a local church community.²⁴ The following service for “The Blessing of a Child” is not a child dedication service. Rather, it is a service of thanksgiving for and blessing upon a newborn child belonging to Christian parents, either biological or adoptive. Because a service like this is not private but always done in community, it becomes a part of the normal Lord’s Day worship. This “service within a service” assumes that a worship service is underway consisting of the Gathering and the Word (now completed), and leading to “The Blessing of a Child” which is viewed as the Response to the Word. Feel free to be somewhat flexible in the order of service to suit your purposes. Though this service is not an ordinance or sacrament requiring an ordained person to officiate, it is most fitting for the ordained pastor to conduct it.

Note: essential parts of the service are listed on the left; suggested but optional parts appear in the center in brackets [].

Song (Transitioning from the Sermon)

An appropriate song is sung by the congregation.

Statement of Purpose

The pastor makes a simple statement as to the special nature of this service.

(Example)

Members of the household of faith, we are gathered in God’s presence to rejoice and give thanks for the gift of new life. (*Name of child*) was born (*date of birth*) to (*names of parents*). What a happy day that was, not only for the (*name of family*) family, but for us too—members of the family of God. All life is a gift from God. How precious is this newly born child in the

²³More detailed information to develop each of these services is found in Constance M. Cherry, *The Special Service Worship Architect: Blueprints for Weddings, Funerals, Baptisms, Holy Communion, and Other Occasions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), chapter 8.

²⁴To reiterate, this service is redundant if the infant or very young child is/will be soon baptized.

sight of God and of her/his spiritual family, the members of (*name of church*). Because we rejoice with those who rejoice, today we will offer a blessing upon this child. We will also dedicate ourselves anew to living as true disciples of Jesus Christ so that (*name of child*) will become acquainted with our Savior and come to follow him too.²⁵

Invocation

Offer a brief prayer inviting the presence of God's Spirit as we worship God for the most generous gift of life.

(Example)

- Jesus, Lover of the children, remind us that you who scooped little ones up into your arms to bless them are with us during these moments to do the same. Come, make your presence known in a special way so that just as you spoke words of welcome in Galilee so long ago, we will hear your voice once again saying, "Let the little children come to me." We worship you by welcoming the little ones with the same passion that you displayed so long ago. We pray this in your name, **Amen.**²⁶

Opening Words from Scripture

An appropriate Scripture passage is read.

[Litany of Thanksgiving]

(Example)

Pastor: This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!

People: **We rejoice in God's goodness.**

Pastor: This is the day we celebrate the innocence and beauty of young children.

People: **We rejoice in God's goodness.**

Pastor: This is the day we fling our arms wide open to embrace this precious child.

People: **We rejoice in God's goodness.**

Pastor: This is the day our community offers the blessing of God upon *her/him*, trusting that God's shalom will abound in *her/his* young life always.

People: **We rejoice in God's goodness.**

Pastor: This is the day the Lord has made;

²⁵Constance M. Cherry, 2012.

All: **Let us rejoice and be glad in it!**²⁷

[Parents' Intent²⁸]

The pastor asks the parents publicly what their hopes and prayers are for their child.

The parents respond by mentioning a spiritual grace for which they pray for the child. It is also possible that the parents may wish to claim a Bible verse as a word of direction for their child's life—a "life verse" which will guide the parents as they pray for their little one in the future.

Note: The entire service, and especially this section, should be discussed prior to the service. The pastor should guide the parents so that they are thoughtful and prayerful concerning these matters, and to avoid any inappropriate choices.

Pastor: What are your hopes for this child?

Parents: **"We pray that God will fill (*name of child*) with love for God and others."** (Love is used here as an example; other virtues may be chosen such as courage, gentleness, peace, boldness, prayerfulness, etc. Only one virtue should be given. The "life verse," if chosen, will relate to the virtue.)

Note: Naming hopes for the child and/or selecting a verse of Scripture may either *both* be done, or *one or the other*.

Pastor: Is there a verse of Scripture you choose to pray in the coming years for (*name of child*)?

Parents: **We hope that (*name of child*) will especially live out this verse from Luke: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27).²⁹**

The Blessing

The pastor takes the child into her or his arms and speaks a blessing upon her or him.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid, referencing Ps. 118:24.

²⁸Parents or guardians are intended throughout.

²⁹The section, "Parents' Intent" is developed by Constance M. Cherry, 2012.

Prayer for the Parents

The pastor or other lay leader offers prayer that the parents will be strengthened to care for and lead this child in the ways of Jesus Christ.

- Prayers may be spontaneously offered by one or more persons.
- It is appropriate to lay hands on the parents during the prayer.

Introduction of the Child

While continuing to hold the child, the pastor moves closer to the congregation (and may even choose to stroll down the center aisle) introducing the child to the people.

[Spontaneous Praises]

The congregation is invited to offer very brief, spontaneous words of praise to God for the child and the family.

Closing Prayer

The pastor closes this part of the service with a brief prayer. This prayer should be distinctly different than the blessing.

(Example)

Loving Jesus, you express great love and concern for young children. As we hold (*name of child*) in our arms, remind us that it is really you who are holding *her/him*. Let us be your gentle hands, your cheerful voice, your kindly face as we welcome (*name of child*), giving thanks to God the Father for this magnificent gift of a little one. Good Shepherd, enfold us all in your care this day, that together we will know the Shepherd's voice and follow you ever more faithfully. Through Christ, our Lord, Amen.³⁰

[The Lord's Prayer]

Song (Celebrating Relationships)

A song related to community, spiritual unity, the family of God, etc. is fitting.

(The worship service continues with the Sending.)

Service 2: An Order for "A Service of Welcome for a Young Disciple"³¹

Song (Transitioning from the Sermon)

An appropriate song is sung by the congregation.

³⁰Ibid.

Statement of Purpose

The pastor makes a simple statement as to the special nature of this service.

(Example)

Dearly beloved, the call to follow Jesus was first issued to Simon and Andrew, James and John. On that day when Jesus called fishermen to be his disciples, he commissioned them to fish for people. Since then, the church of Jesus Christ has done the same, inviting all people to believe, to repent, to be baptized, and to make other disciples. Today we come before God to declare our intent to continue the mission Jesus established long ago. We begin a spiritual journey on behalf of (*name of child*)—even before he/she is aware of the importance of this moment. We have come to formally place *him/her* under the nurture and care of the church so that when the Holy Spirit's work is brought to fullness and (*name of child*) declares faith in Jesus Christ, *he/she* will be baptized and the church will rejoice not only in the salvation of (*child*) but that we were counted worthy to journey with him/her along the way.³²

Invocation/Prayer of Thanksgiving

Offer a brief prayer inviting the presence of God's Spirit as we worship God for the most generous gift of life.

(Example)

Holy God, Giver of Life: we welcome your presence as this moment we rejoice in the gift of new life—the birth of your precious child, (*name*). We praise you that you made us in your image, that you have crowned us with glory and honor, and entrusted us with the care of your creation. In these holy moments, we ask that you will meet us through your Spirit as together we acknowledge that you have entrusted (*name*) to our care as the family of God. Lead us as your church to walk with *him/her* from this day forward until *he/she* is a new creation

³¹Four of the primary elements of this service are attributed to Geoffrey Wainwright: thanksgiving for the birth of the child, admission to the catechumenate, invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the child, and a physical gesture which expresses the action being performed. See Geoffrey Wainwright, "The Need for a Methodist Service for the Admission of Infants to the Catechumenate" in *The London Quarterly & Holborn Review* (London: Epworth, 1968), 51–60.

³²Constance M. Cherry, 2012.

through faith in Christ and we celebrate that the old has gone and the new has come! We praise you that all of this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation. Through Christ we pray, Amen.³³

Opening Words from Scripture

An appropriate Scripture passage is read.

Parents' Intent³⁴

The pastor leads the parents in declaring their intent that their child is raised in the Christian faith as expressed through the church so that in time the child will express personal faith and desire to be baptized.

(Example)

Pastor: Is it your intent that (*name*) will become a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Parent(s): It is *our/my* sincere desire.

Pastor: Is it your intent to provide consistent spiritual nurture in your home—to pray and read the Scriptures often as a family, to attend worship in this community regularly, and to do all in your power to acquaint (*name*) with the Christian faith?

Parents: It is our intent, God helping us.

Pastor: Do you seek the participation of the whole church in influencing your child toward personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord?

Parents: We know we need the help of our sisters and brothers of this faith community.

Pastor: Do you intend to guide (*name*) toward Holy Baptism?

Parents: We do.³⁵

Congregational Pledge

The members of the local church community are asked to accept their role as co-nurturers in the Christian faith.

(Example: Words of Intent for the Congregation)³⁶

Pastor: Do you understand the significance of your role in providing spiritual nurture for (*name*)?

³³Ibid (referencing 2 Cor 5:17–18).

³⁴Parents or guardians are intended throughout.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., except for the final paragraph.

- People:** **We do.**
 Pastor: Will you love and accept this child unconditionally?
People: **We will.**
 Pastor: Will you fulfill your spiritual duty to lead *him/her* in their love of the church, of the Holy Scriptures, of the blessing of prayer, and of serving others?
- People:** **We will, God helping us.**
 Pastor: Will you joyfully accept your duty to provide spiritual nurture and care for (*name*) until *he/she* accepts for *himself/herself* Jesus as Savior and Lord, and follows Jesus in baptism?
- People:** **With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround *these persons* with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in *their* trust of God, and be found faithful in *their* service to others. We will pray for *them*, that *they* may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.**³⁷

Charge to the Congregation

The pastor charges the congregation.

(Example)

“beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on some who are wavering; save others by snatching them out of the fire; and have mercy on still others with fear.” (Jude 1:20b–23a)

Enrollment in Covenant Discipleship³⁸

This is a brief, but meaningful worship act that indicates the formal covenant between the child, the parents/guardians, and the church. It consists of two basic parts: (1) the naming of the child, and (2) writing her or his name on a certificate of covenant discipleship. The purpose is to formalize the covenant between the seeker (the child) and the congregation (the covenant community) for the purpose of resulting in profession of faith and baptism when the child comes of age. While the certificate commemorates the covenant, it is advised that there be a formal

³⁷*United Methodist Book of Worship*, 89.

³⁸Or “Admission to the Catechumenate.”

record of those baptismal candidates who are under the ongoing care of the church beginning in infancy.³⁹

Note: Only the first and middle name(s) are given in the naming of the child consistent with normative baptismal practice.

Pastor: What is the Christian name of this child?

Parents: (*first and middle names*)

Note: The pastor or other official lay representative gives a certificate of covenant discipleship to the parents indicating that their child is officially enrolled in the care and nurture of the church.

Prayer of Invocation for the Child

The pastor takes the child into her or his arms and offers a prayer invoking the presence of the Holy Spirit upon the child.

(Example)

Gracious God, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named: Out of the treasures of your glory, strengthen us through your Spirit. Help us joyfully to nurture (*child's name*) within your church. Bring *him/her* by your grace to *baptism* (*Christian maturity*), that Christ may dwell in *his/her* heart through faith. Give power to (*child's name*) and to us, that with all your people we may grasp the breadth and length, the height and depth, of Christ's love. Enable us to know this love, and to be filled with your own fullness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.⁴⁰

Sealing of the Holy Spirit

The pastor makes the sign of the cross upon the forehead of the child.⁴¹

Benediction

The pastor, still holding the child, pronounces a benediction *upon the child*.

³⁹This procedure is not unlike the former, traditional practice of enlisting infants in the church's "Cradle Roll." It was widely popular, particularly among those in the Free Church tradition, to officially enroll children in the Sunday School program beginning with the nursery department. Other, more liturgical churches also have a cradle roll tradition with enrollment upon baptism or christening.

⁴⁰*United Methodist Book of Worship*, 586–587.

⁴¹This should be a "dry" sign. Reserve water and oil for baptism.

Note: This is not a prayer but a spoken blessing upon the child. Therefore, look directly into the face of the young disciple while speaking the benediction.

(Example)

- Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 1:24–25)

[Introduction of the Child]

While continuing to hold the child, the pastor moves closer to the congregation (and may even choose to stroll down the center aisle) introducing the child to the people.

Song (celebrating discipleship)

A song related to discipleship, community, spiritual unity, the family of God, etc. is fitting.

(The worship service continues with the Sending.)

Service 3: An Order for “A Parental Renewal of Baptism”

A third rite to recognize the birth of a child is “The Parental Renewal of Baptism.” Here the emphasis is upon the dedication of the parents by virtue of remembering their own baptismal vows. The Parental Renewal of Baptism service is rooted in several biblical events where devoted parents fulfilled holy vows previously taken. (See 1 Sam 1:1–28 and Luke 2:21–24.) Like the services outlined above, it is integrated into the regular, primary worship service of a local congregation, serves as the Response to the Word, and is conducted by an ordained pastor. It is appropriate for the infant to be present (held by a parent, other family member, or church leader) though the service will not center upon the child but the parents. Again, essential parts of the service are listed on the left; suggested but optional parts appear in the center in brackets [].

Song (Transitioning from the Sermon)

An appropriate song is sung by the congregation.

Statement of Purpose

The pastor makes a simple statement as to the special nature of this service.

(Example)

Brothers and sisters, from time to time we experience a new beginning in our faith journey, when the Holy Spirit breaks into our lives to inspire us, to lead us, and to deepen our commitment to Christ. Today, we praise the Lord for what has been happening in *[name]* and *[name]* lives.⁴² We rejoice in the gift of (*name of child*) which brings them to the place of dedicating themselves anew to God's purposes. As God's people we affirm that this is an occasion for seeking the Holy Spirit's work of renewal in (*name*) and (*name*) and in so doing, we dedicate ourselves with them, as fellow believers, to live lives worthy of the Gospel.⁴³

Invocation

Offer a brief prayer inviting the presence of God's Spirit as we worship God in this service of renewal.

(Example)

- Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we joyfully welcome your presence here and now. As your people, together with you, we witness our brother and sister, (*name*) and (*name*), as they affirm once again their intention to follow you as true disciples. May you be glorified as together we offer you worship through this act of remembrance and dedication. Through Christ, our Lord, Amen.⁴⁴

Opening Words from Scripture

An appropriate Scripture passage is read.

The Re-affirmation of Baptismal Vows

The pastor leads in reaffirming the baptismal vows.

- These may be given to either the parents alone or with the congregation. If the congregation participates in the vows, they should stand.
- Those persons reaffirming their vows respond with words in bold type.

Pastor: I invite you now to remember God's promise, to turn away from all that is evil, and to reaffirm your faith

⁴²*The Worship Sourcebook* (The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, Faith Alive Christian Resources, and Baker, 2004), 289 (adapted).

⁴³The second part of the prayer is an addition by Constance M. Cherry, 2012.

⁴⁴Invocation by Constance M. Cherry, 2012.

in Jesus Christ and your commitment to Christ's church. Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of evil that rebel against God?

People: I renounce them!

Pastor: Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God?

People: I renounce them!

Pastor: Do you turn to Jesus Christ?

People: Yes! I trust in him as my Lord and Savior.

Pastor: Do you intend to be Christ's faithful disciple, trusting his promises, obeying his Word, honoring his church, and showing his love, as long as you live?

People: Yes! God helping me.⁴⁵

Profession of Faith (All Worshipers)

Pastor: As the church of Jesus Christ, let us profess our faith.

People: (Recite the Apostles' Creed or other appropriate affirmation of faith in unison.)

**I believe in God the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
and born of the Virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended into hell.**

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**⁴⁶

Remembrance with Water

The pastor will pour water from a pitcher into a font or bowl. He or she may dip his or her hands into the basin and lift some water, letting it

⁴⁵*The Worship Sourcebook*, 286.

⁴⁶As found in *The Worship Sourcebook*, 295.

run back into the basin, saying the words, “Remember your baptism and be thankful.”

The pastor will invite the parents renewing their baptismal vows to come forward, dip their hand into the water and raise some water to let it drip back into the bowl. A further option would be to make the sign of the cross before drying the hands. Others who are renewing their baptisms are invited to come forward, and do the same. The one who presides stands at the station, repeating words to those who come: “Remember your baptism and be thankful.”

Note: Congregational singing is very effective during this time.

Prayer for the Parents

The pastor and/or lay leader offers prayer(s) that the parents will be strengthened to walk in their baptism daily, being faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, so that they may live the Christian life consistently, thereby witnessing to their child the love and grace of God.

- These prayers may be spontaneously offered by one or more persons.
- It is appropriate to invite the parents to kneel while others lay hands on the parents during the prayer (though not the child).

(Example)

O Lord, uphold (*names*) by your Holy Spirit.
 Daily increase in (*him/her/them*) your gifts of grace:
 the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
 the spirit of counsel and might,
 the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord,
 the spirit of joy in your presence,
 both now and forever. Amen.⁴⁷

Prayer of the Parents

The parents offer petitions to God for strength and grace to live lives worthy of their calling before their young child. They may include prayers for the child. This prayer may be prepared or spontaneous.

[The Lord's Prayer]

Pledge of the Community

The pastor asks for a verbal pledge of support for the parents.

⁴⁷John D. Witvliet, “A Liturgy for the Renewal of the Baptismal Covenant” in *The Complete Library of Christian Worship*, ed. Robert E. Webber (Nashville: Hendrickson, 1993), 201.

(Example)

Pastor: People of God, do you pledge to uphold these parents in their efforts to live out their baptism daily? Will you surround them with prayer and encouragement? Will you extend your sense of Christian community to include this child in every way?⁴⁸

People: **We will, God helping us.**

[Words of Encouragement]

The congregation is invited to offer very brief, spontaneous words of encouragement to the parents, offering their assistance, love, and support.

Closing Prayer

A prayer closing this part of the service is offered.

(Example)

God of life and goodness,
we praise you for claiming us through our baptism
and for upholding us by your grace.
We remember your promises given to us in our baptism.
Strengthen us by your Spirit,
that we may obey your will and serve you with joy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.⁴⁹

(The worship service continues with the Sending.)

Conclusion

The birth of a child is a joyous occasion in the life of a local church. It should be commemorated in some way. To do so, think carefully about the meaning of any ritual you choose, and disciple your congregation to receive all little ones with care, “for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs” (Mark 10:14).

⁴⁸Constance M. Cherry, 2012.

⁴⁹Witvliet, “A Liturgy,” 201.

CATECHESIS AND THE NEW BIRTH: A WESLEYAN MEDITATION

by

Dean Blevins

Introduction

In these early decades of the twenty-first century, a number of theologians working within Christian disciplines find themselves rethinking their roots. For instance, worship leadership often finds itself significantly engaged with historic liturgical and sacramental theology. Recent shifts toward missional theology challenge traditional notions of evangelism and church planting by returning to the history of God's missional thrust. Christian education finds itself in a similar predicament. Recognizing the limits of most modern approaches to educating the faithful, many Christian educators find themselves returning to historic models of catechesis or catechetical instruction.¹ Catechesis represents a broadly holistic approach for Christian formation, or discipleship, anchored in the sacrament of baptism, yet focused on the comprehensive Christian life as a journey. Can such a view reflect Wesley's own approach to holiness of heart and life? Perhaps, but not without careful acknowledgement of Wesley's own historical and theological struggles with catechism and baptism. This article attempts to provide a mediation between catechesis (properly understood) and Wesley's larger vision of the New Birth. Ultimately the early church's larger vision of baptism frees Methodists from a more restrictive understanding prevalent in Wesley's day, and allows a stronger synthesis for the future. Possessing a view of baptism more as a "launching pad" than "landing zone," Wesleyans may embrace a robust view of catechesis that reflects Wesley's own vision of holiness of heart and life that begins, rather than ends, in baptism itself.

Catechesis and Baptism

One of the more formative texts in the effort to restore the process of catechesis emerges in the writing of J. I. Packer and Gary Parrett titled

¹Beverly C. Johnson-Miller and Benjamin D. Espinoza, "Catechesis, Developmental Theory, and a Fresh Vision for Christian Education," in *Christian Education Journal* (Spring 2014), Vol. 11 Issue 1, 8-23.

Grounded in the Gospel.² Packer and Parrett's current critique of North American Evangelicalism rests upon an idea that the church's educational efforts result in a superficial spirituality.³ Packer and Parrett share this critique with other theologians and social researchers, such as Christian Smith, a popular sociologist of religion.⁴ Smith's research of North American youth revealed a form of civil religion that Smith coins Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD) a view of a benign, generic, God (Deism), who seeks the well being of persons (Therapeutic) as long as they behave appropriately (Moralistic). While primarily a popular text among youth ministers, astute readers will note that young people adopt this view, including evangelical youth, primarily because this view represents their parents' perspective as well. In other words, MTD reflects the broader North American religious culture.⁵ In addition, Gordon Smith offers a critique of earlier versions of North American evangelism, strategies often based on transactional models of consumer exchange, where people enter into the Christian life primarily as a tradeoff of belief for assurance of salvation.⁶ Gordon Smith elsewhere notes this approach to evangelism fails to provide many Christians with a "good beginning" requisite for a robust Christian life.⁷

Returning to Packer and Parrett, the authors provide one of the more comprehensive overviews for restoring catechesis as a strategy in North American congregations. The concept of catechesis, particularly as a pastoral process of forming the congregation, surfaced earlier through the writings of John Westerhoff and other theorists interested in retrieving the concept for the mainline church. Westerhoff's critical retrieval included a substantive call to engaging the whole life of the congregation as a process of forming and shaping Christians.⁸ In similar fashion, Par-

²Gary A Parrett and J. I. Packer, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010).

³Ibid., 8-10.

⁴Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York, Oxford, 2005), 118-171.

⁵Ibid., 161.

⁶Gordon T. Smith, *Transforming Conversion: Rethinking the Language and Contours of Christian Initiation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 1-19.

⁷Gordon T. Smith, *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion & Authentic Transformation* (Downer's Grove, IVP 2001).

⁸John Westerhoff, "The Challenge: Understanding the Problem of Faithfulness" in *A Faithful Church: Issues in the History of Catechesis*, eds. John H. Westerhoff and O. C. Edwards, Jr. (Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow Co., 1981), 1-9.

rett and Packer see catechesis as a way of inculcating Christians almost systematically into the “way,” the “truth,” and the “life” of Jesus Christ. Packer and Parrett distinguish between evangelistic teaching (what they call procatechesis) and formal preparation (what they call catechesis proper) for the Christian life either at baptism, membership, or even when assuming leadership roles in the congregation.⁹ Resources for this approach include: “the three historic summaries of the Faith—the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Decalogue— together with instruction on the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.”¹⁰ In addition, the authors advocate the use of earlier catechisms, though they acknowledge the historical “gap” between the Heidelberg or Westminster catechisms of an earlier era. Packer and Parrett also acknowledge a need for ongoing catechesis as well.

While a comprehensive and systematic overview, Packer and Parrett remain indebted to their own Reformed roots. This indebtedness appears not only in a heavy reliance upon catechetical resources from the Reformation but also on a narrow view of the “gospel” as a form of substitutionary atonement.¹¹ Such an approach does seem to limit a robust view of the atonement, often associated not only with the “new Paul” movement, and other comprehensive treatments like that of Peter Schmiechen’s treatise *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church*.¹² In addition, one possesses the distinct impression that for Packer and Parrett catechesis remains primarily a content-related process. Clearly a broader, less Reformed, approach to catechesis must emerge if Wesleyans hope to embrace the concept of catechesis, one that both respects the larger formative work of the church, but also the more particular task of Christian initiation into the event of baptism.

Perhaps the most important differentiation between contemporary and historic catechesis rests with its deep connection to Christian initiation, the preparation for baptism, in the early church. Christian instruction included more than the preparation of baptismal candidates; nevertheless, catechetical instruction for baptism served both a strategic and necessary role. Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, serves a major propo-

⁹Parrett and Packer, *Grounded in the Gospel*, 29, 167-177.

¹⁰Ibid., 171.

¹¹Ibid., 95-106.

¹²Peter Schmiechen, *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 108-116.

nent of catechetical instruction prior to baptism within the fourth century.¹³ Augustine provided guidelines for more general educational efforts in his treatise, *De Catechizandis rudibus*, *The First Catechetical Instruction*, or on Catechesizing the Un-Instructed (or Beginners).¹⁴ Offered to Deogratius to encourage this instructor in the midst of his boredom, the Bishop offers a powerful overview of both the story and the love of God. However, Augustine also acknowledges that students may well come to their catechetical instruction from varied backgrounds, including those who would challenge the teaching of the church. Augustine implies catechetical instruction may begin in a form pro-catechesis, as noted by Packer and Parrett. Still, Harmless notes that Augustine saw catechesis as central to preparation for baptism. In Augustine's day, catechetical preparation, and baptism, proved essential for conversion, for the personal "Christianization" of the Roman Empire.¹⁵ As noted in the *Confessions* even Augustine's dramatic vision of transformation in the garden (*tolle lege . . . take up and read*) was prefaced by stories of catechesis, and resulted in Augustine seeking catechetical instruction for baptism.¹⁶ As Harmless reports, the total range of Augustine's teaching during catechesis "proper" reveals an intricate interweaving of scriptural themes, confessional guides, and ritual preparation for baptism.

It may be fair to say that baptism serves as the governing sacrament for catechesis since the primary role of catechetical instruction in the early church rest with preparing people for baptism. Catechesis exists as something "more" than baptismal preparation, yet the "logic" of catechesis still relies on the complex, powerful, models of baptismal preparation in the early church. Models that incorporated core confessions, scripture, ritual preparation, and public acknowledgement. While John Wesley recognized this form of catechetical preparation in the primitive church, it is obvious that catechetical practice seemed reserved for children both by

¹³William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, revised edition (Collegeville: Liturgical Press/Pueblo, 2014). 29, 61.

¹⁴Saint Augustine, *The First Catechetical Instruction: De catechizandis rudibus*, in *Ancient Christian Writers, The Works of the Fathers in Translation*, vol 2, tr. Rev. Joseph P. Christopher (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist, 1950); Saint Augustine, *De Catechizandis Rudibus* 3rd Edition, ed. William York Fausset (London: Meuthen & Co, 1915).

¹⁵Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, 61.

¹⁶Saint Augustine, *The Confessions* tr. Maria Boulding (New York: Vintage, 397/1997), 160-161, 148-49, 170-180.

Wesley and later Methodism. Yet, as Wesleyans seeking to recover catechesis, we may face a more daunting challenge in our spiritual mentor. First, how serious did Wesley himself take catechism (as it was known in his day). Second, considering Wesley's teaching on the New Birth, can Methodists embrace a catechesis that respects baptism?

Wesley, Methodism, and Catechism

How did Wesley, and by extension early Methodists, view catechism as a process of Christian initiation as well as catechesis as a pastoral process of formation? One might begin much earlier in Wesley's journey, particularly as a young missionary and Oxford Don, placed in charge of a ministry in Georgia.

Wesley as Catechist

As Geordan Hammond notes, Wesley appears to embrace his vision of primitive Christianity early in his ministry, primarily through particular accounts of the early church. Hammond observes,

Wesley began to show an intense interest in the early church in his choice of readings. In June 1732, he read William Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, a call for the revival of early Christianity, which Cave defined in terms of the practical piety embodied by the church of the first three to four centuries. This appears to have been a foundational text for Wesley's adoption of the primitive ideal that encouraged him to delve more deeply into patristic sources. Wesley's enthusiastic response to Cave placed him in a large group of clergy and laity who cited Cave's account as a model by which the Church could be revived. Later in life Wesley continued to draw on Cave for inspiration, as indicated by his publication of Cave's work in his fifty-volume *Christian Library*.¹⁷

However, Wesley seems to see catechism serving primarily an orientation to the Christian faith for children. Hammond notes that John created or edited his own catechism for six young children as well as provided similar instruction for French-speaking children.¹⁸ Wesley may

¹⁷Geordan Hammond, *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Kindle Edition, 2014), 33.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 73, 191.

have been equally indebted to several sources on catechism, both within the *Book of Common Prayer*, but also from earlier renderings.¹⁹

Wesley's *Journal* also consistently used the term "catechism" in relation to children's instruction.²⁰ Wesley's visit to the Moravian communities in Germany included accounts of the use of Luther's Catechism with children, and his reprint of his own mother, Susanna's account of childrearing included catechetical instruction of children.²¹ Wesley even assessed the Welsh as a people "ripe for the Gospel," in spite of their earlier instruction in the Lord's Prayer and Catechism.²² Undoubtedly, while education remained a crucial component of Wesley's accountable discipleship, catechism remained primarily a term for educating children and youth into the basics of Christian doctrine, though it might be used for larger purposes.²³

Methodist Implementation

Wesley's vision of catechism serving primarily children seems to continue into the establishment of Methodism. William Pierce's publication, *The Ecclesiastical Principles and Polity of the Wesley Methodists*, 3rd edition, provides a comprehensive overview of Methodist practice including many of the early resolutions of Wesleyan polity. The history notes Wesley's own interest in the spiritual wellbeing of children.²⁴ However, the document also notes "a very lively interest . . . and fresh impetus . . . of increased religious instruction and supervision by means of Catechumen Classes" during the 1846 conference.²⁵ Catechumen classes consisted of:

little companies of young persons assembled together for the purpose of instruction. They are conducted by a person called a

¹⁹Hammond, *John Wesley in America*, see footnote 193 on p. 71.

²⁰John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 1, *Journals*, Oct. 14, 1735 – Nov. 29, 1745, ed. Thomas Jackson, (The Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872, reprinted digitally Albany, OR: AGES Software, 1997), 31, 59, 75.

²¹*Ibid.*, 162, 172, 419.

²²*Ibid.*, 254.

²³Steve Johnson, "John Wesley's Liturgical Theology: His Sources, Unique Contributions and Synthetic Practices" (PhD Dissertation University of Manchester/Nazarene Theological College, 2016), 135-179.

²⁴William Peirce, *The Ecclesiastical Principles and Polity of the Wesleyan Methodists*, 3rd Edition. Revised by Frederick J. Jobson. (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1873) 135-137.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 137.

Catechist, whose special business it is to place his charge under a course of instruction, in order that they may be admitted as members of the Christian Church.²⁶

The resolutions conducted in 1846 and 1847 entailed incorporating these classes into the “Methodist economy.”²⁷ The resolutions included encouraging both the general pastoral care of young people (twelve years or older) by itinerate pastors, and direct instruction by lay assistants when ministers remained too busy.²⁸ By 1848 a committee of fifteen pastors devised a regular schedule of lessons, followed by a set curriculum (scripture passages through two lessons per week), printed in a “small, neat book” for sale by 1851.²⁹

To be sure, this early effort at catechism seems to be only a part of a much larger “economy” of Methodist educational practice. As a compendium of Methodist polity and practice, the *Ecclesiastical History* spends far more time on Sabbath or Sunday Schools, Day and Infant Schools, Normal or charity schools for the poor, national educational policy, and proprietary schools in Sheffield, Kingswood, and Woodhouse Grove.³⁰ Even regulations for the education of the daughters of Methodist preachers and the formal theological education of ministers occupy more space than the catechumenate.³¹

Catechetical exercises do surface as a part of Sunday School, yet, overall, the catechumenate seems to reflect primarily a special, age-level designation of religious instruction albeit focused on prospective acceptance into membership.³² However, by this time, infant baptism, seemed to dominate Methodist practice “on the part of the parents an act of public and solemn consecration or dedication of the offspring to the Lord.”³³ While Methodists did not “confound Baptism with Spiritual Regeneration, thereby making all-important” they also did not “degrade it into a mere ceremony, and consequently, render it of no real importance at all.”³⁴ The polity guide instead asserted baptism reflected the covenant of

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., 138-139.

²⁹Ibid., 139.

³⁰Ibid., 140-156, 157-170, 171-182, 182-194, 194-226.

³¹Ibid., 227-232, 233-254.

³²Ibid., 147.

³³Ibid., 104.

³⁴Ibid., 103.

Abraham via circumcision, “so the children of Christians are, under the covenant of grace, by the divinely appointed rite of Baptism, solemnly admitted into the visible church.”³⁵ Specifically, how the catechumen classes prepared young people, 10-20 years of age, for a deeper engagement with faith remains uncertain. The classes did not specifically assume these young people remained “accredited members, or having claim to the privileges of (Methodist) communion.”³⁶ However, Methodist leadership did perceive these catechumenal classes as extensions of both pastoral care and religious instruction for young people.³⁷

Wesley and the New Birth

Undoubtedly Wesleyan scholars seeking to embrace baptism, and catechesis as a natural formation process that respects baptism, must also contend with John’s treatises on the New Birth. Written at the height of the Wesleyan revival, the treatises represent several sermons written on John 3:7 throughout Wesley’s evangelical early years.³⁸ In the text Wesley remains adamant that the New Birth (being born anew) is “not” the same as baptism. Throughout this text, Wesley seems intent on separating out baptism as a formal sign rather than a personal expression of regeneration; separating the sign (baptism) from the thing signified (regeneration). Wesley argues that his interpretation stands within the teaching of the Church of England of his day. Providing an abridgement of the Church of England’s Catechism on baptism, Wesley writes “Nothing, therefore, is plainer than that, according to the Church of England, baptism is not the New Birth.”³⁹ Wesley continues that, while baptism may occur early, the New Birth can occur much later in life through faith.

Wesley does concede that the New Birth does happen with one form of baptism, infant baptism. While Wesley acknowledges that some may be baptized yet not experience the New Birth, he writes:

I do not now speak with regard to infants: it is certain, our Church supposes that all who are baptized in their infancy are at the same time born again. And it is allowed that the whole

³⁵Ibid., 104.

³⁶Ibid., 138.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Albert Outler, “Introduction to Sermon 45” in *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol 2, ed. Albert Outler. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 186.

³⁹Ibid., 197.

office for the baptism of infants proceeds with this supposition. Nor is it an objection of any weight against this that we cannot comprehend how this work can be wrought in infants: for neither can we comprehend how it is wrought in a person of riper years. But whatever be the case with infants, it is sure all of riper years who are baptized are not at the same time born again.⁴⁰

Wesley understood that the New Birth remained crucial for salvation, served as the instantaneous entrance into the process of sanctification, and ultimately lead to holiness. Yet, baptism does not assure this experience or expression of the Christian life.

Most commentators note that Wesley fashioned this treatise in response to critics who argued that, based on their baptism, they did not need to repent and embrace both justification, and the New Birth, by faith.⁴¹ To be sure, Wesley believed in the necessity of the New Birth, even if people were previously baptized or remained unbaptized.⁴²

Wesley continues his separation of baptism from the New Birth in his complementary sermon "The Marks of the New Birth."⁴³ Wesley notes that the efficacy of the New Birth (referencing John 3:8) seems "annexed" or attached to baptism (water and spirit in 3:7) yet proceeds to assert that, whether baptized or unbaptized, people need to obtain these "privileges" much like his earlier sermon.⁴⁴ While less a polemic on baptism, Wesley does provide indicators that reveal what regeneration looks like in the believer. These indicators include the following: Adoption as "sons of God" through a vibrant, living, faith, reminiscent of the New Birth,⁴⁵ Power over sin: "Power over outward sin of every kind; over evil work and work . . . And over inward sin,"⁴⁶ Peace,⁴⁷ Hope born of adoption but also the comfort of the Holy Spirit,⁴⁸ Love of neighbor and of God.⁴⁹

⁴⁰Ibid., 197.

⁴¹Ibid., 186.

⁴²Ibid., 200.

⁴³Wesley, John. "Sermon 18: The Marks of the New Birth." In *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol.1, ed. Albert Outler. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994). 417-430.

⁴⁴Ibid., 430.

⁴⁵Ibid., 417-419.

⁴⁶Ibid., 419.

⁴⁷Ibid., 421-422.

⁴⁸Ibid., 422-424.

⁴⁹Ibid., 424-427.

Wesley continues his argument that baptism does not secure these privileges. He continues to stress that the baptized may well include “gluttons and drunkards, the baptized liars and common swearers, the baptized railers and evil-speakers, the baptized whoremongers, thieves, extortioners!”⁵⁰ Clearly, Wesley argues, baptism does not secure the New Birth, only repentance and faith, even for those who were “once baptized” and therefore think they are “*now* a child of God.”⁵¹ To be certain, Methodism must deal with Wesley’s particular separation of baptism and conversion/regeneration, or at least that conversion was not “complete” in baptism, a cautioned echoed regularly in baptismal treatises.⁵²

A Wesleyan Mediation of Catechesis

How might Wesleyans shape a catechesis that embraces the logic of baptism considering John’s seemingly limited view of catechism, and his powerful critique and separation of regeneration from baptism? Perhaps one begins by recognizing John Wesley’s own contextual influences, and their limits, and then propose an alternative approach that respects Wesley’s larger vision by also drawing from a larger vision of baptism itself.

Primitive Christianity Reconsidered in Context

Recognizing Wesley’s appreciation for Cave’s *Primitive Christianity*, researchers might ask if Wesley’s exclusive employ of catechism for children proves consistent with early church practice. Apparently not. Cave records a process of catechesis that resembles other accounts of adult catechumens under his heading “Of the Persons Constituting the Church both people and Ministers.”⁵³ Cave provides a description of the catechetical journey to full participation in the church:

This was the state of the penitents in the primitive church. Persons having fully passed through the state of the catechuminate, became then immediate candidates of baptism, presented their names to the bishop, and humbly prostrating themselves

⁵⁰Ibid., 429.

⁵¹Ibid., 428-29.

⁵²Gayle Carlton Felton, *This Gift of Water: The Practice and Theology of Baptism Among Methodists in America*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 38-42.

⁵³William Cave, *Primitive Christianity or The Religion of the Ancient Church in the First Ages of the Gospel*, Vol. One of 2 Vols. (London: Joseph Rickerby, Sherbourn Lane. Reprint Forgotten, 1839. Available online, accessed May 25, 2015, <https://archive.org/details/primitivechristi01caveuoft>, 150.

begged that they might be entered into the church. These were called *competentes*, because they did *competere gratiam Christi*, sue for the grace of Christ conferred in baptism. The last rank was that of the *πίστοι*, or the faithful, who having been baptized and confirmed, and having approved themselves by the long train and course of a strict pious life, were then admitted to the participation of the Lord's supper; which being the highest and most venerable mystery of the Christian religion, was not then rashly given to any, but to such only as had run through all other degrees, and by a course of piety evidenced themselves to be such real and faithful Christians, as that the highest mysteries and most solemn parts of religion might be committed to them. This was the highest order, and looked upon with great regard, and for any of this rank to lapse and be overtaken with a fault, cost them severer penances, than were imposed upon the inferior forms of Christians.⁵⁴

Cave's depiction of the journey of pre-baptismal catechesis indicated a much deeper understanding of the Christian life for the baptized. A vision Wesley himself abbreviated in his extract of Cave for the Christian Library. Wesley's abridgement of the same passage provides some striking differences:

Persons having fully passed through the state of the Catechuminate, became then immediate candidates of baptism, presented their names to the bishop, and humbly prostrating themselves begged that they might be entered into the church. These were called *Competentes*, because they did sue for the grace of Christ conferred in baptism. The last rank was that of the , or the faithful, who having been baptized and confirmed, were then admitted to the participation of the Lord's supper; which being the highest and most venerable mystery of the Christian religion.⁵⁵

One notes that Wesley appears to minimize the spiritual qualities of the faithful, a vision of the baptized life less remarkable than communi-

⁵⁴Ibid., 155-56.

⁵⁵John Wesley, ed. *A Christian library: consisting of extracts from and abridgements of the choicest pieces of practical divinity which have been published in the English tongue*. Vol. Nineteen of 30 Volumes (London: J. Kershaw, 1825). Available online, accessed May 25, 2016, <https://archive.org/details/06969185.19.emory.edu>, 37-38.

cated by Cave. If Wesley had taken the same consideration from Cave in this matter as he had in his retrieval of worship,⁵⁶ or even the lives of the saints in his Methodist retrieval of testimony, Methodism might have had a much deeper appreciation of the place and power of baptism . . . and catechesis . . . in later generations.⁵⁷ Wesleyans might be well to move past John's on limited appropriation, a strategy that appears later in the article.

New Birth in Context

Albert Outler, in his introduction to Sermons 18 and 19 ("The Circumcision of the Heart"), argued that Wesley seems to take baptismal regeneration for granted in his treatise on Baptism (taken from Samuel Wesley's catechetical treatise *The Pious Communicant Rightly Prepared*). Outler writes:

John seems always to have believed that *something* "happens" in baptism (and in infant baptism) that validates its propriety and necessity as the sacrament of Christian initiation; he rejected the logic of 'believer's baptism' which always supposes conversion before baptism.⁵⁸

However, Outler notes Wesley's observations of dramatic conversions during the revival provided an important counter narrative and compelled John to forge a doctrine of conversion between his sacramental heritage and evangelical realities.⁵⁹

Outler provides a place to begin but other historians provide additional clarifications. Ted Campbell notes, aside from the tensions in the evangelical revival, Wesley's view incorporated a Reformed (but not Zwinglian) view of the sacraments that did distinguish inward grace from outward sign to preserve God's role in salvation, so that baptism could not be automatic.⁶⁰ In addition, Wesley was influenced by Pietism's

⁵⁶Geoffrey Wainwright, "Introduction" to *Hymns on the Lords Supper* by John Wesley and Charles Wesley. (Bristol: Felix Farley, 1745; Facsimile Reprint Madison, N.J.: The Charles Wesley Society, 1995), v.

⁵⁷Dean G. Blevins, "Holy Church, Holy People: A Wesleyan Exploration in Congregational Holiness and Personal Testament" (*Wesleyan Theological Journal* 39, no 2, Fall 2004), 54-73.

⁵⁸Albert Outler, "Introduction to Sermons 18-19," in *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 1, ed. Albert Outler. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 415-417.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 415-416.

⁶⁰Ted A. Campbell, "Conversion and Baptism in Wesleyan Spirituality," in *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition*, eds. Ken Collins and John Tyson (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 167-169.

emphasis on a religion of the heart that insisted on fresh repentance and a “heartfelt conversion to Christ.”⁶¹ Finally, Wesley remained committed that Methodism operated within an “extraordinary” movement of God to bring about revival, so dramatic conversions signaled this extraordinary need opposed to the “ordinary” practice of baptism.⁶² Campbell helps readers understand the theological undercurrents to Wesley’s emphasis, their historical merits, but also some of their limitations.

Catechesis of the New Birth . . . and More

Research reveals both Wesley’s limited use of catechism, as well as his theological, yet contextual, emphasis on the New Birth. Wesleyan educators need to acknowledge these limitations, yet envision a catechesis that both pastorally guides the breadth of the congregation’s formation, and yet respects deeply the need for authentic Christian initiation within the logic of baptism. Will Wesleyans struggle to articulate an approach within congregations who still live Wesley’s tension of sacramental appreciation but evangelical emphasis? Will Wesley’s own proclivities resonate with Methodism’s employ of cognitive, reformation-like catechisms, as sufficient? Or will Wesleyans acknowledge only “heartfelt” conversions, and adapt pragmatic strategies based on the “exceptional” role of either evangelistic or missional practice?

One way to situate Wesley’s emphasis on authentic regeneration entails a more robust appropriation of the sacrament than evident even in Wesley’s day. Recognizing the formalism that governed the Church of England in the eighteenth century (and whispers of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism in those days) one might easily slide toward a diminishment of the sacrament of baptism if one does not understand the breadth of meaning attached to this act in early Christian practice. Catechesis, and baptism itself, represented many different themes depending on the challenges presented to the local church. Everett Ferguson notes early catechetical efforts, like the *Apostolic Constitutions* and Ireneaus’ *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, incorporated both salvation history and creedal/Trinitarian formulations.⁶³ However, Ferguson notes that different early church leaders placed a specific emphasis within their catechesis that represented a changing understanding of the church but also the Christian

⁶¹Ibid., 170.

⁶²Ibid., 171-172.

⁶³Everett Ferguson, *The Early Church at Work and Worship, Vol. 2: Catechesis, Baptism, Eschatology and Martyrdom*. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), 4-17.

life.⁶⁴ Ferguson articulates the purpose of catechesis. For Justin Martyr, catechesis represents training to live in a distinctive, counter cultural community; for Ireneaus, catechesis provides true salvation among heretical movements; for Cyprian, catechesis provides preparation for martyrdom during persecution.⁶⁵ At the turn of the fourth century, and the establishment of the Church, Cyril of Jerusalem presents catechesis as entrance into orthodoxy; and with Ambrose, and emphasis on meaningful Christian living in the midst of the formalities of the state church.⁶⁶ Only with Augustine's emphasis on the "Heavenly City does catechesis return to both an eschatological mindset, and a practical, moral, concern, alongside an emphasis on doctrinal and liturgical instruction.⁶⁷ Augustine's more comprehensive view may come closer to addressing Wesley's desire for transformation within a Christian context.

Recognizing Wesley's proclivity to retain the best of primitive Christianity through a life of piety, perhaps the best resource to theologically explore catechesis considering Wesley's vision of transformation resides in Robin Jensen's *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity: Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions*.⁶⁸ Jensen draws from a broad range of visual and textual resources to reveal the diversity and complexity of baptismal practice in the early church. Jensen argues that baptism, as a rite or ritual, represented more than merely one's status before God, baptism served as a comprehensive introduction to the Christian life through our "practice" of baptism. As Jensen notes:

Baptism thus becomes the ritually realized symbol of God's first covenant with humanity, the liberation of captives, the coming of Jesus, the restoration of creation at the end of time. That is to say, while baptism was prefigured in ancient events, its effects and its promise are known only in practice. The signs, symbols, and types are necessary to understand the meaning or purpose of the rite, but they do not substitute for the ritual process itself. And yet the ritual process is not the final reality. It is itself a figure of something that is yet to come."⁶⁹

⁶⁴Ibid., 22.

⁶⁵Ibid., 22-24, 24-26, 26-29.

⁶⁶Ibid., 29-34, 34-41.

⁶⁷Ibid., 42-51.

⁶⁸Robin M. Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity: Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012).

⁶⁹Ibid., 6.

Overall Jensen draws on five theological themes to summarize the collective efforts to capture the true meaning of baptism in its ritual practice: Cleansing from Sin and Sickness, Incorporation into the Community, Baptism as Sanctifying and Illuminating, Baptism as Dying and Rising, and Baptism as the Beginning of the New Creation.

Jensen's overview provides two important clues for understanding baptism considering Wesleyan concerns. First, Jensen focuses less on the theologically divine "action" within baptism (whether baptism ensures salvation or incorporates the New Birth) and more on the "practice" of participating and living out baptism as an entrance and expression of the Christian life. To this extent, Jensen's portrayal more closely represents John Wesley's understanding of the means of grace. While most of the means of grace proved repeatable, they also invite our participation, our practice, as a part of the Christian life. For Jensen, baptism, no less, reflects the same means of grace. While our participation in this ritual may only occur once, the multivalent meanings within the baptismal event promised a myriad of themes that Christians could then explore throughout their lives. No wonder catechetical instruction proved so crucial and an extension of this ritual practice. Catechists gave early church Christians careful instruction as a part of a "journey of conversion."⁷⁰ The power of the ritual process insured not only a moment of baptismal acceptance, but also framework for envisioning an ongoing journey in the Christian life.

Perhaps Wesleyans could see the work of John Wesley less as a portrait of evangelical resistance to nominal Anglicans' visions of baptism and more a signpost to the early church. To some degree, Wesley wanted theologically "more" from baptism if it was to truly become baptism. Wesley's continued fear rests with one assuming the Christian life was complete, a "landing zone" that represented a state of nominal Christian salvation. Such a view proved particularly problematic if one might "fall" into practices that "sinned away" the grace represented in baptism. More proactively, Wesley viewed the beginning of the Christian life more like a "launching pad"; the New Birth ushered believers into holiness as both impetus and goal.

In similar fashion, baptism may represent a powerful initiation into the Christian life with holy love as its journey. Without a "good begin-

⁷⁰Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 21.

ning” through catechesis, catechumens might not recognize the rich diversity the sacrament . . . and ritual . . . that baptism possesses in describing the Christian life. Wesleyan educators might begin with Jensen’s five theological themes and ask how they reflect the totality of the Christian life, even of holiness of heart and life. Using these five themes one might move beyond Wesley’s impasse with the New Birth and explore how John’s comprehensive view of the Christian life might be undergirded by a catechesis that took seriously all five themes as the core of Christian living.

For contemporary Christian educators, particularly those of the Wesleyan tradition, to embrace catechesis, they must first see baptism as a dynamic event that incorporates not only preparation but also ongoing guidance into the Christian life. Doing so may help Wesleyans connect baptism to the ongoing, eschatological, practice of Eucharist. While non-repeatable in its act, the narrative and vision of baptism may serve a larger horizon within Wesleyan studies. Wesley’s vision of a dynamic, transformative, life might well be “writ large” within this vision of baptism and the ensuring catechesis that flows from it.

PRIDE IN PERFECTION? A THOMISTIC DEFENSE OF JOHN WESLEY’S DOCTRINE OF ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION

by

Claire Brown Peterson

In regenerating His people, God indeed accomplishes this much for them;

He destroys the dominion of sin by supplying the agency of the Spirit, which enables them to come off victorious from the contest. Sin, however, though it ceases to reign, ceases not to dwell in them. Accordingly, though we say that the old man is crucified, and the law of sin is abolished in the children of God (Rom. 6:6), the remains of sin survive, not to have dominion, *but to humble them under a consciousness of their infirmity*.¹

—John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

While the objections to John Wesley’s doctrine of Christian perfection (also called entire sanctification) are wide-ranging, one particular concern about “the peculiar doctrine” pertains to an apparent tension between entire sanctification and freedom from the vice of pride. In this vein, John Calvin (in the passage quoted above) specifically cites the cultivation of humility as God’s reason for allowing sin to survive in the regenerate. Let us call the objection that, if one *pursues* or *experiences* an (otherwise) sinless state, one will necessarily fall into pride, the “direct objection” (to entire sanctification) from pride. Even if one is not persuaded by the direct objection, one might nonetheless envision a necessary conflict between humility and sanctification of the following sort: one might hold that it is not possible to *testify to* or *believe in one’s own* entire sanctification without suffering from the sin of pride. I will call this sort of concern the “indirect objection” (to entire sanctification) from pride. As theologians and ethicists are quick to emphasize, our initial, unreflective conceptions of the virtues and vices are often in error, and a poor account of any virtue or vice easily leads to incorrect moral conclusions. If the above pride-based objections to entire sanctification rely on a

¹John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (1845), 3.3.11, emphasis mine. Available online at the Christian Classics Ethereal Library: <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.v.iv.html>.

mistaken notion of pride, the objection collapses. Getting clear on the proper understanding of the vice of pride is thus crucial to adjudicating the debate over whether or not Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection somehow runs afoul of the vice of pride.

In this paper, I examine Thomas Aquinas' account of pride and consider whether that account indicates any problems for Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection. I will argue that we can plausibly interpret Aquinas' account of pride in two main ways and that neither interpretation reveals pride to be a necessary failing of a person who seeks, experiences, believes in, or testifies to Wesley's entire sanctification (or any component thereof). Pride-based criticisms of Wesley's account of Christian perfection do properly highlight the special pride-based temptations that those who pursue Christian perfection will need to resist, but nothing about the nature of pride, the particular elements of Christian perfection, or the pursuit of, belief in, testimony to, or experience of any of those elements implies falling to such temptations. In short, while there is an important point behind pride-based objections, neither the direct nor the indirect objection ultimately succeeds.

Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Perfection

For the purposes of this paper, I will be focusing on John Wesley's view as he presents it in "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection." There, Wesley argues on scriptural grounds for the possibility of experiencing Christian perfection prior to death. While Wesley points to a number of passages supporting the possibility of entire sanctification, he particularly draws attention to biblical promises of the complete cleansing that God offers to all, e.g., "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).² Wesley takes "cleansing," notably a metaphor of purification, to specifically connote sanctification as opposed to justification.³ Thus, in this passage we see that God promises not only to forgive the repentant and offer justification but to cleanse the repentant, making them new people, people able to walk in God's ways, thereby offering sanctification, even entire sanctification ("all unrighteousness").

²As quoted by John Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, as believed and taught by the Reverend Mr. John Wesley, from the year 1725 to the year 1777," *The Works of John Wesley*, Thomas Jackson, ed. (14 vols.; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1958), 11:376.

³*Ibid.*, 11:377-378.

To understand what Wesley means by “Christian perfection” or entire cleansing from unrighteousness, we must note that, for Wesley, all of God’s commands fall under the rubric of love, in the sense that fulfillment of these commands is a matter of being made perfect in love.⁴ Wesley makes clear that the invocation of love in this context does not deflate the rigor of God’s law,⁵ and we ought remind ourselves that the inner purity of perfect love is even more elusive than right external action. For these reasons, Wesley’s entirely sanctified believer is a wonder to behold.⁶ Such a person “loves the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength.”⁷ He rejoices in the law and prays without ceasing.⁸ He loves all other people “as his own soul,”⁹ and he himself is pure of heart, free from “envy, malice, wrath and every unkind temper” as well as pride and self-will.¹⁰ Out of love, and for the glory of God, he keeps all the commandments.¹¹

⁴Ibid., 11:367-8.

⁵Ibid., 11:431.

⁶It would be interesting to compare Wesley’s entirely sanctified Christian with the “Loving Saint” that Susan Wolf describes in her classic paper, “Moral Saints,” *The Journal of Philosophy*, 79 (1982), 419-39. Wolf’s thesis is that a moral saint (“a person whose every action is as morally good as possible”) “does not constitute a model of personal well-being toward which it would be particularly rational or good or desirable for a human being to strive,” 419. She states that she would not want to be a moral saint, nor would she wish moral sainthood for her friends. In arguing for her thesis, Wolf identifies two forms such a saint could take depending on the person’s motive for so scrupulous a moral life: the “Rational Saint” and the “Loving Saint.” Wolf’s Rational Saint is a Kant-inspired saint from duty whose good deeds derive from his commitment to choose duty over happiness come what may. Wolf’s Loving Saint, by contrast, enjoys fulfilling duty because her love for others is so pure that serving their happiness has become her own. Wolf argues that both the Rational Saint and the Loving Saint are missing something and make for poor personal ideals. The problems with the Rational Saint are obvious. Wolf’s objection to the Loving Saint is that she appears “blind to what the world has to offer” insofar as she so readily and happily accommodates others, making their happiness her own and thereby insufficiently valuing the very real goods of life, 424. It would be well-worth exploring the extent to which Wolf’s Loving Saint corresponds to Wesley’s picture of the Christian made perfect in love and how a Wesleyan ought best address Wolf’s concerns.

⁷Wesley, “A Plain Account,” Works, 11:371.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., 11:372

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

Wesley is careful to point out that the above portrait of a person made “perfect in love” is nonetheless not a portrait of a person who is perfect in all respects, a god or goddess on earth, so to speak. Wesley thus explicitly states that the fully sanctified are not perfect in knowledge or in body, that they have weaknesses, face temptations, make mistakes, and are subject to illness and ignorance.¹² The reason Wesley takes the time to make these points is that such non-moral imperfections may lead to actions (or inactions) that can appropriately be described as sinful even though they do not fall under Wesley’s definition of sin as “a voluntary transgression of a known law.”¹³ More specifically, non-moral human imperfections retained post-sanctification can still result in unintentional “transgression[s] of the perfect law.”¹⁴ While Wesley says little by way of example of what he has in mind when he speaks of ignorance, infirmity, or weakness leading to unintentional transgressions of the law,¹⁵ it is not difficult to imagine likely candidates. Consider a person ignorant of the customs of the U.S. who, due to her ignorance, fails to tip her server appropriately at a restaurant while visiting the U.S. Or consider a person who rushes through his mail and inadvertently discards a small bill, which he never pays and which the issuer writes off as a loss. Both hypothetical individuals have failed to pay money that they rightfully owe. In both cases, a genuine injustice occurs that requires forgiveness.¹⁶ But because the individuals are unaware of this fact, provided their ignorance is not due to moral vice, they have not sinned voluntarily; the actions (or inactions) in question “are not properly sins.”¹⁷ Such unintentional transgressions, precisely because they are not the result of vice, may occur even with people who have been made perfect in love as the (yet) weak, non-omniscient, human creatures that they are.

¹²Wesley makes this point repeatedly. See “A Plain Account,” *Works* 11:374, 383, and 394.

¹³*Ibid.*, 11: 396.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 11: 395.

¹⁵The first example Wesley gives of a “mistake in judgment” leading to a “mistake in practice” is the following: “Mr. De Renty’s mistake touching the nature of mortification, arising from prejudice of education, occasioned that practical mistake, his wearing an iron girdle,” “A Plain Account,” *Works*, 11:394-5. A second example involves ignorance prompting one to misjudge a person’s character and thereby treat that person in an inappropriate manner, 11: 417.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 11:395.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 11:396.

A second way in which the entirely sanctified fall short of absolute perfection concerns a way in which Christian perfection does not require absolute moral perfection when it comes not merely to unintentional behavior but *even to states of character*. Wesley writes that an entirely sanctified person, that is, a person whom God has fully cleansed of unrighteousness, is “improvable”¹⁸ and may grow in both grace and “the love and image of God,”¹⁹ indicating that such a person is not the pinnacle of all (moral) virtues. This possible improvement in virtue and love reveals an apparent inconsistency in Wesley’s discussion: it does not seem possible to love God with one’s *whole* heart, mind, soul, and strength (and every human as oneself) *while also* being improvable in love, a puzzle that Matthew Schlimm has attempted to address.²⁰ Following Schlimm, I will be interpreting Wesley in such a way that we retain the full force of the claim that growth in love and the image of God is indeed possible for those who have experienced entire sanctification. I would add that if retaining the possibility of such growth requires taking some aspects of Wesley’s discussion of perfect love (e.g., “whole heart”) as hyperbolic, so be it.

Despite the fact that Wesley tells us that the entirely sanctified can grow in love and the image of God, he does not describe how this works, but we can speculate on his behalf. Let us imagine a hypothetical person who commits no intentional sins, lacks all moral vices and has all moral virtues, but who possesses those virtues to an imperfect degree. Note that such a person can be described as free of unrighteousness: she neither chooses sin nor suffers from underlying sinful character (vice) and this alone is enough to make the person free from all unrighteousness. A

¹⁸Ibid., 11:442.

¹⁹Ibid., 11:402.

²⁰Schlimm grapples with both the general question of how *any* growth is possible for the “perfect” as well as the more specific challenge of how growth in love and the image of God could be possible. With regard to the latter (i.e., growth in love and the image of God), Schlimm points out that those who are fully governed by the law of love can still grow in love as the nature or *quality* of that love more and more closely approximates God’s own love. Schlimm takes a similar line when explicating growth with respect to the image of God: one can come closer and closer to (but never reach) the perfection that is the likeness of God despite already being free from intentional sin, “The Puzzle of Perfection: Growth in John Wesley’s Doctrine of Perfection,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 38 (2003), esp. 132-4.

virtue that one possesses in an imperfect way is not equivalent to a vice. Thus, entire sanctification need not imply perfect possession of the virtues.

It is tempting to think that the hypothetical, entirely sanctified, (but) not yet fully virtuous person just described is somehow a (near) logical impossibility: that anyone who ceases sinning and for whom this is not a mere matter of luck (i.e., it is not simply the case that she is somehow being sheltered from especially tempting situations) must have a perfect character not merely in the sense of possessing all the virtues but in the sense of possessing all the virtues to the highest possible degree. To fail to possess a virtue to the highest degree, this line of thinking goes, is to be liable to sin in those stringent situations in which only those with perfect virtue would emerge victorious. But to be liable to sin, even only in the most difficult circumstances, is to fail to be fully cleansed. In response to this concern, we can defend Wesley's contention that entire sanctification and sinlessness are compatible with non-idealized virtue on two fronts, one philosophical, the other scriptural.

The philosophical defense requires a careful discussion of the nature of virtue and its connection to action. Virtues are character traits, and as such, they prompt and explain action. A person with the virtue of honesty is not merely honest when she finds it convenient (dishonest people can make the same claim); she is honest when it costs her something. Her honesty thus explains why she tells the truth even in difficult situations. This action-explaining feature of virtue can make it seem as if, when it comes to the most difficult of situations in which one's virtue is really put on trial—e.g., cases in which publicly affirming one's faith could cost one one's life or being truthful about one's boss will cost one one's job—only those with the highest degree of virtue will manage to do the right thing. While a person who possesses the virtue of honesty to a less-than-perfect degree may never lie in her final years of life, this fact about her (one might reason) must be due to the *luck* of not facing the most trying of temptations rather than her own character.²¹ Were she to face such a try-

²¹I am referring to the notion of moral luck, which roughly corresponds to the way in which unreflective moral assessments of an agent or her action often depend on factors outside that agent's control, a dependence that is in tension with the moral point of view that, as a matter of justice, seems immune from such circumstantial factors. For a discussion of moral luck, see Bernard Williams, "Moral Luck," in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 20-39.

ing situation, her honesty, since imperfect, would fail. Thus, such a less-than-fully virtuous person should not be considered “free from all unrighteousness” even if she eventually succeeds in not committing any (more) intentional sins. To adopt the language of W. K. Clifford from a slightly different context, those with less-than-perfect virtue who never intentionally sin are thus not perfect; they “only have not been found out.”²²

The problem with the above line of thinking is that it reflects a subtle misunderstanding of the nature of virtues, an understanding that exaggerates the way in which virtues explain action and ignores the way that virtues are formed and cultivated. Let us return to the example of the person whose faith is put to the test, so that standing firm in the faith will cost her her life. It is true that the higher one’s fidelity, the easier and more natural standing firm in this situation will be. For those with the highest levels of the virtue of faithfulness, apostasy may well even be so unthinkable as to be nearly impossible. It does not follow, however, that standing firm in the faith is possible only for those who have already achieved the highest level of the virtue of fidelity. Indeed, this is precisely how virtue grows: we face temptations that our less-than-ideal virtue makes difficult; we choose as the idealized virtuous person would; and our virtue becomes stronger. For this reason, we ought not say that the person of imperfect virtue who ceases sinning but also never faces the most trying of situations is not free from righteousness and rather “just has not been found out.” Her less-than-perfect character state does not guarantee success *or* failure in such a situation. Were she to face such a situation, her eventual action should not be understood as revealing the (perfect or imperfect) virtue she already had but as forming—strengthening or weakening—her character itself. Significantly, though, the lack of a guarantee is not itself a sin, a case of unrighteousness. Similarly, the full cleansing of Christian perfection does not provide a guarantee of remaining in that condition, a point that Wesley makes explicit.²³

The scriptural case for the possibility of being free from sin and unrighteousness without yet possessing all virtues in the highest degree is

²²W. K. Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief,” *Contemporary Review* 29 (December 1876–May, 1877), 290.

²³For Wesley, this is no mere theoretical possibility. He writes, “it is an exceeding common thing for persons to lose [this state of perfect love] more than once, before they are established therein,” “A Plain Account,” *Works*, 11: 426–7. See also 11:422.

found in the moral development of Jesus himself. Luke's gospel tells us that Jesus "increased in wisdom and in years and in divine and human favour" (Luke 2:52).²⁴ Hebrews, which emphasizes the way in which Jesus' humanity allows him to "sympathize with our weaknesses" tells us not only that Jesus faced all temptations "without sin" but also that he "learned obedience through what he suffered" (Hebrews 4:15; 5:8). Thus, scripture indicates that while Jesus was sinless throughout his life he grew in virtue over the course of his life. This implication of scripture is also an implication of the incarnation: a nine-year-old child is not capable of the highest degrees of virtue. Accordingly, the nine-year-old Jesus did not possess full virtue. He developed virtue, including the virtue of obedience, over time, and it was this development that prepared the always-sinless Jesus for the cross.²⁵ Wesley's entirely sanctified believer may at first have more in common with the teenage Jesus than the adult Jesus.

A final feature of Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection that should be noted is the extent to which Christian perfection requires entire dependence on God. In the first place, Christian perfection itself is a product of the Holy Spirit: only God can cleanse the unrighteous.²⁶ Additionally, Christian perfection is not a state that guarantees its own continuance; the possibility of intentional sin remains. It follows that those who are fully sanctified have not only received God's transforming grace in the past but also must continue to rely on God's preserving grace to maintain their current sanctified state. Moreover, they require forgiveness for any unintentional sins they commit. Finally, they place their hope in the Holy Spirit's continued transforming grace as they are further perfected in virtue. We will later return to these crucial elements of Wesley's discussion of entire sanctification.

Thomistic Pride

With Wesley's notion of Christian perfection now clear, we can turn to Aquinas' account of pride. Before providing the details of that account, it is worth noting at the outset how Aquinas does *not* define pride. Significantly, he does not define pride, as most people today likely would, in terms of overly exalted beliefs about the self so that, say, a person is pride-

²⁴This and all other biblical quotations in this paper (unless quoted by Wesley) will employ the *New Revised Standard Version*.

²⁵Brad J. Kallenberg makes this point in "Virtue Ethics," in *Christian Ethics: Four Views*, ed. Steve Wilkens (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017), 37.

²⁶Wesley, "A Plain Account," *Works*, 11:439.

ful just in case she believes herself to be better than she actually is. If Aquinas were to define pride in this way, then we would have a straightforward way of knowing that Wesley's state of entire sanctification need not betray a problem with pride: provided the sanctified believer is not deceived about her moral achievement or her utter dependence on the Holy Spirit, that is, provided any such beliefs she has are accurate, her view of herself is not overly exalted and she does not suffer from the sin of pride. (Similarly, neither seeking nor testifying to one's own entire sanctification need betray a pride problem so long as the individual in question is not self-deceived.) As we will see, Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection can be defended from the direct and indirect pride objections, but the defense is more complicated than "it's not pride if it's true" because, in fact, pride is not adequately defined in terms of false, exalted beliefs about the self.

For Aquinas, all sin is a perversion of a "natural appetite," that is, an appetite fundamental to human nature that as such should be preserved but that can be disordered either by exceeding or falling short of "the rule of reason."²⁷ For instance, one can sin with regard to the natural appetite for the pleasures of eating and drinking by placing too much emphasis on such pleasures (as in the case of gluttony) or by placing too little emphasis on such pleasures (as in the case of "insensitivity," a vice so unusual that Aristotle says it lacks a name). Given this general notion of sin, we can immediately see why Aquinas cannot define "pride" in terms of false (overly exalted) beliefs about the self: the "false belief" definition is purely cognitive whereas Aquinas insists on defining sin volitionally, in terms of excessive or deficient appetites.²⁸ Thus, while Aquinas holds that false, overly exalted beliefs about the self are connected to the sin of pride (as both cause and effect), they ought not be mistaken for the sin itself.²⁹

If all sin consists in a disordered natural appetite, we must locate the appetite that pride distorts. Aquinas' answer is surprising: pride is a distortion of the appetite for excellence. More specifically, pride is "inordi-

²⁷Aquinas, *On Evil*, trans. Richard Reagan, ed., Brian Davies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), Q 8, A 2.

²⁸Aquinas thus agrees with Augustine in reasoning that "inordinate desire belongs to the will" so that "sin consists chiefly of the will," *On Evil*, Q 2, A 3.

²⁹*Summa Theologica*, 2nd revised edition, trans. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 2008), online: <http://newadvent.org/summa>, II-II, Q 91, A 2.

nate desire of one's own excellence."³⁰ In *De Malo*, Aquinas further clarifies:

And one of the things that human beings naturally desire is excellence. For it is natural for both human beings and everything to seek in desired goods the perfection that consists of a certain excellence. Therefore, the will will indeed be morally right and belong to loftiness of spirit if it seeks excellence in accord with the rule of right reason informed by God. Just so, as the Apostle says in 2 Cor. 10:13: "And we do not glory in something beyond our measure," as if in the measure of another, "but by the measure by which God has measured us." And there will be the sin of pride if one should exceed the rule, as the very name "pride" [Latin: *superbia*] demonstrates, since to be proud is simply to exceed the proper measure in the desire for excellence. And so, Augustine says in the *City of God* that pride is "the appetite for perverse eminence."³¹

While Aquinas clearly intends the above to convey a single, unified account of pride as a moral failing, the nature of that account is not at all clear. The trouble begins with the notion of "excessive" desire for one's own excellence. At first blush, this sounds like the sort of non-failing one might feign-confess in a job interview when asked to name one's greatest weakness (compare: "I care too much"; "I work too hard"; "I'm a perfectionist"). How, we must ask, can one desire *excellence* excessively? The answer would be easy if Aquinas were discussing the pursuit of the appearance of excellence, for it is not hard to see how a desire to appear to be excellent could be so strong as to crowd out higher goods, as when one places more emphasis on one's moral reputation (the appearance of excellence) than on one's actual character (the grounds of excellence itself). But Aquinas, ever careful with his wording, is clear that "pride covets excellence inordinately: while vainglory covets the outward show of excellence."³² Pride thus must not be confused with the related but distinct excessive desire for the appearance of excellence (vainglory).

Pride also ought not be confused with the pursuit of false excellence that occurs when a person mistakes a lesser good for a higher one, going so far as to consider the lesser good to be the very grounds of human

³⁰Ibid., II-II, Q 161, A 2.

³¹Aquinas, *On Evil*, Q 8 A 2.

³²*Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q 162, A 8, ad. 2.

excellence. Consider a person who places financial achievement ahead of his character or his civic obligations, cheating on his taxes or ignoring the plight of the marginalized in order to build up his assets. Such a person has an excessive attachment to money; the attachment may be so insidious that the person has come to see money as the measure of human life.³³ Aquinas has a name for the vice that afflicts such a person: avarice, a vice of excess that pertains to the appetite for the materially profitable. More generally, Aquinas, like Augustine, believes that a specific vice exists for *every* natural appetite for a good thing that can be pursued so excessively that it can be mistaken for the grounds of human flourishing/excellence/happiness. Pride is itself *one* of these vices (the good thing that can be pursued inordinately in the case of pride is excellence itself), albeit special in that pride often lies at the root of the other vices. Pride is thus not the general failing, common to avarice, vainglory, and a host of other vices, of excessively pursuing a false or mistaken account of human excellence.

For Aquinas, then, pride is the inordinate desire for excellence; the trouble is explaining how one can desire (one's own genuine) excellence too much. The passage from *De Malo* quoted above suggests that one way that this can occur is for one to desire particular excellences that are not appropriate to one's station. I will call this suggestion the "domain" interpretation of pride as pride is, on this account, disordered because it desires excellences that go beyond one's proper domain (e.g., as a human rather than an angel or as a monk rather than a bishop), one's proper domain being set by God. The domain interpretation of pride can easily answer the question of how a desire for excellence can be bad and excessive insofar as not all genuine excellences are appropriate for all beings. Yet the domain interpretation of Thomistic pride leaves a puzzle about pride unresolved: the domain interpretation makes it hard to understand why pride should be classified among the most serious and dangerous of sins. We can certainly recognize the pursuit of knowledge or achievement

³³Consider 1 Timothy 6:9-11, 17, "But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. . . . As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment."

beyond one's inherent ability as foolish, but it is hard to see how such a desire potentially lies at the root of all moral vices!³⁴

A second possible interpretation of Aquinas' account of pride as "inordinate desire for one's own excellence" is one that I will call the "eminence interpretation." The eminence interpretation attempts to answer the question of pride's great and special danger by drawing attention to Augustine's description of pride (which Aquinas quotes in his discussion in *De Malo*) as "the appetite for perverse eminence." According to the eminence interpretation, one's desire for excellence is inordinate when one desires excellence *qua* eminence, i.e., superiority, an inherently *comparative* notion. We can thus distinguish between two types of excellence, which I will call "objective excellence" and "eminence." Objective excellence is measured by a static standard: one achieves objective excellence when one meets or exceeds the standard. Eminence is measured by the non-static standard of the achievements of others: one achieves eminence when one excels others.³⁵ The desire for eminence recalls Augustine's *libido dominandi* (the "lust for rule"), which Augustine claims is the actual ruler of the earthly city.³⁶ When a person desires her own excellence, this could theoretically be understood as a mere desire for objective excellence, a mere desire for eminence, or a desire for both. For instance, a geometry student might strive for (1) the perfect mastery of the unit's subject matter that a score of "100" would likely reflect (objective excellence), (2) a greater mastery of the material than any other student that the highest score in the class would likely reflect (eminence), or (3) a perfect mastery of the unit's subject matter that surpasses the mastery of all other students (both objective excellence and eminence). Notably, if the student desires (2) *or* (3), a score of 100 will not be enough to satisfy him (even if he is convinced of the test's validity as a measure of comprehen-

³⁴Aquinas considers pride to be the root of all sin, not in the sense that all sin necessarily comes from pride, but in the sense that all vices can (directly or indirectly) come from pride, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q 162, A 2.

³⁵Whether one excels others will still be understood as dependent upon how both self and other measure up to the standard associated with objective excellence, so that (1) eminence, while non-static, is not a subjective matter and (2) the concept of objective excellence is prior to the concept of eminence.

³⁶Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol. 2., Philip Schaff, ed. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). Online: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120101.htm>, preface. Thanks to Burnie Reynolds for pointing out this connection.

sion). Such a student will only be satisfied with a perfect score if no other student achieves such a score. The more students who score perfectly, the more disappointed the one who desires eminence (at all) will be.

It is not hard to see why the desire for eminence is problematic: it is one thing to desire a truly excellent good; it is quite another to desire to be the sole possessor of that good, or even one of the few possessors of that good. To do so is to desire the good for the self *and* to desire to take the good away from others. Aquinas holds that there are two classes of goods: private goods, which are goods that can be possessed by only one individual, and common goods, which are available to all. Significantly, the goods that are the proper ground of genuine excellence are the common goods of knowledge and (especially) virtue. We can use this insight to identify the problem with the desire for eminence and, more interestingly, to specify the precise way in which the desire for eminence is a perversion of—a dis-ordering of—the natural appetite for excellence. The desire for eminence attempts to turn common goods into private goods. It treats such goods as virtue and knowledge as tools for surpassing others, thereby corrupting them. The problem with those who pursue eminence is thus not so much that they want excellence “too much” as that they want excellence for the wrong reason—they desire excellence(s) for the sake of domination and surpassing others rather than for the sake of the goods in question (e.g., rather than knowledge for knowledge’s own sake).

If we understand pride as this desire for eminence, a particular corruption of the desire for excellence, we can thus understand how and why even a desire for genuine excellence—not false excellence and not the mere appearance of excellence—can be both deeply problematic and widespread. Return to the student example and the three (theoretical) desire possibilities that were identified. Note that option (3)—the desire for both eminence and objective excellence—reveals the state of most people most of the time. The fact that we want to excel others relative to an objective standard (and not just in the subjective opinions of others) suggests that we all care about objective excellence. For this reason, option (2), understood as the pure desire for eminence, may not even be a psychological possibility. Yet most of us also would have to admit to at least some feelings of disappointment in instances in which we meet some standard but then find out that we were not the only one who excelled or that almost everyone excelled. Thus, while most of us desire excellence for the sake of the excellences in question, we also desire excellence for the sake of surpassing others, i.e., for the sake of eminence.

The domain and eminence interpretations of Aquinas' discussion of pride allow us to formally articulate two basic possibilities for what pride is, according to Aquinas:

The domain account: pride is the inordinate appetite for excellence that violates the rule of reason in desiring excellences inappropriate to one's station.

The eminence account: pride is the inordinate appetite for excellence that corrupts the natural desire for excellence in desiring specific excellences at least in part for the sake of excelling others.

Strictly speaking, one could also have some sort of mixed account of pride, on which both the desire for excellence beyond one's domain and the desire for excellence as eminence appear as components of pride. Moreover, there are multiple forms that such a mixed account could take.³⁷ For the purposes of my paper, I need not consider any of these mixed accounts on its own. As I will argue, neither the domain nor the eminence account of pride presents an insurmountable problem for Wesley's Christian perfection. If my reasoning is correct, there is no reason to fear that a mixed account would present any additional problems.³⁸ So, for the sake of simplicity, in what follows, I will attend only to how the domain and eminence accounts of pride might indicate problems with seeking, experiencing, believing in, and testifying to Christian perfection (or the components thereof).

The Accounts Applied

We have thus far sketched Wesley's understanding of Christian perfection and identified two ways of understanding Aquinas' account of pride as "inordinate desire for one's own excellence." It is time to put these

³⁷On one such account, to be prideful is to have either an appetite for an excellence outside one's domain or an appetite for eminence; on another possible mixed account, to be prideful is to have both an appetite for excellence outside one's domain and an appetite for eminence; on a third possible mixed account, to be prideful is to have an appetite for eminence that produces an appetite for an excellence outside one's domain.

³⁸If one can seek, experience, believe in, and testify to one's own Christian perfection without satisfying either of the two components that make for a mixed account of pride (those two components being the domain and eminence accounts themselves), then one can seek, experience, and testify to Christian perfection without satisfying a mixed account of pride.

accounts together to determine whether Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification somehow runs afoul of the sin of pride. Given that pride, for Aquinas, is a matter of a corrupted appetite for excellence, the question is whether *experiencing* some aspect of entire sanctification, or *aiming at*, *believing in*, or *testifying to* one's own entire sanctification necessarily betrays or fosters a corrupted appetite for excellence.

If the domain account of pride is correct, we can easily see that the direct objection from pride fails: neither aiming at nor experiencing Christian perfection (or any component thereof) necessarily betrays or produces pride, for neither aiming at nor experiencing entire sanctification need involve or produce any sort of appetite for an excellence beyond one's appropriate domain. Recall that Wesley's entirely sanctified believer, while a wonder to behold, is no goddess on earth: she has weaknesses, suffers from ignorance, knows herself to be utterly dependent upon the Holy Spirit, and unintentionally transgresses divine law. To hope to be made into such a person is thus to hope to be made perfect in love as a (finite) human being, which is to say, within one's proper domain. The fact that the entirely sanctified believer commits no intentional sins (and so strives) is not problematic, here. For while "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), continuing in sin is not God's plan for human beings. Whether one takes Genesis 1–3 literally or not, Genesis 1–3 makes clear that human beings are not inherently sinful; the man and woman of Genesis 1–3 did not become human when they sinned. Similarly, Jesus' sinless state does not disqualify him from being human. Indeed, Jesus' sinlessness is what makes him fully human in the strongest sense: sinful humanity is corrupted humanity; sinless humanity is complete, full humanity. Thus, striving to "sin no more" or "love wholly" (and managing to do so) need not involve an appetite for an excellence that is not appropriate for human beings.³⁹ Likewise, a person

³⁹Interestingly, aiming to "sin no more" *need not* involve the pride of aiming above one's station even for those who may have had such an aim prior to the death and resurrection of Christ. To be sure, such an aim would at best be foolish or deeply deluded without the power over sin that the Holy Spirit offers on account of Christ, but so-striving would still not necessarily be a case of having an appetite for an excellence inappropriate to one's standing. Instead, the case might be analogous that of a native English speaker who strongly desires to learn Portuguese even though she lacks access to any means to do so (e.g., she knows no one who speaks both Portuguese and English; she knows of no helpful textbooks or software). Unless her situation changes, she will never learn Portuguese, but the domain interpretation does not say there is anything prideful about an

who believes in or testifies to her own entire sanctification need not desire any sort of excellence beyond what God has for her. The indirect objection thus also fails if we assume the domain account of pride.

Of course, the above discussion does not guarantee that (assuming the domain account is correct) all who seek, believe in, or testify to entire sanctification are innocent of the sin of pride. For instance, if one desires (seeks) to “sin no more” *and to be solely responsible for never again sinning*, one is aiming at an excellence (a type of moral autonomy) that is not appropriate for the dependent creatures that humans are. Those who specifically aim to live sinlessly autonomously (and thus would eschew or lament any divine aid offered) thus do fall to the sin of pride, on the domain interpretation. Self-caused goodness is an excellence reserved for God alone. Similar considerations apply when it comes to the issue of believing in or testifying to one’s own entire sanctification: while believing in or testifying to one’s own entire sanctification need not be motivated by an appetite for an excellence outside one’s domain, it could be so-motivated. Both our beliefs and our claims about ourselves often reflect our aspirations and hopes.⁴⁰ On the domain account, the person who believes in or testifies to his own entire sanctification out of an inappropriate aspiration, such as the aspiration for moral autonomy, is pride-

appetite for an excellence that one cannot access. On the domain interpretation, pride only occurs when one’s appetite is for an excellence that it would be inappropriate for one to access. Those who live pre-Christ thus in theory may, consistent with the domain interpretation, aim at entire sanctification without falling to the sin of pride. Still, one might argue that such individuals qualify as those who are “most to be pitied,” to borrow a phrase from Paul (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Those convinced that, without Christ, the aim to “sin no more” is inherently prideful have reason to reject the domain account of pride in favor of the eminence account, which is rooted in the work of Augustine. Of relevance in this discussion is Augustine’s contention that pagans cannot have true virtue in that the pagan pursuit of virtue is ultimately rooted in pride. The issue of whether or not Augustine is right ultimately comes down to the question of whether or not a pagan can pursue virtue out of love for God and neighbor rather than out of pride and love for self. For an excellent discussion of Augustine’s charge against pagan virtue (a charge he recognizes applies to hypocrites within the church as well) and a series of attempts to grapple with that charge, see Jennifer A. Herdt, *Putting on Virtue: A Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), esp. 45-56 and 66-71.

⁴⁰As Aquinas says (when discussing the close connection between exalted beliefs about the self and the vice of pride itself), “a man is ready to believe what he desires very much,” *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q 162, A3, ad. 2.

ful. But one who is simply “glorying in” the measure God has given that person and believes and testifies accordingly is not guilty of pride.

The ease of the above discussion suggests a crack in the domain account of pride. If avoiding pride merely requires restricting one’s appetite to those excellences that are appropriate to human beings (or human beings of one’s station), then avoiding pride looks too easy. This objection to the domain account is particularly pressing when one specifically considers the journey toward and in Christian perfection, an endeavor that, it must be admitted, is rife with temptations to pride. Indeed, according to Aquinas, pride is an *especially* enticing temptation for those who are pursuing or have achieved high moral development. Thus, Aquinas repeatedly warns that virtue and good deeds present an “occasion for pride.” What is more, good deeds and virtue are the only excellences that he specifically mentions by name as providing an occasion for pride!⁴¹ Aquinas further states that, ironically, a person can even be proud of his humility!⁴² Somehow, then, the *excellence of virtue* itself, an excellence perfectly appropriate for human beings, creates an occasion for pride, the *vicious* appetite for excellence. Calvin’s concern is not without warrant! The connection between pride and good deeds thus needs to be further explored, but it can only be adequately explored if we move past the domain account of pride and its exclusive focus on which excellences one pursues (e.g., virtue/a life free from sin). What we need is the eminence account of pride, which attends to why and how one pursues those excellences.

Consider a person who not only desires not to sin in the future, he wishes he had never sinned in the past. Note that while it is clear from this description that the person in question has an appetite for sinlessness, it is not at all yet clear whether this person suffers from the vice of pride. On the one hand, all human beings are called to repent of their sins, which implies possessing a negative attitude toward their own past sins. Such a repentant attitude, far from being prideful, is essential to spiritual rebirth. On the other hand, if the person in question resents his status as a person who has sinned, such an (also) negative attitude toward his own sin would betray pride. Since both the repentant person and the resentful person, in wishing never to have sinned, show themselves to

⁴¹*Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q 162, A 2, ad. 3; II-II, Q 162, A5, ad. 3; II-II Q 162, A 6, ad. 1.

⁴²*Summa Theologiae* II-II, Q 162, A 5, ad. 3.

have an appetite for sinlessness, the appetite for sinlessness cannot be dismissed as inappropriate for humans *tout court*. It cannot even be dismissed as inappropriate for humans who have already sinned (and hence who have no chance of ever seeing that appetite fulfilled). What makes it the case that the resentful person, but not the repentant one, suffers from pride is not the specific excellence that is desired or even the history of the desirer (as one who has sinned), but the way in which the excellence of sinlessness is desired. The repentant person desires sinlessness out of love for holiness, God, and his victims; the resentful person desires sinlessness *as status*. The person who desires excellence beyond his domain is thus not at fault for desiring a good that is not appropriate to him; he is at fault when the reason he desires such a good is that he desires to surpass others or when he resents a way in which others (including God) surpass him. Similarly, the person who wants to be "like God" out of pure love and even reverence for God is to be distinguished from the person who wishes to be "like God" out of dissatisfaction with God's sovereignty.

The contrast between resentment and repentance brings out the heart of the temptation to pride that the eminence account recognizes as lying in wait for any person who pursues Christian perfection. The temptation is to treat Christian perfection itself as a status, an excellence to be valued for the way in which it makes one superior to others (the non-sanctified) and/or apparently lessens the ontological gap between self and God. One (correctly) thinks of entire sanctification as an excellence and (perversely) desires this excellence as eminence. Or, in the case of the person who is not merely pursuing the virtues but has acquired them, one comes to value these virtues for the way in which they separate the self from others and apparently narrow the gap between self and God. One values an objective excellence at least in part for the sake of eminence.

For reasons connected to both human psychology and the human *telos*, this temptation to pride (from virtue) is ironically likely to be especially pressing for those well along on the path of moral development. The better we are at something relative to other human beings, the stronger the temptation to view the particular excellence we possess as the grounds of overall superiority and to value that excellence for this (real or apparent) superiority-conferring feature. Thus, it is possible for both an athletically gifted person and a physically weak person to think of athleticism as an indicator of individual worth and desire athletic excellence accordingly. The prideful strong athlete will glory in her superiority; the prideful weak athlete will resentfully lament her inferiority. Yet

the more gifted athlete is more likely to view physical strength in this privileged way in the first place: this person is more invested in what is, for her, a self-inflating conception of personal worth and is accordingly more tempted to cling to it and the comforting feeling of superiority it provides. While, strictly speaking, almost any excellence one possesses can present this temptation to pride, the temptation will be especially strong when the excellence that one possesses is high moral achievement. Virtue and good deeds are not like musical or athletic skill, excellences that are genuine excellences but that say nothing about personal worth. While possession of the virtues does not make one person more ontologically valuable or more beloved of God than any other person, moral excellence is an excellence unlike any other in terms of its overall significance.⁴³ The special pride temptation facing those well on their way to Christian perfection is to value virtue for this special superiority-conferring status rather than solely for the sake of the values at the heart of the virtues themselves. (One increases in glory when one increases in love, but one's own glory is not at all the point or value of love!)

If the eminence account is able to recognize the pressing temptations facing anyone who has or aims at Christian perfection, the eminence account also suggests a way out: a person may non-pridefully seek, experience, believe in, and testify to her own entire sanctification provided she does not value Christian perfection for its status (i.e., superiority) conducting features, as a kind of merit-badge to surpass all merit-badges. Note that, in this vein, it is not enough not to desire Christian perfection *primarily* for its status-conferring features; to avoid pride, the pursuer of virtue must not value Christian perfection *at all* for its status-conferring features. The purpose of the virtues is not *at all* to provide some sort of ranking system for human beings. Anyone who values or seeks them for the sake of eminence is thus misusing the virtues, treating them as private goods rather than common goods.

Interestingly, several features of Wesley's account of Christian perfection may help to guard against the temptation to treat Christian perfection as valuable for the sake of eminence. In the first place, as Wesley emphasizes, Christian perfection does nothing to remove human fini-

⁴³To appreciate this point, we need only remind ourselves that Romans 3:22–23 tells us, “For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” and not, say, “For there is no distinction, since all have physically tired and fall short of the glory of God.”

tude: ignorance, weakness, dependency, and vulnerability remain at the heart of the human condition, including the condition of the fully sanctified. This finitude goes all the way down to moral weakness, limitation, and dependency. Thus, the fully sanctified believer continues to commit unintentional but genuine acts of injustice that require forgiveness. He is vulnerable to committing even intentional sins in the future: Christian perfection is a fragile state, so that any person who has reached this state must have relied on the power of the Holy Spirit in the past and must continue to rely on that power in the future to remain in this state. Moreover, even the fully sanctified believer has room to grow in virtue. Possession of all virtues does not imply full possession of all virtues. This state is, quite transparently, not a state that closes the ontological gap between self and God. And while this state does elevate one above most other humans on the admittedly specially significant dimension of morality, on this very same dimension, the fully sanctified continue to share with all other humans the need for forgiveness and moral improvement. Reminding oneself of the above components of Christian perfection is one practical step one can take to flee the temptations to pride associated with the pursuit of entire sanctification. When one spells out the components of Wesley's entire sanctification, entire sanctification no longer looks like the sort of merit badge that separates the winners from the losers. We all turn out to be much more closely connected than the term "perfection" might have suggested.

A second practical step for countering pride even while pursuing Christian perfection is to take a page from Aquinas and self-consciously treat moral development as the common good that it is. Pride is a zero-sum game and treats sanctification accordingly. To the prideful, another person's increase in virtue is a threat to the self and the significance of one's own moral achievement and worth. The way out is to invest oneself in others' moral development and thereby learn to celebrate their victories. In addition to investing in others, one can also learn to appreciate sanctification as the common good it is by taking time to acknowledge and cultivate gratitude for the role others play in one's own growth. The corporate dimension of holiness thus serves as an antidote to the privatizing perversion of pride.

Christian perfection is not a competition but a grace-dependent, communal, cooperative enterprise. This truth, while obvious when spelled out, is easy to ignore. The ease with which we forget this truth may explain not only why Christian perfection carries with it a serious

temptation to pride but also why many have assumed that the concept of Christian perfection is necessarily tied to pride. When either the direct or indirect pride objections to Christian perfection come from a person of goodwill, the objector may be implicitly assuming that only a person seeking to advance the self relative to other people or God would seek (or testify to or believe she has experienced) such a state. In other words, the objector is (naïvely) thinking of moral development as a competition. Clarifying that no part of the doctrine of Christian perfection rejoices at its rarity—and that indeed the good news of the doctrine is the widespread availability of Christ's power over sin⁴⁴—can go a long way to assuage such well-intentioned concerns.

When the pride objections come from a person of ill-will, the objector, too, is likely implicitly assuming that Christian perfection is a competition that the seeker hopes to win (or that the testifier claims to have won). The difference between this assumption in the person of ill-will versus the person of goodwill, however, is that the person of ill-will resents the thought that others might “beat” her by achieving Christian perfection, which is why she does not want to grant it as a possibility. Wesley describes such a person of ill-will when he speaks of those who hear the doctrine of Christian perfection and then ask to be shown an example of a person made perfect in this life. Wesley's response hits hard, “If I knew one here, I would not tell you; for you do not inquire out of love. You are like Herod; you only seek the young child to slay it.”⁴⁵ The person of ill-will, too, thus needs to be reminded that we must watch ourselves for “implicit envy at those who speak of higher attainments than our own”⁴⁶ and remember that neither the fully sanctified believer nor the doctrine of entire sanctification that recognizes the possibility or existence of such believers is a threat to anyone's worth.

A final issue that needs to be addressed pertains to that form of the indirect objection from pride that is specifically concerned with *testifying to one's own entire sanctification*. What shall we say of a person who so-testifies? The first point to be made is that, as with the desire for entire sanctification, while a person could falsely testify to such a state out of pride (perhaps she cannot bear acknowledging anyone as above herself), a

⁴⁴Wesley calls entire sanctification, “the glorious privilege of every Christian,” in “A Plain Account,” *Works*, 11:376.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 11:391.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

person might instead testify to it out of vulnerability and a desire to see holiness in others. In the latter case, the testifier knowingly risks making himself “a mark for all to shoot at”⁴⁷ (and, indeed, a mark that might yet fall given the fragility of Christian perfection) out of a higher desire to declare the power of God available to all. Still, there is an important difference between aiming at and testifying to entire sanctification: all are called to pursue sanctification, but it does not follow that all who experience entire sanctification are called to testify to it. Wesley emphasizes that much wisdom is needed when it comes to decisions about such testimony,⁴⁸ and we can draw on the example of the Apostle Paul to understand why such wisdom is necessary. Paul is well-aware of the dangers of boasting: that it can flow from self-deception (Galatians 6:3) and that it is often a fool’s errand insofar as it involves glorying in rubbish (2 Corinthians 12:11 and Philippians 3:8). Nonetheless, despite these critical remarks, Paul is willing—when the occasion warrants it—to recount his Jewish credentials and his extensive history of suffering as a way of buttressing his own authority and so advancing the gospel (2 Corinthians 11:16-33, Philippians 3:4-11). Rebecca DeYoung recognizes a similar tension in Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount when it comes to the question of whether our good works ought to be placed on display for others to see:⁴⁹

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, *so that they may see your good works* and give glory to your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16, emphasis mine)

Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, *so that your alms may be done in secret*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matthew 6:1-4, emphasis mine)

⁴⁷Ibid., 11:391.

⁴⁸Ibid., 397-8.

⁴⁹Rebecca Konydyk DeYoung, *Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and their Remedies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2009), 72-73.

If we apply the above passages (both those by Paul and those from Matthew) to the issue at hand, we can say that, while there are dangers in testifying to one's own entire sanctification, dangers that should lead one to "beware" and tread lightly, such testimony may (in certain circumstances) serve to glorify God and advance the kingdom, purposes that may make such testimony imperative.

We have seen that, if a Thomistic account of pride is correct, Wesley's understanding of Christian perfection can be pursued, experienced, believed in, and claimed without being undermined by the sin of pride. If we take Aquinas as saying that pride is a matter of pursuing excellences that are inappropriate to one's station, pride is avoided provided one simply desires for oneself what God desires for all people: a Spirit-empowered life free from sin. If we take Aquinas as saying that pride is a matter of allowing a desire for eminence to shape (in any way) one's desire for excellence, avoiding pride while pursuing, experiencing, believing in, or testifying to one's own entire sanctification will be much more difficult. It is extremely tempting to treat the virtues themselves as valuable for the way in which they separate the self from others, and growth in virtue itself strengthens this temptation in an important way. Nonetheless, through grace this temptation can be resisted: one can value the virtues for their own sake and not at all for any real or imagined value they confer upon their possessor relative to others, and one can do so while pursuing entire sanctification, experiencing entire sanctification, recognizing oneself as having experienced entire sanctification, and testifying to such an experience. Thus, no matter which way we interpret Aquinas, pride ought not be regarded as a necessary failing of those who pursue, experience, believe in, or testify to their own entire sanctification.⁵⁰

⁵⁰Many thanks to Chris Bounds and Burnie Reynolds for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

CRAFTED AND CO-OPTED: THE EARLY CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE'S SELECTIVE AND SELF-SERVING USE OF THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF JOHN WESLEY

by

Bernie A. Van De Walle

Founded in 1887, The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) was instituted as an intentionally interdenominational, non-ecclesiastical body dedicated to both the exigent promotion and practice of the “Deeper Life” and the equally urgent evangelization of the world. Consequently, the C&MA sought the support and involvement of those from the wide variety of evangelical Protestant theological traditions, especially people who resonated with this two-fold commitment. In order to maintain its focus on these two pressing tasks, the early C&MA refused, at least officially, to entertain debate on historic Protestant theological dispute and particularly those associated with the distinctions between Calvinism and Arminianism. It was believed that to do so would be to invite distraction and division, either of which would, at best, distract this group from attending to the swift completion of the tasks set before it. This posture was not merely the unspoken mood of the organization, it was explicitly stated in the original constitutions of both The Christian Alliance and The Evangelical Missionary Alliance, the precursors of the contemporary C&MA. This stance would be enunciated repeatedly, explicitly, and in detail.¹

¹The following are only a sample of this kind of articulation of the early Alliance's desire for diversity. “It was distinctly understood when the Alliance was organized that there was to be no controversy on the questions of church government, baptism, feet washing, Calvinism, Arminianism, etc., on which the various evangelical bodies are divided, but we were simply to agree to differ. The points essential to our united testimony are Salvation, Sanctification, Divine Healing and the Lord's Coming.” “Editorial,” *The Christian Alliance*, 25:12, March 31, 1906, 185. “THEN further, we must learn to be adjusted to one another and to all the varieties of religious opinion and experience which must arise in so varied a work so far as they are not incompatible with our faithfulness to evangelical truth and true spiritual life. We must not expect that all our brethren will teach

(Continued on following page)

This posture, however, does not mean that in order to achieve its goal of unified ministry the movement wholly ignored the theological and practical contributions of central figures associated with these historic movements. It most certainly did not. The pages of early Alliance publications are replete with references to notable figures of Church history and, in particular, figures associated with both sides of this historic divide. In particular, it meant that the C&MA did not altogether disregard the theological and practical perspectives of John Wesley (1703–1791), the founder of Methodism and, more to the point, a noted Arminian. The question, then, is not so much if the Alliance has used the theological and practical contributions of Wesley. Instead, the question is, “How has it done so?” That is, given the “fraternal”² posture of the C&MA and its desire to include Calvinists and Arminians alike, how did it employ Wesley?

(Continued from previous page)

the doctrine of the deeper life and the experience of entire sanctification in precisely the same phrases? If we hold Arminian theories we must not quarrel with our Calvinistic [*sic*] brethren. If we have learned the full significance of Christian baptism as a deeper death and resurrection with Christ we must not quarrel with our brethren who do not so believe, nor see anything unscriptural in infant baptism. If we have received some special manifestation of the Holy Spirit through the sovereign grace of God’ this does not justify us in sitting in judgment on our brethren to whom the Holy One has manifested Himself in some different way, or compelling them as a condition of communion to have exactly the same experience as we. Nor are we justified in discarding our missionary obligations because our own peculiar views and experiences are not perfectly represented by some of the workers or leaders. God, has called us in the Alliance not to a thousand minor points of testimony, but to stand together for certain great essentials, principles and aims, the fullness [*sic*] of Jesus, the evangelization of the world and the hastening of His coming. Surely this is sufficient to enable us to keep rank and to be of one heart to make Jesus King.” “Editorial,” *The Alliance Witness*, 38:8, May 25, 1912, 113.

Even when the periodicals would contain biased presentations, they seemed to sense the need to apologize or issue a disclaimer. “Having printed both sides of this controversy, to do no injustice, we wish now to say that both articles are out of keeping with the purpose of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, which regards the questions between Arminians and Calvinists, and the various theological controversies that divide the Churches, as open questions. Our testimony is distinct from that altogether, and has reference only to Christ our Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer, and coming Lord.” “Editorial,” *The Christian Alliance*, 26:14, October 6, 1906, 211.

²The hope that the Alliance would be marked by this “fraternal” disposition is explicitly stated in the founding constitution of The Christian Alliance and, though not explicit, present in the founding constitution of The Evangelical Missionary Alliance, the precursors of The Christian and Missionary Alliance.

Through an investigation of early Alliance publications, particularly those printed during the lifetime of their founder, Albert Benjamin Simpson (1843–1919), this article will show that while the early Alliance periodicals both referred to and cited John Wesley often, (even identifying him on at least one occasion as a “Christian Hero”) their use was both limited and purposive.³ When they referenced Wesley, they spoke of him, primarily, in one of three distinct ways: 1) They identified him as an example of upstanding Christian piety; 2) They referenced him as one whose own practical and theological positions endorsed central Alliance emphases; 3) They recognized him as a pioneer and promoter of foreign missions. Not surprisingly and in line with the organization’s historic cooperative disposition, Alliance publications avoided those aspects of Wesley’s theology and practice that would either challenge existent Alliance theology and practice or serve as an agitation within its multi-denominational corporation. Given that the periodicals were created and designed to be instruments for the explicit promotion and diffusion of these ideas and causes, this selective and restrictive use of Wesley (or of any other figure for that matter) should come as no surprise.⁴

***Praised for his practice of piety, the secret of his spiritual power*⁵**

Beyond what he did and what he taught (which we will cover in due course), Alliance authors esteemed Wesley as a man of exemplary character and piety. First, Alliance authors exalted Wesley for the complete dedication of himself and his resources to the work of God. J. R. Miller noted that what made Wesley (and others) “so remarkable was, not their exceptional talents, but an absolute consecration of their talents to God.”⁶ He

³A.B.D., “John Wesley: A Christian Hero,” *The Word, Work, and World*, 8:2, February 1887, 90-94. John Robertson, “The Unused Resources of the Church Militant,” *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 22:2, January 1899, 36.

⁴The C&MA periodical had variously described itself early on as being “Designed as a cheap and popular channel for the Fellowship and Cooperation of all who believe in the Gospel of Full Salvation” (e.g., *The Christian Alliance*, 2:4, April 1889, 49) and “Designed as a cheap and popular channel for the Fellowship and Co-operation of all who believe in the Gospel of Full Salvation and Long, Labor and Pray for the Evangelization of the World.” *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 4:24, June 13, 1890, 369.

⁵Notes that “the secret of John Wesley’s greatness was ‘not his ability as a statesman, an orator, or a poet, but it was his deep spiritual power.’” No author, “Prayer and Praise,” *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 29:1, July 5, 1902, 14.

⁶J. R. Miller in “Best Thoughts from the Best Authors,” *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 33:14, September 10, 1904, 230.

was recognized for self-identifying as being fully dedicated to the work of God and was acknowledged by others as God's "chosen instrument."⁷

While Wesley was renowned for his success in revivalistic work, Alliance authors were sure to note that this success was not primarily the product of Wesley's practical talents. First, they noted that Wesley's success, in all fields of endeavor, was grounded in his reverence for and dependence upon scripture. George Pardington, an Alliance theologian with Wesleyan-Methodist roots and training, declared that Wesley's success in the area of revival was "attended by a revival of the study of the Word of God. The latter oftentimes produces the former."⁸ Second, and closely coupled to the first, Alliance authors lauded Wesley's commitment to Christian disciplines and, particularly, his commitment to prayer. According to F. H. Senft, who would serve later as president of the C&MA, "Wesley . . . spent two hours daily in prayer, and often more than this. He began at four in the morning. One who knew him well says of him: 'He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else, and I have seen him come from his closet with a serenity of face next to shining.'⁹ In the same way, others suggested that John, his brother Charles, and their colleagues had "spent nights in prayer, before the revival fires fell under their ministry" for it was due to [these times of prayer] that [the] power and glory of God came."¹⁰ Another author, describing the relation of the revivals to Wesley's commitment to prayer wrote, "Wesley moved things mightily because he moved God mightily."¹¹ Yet, as others

⁷John Wesley, "For the Fulness [sic] of Love," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 25(35):13, April 7, 1906, 203-4. R. Wheatley, "Characteristics of Prominent Workers," *The Word, Work, and World*, 5:12, December, 1883, 327; God raised up Wesley (and others) for his purpose. (George P. Pardington, "Esther Pleading for Her People," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 23:18, September 30, 1899, 282.

⁸George P. Pardington, "Jehoshaphat's Good Reign," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 21:12, September 21, 1898, 279; no author, "A Great Centenary: The British and Foreign Bible Society Celebrating Its Centennial," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 31:17, April 25, 1903, 223.

⁹F. H. Senft, "The Place and Power of Prayer in the Gospel Ministry," *The Alliance Weekly*, 40:6, May 10, 1913, 85.

¹⁰Notes from a sermon preached by A. C. Dixon (at Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle), "The Glory of the Lord," *The Alliance Weekly*, 41:2, October 11, 1913, 20. "John Wesley, his brother Charles, and their associates spent nights in prayer, and the revival fires fell." F. H. Senft, "Sacrifice and Glory," *The Alliance Weekly*, 50:17, July 27, 1918, 260.

¹¹Walter H. Oldfield, "Some Essential Points in a Foreign Worker's Equipment," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 33:24, November 12, 1904, 376.

have described, the main desire of Wesley's prayer was for the outpouring of God's Spirit and, therefore, he understood that the one that prayer ultimately informs and moves is not God but the one praying.¹²

In spite of his success and renown as a revivalist, Alliance authors were sure to identify humility and, therefore, contentment as indelible marks of Wesley's life and work. They remarked that this attitude expressed itself in Wesley's aversion to complaint and worry.¹³ One author wrote, "John Wesley said a child of God had no more right to grumble than to curse or swear."¹⁴ Wesley is quoted by another as saying, "By the grace of God, I will never fret; I repine at nothing; I am discontented with nothing."¹⁵ Beyond that, it was said that it was Wesley's desire not even to surround himself with others who would do so. So unpleasant would he find such company be that it would be "like tearing the flesh off [his] bones."¹⁶ Alliance authors repeatedly recognized that Wesley's humility also manifested itself in frugality concerning his own needs and, con-

¹²No author, "Prayer," *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 3:10, October 4, 1889, 153; "Every revival hitherto has left as a permanent deposit some new truth which had previously been either unknown or disregarded. Thus the Reformation emphasized justification by faith. Wesley brought forward the office of the Holy Spirit. Jonathan Edwards developed the sovereignty of God, Finney the importance of personal responsibility, and Moody salvation by grace." Pardington, "The Law of Love," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 31:14, April 4, 1903, 190. Wesley on prayer: "Prayer is no so much to inform God as to inform ourselves; not so much to move God, as the means God uses to move us." Quoted in "Jottings," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 27:7, February 16, 1907, 80.

¹³"John Wesley said a child of God had no more right to grumble than to curse or swear." Charles Inglis, "Heavenly Citizenship," 49:17, *The Alliance Weekly*, January 26, 1918, 263. "John Wesley declared that he was as much afraid to fret as he was to swear, and that the one was well-nigh as sinful as the other." Jesse Gilbert, "The Grace of Patience," *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly*, 13:22, November 30, 1894, 514.

¹⁴Charles Inglis, "Heavenly Citizenship," *The Alliance Weekly*, 49:17, January 26, 1918, 263.

¹⁵No author, Untitled, *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 27:7, February 16, 1907, 76.

¹⁶C. Murray, "Ask and It Shall Be Given You," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 27:7, February 16, 1907, 76.

versely, his generosity to others.¹⁷ In the same vein, A. B. Simpson, who was born, raised, and trained in the Presbyterian tradition, praised Wesley's dedication to forgiveness, even at personal cost.¹⁸ Finally, Wesley was honored by early Alliance authors not merely for his dependence upon Christ but for recognizing Him as the lone source for all his needs: Wesley was praised for his commitment to the sufficiency of Christ, a fundamental Alliance emphasis.¹⁹ In sum, Alliance authors saw Wesley as one who trusted in Christ as his "all in all," as the supply for both his physical and his spiritual needs.²⁰ For more than one Alliance writer, and particularly for Simpson, Wesley's realization of the sufficiency of Christ is no more clearly iterated than in his dying words: "best of all, God is with us."²¹

¹⁷No author, "The Home Missionary," *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 4:18, May 2, 1890, 328; No author, "Missionary News," *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 7:19, November 13, 1891, 302; no author, "Seven Ways of Giving," *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly*, 12:14, April 6, 1894, 377; A. T. Pierson, "Christ as the Christian's Centre," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 18:5, January 29, 1897, 105; Albert B. Simpson, "Burden Bearing," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 26:16, April 20, 1901, 215; Simpson, "Live in My Love," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 27:8, August 24, 1901, 112.

¹⁸Albert B. Simpson, "Free Grace," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 26:13, March 30, 1901, 181.

¹⁹Joseph W. Kemp, "The Soul in Despondency," *The Alliance Weekly*, 49:22, March 2, 1918, 340.

²⁰It is interesting to note that Alliance authors also link the idea of the all-sufficiency of Christ to the hymns of Charles Wesley. Frederick W. Troy, "The Secret of Happiness," 33:12, August 20, 1904, 180; Joseph W. Kemp, "The Soul in Despondency," *The Alliance Weekly*, 49:22, March 2, 1918, 340. Mary Glover Davies, "The Discipline of Faith," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 29:3, October 19, 1907, 40.

²¹A.B.D., "John Wesley: A Christian Hero," *The Word, Work, and World*, 8:2, February 1887, 94; Simpson, "Workers of the Restoration," *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 10:14, April 7, 1893, 217; Simpson, "The Transformation," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 31:6, July 11, 1903, 72; Simpson, "The Incarnation Sign," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 33:31, December 31, 1904, 482; F. E. Marsh, "Here and There," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 38:14, July 6, 1912, 213; Albert B. Simpson, "Faith's Ladder," *The Alliance Weekly*, 40:10, June 7, 1913, 148; F. H. Senft, "Closing Days in England and Homeward Voyage," *The Alliance Weekly*, 41:2, October 11, 1913, 27; Albert B. Simpson, "The Incarnation Message," *The Alliance Weekly*, 47:12, December 23, 1916, 178; Albert B. Simpson, "Transformation," *The Alliance Weekly*, 51:22, March 1, 1919, 338.

Praised for his emphasis on the work of salvation

Not only did authors associated with The Christian and Missionary Alliance extol Wesley's character and piety with equal, if not surpassed vigor, they praised him for his teaching and work in regard to salvation. For this reason, he was identified by Simpson as "the leader of the Great Awakening of the 18th century" and by another as a leader of the "second Reformation."²² Ultimately, one author said that what Wesley accomplished in this area was returning the attention of the Church to the work of the Holy Spirit.²³

The admiration for Wesley's work in this area rises from his promotion and treatment of two distinct but related topics. This dual emphasis is recognized as constituting the essence of Wesley's teaching and ministry. Naturally, the churches started by Wesley were also noted as bearing or having borne this two-fold emphasis. Among Alliance authors, these emphases were labelled variously as the "two great watchwords," an emphasis on "the Salvation of Sinners, the Sanctification of Believers," a mission which was both "to evangelize and to elevate," and a work that "saved from the guilt and penalty of sin, [and] that they might be delivered from the power of sin."²⁴ William Coit Stevens, another Presbyterian closely associated with the C&MA, wrote that this two-fold emphasis was evident in the famous hymn of Charles Wesley (1707–1788), John's brother, where he says that God "wilt my guilty soul forgive, My fallen soul renew."²⁵

²²Simpson, "The Story of the Reformation," *The Word, Work, and World*, 3:11 & 12, November and December, 1883, 163. No author, "Centenary of American Methodism," *The Word, Work, and World*, 5:1, January, 1885, 13; Wesley is identified as a reformer on par with and similar to Ezra and Nehemiah, John the Baptist, Luther, etc. George P. Pardington, "Keeping the Sabbath," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 23:25, November 18, 1899, 399.

²³Quoting A. J. Gordon: "Remember that revivals of religion always cluster around the restoration to prominence of neglected truths." "Wesley proclaimed holiness of heart that the inward witness of the Spirit." (no author, "Baptist Convention at Brooklyn," *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 5:22, December 5, 1890, 345; Wesley is identified as one of the "church reformers" who had great faith to "awaken a slumbering Christendom." George B. Peck, "Faith's Punctuation Marks," *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly*, 12:9, March 2, 1894, 233.

²⁴"Work of the Churches," *The Word, Work, and World*, 1:3 March 1882, 114. R. Wheatley, "Gospel Work Among the Masses," *The Word, Work, and World*, 5:6, June, 1883, 169. W. Russell, "The Fours Alls in Missions," *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly*, 2:5, February 2, 1894, 131.

²⁵Wm. C. Stevens, "Sanctification," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 30:5, May 2, 1908, 75.

As noted earlier, Simpson declared that Wesley was a “pioneer” in “revival work.”²⁶ In this pioneering work, Wesley was commended for highlighting the necessity of regeneration and its fundamental role in Christian experience.²⁷ More particularly, however, the greater emphasis in Alliance publications was on the latter of the two, Wesley’s teaching in regard to the normative role of sanctification in God’s saving work.²⁸ Wesley, it was noted, recognized that Christian sanctification is of two types: the first, associated with justification but, more importantly and far more often, his emphasis was on the second kind.²⁹ It was this second type that was recognized as the core and distinguishing feature of Wesley’s very successful preaching and teaching ministry and it is here that he particularly resonates with historic Alliance teaching and emphasis. Repeatedly, contributors to Alliance periodicals applauded Wesley for teaching that this

²⁶Simpson, “Progressive Christianity,” *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 10:4, January 27, 1893, 53.

²⁷“Wesley [was] sent [by God] to teach a formal age the necessity of regeneration and Christian experience. . . .” Albert B. Simpson, “Our Trust,” *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 34:9, May 28, 1910, 143; Simpson, “Our Trust,” CMA, 34:24, September 10, 1910, 385; “In the Wesleys’ days the work of God’s Spirit in regeneration and sanctification was emphasized.” J. Charles Crawford, “A Prayer Revival,” *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 37:2, October 14, 1911, 19; C. F. Wimberly notes that Wesley taught that the divine grace of regeneration was fundamental to salvation and that the various spiritual disciplines and such have their roles but do not precede this. C. F. Wimberly, “Do They Need Regeneration?” *The Alliance Weekly*, 52:25, September 13, 1919, 390; No author, “Centenary of American Methodism,” *The Word, the Work, and the World*, 5:1, January 1885, 13.

²⁸George B. Peck, “The Scriptural View of Divine Healing a Common Sense View,” *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly*, 17:16 & 17, October 16 & 23, 1896, 356; as God used Luther to save us from Romanism, “He used John Wesley to restore the great and glorious doctrine of entire sanctification, wrought by the Holy Ghost through the cleansing blood, instantaneously received by simple faith for that mighty work.” No author, “A New Commentary on the New Testament,” *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 22:5, April 1899, 160; “To Wesley and the Wesleyans He gave responsibility to stand for the doctrine of holiness and an unworldly life.” “Editorials,” *The Alliance Weekly*, 52:22, August 23, 1919, 337.

²⁹Rayner Pardington, a Methodist clergyman and father of Alliance leader and theologian, George P. Pardington, notes that Wesley stated, “The term sanctified is continually applied by St. Paul to all persons that were justified. By this term alone he rarely if ever means saved from *all* sin, and therefore, it is not proper to use it in that sense without adding the words wholly, entirely.” Rayner Pardington, “Christian Holiness,” *The Christian Alliance*, 1:12, December 1888, 181.

kind of sanctification, while related to justification and regeneration, was a work of God that began subsequent to them.³⁰ Beyond that, Alliance writers stressed that Wesley taught that sanctification was received by a discrete act of faith just as was the case for justification and regeneration.³¹ Further, Wesley was identified as a key voice in emphasizing the normative (the will of God for all who are regenerate) and necessary (addressing human needs not addressed in justification) nature of sanctification.³² In promoting this understanding of sanctification, Wesley was credited with resisting and seeking to overcome a number of obstacles that sincere faith of the day was facing: Christian indifference, "frigid externalism," "ritualism," formalism, and pessimism and its attendant "impossibilities."³³

³⁰D. B. Strouse, "Keswick, Northfield, Nyack, and the Holiness Movement," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 26:22, June 1, 1901, 300; Frank N. Riale, "The Vision that Sets Men Free," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 32:7, January 23, 1904, 106.

³¹"Wesley said: 'Exactly as we are justified by faith, we are sanctified by faith.' It is the same faith, in the same God, for different experiences." Abbie C. Moore, "Sanctification," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 20:7, February 16, 1898, 154.

³²The author says that Wesley discovered that "this is the will of God even your sanctification." (1 Thess 4:3) "Notes from the Home Field," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 32:5, May 1, 1909, 85. Even as a minister, Wesley felt, personally, the need for further conversion. Frank N. Riale, "The Vision that Sets Men Free," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 32:7, January 23, 1904, 106.

³³The Church of England of which Wesley was a part, while respectable, "was empty of Christ" "when Wesley appeared." Rayner Pardington, "The Church of Laodicea in Modern Times," *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly*, 16:2, January 10, 1896, 31; G. Palmer Pardington, "Paul Opposed at Ephesus," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 19:7, August 11, 1897, 159; no author, "Jesus Rejected at Nazareth," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 32:6, January 9, 1904, 79. "John Wesley was also a man of ONE IDEA. His was 'The Witness of the Spirit.' In an age of frigid externalism, it was absolutely necessary to put forth an urgent plea for internal piety." W. Russell, "One Idea," 12:10, March 9, 1894, 262. Wesley's ministry described as "irregular" because "it disturbed the sea of ritualism from which was rising a paralyzing miasma, as to say that the truth of our Lord's Coming is irregular, because it disturbs a Laodicean church." W. Russell, "A Sad Delusion, Revisited," *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly*, 12:16, April 20, 1894, 426. Albert B. Simpson, "Our Trust," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 34:9, May 28, 1910, 143; W. B. Riley, "The Kingdom of God," *Living Truths*, 6:4, April 1906, 211.

Wesley believed that some of the "(weak children of God) will oppose the doctrine of holiness, saying: 'It is impossible, that is too much, no one can be holy here,' thus making God a hard and cruel taskmaster demanding impossibilities." D. L. Clark, "Satan's Doctrines," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 35:21, February 18, 1911, 325.

Alliance publications were also sure to praise Wesley for the priority that he gave to the practical pursuit of sanctification: discipleship. In an era that highlighted the work of the evangelist, the inaugural issue of the periodical that would come to serve as the Alliance's official organ, the other great revivalist of Wesley's own era, George Whitefield, was cited as declaring that an emphasis on evangelism "which does not reorganize and provide for the subsequent nurture of its converts is unscriptural to that extent, and must prove, in proportion, unsatisfactory and impermanent."³⁴ Furthermore, Whitefield was reported to have said that while he had been given as many souls as Wesley, the latter's organizational efforts in regard to the discipling of new converts meant "[the] result is that his work remains an abiding power, and much of mine has proved a rope of sand."³⁵ This commitment to discipleship, it was said, explains Wesley's involvement in an early form of Sunday School.³⁶

Finally, Alliance authors repeatedly asserted that Wesley's emphasis and distinct teaching on sanctification would cause him to be sidelined and harshly persecuted by the established church of his day. It was also just as surely suggested, however, that it was this persecution and its attendant driving of Wesley into the "highways and byways" that, in the economy of God, led to the expansion and proper focus of his ministry.³⁷ For these

³⁴No author, "The Church's Commission," *The Word, Work, and World*, 1:1, January 1882, 23.

³⁵"And the evangelization which does not reorganize and provide for the subsequent nurture of its converts is unscriptural to that extent, and must prove, in proportion, unsatisfactory and impermanent." No author, "The Church's Commission," *The Word, Work, and World*, 1:1, January 1882, 23. The same Whitfield story is told on at least one other occasion in early Alliance periodicals. No author, "New York Christian Alliance," *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 5:9, September 5, 1890, 129–130. "Then God raised up George Whitfield and John Wesley to preach the doctrine of regeneration and a life of holiness. Wesley proved the better organizer of the two, and at his death seventy thousand followers all over England were ready to crystalize around his name as witnesses of the new gospel of life and power; while a far larger number in all the churches were quickened into life by the great Revival." no author, "Centenary of American Methodism," *The Word, Work, and World*, 5:1, January, 1885, 13. See also No author, editorial, 43:5, October 31, 1914, 66.

³⁶No author, "First Sunday-School in the World," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 18:23, June 4, 1897, 551; no author, "General Notes: The First Sunday-School," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 19:4, July 21, 1897, 89.

³⁷"While John Wesley attempted to preach a crucifixion of the flesh by means of a dead formalism and a dead ecclesiasticism, under the auspices of an

authors, rather than being a sign of shame, Wesley's persecution was to be understood as an emblem of his righteousness and as a badge of honor.

Identified as a Supporter of Divine Healing

Given that the doctrine of divine healing is not normally identified as a major subject of either Wesley's teaching or practice, the frequency with which early Alliance periodicals refer to him in regard to its legitimacy is significant. The mentions of Wesley's support of the doctrine are relatively numerous and focus on both the doctrine's theology and practice.³⁸

Established Church; a church whose ideals did not rise higher than gowns, miters, litanies, genuflections, and orders, things moved harmoniously. He was a faithful servant of the church, just a bit overzealous, that was all; incurable but harmless. But when the real power came upon him and the hungry multitudes thronged him for the bread of life, the whole religious machinery of England became aroused and indignant. Had Mr. Wesley lived two centuries earlier, he would have paid the same penalty as that of Joan of Arc or Savonarola; but his religious brethren very assiduously applied the faggots of slander and anathema. When he was without power he was patronized and promoted; with power he was driven from the privileges of his own church into the highways and byways by angry mobs, incited by lazy, drunken, fox-hunting parsons. He had power—and he paid for it." C. F. Wimberly, "Penalty of Power," *The Alliance Weekly*, 53:2, October 4, 1919, 22. "When Wesley came he found the doctrine of holiness lost; holiness was unknown in his day. Wesley was stoned and dragged through the streets of Christian England because he preached holiness of heart and life. The clergy hated him and the Church doors were closed against him, but standing upon his father's tomb in the graveyard he proclaimed holiness, and declared his mission was to preach it, and spread Scripture holiness throughout the land." (D. W. Le Lacheur, "Divine Healing," 3:4, October 1903, 194. Milton M. Bales, "Prayer," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 31:12, August 22, 1903, 157.

³⁸The following are but a sample of such mentions. No author, "Friday Morning: Divine Healing," Report of the Christian Convention and Old Orchard Beach, ME, held July 31 to August 9, 1887, *The Word, Work, and World*, 76; David Le Lacheur, "Sickness and the Atonement," *The Christian Alliance*, 1:9, September, 1888, 137; no author, "A Candid but Inconsistent Criticism of Divine Healing," *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 5:12, September 26, 1890, 179; F. W. Beers, "Series of Articles on Divine Healing," *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 7:1, July 3, 1891, 8; F. L. Chapell, "Divine Healing in the Word," *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 9:9, August 26, 1892, 135; Milton M. Bales, "What Shall I Do in Sickness," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 22:3, February 1899, 84; D. W. Le Lacheur and I. Luce, "A Consensus of Commentators on Divine Healing: To Continue in the Church," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 26:3, January 19, 1901, 35; Harriette S. Bainbridge, "God's Way of Healing: Quotations from Rev. A. B. Simpson,

(Continued on following page)

This, of course, includes the mention of the famous story of Wesley's praying for the recuperation of his horse.³⁹ In sum, the early Alliance seemed to view Wesley as "a true believer in the 'Gospel of Healing'" and a "very strong believer" at that.⁴⁰ Alliance authors, however, suggested that beyond just a general endorsement of the reality of divine healing, Wesley held a number of positions on the topic that agreed with the positions held by the Alliance. First, and perhaps most fundamentally, one author stated that Wesley, like the C&MA, believed that divine healing was grounded in the atoning work of Jesus Christ.⁴¹ Beyond that, and more widely asserted, is the claim that Wesley did not hold to the cessation of the miraculous. In particular, it is said that Wesley believed that divine healing's relative absence was not the result of God's will—as the cessationists might assert—but the consequence of an absence of faith

(Continued from previous page)

Rev. W. E. Boardman and John Wesley," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 27:5, August 3, 1901, 63; J. H. Hartman, "The Divinely Appointed Means for Healing the Sick," *The Alliance Weekly*, 51:16, January 18, 1919, 245; W. B. Riley notes that Wesley, while in severe physical distress, "called on Jesus to restore him, that he might continue to speak, and found, as he himself said, 'When I was praying my pain vanished away, my fever left me, my bodily strength returned, and was able to effectually call sinners to repentance, and pray successfully for their pardon.'" This, Riley believes, displays not only Wesley's practice of divine healing but, also, the link between healing and effective service, a classic Alliance teaching. (W. B. Riley, "Supernaturalism, or the Miracle Ancient and Modern," *Living Truths*, 3:4, October 1903, 187-188.

³⁹Simpson, "Divine Healing and Demonism not Identical: A Protest and Reply to Dr. Buckley in the Century Magazine," *The Word, Work, and World*, 7:1, July 1886, 52; F. W. Farr, "The Historical Argument for Divine Healing," 8:17, Friday, April 22, 1892, 263.

⁴⁰"The Rev. John Wesley, a true believer in the 'Gospel of Healing,' and himself healed many times in answer to prayer, had long continued sieges of illnesses, having had, at two different times, 'deep consumption,' and during those many times of infirmities of the flesh, still ceased not to continue his travels and his work in the ministry." I. P. Roberts, "Paul's Thorn in the Flesh—What was It?" 25(35):8, March 3, 1906, 123. David Le Lacheur, "Divine Healing as I Understand It, Part III" *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 6:5, January 30, 1891.

⁴¹Wesley, among others, asserted that "All these standards of the church I have carefully consulted and find that they all recognize the great truth of the human body and sicknesses have been provided for in the atonement made by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself." David Le Lacheur, "Divine Healing as I Understand It, Part II" *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 6:4, January 23, 1891, 57.

within the Church.⁴² In spite of these strong and numerous statements, there exists a considerable lack of detail in regard to what actually constituted Wesley's theology of divine healing. For Alliance authors, however, it seemed sufficient to align Wesley's views in the area of divine healing with those of the C&MA.

Praised for his involvement in the practice and promotion of mission

As publications intimately connected to an organization founded to promote the evangelization of the world, it should come as no surprise that Wesley's contribution to the missionary cause would be featured in their pages. In these publications, Wesley is recognized as one whose work and example fuelled the "current age of missions."⁴³ Of particular note in this area is the testimony of Simpson associate A. T. Pierson, a renowned nineteenth-century orator, author, missionary statesman, and the primary early leader of the Student Volunteer Movement. In an article in *The*

⁴²Quoting Wesley from "Wesley's Notes on the New Testament," on James 5:14, 15. F. H. Senft, "Disease and the Divine Remedy," *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly*, 13:16, October 19, 1894, 371; "Wesley was a believer in divine healing, a very strong believer in it, and he believed that it was to continue in the church. When Wesley came he found the doctrine of holiness lost; holiness was unknown in his day." David Le Lacheur, "Divine Healing as I Understand It, Part III" *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 6:5, January 30, 1891, 72; "John Wesley said, "All the gifts are in the Holy Ghost, and as long as He is in the Church, all the gifts are there." Also when commenting on James v. 14, 15, he said, "This single conspicuous gift which Christ committed to His apostles, seems to have been designed to remain always." Jacob Hygema, "Divine Healing," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 26:9, March 2, 1901, 119; John Harris, "Our Lord's Ministry of Healing," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 34:2, January 14, 1905, 19; Simpson notes that Wesley, in his "Notes on James," supports the practice of divine healing and, particularly, endorses the practice as outlined in James and further seems to link Wesley with the idea that it only fell out of practice with a loss of faith on the part of the church. Albert B. Simpson, "Is There Something Better than Christian Science," *Living Truths*, 1:5, November 1902, 249. David Le Lacheur notes that Wesley did not believe in the dispensational suspension of the miraculous and, in fact, notes that healing lasted long after the other miracles no longer manifested. (D. W. Le Lacheur, "Divine Healing," 3:4, October 1903, 194-195

⁴³The current age of missions did not appear *ex nihilo* but was the consequence of the work of such men as John and Charles Wesley, and others, who "stir[red] a half dead church to proclaim the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth." Josephine H. Eldridge, "Backward Glances upon Nineteenth Century Missions," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 24:19, May 12, 1900, 309.

Christian and Missionary Alliance, Pierson attributed the genesis of the nineteenth-century missionary movement—what noted mission historian Kenneth Latourette later called “The Great Century” of Christian mission—to the Holiness Club of Eton College and to John Wesley, in particular.⁴⁴ Frederic W. Farr, who among other responsibilities served as Dean of the Alliance’s Missionary Training Institute, suggested that the success of late nineteenth-century mission to North American indigenous peoples was the consequence of the ministry of the Wesley brothers in the eighteenth century.⁴⁵ It is interesting to note that while denominations in the Wesleyan tradition were regularly mentioned in the periodicals for their various missionary engagements, Simpson noted on at least one occasion that missionary work and especially missionary giving among these churches is astonishingly small, especially in light of Wesley’s own fundamental commitment to the cause.⁴⁶

In addition, Alliance authors often invoked Wesley when promoting the Alliance’s commitment to the missionary enterprise. They did so in two ways. First, they employed Wesley to describe the breadth of the missionary task. This is no more clearly seen than when they employed Wesley’s famous adage, “The world is my parish.” Simpson, for one, interpreted the intent of this statement to mean that the Christian is to “learn to think of the whole kingdom of Christ as your trust” and to take a larger, broader, and non-selfish approach to ministry.⁴⁷ The Church must

⁴⁴Latourette, Kenneth Scott, *The Great Century: Europe and the United States*, vol. 4, *A History of The Expansion of Christianity*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1941). A. T. Pierson, “The Great Spiritual Movements of the Century,” *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 18:2, January 8, 1897, 33.

⁴⁵Links the Wesley brothers to North American indigenous missions. F. W. Farr, “The American Indian,” *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly*, 14:23, June 6, 1895, 355.

⁴⁶No author, “Work of the Churches,” *The Word, Work, and World*, 1:3 March 1882, 114.

⁴⁷Simpson, “One in Him,” *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 9:20, November 11, 1892, 311; William H. Walker, Jr., “The Meaning of the Great Commission,” *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 10:9, March 3, 1893, 140; Simpson, “Lengthening the Cords and Strengthening the Stakes,” *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 28:7, August 10, 1907, 62; Simpson, “Epistles and Apostles,” *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 34:15, July 9, 1910, 242; Albert B. Simpson, “Epistles and Apostles!” *The Alliance Weekly*, 47:16, January 20, 1917, 244. Simpson, “Lengthening the Cords and Strengthening the Stakes,” *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 28:7, August 10, 1907, 62.

take the good news of Jesus Christ beyond the realm of its current and immediate influence. It must go into all the world. Second, Alliance authors appealed to Wesley when promoting their understanding of the breadth of the missionary responsibility. Mission is never simply the responsibility of a select few but, instead, is the duty of all denominations, of all churches, and all Christians. Beyond that, it is the Church's full-time responsibility. Mission can be neither a part-time engagement nor a passing fancy. In one instance, the editor wondered what the breadth of impact could be in regard to world evangelization if the church were to take seriously "Wesley's motto for the whole church: 'All at it and always at it.'"⁴⁸

Additionally, Wesley was cited in describing the nature of Christian mission. In this case, the point being made is that the nature of Christian mission was not solely that of proclamation. Henry Wilson, a close friend and associate of Simpson, citing Wesley (erroneously but still sincerely), wrote that the responsibility of the Christian "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, to all the people you can, in all the places you can, as long as you can."⁴⁹ It was also noted approvingly that this kind of work, and the work of the Church in general, ought to be directed toward a particular audience: the poor and the marginalized. Christians were to "Go not only to those who need you, but to those who need you most."⁵⁰ For Alliance writers, as for Wesley, these were the neglected and "neglected

⁴⁸"Missionary Items," 34:17, April 29, 1905, 266. This same motto is employed in relatively the same way, though not attributed to Wesley, in other instances. A. T. Pierson, "Our Lord's Second Coming, a Motive to World-wide Evangelism," *The Word, Work, and World*, 7:6, Dec. 1886, 319; A. T. Pierson, "The Blessed Hope," *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly*, 13:20, Nov. 16, 1894, 467; G. P. Pardington, "David and Absalom," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 31:20, Oct. 17, 1903, 273; G. P. Pardington, "Jesus Calms the Storm," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 32:11, Feb. 20, 1904, 273; "Editorial," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 34:4, Jan. 28, 1905, 49; G. P. Pardington, "The Boy Jesus," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 25:1, Jan. 6, 1906, 7.

⁴⁹Henry Wilson, "Our Children's Bible School," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 31:6, February 7, 1903, 77; Henry Wilson, "Children's Page," 33:7, July 16, 1904, 106. This idea was also approvingly identified in an untitled editorial, *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 33:10, August 6, 1904, 156. See also George P. Pardington, "Paul's Farewell to Ephesus," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 31:12, March 21, 1903, 162.

⁵⁰R. Wheatley, "Gospel Work Among the Masses," *The Word, Work and World*, 5:6, June, 1883, 169.

classes.”⁵¹ This included both the “criminals in prison” and, in particular, the poor.⁵²

Finally, Wesley was upheld by Alliance authors for recognizing and teaching the essential link between spiritual renewal and missionary activity.⁵³ This understanding, some noted, was imparted to him by the Moravians during his storied journey with them to North America in 1736.⁵⁴ Essentially, this teaching asserts that the desire to witness and the ability to do so effectively are the consequence of the indwelling/influence of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵

Miscellaneous Connections—Alliance priorities

While Wesley would be referred to primarily in regard to those categories identified above, Alliance publications also noted a number of other ways that Wesley’s own positions aligned with an Alliance perspective on the same issues. First, this included identifying him “conclusively” as a champion of premillennialism. Beyond that, as was the belief for most associated with the Alliance, Wesley was described as having linked a commitment to the doctrine of the premillennial return of Christ with holiness;

⁵¹Kiel D. Garrison, “The Preaching of the Cross,” *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 32:13, June 26, 1909, 209.

⁵²“Prominent among the workers who seek to evangelize and elevate the people are the Methodists. These cannot forget the words of John Wesley, whose accustomed advice was, ‘Go, not only to those who need you, but to those who need you most.’ Like him, and like St. Paul, they know that the ‘Gospel of Christ is the power of God into salvation to everyone that believeth; the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.’ The burning conviction of this glorious fact induced the Wesleys while at Oxford, to visit and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to criminals in prison.” Wheatley, “Gospel Work Among the Masses,” 169.

⁵³Simpson, “The Holy Spirit and Missions,” *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 29:4, October 26, 1907, 66.

⁵⁴“So two humble Moravians led John Wesley to know the mystic secret of the indwelling Christ, and John Wesley became the father of millions of saved and sanctified souls.” (Simpson, “Aspiration and Inspiration,” *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 29:7, August 16, 1902, 88; “[All] his usefulness dated from the time when he met a few Moravian brethren and learned the secret of the hidden life from them.” Albert B. Simpson, “Evolution or Revolution,” *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 31:10, August 8, 1903, 140.

⁵⁵The revival “under the Wesleys gave clear light on the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of witness.” W. H. Walker, “Modern Movements and Modern Missions in Palestine,” *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 6:22, May 29, 1891, 350.

after all, "the two truths are linked together."⁵⁶ Second, Wesley was upheld as a champion of temperance as he linked "gin" not only with poverty but, particularly, with crime.⁵⁷ Third, like the founders of the C&MA and especially like Simpson, Wesley was identified as one who did not seek to start a new denomination but to champion renewal within the existing structures, especially in regard to forgotten or neglected "truths."⁵⁸ It was suggested that, like Simpson, Wesley did not intend his work to be sectarian and that, moreover, would have considered it a tragedy that a church should go by his name rather than by the name of Christ. After all, it was suggested that both men would assert that God is more interested in exalting the name of Jesus than that of persons or of their respective doctrines.⁵⁹

⁵⁶"John Wesley believed in the Pre-Millennial Coming of Christ as his writings conclusively show. As an expounder and exemplifier of the doctrine of holiness, the two truths are linked together." The author believes that the same holds true for Charles Wesley, John Fletcher, John Whitefield, "and the early Methodists." F. H. Senft, "Holiness and the Coming of the Lord," *The Alliance Weekly*, 49:10, December 8, 1917, 149. Other explicit references to Wesley's pre-millennialism include "John Wesley and Pre-Millennialism," *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly*, 16:17, April 24, 1896, 394-395. In this vein, the publishers included the entire Charles Wesley hymn, His Coming Near," *The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 30:6, May 9, 1908, 102.

⁵⁷Quoting Archdeacon Farrar, "England's Dark Epoch," *The Christian Alliance and Foreign Missionary Weekly*, 13:10, September 7, 1894, 237.

⁵⁸"Remember that revivals of religion always cluster around the restoration to prominence of neglected truths." "Wesley proclaimed holiness of heart that the inward witness of the Spirit." No author, "Baptist Convention at Brooklyn," *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 5:22, December 5, 1890, 345.

⁵⁹"How different this has been! The Church has got a name and frequently it is not the name of Christ at all, but of some human founder or of some doctrinal phase. It goes to meet the world and the devil in the name of a Wesley or an Episcopate or a Presbytery or a doctrine of Baptism or a method of Methodism. True, these are Christ's churches, but the very principle on which their distinctiveness is founded obscures His name." Albert B. Simpson, "The Lord's Message to the Unbelieving Church," *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 4:18, May 2, 1890, 276; no author, "The Sign of the Times," *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 6:2, January 9, 1891, 18. Simpson asserted that Wesley's dream recounted when the latter arrived in heaven only to discover that no one there goes by denominational names but only by "Christians." (Simpson, "One in Him," *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 9:20, November 11, 1892, 310.

Conclusion

In spite of a stated position to not take sides in the historic Calvinist-Arminian debate, the early Alliance publications did not hesitate to reference Wesley and to do so relatively often.⁶⁰ Yet, the references to and invocations of Wesley that did appear were not indiscriminate. Almost without exception, when Wesley is mentioned or quoted, these citations are limited to those occasions where Wesley was identified as supporting some theological or practical position already held, promoted, and practiced by the Alliance and these almost exclusively in regard to what The Christian and Missionary Alliance has understood as its “distinctives:” the various aspects of the Fourfold Gospel and the evangelization of the world. Such is the case even where one could rightly argue that Wesley’s actual views in that particular area are unduly contorted to make them fit.⁶¹

In sum, Alliance authors supportively upheld the person and perspectives of Wesley in regard to his evangelical piety (the Deeper Life), his teaching and work in regard to regeneration and justification (Christ, our Savior), his teaching on and experience of sanctification, particularly in reference to its being a normative experience subsequent to justification (Christ, our Sanctifier), his support of divine physical healing as a continuing reality (Christ, our Healer), and, though these mentions are comparatively rare, his championing of premillennialism (Christ, our Coming King/Lord). In addition to being implicitly identified as a supporter of the Fourfold Gospel, Wesley was also endorsed for his teaching on and support of world-wide mission.

While the periodicals mention and endorse Wesley’s view on a number of theological and practical issues, it must be noted that they almost never referred to his views when he taught something distinct from or, at least, more narrowly defined and, therefore, restrictive, than official Alliance teaching. Even when on those rare occasions Wesley’s distinctive teachings were identified, they certainly were never endorsed. This, of course, is most clearly seen in regard to Wesley’s distinctive teaching on

⁶⁰The same, of course, could be said about Calvin and other Reformed figures. It is interesting to note, however, that the explicit references to Wesley are double of those of Calvin.

⁶¹This is particularly the case in regard to Wesley’s views regarding divine healing and eschatology where, it might be argued, they are significantly different from those espoused by the C&MA.

sanctification, commonly known as “entire sanctification” or “perfect love.”⁶² To promote (and seemingly even to present) Wesley’s understanding of this latter doctrine would be unnecessarily divisive to the character and aim of the Alliance. In fact, the only place where such teachings were raised and defined to any degree is when they are recognized as divisive and readers are informed that for that reason they will not be promoted or given space in the publications.

Ultimately, while Alliance authors mention Wesley and his ideas and while they do so relatively often, they do not grant to him any particular priority of place or authority, as a periodical strictly situated within the Wesleyan tradition may be more liable to do. Instead, in an effort to promote their own positions and agenda, the periodicals of the C&MA selectively co-opt Wesley’s name and reputation to serve their own purposes, to grant to their own movement a sense of legitimacy and noteworthiness. There is little doubt that this use of Wesley recognizes him as a significant voice in church history, yet, practically, he remains just one voice among others.

This is because, at least in part, Alliance periodicals are not theological journals nor are they a marketplace of theological options. Instead, they exist as the primary organ of a particular, self-consciously interdenominational movement (including believers of both Reformed and Arminian allegiances at all levels of the organization) for the promotion of its particular emphases and agenda.

⁶²While Alex McDonald mentions Wesley and “Perfect Love” in a seemingly positive tone, he does not define what is meant by the term. Alex McDonald, “A Missionary’s Call, *The Christian Alliance and Missionary Weekly*, 8:12, March 18, 1892, 189.

WHY IT IS OKAY FOR CLASSICAL ARMINIANS IN THE WESLEYAN TRADITION TO BE OPEN THEISTS

by

Jason White

Although some proponents of classical Arminianism (CA) both inside and outside the Wesleyan tradition have problems with open theism, open theists have a more friendly home among Arminian communities overall.¹ This article is written for Arminians in the Wesleyan tradition that still have reservations about confessing an open theist model of God's providence.

Most of the material published for and against open theism focuses on the biblical, theological, practical, and philosophical issues which come down positively or negatively for its model of providence. There are at least two main areas where CA disagrees with open theism. The first concerns God's relationship to time. Many adherents of CA support a theology premised upon God being solely outside of time. The second concerns God's foreknowledge. CA confesses exhaustive definite foreknowledge.² They believe that God has complete knowledge of everything that has, is, and will transpire. Open theists suggest, however, that God's knowledge of the past and present is exhaustive, but God does not know the future definitely. He has exhaustive knowledge of the possibilities that might take place in the future, but God does not know which possibility is definite until humans make choices. Thus, God chooses to restrain his foreknowledge of the future out of love for humanity to participate in creating the future with him.

¹Major contemporary Wesleyan scholars who disagree with open theism include: Thomas Oden, Laurence Wood, and Ben Witherington III. Major contemporary Arminian theologians who disagree with open theism include: Robert Picirilli, Jack Cottrell, and Roger Olson.

²For an excellent summary of CA's understanding of foreknowledge, see Bruce Reichenbach, "God Limits His Power" in *Predestination & Free Will*, eds. David and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 109-12.

John Sanders addressed the foreknowledge issue in a previous *WTJ* article, calling open theism a miniscule variant on CA.³ This article wishes to address grounds for CA acceptance of open theism from a perspective that is sorely neglected, namely *linguistics*. Open theists suggest that God's change of mind is a theological truth overall. They differ on how to explain this metaphorical fact. For example, Greg Boyd and Clark Pinnock suggest that metaphors of divine change of mind are literal and therefore true.⁴ John Sanders's approach to the truth of God's change of mind will be discussed in a later section where a more thorough examination can be offered.

A Brief History of Literalism and Metaphor in Theology and Philosophy

There are many statements Wesley made to prove his support for using a literal method of interpretation but one of his more intense statements on this subject suggests that a person is "in danger of enthusiasm" (i.e., emotional imbalance) "if" this person "depart[s] even so little from . . . the plain, literal meaning of any text taken in connection with context."⁵

³John Sanders, "'Open Theism': A Radical Revision or Miniscule Modification of Arminianism?" *WTJ* 38, no. 2 (2003): 69-102.

⁴Thus, Boyd states: "We [i.e., open theists] seek to interpret a passage according to the author's intended meaning. . . . The only difference is that there is one category of texts openness theologians take [literally] in a straightforward fashion that most others take as figurative [i.e., metaphorical]." Gregory A. Boyd, "Christian Love and Academic Dialogue: A Reply to Bruce Ware." *JETS* 45 (2002): 240. Pinnock states: "We must take seriously how God is depicted in the [Bible] . . . and resist reducing important metaphors to mere anthropomorphic or accommodated language. God's revelation is anthropomorphic through and through. We could not grasp any other kind. We must take it all seriously, if not always *literally*." Clark H. Pinnock *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 2001), 20, emphasis added. Boyd and Pinnock's approach is wrong-headed here because it creates literal metaphors which are a linguistic contradiction. What these two theologians were attempting to do, however, was to provide a basis for metaphorical truth claims, which is something this paper will explore later.

⁵John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. (Kansas City, MO: Beacon, 1971), 97. When I read this statement, my first reaction was to perceive it as hyperbolic. This perception changed when I read the following: "Wesley . . . is the sort of person who says what he means and means what he says." Jason E. Vickers, *Wesley: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York, NY: T. & T. Clark International, 2009), 2.

From this quote, it is accurate to say that Wesley's and Wesleyan interpretation "is based on the 'literal' sense." overall.⁶

A literalist presupposition for hermeneutics brings with it several logical extensions Wesley and CA support overall. For example, beginning with the idea that there is a plain, normal, conventional, and clear meaning to scripture, any text that is obscure or novel is interpreted by the clear text of scripture. Wesley was in full support of applying this approach to the biblical text stating: "The general rule of interpreting scripture is this: the literal sense of every text is to be taken, if it be not contrary to some other texts. But in that case, the obscure text is to be interpreted by those which speak more plainly."⁷

Where does such intense support of literalism leave metaphor? I have two contentions to prove in this article. First, CA relies too heavily on literalism. Therefore, they have not disciplined themselves to embrace the necessary contribution metaphor makes in the overall interpretative process. Second, missing the vital role metaphor makes in developing theological truth claims has led some CAs to misunderstand open theism and thus display a lack of support for it as a better theological alternative.

The Contribution of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas to the Tradition of Metaphor

For approximately a century, the more metaphorically based theory of allegory was the dominant method of interpretation for the West.⁸ Allegory met its demise at the hands of Thomas Aquinas, who believed allegory was not needed because all the essentials of the faith taught in scripture could be gleaned using the literal sense overall.⁹ Through Aristotle, Aquinas brought literalism to prominence in biblical and theological interpretation. For Aristotle, literalism is the process of correctly describing the direct correspondence between the physical and/or metaphysical

⁶Wayne McCown, "Toward a Wesleyan Hermeneutic" in *Interpreting God's Word for Today*, eds. Wayne McCown and James Earl Massey (Anderson, IN: Warner, 1982), 2.

⁷Frank Baker, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 26 (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1982), 557.

⁸For a basic definition and influence of allegory in the early church, see Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1970), 24-45.

⁹Henning Graf Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation: Vol. 2*, trans. James O. Duke (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 195-96.

and language that produces truth. This was done by developing proper definitions of things to the word in which they belong. These proper definitions were “a collection of [the] necessary and sufficient conditions for an object to be a particular kind of thing.”¹⁰ Aristotle’s requirement that language express concepts literally prevented metaphor from making truth claims, unless they were translated into literal paraphrase. Therefore, Aristotle defined metaphors as deviant expressions that are properly expressed by words with literal senses.¹¹

Aquinas took the Aristotelian view of metaphor and applied it to the study of God. A prime example of this view seems obvious when Aquinas states: “[A]ll names applied metaphorically to God are applied to creatures rather than to God.”¹² Thus, Aquinas became a major source for the “view of metaphor as the transference of a name to something that it does not signify.”¹³ This understanding of “metaphor” as “a *deviant* use of a *word*” is still very much alive today in Western theology and biblical interpretation.¹⁴

Literalism and the Reformation Period

By the end of the Middle Ages, most Christian academics were united in the belief that “[t]he literal sense [was] . . . the one the author intended. It [was] . . . infallible, and [communicated] . . . everything necessary for salvation.”¹⁵ The dominance of the literal sense continued into the Reformation period, although it was more prominent in the writing of John Calvin than Martin Luther. Luther’s early interpretive conclusions were frequently made “with the aid of allegorizing.”¹⁶ As time passed, however,

¹⁰George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Philosophical Thought* (New York, NY: Basic, 1999), 379.

¹¹For more detail on Aristotle’s view of metaphor, see Mark Johnson, “Introduction: Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition,” in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor* ed. Mark Johnson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 5–8.

¹²Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologia*, vol. 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York, NY: Aeterna, 2015), 145.

¹³Johnson, “Introduction,” 10–11.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁵Bray, *Biblical Interpretation*, 155, emphasis removed.

¹⁶Henning Graf Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation: Volume 3: Renaissance, Reformation, Humanism* trans. James O. Duke (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 79.

Luther moved his support away from allegory to emphasizing “the primacy of the literal interpretation of Scripture.”¹⁷ Calvin was more single-minded in his interpretative approach. He “rejected allegorical interpretation . . . because it led men away from truth of Scripture.”¹⁸ For Calvin, “[t]he literal sense of interpretation [was] . . . paramount.”¹⁹

Literalism and Enlightenment Philosophy

One of Wesley’s famous quotes expresses a major purpose of his life as a leader and committed follower of Christ. Wesley strove to “design plain truth for plain people.” He “avoid[ed] all words which are not easy to be understood [or] . . . used in common life.”²⁰ Wesley was not the only person with this purpose. A goal of many Enlightenment philosophers was to discover truth either through rational or empirical means. Their goal of communicating this truth was through plain, normal, conventional literalism. A reason philosophers of the Enlightenment period wished to do this was to create an objectively true foundation upon which human knowledge could be achieved.

René Descartes was a major force behind the human need to think and communicate objectively (i.e., literally) rather than subjectively (i.e., metaphorically). The pursuit for objective clarity of thought and communication led philosophers to the idea of removing metaphor from conventional language. Thomas Hobbes was one of the most prominent philosophers to argue against the use of metaphor. He believed the ability for humans to communicate their thoughts clearly was hindered when anyone “use[d] words metaphorically; that is, in other sense[s] than that which they are ordained for” and even went so far as to say that when humans use metaphors, they are really intending to “deceive others.”²¹ John Locke agreed with Hobbes on this point stating:

If we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that . . . all the artificial and figurative application of words . . . are noth-

¹⁷Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 54.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁹Bray, *Biblical Interpretation*, 202.

²⁰Albert Outler ed., *The Works of John Wesley* vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1984), 104

²¹Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1982), I, IV, 38. Hobbes’s attack continues: “[M]etaphors, and senseless and ambiguous words, are like *ignes fatui* [goals that can never be reached]; and reasoning upon them is wandering amongst innumerable absurdities; and their end, contention and sedition, or contempt” (I, V, 50).

ing else but to insinuate wrong ideas . . . and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats; and therefore, however laudable or allowable oratory many render them . . . they are certainly, in discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided, and where truth and knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the language or the person that makes use of them.²²

Whether wittingly or unwittingly, what the Enlightenment did was put literalism and objective truth into a symbiotic relationship that philosopher Mark Johnson calls the “literal-truth paradigm.” There are three main components that make up this paradigm. First, “literal language . . . is the *only* adequate vehicle . . . for expressing one’s meaning precisely and . . . making truth claims which together make possible correct reasoning.” Second, “[m]etaphor is a deviant use of words in other than their proper senses, which accounts for their tendency to confuse and deceive.” Third, “[t]he meaning and truth claims of a metaphor (if there are any) are just those of its literal paraphrase.”²³ Thus, the consequence of plain truth for plain people in an Enlightenment context was the inability of metaphor to make truth claims independently of that which is deemed literal.

What is Metaphor in the Christian Tradition?

Christian theology has taken much from the discipline of philosophy overall, including its understanding of metaphor. Going back to Aristotelian philosophy, metaphor “involves the transfer of a name to some object to which that name does not properly belong.”²⁴ Metaphors are obscure, indirect, deviant, and/or nonconventional uses of language to make rhetorical, poetic points that may give humans a different perspective or expand their imagination. They never make truth claims in and of themselves and they are never able to properly define concepts.

A more specific way the Christian tradition has applied the Aristotelian understanding of metaphor is to the concepts of anthropomorphism and anthropopathism. Respected theologian, Graham Cole, defines these as follows: “An anthropomorphism . . . speaks of God by

²²John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Niddich (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), III, X, 34, 508.

²³Johnson, “Introduction,” 12.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 6.

using words about the human physical form . . . An anthropopathism speaks of God by using words about human emotional life or human cognitive life.”²⁵ It is not difficult to see the correlation between Aristotle and Cole in their respective definitions of metaphor in that they focus on how words are transferred from one context to another context. By definition, transference of words does not allow for metaphors to convey conventional, plain, or ordinary meaning.

Application of Metaphorical Concepts to the God-Human Relationship

Theological orthodoxy is filled with examples of influential academics and pastors who did not allow a direct blending between God and human characteristics. Some of these are consistent in this (i.e., Philo, Augustine, Aquinas, Paul Helm) but most are not (i.e., Justin Martyr, Origen, Athanasius, Luther, Bruce Ware). For his part, Wesley falls in the inconsistent camp. For example, he wanted God to have some kind of emotional life in order to truly respond to the emotions of his human creation. To justify an emotional similarity between God and humanity, Wesley turned to the theory of analogy.²⁶ Theologian Michael Horton accurately explains the theory as follows:

When we assert certain predicates of God, based on God’s own self-revelation, we use them in one of three senses: univocally, analogically, or equivocally. If we say that the predicate “gracious” means exactly the same thing, whether in God or in a creature, we are using “gracious” *univocally*. At the other end of the spectrum, if we say that by using that predicate we are ascribing something to God whose appropriateness is unknown to us, we are using it *equivocally*. If, however, God is said to be “gracious” in a way that is . . . similar . . . to creatures, we say it is *analogical*.²⁷

²⁵Graham Cole, “The Living God: Anthropomorphic or Anthropopathic?” *The Reformed Theological Review* 59 (2000) 16–17. Cole’s article seems to suggest overall that the traditional definition of metaphor helped lead John Calvin to incorrectly interpret God as passionless.

²⁶Randy Maddox, “Seeking a Response-able God: The Wesleyan Tradition and Process Theology,” in *Thy Name and Thy Nature Is Love: Process and Wesleyan Theologies in Dialogue*, eds. Bryan Stone and Thomas Oord (Nashville, TN: Kingswood, 2001), 115.

²⁷Michael Horton, “Hellenistic or Hebrew?: Open Theism and Reformed Theological Method” in *Beyond the Bounds*, eds. John Piper et al. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 209–10.

According to Randy Maddox, Wesley believed that humans “form” their “understanding of God indirectly, based on our experience of the world and human life.”²⁸ Some of this indirect understanding has no correspondence with the reality of God (e.g., anthropomorphisms) while other ideas do correspond in various ways with divine reality (e.g., love and justice).²⁹ There are, however, at least five problems with the theory of analogy.

First, it is not based on linguistic evidence. This theory finds its origin in the thought of Thomas Aquinas. According to linguist Nelly Steinstra, however, “Thomas was not a linguist who was interested in linguistic phenomena for their own sake.”³⁰ Aquinas developed the analogy theory to deal with an urgent theological problem; how humans can speak of God in any meaningful way. His theological commitments led him more to a *confession* about language, which may be why it is referred to as the “doctrine” of analogy. This doctrine, however, is not one that can easily boast the best linguistic support. Thus, Terrence Tilley suggests that one “cannot assume that he [Aquinas] has offered us a final solution to the problems of the sense and reference of talk of God [as] . . . his solution . . . is no longer adequate.”³¹

Second, reaching consensus on an adequate interpretation of the analogy theory is difficult, because it was not developed comprehensively. Steinstra points out that Aquinas “left references to analogy scattered over a number of his works.” Because Aquinas did not provide a more robust understanding of analogy, “students of Thomas’ work” have “come up with different interpretations of his ‘theory of analogy,’ if such it can be called.”³²

Third, one has to work hard to prove that profitable information is gleaned from the analogical relationship between God and humans as Aquinas understood it. In his analysis of the analogy theory, theologian David Clark suggests that the boundary between analogy and equivocal-

²⁸Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994), 49.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 50.

³⁰Nelly Steinstra, *YHWH IS THE HUSBAND OF HIS PEOPLE: Analysis of a Biblical Metaphor with Special Reference to Translation* (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1993), 44.

³¹Terrence Tilley, *Talking of God: An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis of Religious Language* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 46.

³²Steinstra, *YHWH*, 44.

ity was not a clear and delineated one. That is, analogy and equivocality seem closely synonymous. Analogy may reveal certain truths about God, but “does not provide any substantive knowledge about God” overall.³³ Fourth, the analogy doctrine focuses on words rather than addresses the way humans are designed to *think* about one thing in terms of another. The novel conclusion that humans are created to think metaphorically is where attention is turned to next.

A Fourth Problem: Conceptual Metaphorical Theory

The twentieth century brought about a revival in the study of metaphorical theory after centuries of formal neglect of its importance. A seminal work on metaphor in that century was *Metaphors We Live By* written by linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson. Their book critiques traditional assumptions about literal and metaphorical thought and language by examining linguistic expressions that, when put together, form what they name “conceptual metaphor.” A conceptual metaphor can be defined as the human ability to *think* or *conceptualize* (i.e., provide meaning to) one type of thing (i.e., abstract concept, event, action, and so on) in terms of conventional experiences. As an example of conceptual metaphor, they use the following linguistic expressions that comprise the *Argument Is War* metaphor:³⁴

1. Your claims cannot be *defended*.
2. He *attacked every weak point* in my argument.
3. His criticisms were *right on target*.
4. I *demolished* his argument.
5. I’ve never *won* an argument with him.
6. If you use that *strategy* [in your debate], he’ll *wipe you out*.
7. He *shot down* all of my arguments.³⁵

Lakoff and Johnson interpret the meaning of this conceptual metaphor as follows:

It is important to see that we don’t just *talk* about arguments in terms of war. We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the

³³David Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 390–91.

³⁴George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 3–6. Their formal definition of conceptual metaphor is as follows: “*The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another*” (5, emphasis original).

³⁵Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live*, 4, emphasis original.

person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies. If we find a position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new line of attack. Many things we *do* in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war. Though there is no physical battle, there is a verbal battle, and the structure of an argument—attack, defense, counterattack, etc.—reflects this. It is in this sense that the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor is one that we live by [as] . . . it structures the actions we perform in arguing. . . .³⁶ Moreover, this is the *ordinary* way of having an argument and talking about one. . . . Our conventional ways of talking about arguments presuppose a metaphor we are hardly ever conscious of. The metaphor is not merely in the words we use—it is in our very concept of an argument. The language of argument is not poetic, fanciful, or rhetorical. . . . We talk about arguments that way because we conceive of them that way.³⁷

There are four major points Lakoff and Johnson discuss in their explanation of the *Argument Is War* metaphor that are keys opposing the traditional definition of metaphor. First, metaphor is not about how humans use words but how they think metaphorically. Second, the thought and language used in metaphorical expressions is conventional rather than deviant. Third, because metaphorical thought and language are conventional, there is minimal distinction between literal and metaphorical thought and language. Fourth, since humans think (i.e., conceptualize) much more in terms of metaphor than literalism, metaphors make truth claims.

A second example demonstrates how multiple conceptual metaphors come together to help humans understand complex processes. In this case, the complex process is linguistic communication. The overarching conceptual metaphor used to understand the communication process has been named the *Conduit* metaphor,³⁸ but this large metaphor seemed to be comprised of at least the following three conceptual metaphors: (1) *Ideas (or Meanings) Are Objects*, (2) *Linguistic Expressions Are Containers* and (3) *Communication Is Sending* (i.e., or *Movement*).³⁹ Lakoff

³⁶Ibid., 4.

³⁷Ibid., 5.

³⁸Ibid., 11.

³⁹Ibid., 10.

and Johnson explain how these metaphors function together, stating: “The speaker puts ideas (objects) into words (containers) and sends them (along a conduit) to a hearer who takes the idea/object out of the word/container.”⁴⁰

The following sentences highlight the CONDUIT conceptual metaphor:

1. It's hard to *get* that idea *across* to him.
2. I *gave* you that idea.
3. Your reasons *came through* to us.
4. t's difficult to *put* my ideas *into* words.
5. When you *have* a good idea, try to *capture* it . . . *in* words.
6. Try to *pack* more thought *into* fewer words.
7. His words *carry* little meaning.
8. The introduction *has* a great deal of thought *content*.
9. Your words seem *hollow*.
10. The sentence is *without* meaning.
11. The idea is buried in terribly dense paragraphs.⁴¹

Again, such an example helps the reader understand the following characteristics about conceptual metaphors. First, the conventional experiences of movement, seeing objects and the basic understanding of how containers function are vital to our understanding the complexity of linguistic communication. Thus, experience is vital to human understanding of abstractions (i.e., ideas and communication). Second, metaphors are a part of conventional, natural language use. Indeed, the *Conduit* conceptual metaphor “is so much the conventional way of thinking about language that it is sometimes hard to imagine that it might not fit reality.”⁴² Third, because this metaphor is so conventional, then, “it is . . . difficult to see . . . that there is a metaphor . . . at all,” meaning we are not normally aware that our understanding of language is based on metaphor and not literalism.⁴³

A Fifth Problem: The Cognitive Science of Categorization

A final problem with the analogy theory finds roots in the way the human mind processes information and determines meaning. It is commonly referred to as the cognitive science of categorization (cognitive catego-

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., 11.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

rization). Through empirical testing, cognitive science has discovered that human experience provides the semantic content for providing meaning to events and concepts of which humans cannot form mental images. Thus, cognitive science refers to those concepts human can mentally image as the “basic-level” and those they cannot the “superordinate-level.”

Linguist, Ken McElhanon, provides excellent definitions and examples for these two levels.

For example, we can form a mental image of basic-level categories such as those of a *dog*, a *screwdriver* and a *chair*, but not of their abstract, superordinate-level categories of *animal*, *tool* and *furniture*. When asked to picture an *animal* in their mind, respondents typically cite a basic-level representative of that abstract category such as *dog*, *cat*, *horse*, etc. This is because it is impossible to form a mental image of a superordinate-level category.

We also interact with basic-level artifacts in different but uniform ways. Sitting on a chair is basically the same whether it is a soft-cushioned or wooden, elevated at a tavern bar or swiveling in a hair salon. Reclining on a bed is basically the same for all beds, whether on a coil spring mattress . . . a crib, a cot, a stretcher or a hammock. There is, however, no uniform way to interact with the more abstract, superordinate concept of *furniture*.⁴⁴

The point McElhanon demonstrates with these examples is that the human mind cannot understand the meaning of superordinate-level concepts without first being able to form images of objects and events that provide semantic content for superordinate-level abstractions.

Conceptual categorization is important because it points out a major flaw in the theory of analogy; superordinate to basic-level relationships are not based upon similarity. Superordinate categories may have meaning separate from that given to it by basic-level human experience, but have no access to such meaning without human experience. Thus, superordinate-level concepts are meaningless without the basic-level of human experience to provide them with semantic content. The lack of innate properties for superordinate-level concepts means that basic-level and

⁴⁴Kenneth A. McElhanon, “From Word to Scenario: The Influence of Linguistic Theories upon Models of Translation.” *Journal of Translation* 3 (2005): 43–44.

superordinate-level entities have no shareable properties by which to claim similarity.

Overcoming a Problem with Metaphorical Similarity

As a superordinate-level concept, God cannot be formally said to have similarities with basic-level humans. Based upon the inability point to similarities, one could say that God and human are completely different. This linguistic fact seems to bolster the case that the God-human distinction is the interpretative lens by which one should pursue theological construction. A way to overcome this lack of similarity is to interpret God-human metaphors through the *imago Dei*.

Over the history of theology, several possible interpretations have been presented for understanding what it means for humans to be created in the *imago Dei*.⁴⁵ When one observes the common-denominator of the phrase, one can reasonably conclude that there is “some core likeness between God and . . . creatures.”⁴⁶ This likeness, however, is not the indirect likeness that one gleans from the traditional definition of metaphor, but is one of directness where God and humans truly share qualities and characteristics of all kinds. Thus, “if we are like God, made in his image, then God must be like us with respect to the characteristics we share.”⁴⁷

This does not mean that humans are God. Scripture does reveal that there are distinctions between God and humans. At the very least, though, it seems wise to acknowledge that the human interpretative lens begins with similarity when understanding the God-human relationship, because humans are created in the *imago Dei*. Thus,

One essential meaning of the statement that man was created ‘in the image of God’ is plain: it is that man is in some way . . . like God. Even if the similarity between man and God could not be defined more precisely, the significance of this statement of the nature of man for the understanding of biblical thought could not be over-emphasized. . . . [T]he doctrine of the image

⁴⁵R. Larry Overstreet, “Man in the Image of God: A Reappraisal” *Criswell Theological Review* 3 (2005): 58.

⁴⁶John Sanders, *God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 25.

⁴⁷Michael Saia, *Does God Know the Future?: A Biblical Investigation of Foreknowledge and Free Will* (Fairfax: VA: Xulon, 2002), 120.

of God . . . elevates all men . . . to the highest status conceivable, short of complete divinization.

There is . . . in the [image] doctrine . . . a slight hint of the limitation of the status of mankind, in that the image is not itself the thing it represents and that the copy must in some respects be unlike its original. . . . Obviously the fact that he is 'made' in the image of God, that is, that he is a creature, imposes limitations upon the range and degree of his similarities to God. [Yet,] . . . the essential meaning of the image is clear, namely that man's splendour is his likeness to God.⁴⁸

There are at least two significant scriptural confessions that the above quote describes that are central to understanding an accurate view of metaphor in the context of the God-human relationship. First, humanity being created as similar to God is not something humans initiated. Human beings were created by God to be similar to God. Second, although humans are similar to God, they are not the same as God. In other words, there are differences between the original (i.e., God) and the copies (i.e., human beings). The fall of humanity into sin does not need to negate God-human similarity brought about by humanity's *imago Dei* status.⁴⁹

God's Change of Mind

When one examines the historical writings of Wesleyan/Methodist theologians (John Wesley; H. Orton Wiley, Richard Watson, William Burt Pope) one finds a curiosity; there is a lack of consistency to what God's immutability is applied. In other words, these keen theological minds interpret metaphors that connote God's emotional life in a truthful manner. They take as anthropomorphic, however, the descriptions of God that denote divine change of mind. This inconsistency suggests that

⁴⁸David Clines, "The Image of God in Man," *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 53–54. The last sentence of the quote appears before the sentence beginning with "Obviously" in Clines's article. The order of the sentences has been changed to emphasize what seems to be Clines's main point. The original text after the word "Maker. . . ." reads: "Yet, the essential meaning of the image is clear, namely that man's splendour is his likeness to God. Obviously the fact that he is 'made' in the image of God, that is, that he is a creature, imposes limitations upon the range and degree of his similarities to God" (54).

⁴⁹John F. Kilner, "Humanity in God's Image: Is the Image Really Damaged?" *JETS* 53, no. 3 (September 2010): 601–17. This article suggests that the image of God in humanity was not damaged by their fall into sin.

metaphors make truth claims in one instance and cannot in another. Based on the way humans were created to conceptualize, experience, and communicate about God, there is little linguistic basis for such a conclusion. When one looks to scripture, there need be no reason for this conclusion. God's change of mind appears many times in the Old Testament. These divine changes of mental states impact God's foreknowledge. Even if one does not like the way in which open theism explains the impact of God's change of mind on foreknowledge, CA needs to offer an alternative interpretation of divine foreknowledge that takes divine change of mind as a metaphorical truth claim.

Problems with Inconsistency

In the above paragraph, I used the word inconsistency to describe the classical Wesleyan understanding of God's emotional life and foreknowledge. That is, it does not seem to make sense to confess that God has an emotional life and therefore God changes to some extent, but does not change in terms of his knowledge of the future. In saying that classical Wesleyans are inconsistent I am not using the term in a pejorative manner. All models of theology default to mystery to explain God's providence at some point. One should not be afraid to claim mystery as a term. This does not mean, however, that one can forgo the hard work of deciding where mystery should be confessed and where it should not.

A major reason mystery should not be claimed concerning the truth of God's change of mind is that it asks humans to do something they cannot. It requires them to conceptualize metaphors related to God's emotional life differently than the way they conceptualize metaphors associated with God's change of mind. It is true that there are different types of ontologies (e.g., time, love, arguments, and so on) and that there are different ways in which we interpret these ontologies. There is not, however, a different conceptual system by which humans make associations between their experience and that which they cannot experience. Because our conceptual system is designed by God to think primarily in terms of metaphors, we understand theological concepts metaphorically. Literalism, rather than metaphor, plays a minute part in human thinking overall.⁵⁰

⁵⁰A great book to make this point through empirical testing is Raymond M. Gibbs, Jr. *The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language, and Understanding* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Also review the chapter on "Time" in Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 137–69.

Rethinking the Hermeneutics of John Sanders

In the introduction, I mentioned that Sanders takes a somewhat different approach from that of Boyd and Pinnock in how to interpret God's change of mind. Sanders's approach is to interpret metaphors as truth claims without the need for literalism. By doing this, Sanders theory of theological interpretation is closer to conceptual metaphorical theory and cognitive categorization. I have chosen to reformat and offer explanation and correction of the first edition of Sander's *The God Who Risks*.

Some readers may wonder why I do not address the revised edition of this book.⁵¹ In the revision, Sanders's intent is not to *apply* the cognitive theories to expose errors in the hermeneutics of classical theism, but to introduce a new way of thinking about metaphor. He explains the basics of conceptual metaphor and cognitive categorization well, but space limitations seem to hamper his hermeneutical presentation. Sanders outlines his hermeneutical approach in chapter two of the revision, but this chapter is a mere twelve pages long (pp.18-30). The lack of this chapter's ideas being integrated throughout the rest of the book results in what is essentially a stand-alone article.⁵² Thus, the careful reader may wonder if the cognitive theories are a true help to open theism overall.⁵³

A good starting point to begin examining Sanders's theo-linguistic approach is "the question of how we are to know what God is like and to the appropriateness of human language for speaking of God."⁵⁴ A first error of Sanders is his wish to focus on human language (i.e., the linguistic expressions they use). From the perspective of conceptual metaphori-

⁵¹John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Divine Providence* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007).

⁵²For a research project intended to expose flaws in classical theist hermeneutics using conceptual metaphor and cognitive categorization, see Charles Jason White, "The Literal vs. The Metaphorical God: A Description, Critique, and Clarification of Classical and Open Theist Methodologies within Conservative Evangelicalism" (Ph.D diss., McMaster Divinity College, 2016).

⁵³Sanders has since corrected the integration problem in a recent publication that challenges Christian scholars to glean the insights of cognitive semantics and thus encourages them to change their perspective on metaphor and cognition. John Sanders, *Theology in the Flesh: How Embodiment and Culture Shape the Way We Think about Truth, Morality, and God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016).

⁵⁴Sanders, *God Who Risks*, 15.

cal theory and the cognitive science of categorization, understanding (i.e., providing meaning to) the human relationship to God finds its source, first and foremost, in the human conceptual system. Although it is true that the human language is a primary window to gaining access to this system, human language is a means to an end.

Sanders proceeds to suggest that “[m]etaphors help us make sense of things . . . by making comparisons.”⁵⁵ As shown in a previous section of the paper, one cannot assume God-human similarity on the basis of metaphor alone. To apply an adequate metaphorical theory properly, open theists must provide a theological basis for metaphor. Thus, they need to tie metaphor to the *imago Dei*, which allows metaphor to create similarity and truth between God and humans.

Taking the insights of conceptual metaphorical theory into account, better clarity is brought to a major statement made by Sanders concerning metaphor:

The metaphorical and anthropomorphic language of the Bible is taken seriously because it is through the idiom of Scripture and its various metaphors that we understand and relate to God. The language of Scripture is ‘reality depicting’ in that our understanding of God and his relationship to the world is mediated through its metaphors and images.⁵⁶

The following inferences may be drawn from this definition. First, metaphorical statements in scripture are meaningful, which is what Sanders seems to mean when he uses the term “seriously.” Second, metaphors are the primary avenue humans have for understanding God’s revelation. Third, metaphors make truth claims, which is what Sanders suggests by using the adjectives “reality depicting” and “real.” Therefore, according to Sanders, “[m]etaphors . . . are reality depicting [i.e., truth revealing] in that they tell us of a real [i.e., truthful] relationship between God and the world.”⁵⁷

Sanders rightly points out how “[i]t is commonplace for theologians to claim that biblical anthropomorphisms are ‘accommodations’ on God’s part to our limited abilities to understand.”⁵⁸ This claim simply perpetuates the stunningly “negative view of biblical anthropomorphisms,” which

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Sanders, *God Who Risks*, 16.

⁵⁸Ibid., 33.

is pervasive “in the history of the church.”⁵⁹ There are at least two major problems with the accommodation theory.

First, accommodation theory is based on contradictory reasoning that offers no empirical evidence to support its claim, because the claim of accommodation is based only on information gleaned from accommodation. All superordinate-level concepts need basic-level content to provide their meaning. God, as a super-ordinate level person, did not create another way for his human creation to understand his personhood except through the basic-level. The flow of meaning from basic to superordinate-level does not just apply to God. It applies to all other superordinate-level concepts. For example, one of the primary ways in which the superordinate-level concept, “argument,” is understood is through drawing upon the basic-level concepts of “war.” Should we say that the way we conceptualize the concept “argument” is accommodated because one of the primary ways we understanding it is in terms of “war?” Not at all! Using basic-level experience to understand super-ordinate level concepts is not accommodation if it the normal way humans were created to understand.

Second, the accommodation theory does not adequately explain the incarnate Christ. Sanders rightly points out that “Jesus [Christ] is the consummate revelation of God in human form.”⁶⁰ Christ, as the paragon metaphor of God, accepts the empirical truth of using basic-level experiences to understand the superordinate-level God as a normal conceptual process of the human mind. One reason Christ became incarnate was to reveal to humanity who the person of God is through basic-level. Humans can trust that Christ reveals truth about God empirically at the basic-level because “Jesus is the exact representation of the divine nature (Heb 1:3) in who deity dwelled in bodily form (Col 1:15–20; 2:9).”⁶¹ Because Jesus is the basic-level paragon of the super-ordinate level God, humans can be certain that “the Bible, with all its anthropomorphism, . . . presents God as he truly is.”⁶²

In order to protect God’s exhaustive definite foreknowledge, a prototypical Arminian rebuttal to Sanders is to default to the “hidden” and

⁵⁹Steve Roy, *How Much Does God Foreknow?: A Comprehensive Biblical Study* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 156.

⁶⁰Sanders, *God Who Risks*, 26.

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶²*Ibid.*, 23–24.

revealed distinction of God. So, Robert Picirilli accepts Sanders's understanding of anthropomorphism as long as its meaning does not affect the "hidden" God.

Sanders . . . rightly rejects the idea that Biblical references to God's repentance and anger are so anthropomorphic that they do not reveal God. . . . Even in metaphor the truth is spoken, though not in a directly literal way. What we know of God in terms of his relationship to us we know truly, though this knowledge is not exhaustive. . . . Sanders rightly [renounces] . . . those who would regard Biblical descriptions as less than fully true-in-themselves because God is accommodating himself to our supposedly different mode of understanding.⁶³

Yet, Picirilli's praise of Sanders ends quickly when he turns to discuss God's eternity. This eternal attribute means that "God's . . . absolute 'mind' . . . does not repent or change." It is only when God interacts in human experience and time that we can speak of God's changing.⁶⁴ God acting different outside of time than inside of time is what Picirilli calls "paradoxical affirmations."⁶⁵

Assuming the theological importance of God's relationship to time, how does Picirilli's prototypical Arminian response not fall into "accommodation," which he rejects? Suggesting that God reveals differently to humanity than the divine truly is is the same as Calvin suggesting that God's revelation to humanity is like a caretaker communicating in baby-talk to a toddler.⁶⁶

What some theologians may need to admit to themselves is that the timeless/in time distinction, the "hidden"/revealed distinction of God, and the Creator-creature distinction are synonymous overall in that they begin with the presupposition of difference rather than similarity between God and humans. Starting from these presuppositions, however, diminishes the importance of humans being created in the *imago Dei*, diminishes the impact of Christ's life to reveal the superordinate-level God to humanity, and thus diminishes the value of similarity in metaphor, which is what allows humans to make truth claims about God.

⁶³Robert Picirilli, "An Arminian Response to John Sanders's *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* *JETS* 44, no. 3 (2001): 484.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 487.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 488.

⁶⁶John Calvin, *Calvin's Institutes: Abridged Edition* ed. Donald McKim trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 1.13.1.

Although, the superordinate-level God reveals basic-level truth to humanity, we are designed by God to develop theology from the basic-level (what we experience and therefore know of God) to the superordinate-level (God). This truth is one of the reasons Sanders suggests that “theologians need to be a little less sanguine about their own intuitions” about who God must be and “need to pay more attention to what God has actually decided to do in human history.”⁶⁷ Therefore, speculative theology must do a better job of tethering itself to God’s basic-level revelation.

Some classical Arminians, like Picirilli, seem concerned that open theists are trying to completely remove the distinctions between God and humans. This concern is unwarranted. Sanders agrees with the classical tradition by stating that “the Bible does teach the hiddenness and incomprehensibility of God. God is not knowable unless God makes himself known, and even then we do not possess a complete understanding of God.”⁶⁸ These facts are “based on the Creator-creature distinction that comes to us from divine revelation.”⁶⁹ Thus, open theism is not against God-human distinction. What it is against is theological development that takes as its *first* premise the differences between God and humans. Sanders fails to explain why open theism is against this, except to point to the importance of metaphor for human understanding. Such an answer does not give metaphor a theological ground that it needs if humans can trust that similarity between God and humans exists. Open theism needs the *imago Dei* as a vital part of their theology, because it is this creative act by God that promotes theological construction based upon God-human similarity. Open theism does not ignore the fact of God-human distinction but interprets it in light of God-human similarity.

Conclusion

The first part of this paper was a brief historical survey of the hermeneutics of literalism and metaphor. The orthodoxy of Christian hermeneutics is one where literalism has dominated biblical and theological interpretation for centuries. Because of this domination, it is not surprising that Wesley’s and CA’s hermeneutic rely heavily upon literalism to do theology. Concerning metaphor, Wesley and CA have recognized that metaphors do play a truth role in assisting humans in understanding

⁶⁷Sanders, *God Who Risks*, 13.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

God. Recognizing the importance of metaphor allows CA to confess that God does experience a variety of emotions.

The inconsistency in CA comes from their not allowing metaphors concerning God's change of mind to make truth claims about God's foreknowledge. Thus, CA confesses God's exhaustive definite foreknowledge by claiming that metaphors associated with God's change of mind are anthropomorphisms.

The goal of the middle section of the paper was to overcome the CA claim about God's foreknowledge by introducing conceptual metaphorical theory and cognitive categorization. Unlike the traditional theory of metaphor, which defined metaphor in terms of how words or phrases were used in non-conventional, deviant, or untruthful ways, the cognitive theory empirically demonstrates that metaphors are linked to the very way humans *think*. Because of this link, humans have no choice but to think in terms of metaphors. This insight requires a theological response. This paper suggests that because God created humans in the *imago Dei*, metaphorical thinking is a natural, conventional way of conceptualizing God. Thus, metaphors make truth claims.

Based upon the premise of metaphorical truth, this paper stated that to suggest metaphors associated with God's change of mind were different than metaphors associated with God's emotional life, was to claim that humans have two conceptual systems. This paper pointed out that this is simply not the case. What experiences humans associate with the superordinate-level God may be different. There may be different superordinate-level concepts attributed to God. Yet, God designed humans to understand basic to superordinate-level associations *metaphorically*.

The last part of the paper used conceptual metaphorical theory and cognitive categorization to clarify the theological interpretation of John Sanders from the first edition of the *God Who Risks*. Sanders's goal is to suggest that metaphors make truth claims about God without needing to default to literalism. The conceptual linguistic theory not only gives Sanders (and all other open theists) the ability to do this, it provides an adequate reason for classical Arminians to become open theists.

REHABILITATING JOHN WESLEY'S CHRISTOLOGY IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS: A RESPONSE TO HAMBRICK AND LODAHL

by

Rob DeGeorge

John Wesley (1703-1791) was more than a preacher; he was a determined theologian as well. Indeed, he did preach somewhere between 23,000 and 40,000 sermons¹ and founded Methodism, a seminal evangelical movement. He also developed the doctrine of entire sanctification, which served as the cornerstone for the Holiness and Pentecostal movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Yet, Wesley is often characterized as a practical theologian because he is most known for his scripturally-saturated evangelistic preaching. It is not surprising then to find little scholarly treatment of his theological understanding of classical systematic themes.

In the last century only a few scholars have considered more intentionally the particulars of Wesley's Christology.² Subsequently, in a rare

¹The Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition at Duke University has published a register of all sermons preached by John Wesley for which there was a known preaching passage. Their research totals over 23,000 sermons. However, both Stephen Tomkins and Kenneth Collins in their biographical works cite "over 40,000" sermons preached but offer no citation or rationale to support their claims. It is conceivable and likely that some undocumented preaching episodes took place over the course of Wesley's career, but most likely does not rise to the number of 40,000; Wanda Willard Smith, "Register of John Wesley's Preaching Texts," Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition at Duke University, (Apr 2011): <https://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/cswt/research-resources/register>; Kenneth Collins, "Wesley's Life and Ministry," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed. Randy Maddox and Jason Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 43-59; Stephen Tomkins, *John Wesley: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 199.

²Richard M. Riss, "John Wesley's Christology in Recent Literature," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 45, no.1 (Spring 2010): 108-29. Richard Riss in his article reviews nine prominent treatments of Wesley's Christology in English. This list comprises many forms of treatments, including dissertations turned monograph, monographs, book chapters, articles, and reviews. While not all of these are relevant to this study, the fact that the list contains so few and that only one in the last (almost) sixty years is completely dedicated to the specific topic of Christology is a clear indication of the dearth of comprehensive study in this area historically.

but relatively recent study, Matthew Hambrick and Michael Lodahl tackle the appropriateness of the founding Methodist's Christology as demonstrated in Wesley's comments on the Epistle to the Hebrews.³ Andrew Lincoln describes Hebrews as the logical choice to evaluate one's Christology as the epistle emphasizes the person and work of Christ as mediator of the "apparently incommensurable gap" between the holy (God) and the profane (humanity) "by asserting that Christ is 'the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of his very being and he sustains all things by his powerful word' (1:3) and yet later can say of this same person that he is a fully human being, who is like other humans in every respect (2.17)." As such, Christ acts on behalf of and as a representative for humanity in order that the divine might become human as one who "mediates salvation as perfection [while] fully in solidarity with humans, sharing in their sufferings, and yet at the same time fully in solidarity with divine holiness and separate from actual sin."⁴ The question for Hambrick and Lodahl, with regard to Wesley, is whether his perspective of the person and work of Christ conforms with this typical portrayal, or does he favor the divine nature over the human that conveys a form of docetism or monophysitism?⁵ This paper seeks primarily to respond to their article, "Responsible Grace in Christology? John Wesley's Rendering of Jesus in the Epistle to the Hebrews"⁶ in which the authors' claim that an investigation (largely) of Wesley's annotations concerning Hebrews in *Explanatory*

³ Parenthetical references will refer to chapter and verse from the book of Hebrews, unless otherwise noted; i.e., (2.9) refers to Hebrews chapter 2 verse 9, and so forth.

⁴ Andrew Lincoln, *Hebrews: A Guide* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 85, 89.

⁵ The literature review and subsequent discussion will detail those who have levied these charges. However, it is important to note, at this point, both monophysitism (the argument that there is one dominant nature in Christ after the incarnation, the divine) and docetism (the argument that "the humanity and suffering of Christ were only apparent . . . and not real") are meant not so much to charge these specific technical heresies, but rather as a means to expose Wesley's undermining of orthodox Christology which emphasizes a divinity of Christ that diminishes (rather than denies) his humanity. Terms are defined as found in Van A. Harvey, *A Handbook of Theological Terms: Their Meaning and Background Exposed in Over 300 Articles* (New York, NY: Macmillan and Co., 1964), 154, 72.

⁶ Matthew Hambrick, and Michael E. Lodahl, "Responsible Grace in Christology? John Wesley's Rendering of Jesus in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 86-103.

*Notes on the New Testament (NT Notes)*⁷ reveals a weak Christology that (seemingly) crosses the line into docetism. This response will suggest that Wesley's approach to Christology in the book of Hebrews as found in his *NT Notes* is primarily conditioned methodologically and theologically, and should not be evaluated as a systematic reflection of his Christology. That is, Wesley designed his *Notes* to present the average believer with edifying and nurturing teaching on the true locus of "holiness and happiness." Therefore, his depiction of Christology, although truncated, was predicated on the assumption of the work of Jesus Christ whose faithful obedience resulted in His own glory and provides the means for the believer to be brought to glory through like faithfulness. Deficiencies in its expression should not assume a conclusion of weakness, or worse heresy, especially when argued from silence.

Wesley's Christology in the Most Relevant Literature

In general, the regnant scholarship concerning Wesley's portrayal of Christology is conflicted. Although scholars overall agree that Wesley presented a Chalcedonean Christology, some question whether Wesley presents a weakened human nature with respect to the person and work of Christ. Leading the discussion are two works, one by Swiss author, David Lerch, and the other by John Deschner. Lerch's study, *Heil und Heiligung bei John Wesley Dargestellt unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Anmerkungen zum Neuen Testament* (1941),⁸ has been regarded as the starting point of scholarly discussion with respect to Wesley's Christology. Lerch centers his study on the humiliated and exalted states of Christ, with special attention given to the offices of prophet, king, and priest. Lerch identifies that Wesley's sermons do not describe the historical person of Jesus, but rather exclusively opts for monikers signaling his divinity such as *Lord* and *Christ*. Despite this, he is convinced Wesley's *NT Notes* demonstrate his own commitment to orthodox Christology.⁹

⁷John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, 3rd edition, corrected in 3 volumes (Bristol: Graham and Pine, 1760–62), hereafter *NT Notes*.

⁸David Lerch, *Heil und Heiligung bei John Wesley Dargestellt unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Anmerkungen zum Neuen Testament* (Zürich: Gedruckt bei der Christlichen vereinsbuchhandlung, 1941).

⁹Disclosure: This author assumes with many Wesleyan scholars that while Wesley's *NT Notes* are largely the edited work of Johannes Bengel, his use of them as a doctrinal standard assumed his agreement with the theological presentations represented in them, and to this extent could be considered reflective of his own thoughts. See notes 12, 13, and 48 below.

For Lerch, the Chalcedonian doctrine of shared properties (*communicatio idiomatum*) is clearly established as a principal interpretive theme evidenced in statements concerning the equality of the Son with the Father. Yet, he allows that the progressive development and emphasis on Christ's divinity and statements that seem to imply the gradual deification of the human nature indicates an imbalance. Lerch suggests Wesley's concern for polemics against the scriptural divinity of Christ (particularly Deists and Socinians) gave occasion to emphasize the divine nature in order to properly arm and sustain the "plain reader" under such attacks.¹⁰ In this same vein, Vickers more recently shows that Wesley was one among several Methodists concerned with the defense of the divinity of Christ in the face of theological controversies, such as Socinianism and Arianism.¹¹ He argues the outright attacks on Christ's divine nature promulgated in the "mere man" Christologies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries aroused a "reluctan[cy] to speak of Christ's human nature" at all.¹²

¹⁰Lerch, *Heil und Heiligung*, 73-76; Riss paints a picture of Lerch depicting Wesley as having a greater emphasis on a "weakened humanity." However, while he is concerned, Lerch is more measured and balanced, Riss, "John Wesley's Christology in Recent Literature," 109. Scroggs, commenting similarly to Lerch on John 10, notes that "that the unity is not one of will only, but also of power and therefore of nature. 'I and the Father are One' refutes both Sabellians and Arians. Throughout all the history of religions, only Jesus has claimed such a prerogative." Such a comment adds support to the argument for the *NT Notes* functioning polemically against those seeking to undermine the divinity of Christ, Robin Scroggs, "John Wesley as Biblical Scholar," *Journal of Bible and Religion*, 28, no. 4 (Oct 1960): 420.

¹¹John Spurr's extensive work in the primary sources details the rise of Christological heresies that were a primary concern for Anglican theologians in the seventeenth century and had come to full flower during Wesley's ministry of the eighteenth century. Socinianism, particularly, denied the divinity of Christ and his sufferings as the legitimate satisfaction for the sins of humanity. Yet, Spurr asserts the Anglican response by moralists such as Stillingfleet and Tillotson had devised defenses of the faith that placed an "emphasis upon the individual's responsibility for his own salvation, [and] was marginalizing the 'righteousness of Christ'" that would inspire efforts to rehabilitate the divine nature by evangelicals in the eighteenth century. John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 256.

¹²Vickers identifies this concern for the defense of the divine nature of Christ among many seventeenth and eighteenth-century theologians, but specifically names John Fletcher, Thomas Coke and Jospeh Benson. Jason E. Vickers, "Christology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, ed. William J. Abraham & James E. Kirby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 557. To be fair, this research was not available to Hambrick and Lodahl at the time of their article.

Deschner, on the other hand, offers the first significant work in English in his study, *Wesley's Christology: An Interpretation* (1960). In it he attempts to understand the presuppositions of Wesley's two-fold soteriology of justification and sanctification from the viewpoint of Wesley's Christology; that is, "[i]s Christ the source from which Wesley's understanding of salvation derives its character, or is the Christology somehow finally shaped by the soteriology?"¹³ Deschner centers his study on the Methodist Twenty-Five Articles, Wesley's standard forty-four sermons, and principally on the *NT Notes* as he laments the lack of any Christological treatise from Wesley.¹⁴ His intent was not to formulate an exhaustive presentation of Wesley's Christology from fragmentary evidence,¹⁵ but rather to demonstrate that when Wesley is placed against a specific set of Christological coordinates it is clear that "[he] betrays a decided emphasis on the divine nature and a corresponding underemphasis on the human."¹⁶ The genesis of this imbalance, he states, is rooted in "those puzzling moments when Jesus' human nature seems to evaporate. . . . when the personal union is strained, if, indeed, there is not occasionally a separation of natures."¹⁷ Deschner concludes that Wesley's Christology is

¹³John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology: An Interpretation* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960), 38.

¹⁴Riss and others refer to a short list of works cited on page 5 as the center of Deschner's study. However, a more careful reading later in the introduction reveals Deschner's more comprehensive scope of materials (and justification for such) with the *NT Notes* being selected for "more exhaustive treatment" as it provides the "most fruitful source for Wesley's Christology," Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 7, 10; cf. Riss, "John Wesley's Christology in Recent Literature," 111.

¹⁵Deschner concedes that while the *NT Notes* is a condensing of other works valuable for Methodist teaching and preaching, its inclusion in the Model Deed of 1763 as the authoritative standard (along with the standard 44 sermons) for Methodist doctrine establishes its significance of place for Wesley both theologically and ecclesialogically. Although it cannot be clearly discerned between Wesley's personal views and those he simply agreed with, Deschner states that the "systematic student cannot help but be impressed by the fidelity with which the key Wesleyan emphases and doctrines are reflected there." Agreeing with Lerch, he declares that the *Notes* are a reliable source for Wesley's theological thinking. However, he chides that extreme caution against proof-texting is necessary, "the *Notes* must be used whole, as a book whose parts are intended to compliment and interpret and even mutually correct one another" Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 8, 11.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 31.

driven in part by a caution against too closely associating human weakness with the divine Lord. As a result, he contends that although the doctrine of communicated properties is most often used in “orthodox ways,” there are times where it appears to be lacking:

[T]here is the problematic statement about the Son of God being without father, as to His human nature, without mother as to his divine (Heb. 7:3). A thoroughgoing doctrine of communicated properties would have guarded Wesley against misexegesis here. The concrete of the divine nature, “the Son of God,” is here clearly used to refer to the divine-human person, and He cannot be said to be without a mother. But Wesley’s zeal for typology leads him in this instance to overlook the communication of human properties to the divine-human Son of God.¹⁸

Deschner sees in Wesley a Christology that is somewhat one-directional, exhibiting a tendency to define the authority of Christ in terms of his divinity and to “speak of Christ’s divinity as a substance or abstract quality, which can be seen, judged, measured, and, when deserved, ascribed to Jesus.”¹⁹ The human nature, on the other hand, he asserts is underemphasized as it is focused primarily on the functional character of the mediatorial role of Christ that emphasizes the substitutionary atonement of Christ’s work on the cross and as the template for sanctification as the “express image of the Father’s person, ‘a copy of his divine righteousness, so far as it can be imparted to a human spirit’ (Heb 1:3)”²⁰

Subsequently, Deschner can be found in nearly every work concerning Wesley’s Christology with both supporters and critics. Fritz Hildebrandt, in his review, finds the study to be illuminating in light of its filling a lacuna in Wesleyan scholarship at the time, but has reservations concerning its conclusions. Suspecting that his interpretive schema is deeply indebted to his Barthian training, Hildebrandt emphasizes that the reader is “at several points inevitably and avowedly taken beyond Wesley.” Specifically, Hildebrandt agrees with Deschner that Wesley’s theology is first informed by a moralistic Anglicanism but “converted” by his later found evangelicalism. However, he is concerned that Deschner’s charge of a weakened humanity in Wesley’s Christology is owed, in part, to a mis-

¹⁸Ibid., 34.

¹⁹Ibid., 17.

²⁰Ibid., 119.

understanding of Wesley's pneumatology. He identifies that Deschner's belief that Wesley is misguided to affirm empowerment through the work of the Holy Spirit for sanctification is constrained by a Barthian understanding of the believer's sole indebtedness to the active obedience of Christ (via his meritorious work) in order to receive all the benefits of his sacrifice. Hildebrandt, thus, reinforces that for Wesley the distribution of these benefits *is* dependent on a robust pneumatology.²¹

On the other hand, the eminent Wesleyan scholar, Albert Outler, followed Deschner's evaluation that in Wesley one sees an emphasis of the divinity of Christ over his humanity and levels his own charge of a "practical monophysitism."²² Although Outler does not offer a detailed analysis of this allegation, he does give some contextual clues. In his summary remarks to Wesley's sermon, "On Knowing Christ after the Flesh,"²³ Outler postulates that Wesley's purpose for this sermon was to expound most explicitly on his understanding of Christology. Again agreeing with Deschner, he reiterates Wesley's lack of distinction from Protestant orthodoxy on this point and underscores his indebtedness to the Reformed tradition concerning the interpenetration of the divine and human natures of Christ. Outler states Wesley is directing his thoughts against a "one-sided" emphasis on the humanity of Christ exemplified by the pietists. Yet, in so doing, he suggests that, "in his zeal against psilanthropism²⁴ [Wesley] had fallen into its opposite, viz., monophysitism . . ." and that "there is very little

²¹Franz Hildebrandt, "Wesley's Christology," *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 23 (June 1962): 123.

²²Outler, in note *f* on Wesley's "Sermon on the Mount, I" states, "Note the direct correlation between the human Jesus and the Second person of the Trinity: no kenosis here, but more than a hint of Wesley's practical monophysitism." As support for this claim, he references section I.9 of the sermon in which Wesley describes Jesus' oration of the beatitudes in divine terms (John Wesley, Sermon 21, "The Sermon on the Mount, I," §1.9, in *Sermons I*, ed. Albert C. Outler, vol.1 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1976-), 470, 474, [hereafter *Works*].

²³Albert Outler, introductory comment to Sermon 123, "On Knowing Christ After the Flesh," *Works*, 4:97-106.

²⁴Psilanthropism denies the divinity of Christ and views Jesus as "merely man." Interestingly, Outler appears to doubt Wesley's apologetic as he expresses a skepticism of the presence of this heresy when he states, "as though any professing Christian in the eighteenth century had ever thought or spoken of Jesus Christ 'as a mere man' and nothing more," Outler, introductory comment to Sermon 123, *Works*, 4:97.

emphasis [in this sermon] on the latter half of the Chalcedonian 'definition' that Jesus Christ in his human nature was wholly and truly of the same reality as we ourselves (καὶ ὁμοούσιον ἡμῖν)."²⁵

In two more recent works we see a more charitable assessment of Wesley's Christology. Both Kenneth Collins and Randy Maddox, who also recognize in Wesley an emphasis of the divine over the human nature, offer evaluations that are concerned with points of convergence and continuity rather than disjunction and deviation. Setting his discussion in the context of Wesley's homiletical scheme, Collins asserts that the Methodist divine saw the "sermon . . . as a form of literature to communicate theological truths."²⁶ However, he is also sensitive to Wesley's own comments that describe a primary parallel function of his sermons, namely, "that soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) was at the very heart of the entire enterprise of the published sermons, and this emphasis gives the various theological discussions within these pieces a distinctive and memorable hue."²⁷ Further, Collins shows that for Wesley the roles of the Divine (Creator, Sustainer, Preserver, Governor, Redeemer) cannot be artificially parsed to particular persons of the Triune, but rather "emphasized [in his writings] the unity of the Godhead . . . by articulating the interpenetration of roles by each person of the Trinity." From this perspective, Collins argues that the "teleological thrust, the orientation of much of Wesley's theology," stands in relation to an emphasis on the entire process of salvation, which necessarily points with particularity to the encompassing work of the Son of God (particularly with the divinity of Christ in mind) as, "the perfection in love to which human beings are created."²⁸ However, he maintains this is no indication that Wesley lacked a vibrant affirmation of Christ's humanity, which can be easily tracked through his sermons and other writings.²⁹ Therefore, Collins insists that despite Deschner's

²⁵Outler, "Introductory Comment," to Sermon 123, *Works*, 4:98.

²⁶Kenneth J. Collins, *A Faithful Witness: John Wesley's Homiletical Theology* (Wilmore, KY: Wesley Heritage Press, 1993), 11.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 12.

²⁸Collins states that the "division of labor" among the Trinity is often divided in terms of: Father-Creator, Son-Redeemer, and Holy Spirit-Sanctifier. Here he claims, Wesley did not find such division adequate to articulate his Christology, nor his doctrine of God or the Holy Spirit, given the biblical witness, *Ibid.*, 37, 38.

²⁹See, for classic examples, Wesley's sermons: Sermon 62, "The End of Christ's Coming," §II.4; Sermon 55, "On the Trinity," §I.13-16; Sermon 59 "God's Love to Fallen Humanity," §I.5; Sermon 85 "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," Intro.4.

underestimation of Wesley's conception of Christ's humanity and skepticism of his doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum*, Wesley "neither devalued the human nature of Christ nor did he reject a 'communication of properties.'" ³⁰

Finally, when Randy Maddox takes up the question of Wesley's Christology, he contends the Methodist's primary concern was with the work of Christ. Respectively, conceptions of the nature of Christ with regard to his humanity and divinity revolve around perceptions of human need and Christ's forensic/therapeutic task as mediated through Eastern and Western understandings of salvation. Central to Maddox's assessment of Wesley's Christology is the distinction between the soteriological functions of Christ's work present in these two perspectives. Here, the juridical emphasis of Western conceptions defines the necessity of the incarnation and death of Christ in relation to humanity's need and inability to self-administer atonement that arose as a result of sin and guilt. While the Orthodox tradition does not deny this legal function, the focus lies rather in the restorative purposes of Christ's sacrificial death that "became integral to his total identification with our human nature. . . . [b]y his death, then, Christ reclaimed fallen human nature and through his resurrection and ascension he transformed and exalted it, providing for our spiritual healing and renewed growth." ³¹ Yet, for Maddox there are clear indications that Wesley's Christology concerning the nature of Christ follows an expressly Western emphasis as is demonstrated in his "Letter to a Roman Catholic," in which he articulates a strong Chalcedonian Christology.³² Maddox concludes that as Wesley sought to "integrate the juridical emphasis typical of Western theology into his basic therapeutic view of the Christian life," Eastern emphases of the ascended and

³⁰Ibid., 41. Collins rightfully notes that while Deschner comes short of levying charges of Nestorianism and Docetism against Wesley (he comes just short), he does little to mask his suspicions when stating that there lies within Wesley a disposition against associating human weakness too closely with Christ which prevents him from affirming with certainty that the incarnation affirms the human nature in Christ and not simply being subjected to it, Ibid., 31-32.

³¹Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood, 1994), 95. The text of this statement is attached in addendum 1 given its significance.

³²John Wesley, "A Letter to a Roman Catholic," *Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1958), 81-82, especially §§ 4,7,8,9,10,11; see Appendix I.

risen Lord discernibly take the forefront to communicate Christ as the epicenter of the activity of the Divine:

Wesley's consuming emphasis on the deity of Christ was an expression of his conviction that *God is the one who takes initiative in our salvation*: it is God who died in Christ to make possible our pardon; it is God who awakens us to our need of grace in Christ the Prophet and drives us to Christ the Priest; it is God who initiates our restored relationship in Christ the Priest; and it is God who guides us as Christ the King, leading us into all holiness and happiness.³³

For Maddox, this stress on the divine was rooted in Wesley's insistence that the deity of Christ was the "foundation of all our hope."³⁴ What Wesley meant by this and what prompted this emphasis could be the key to understanding how the divine and the human function together in Wesley's Christology. But, concerning the nature of Jesus, Maddox believes the ways in which Wesley describes Christ, despite some very strong indications of a wholly Chalcedonian Christology, he "came right to the border of monophysitism, if not stepping over it." Yet, he asserts such latitude is practical, permissible, and justified within his broader soteriological concerns.³⁵

Hambrick and Lodahl's Assessment of Wesley's Christology

Given the above conversation concerning the state of Wesley's Christology, it is no surprise to find in their article that Hambrick and Lodahl are persuaded that Wesley developed a pattern in both his preaching and written comments that upheld "the church's teaching regarding the human nature of Christ, at least in broad terms, but also downplayed or even avoided Hebrews' strongest affirmations of Jesus' humanity."³⁶ This

³³Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 96, 117-118.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 115.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 118. Maddox uses the bulk of this chapter to summarize the atonement of Christ and the offices of priest, prophet, and king. Within Wesley's soteriology, he argues, the divine nature plays the central role in the salvation of mankind. And, because the creeds provide loose boundaries for Christological commitments (i.e., the essential confession for orthodoxy being two natures in one person, otherwise, church tradition did not stipulate much more), Wesley's polemics against Arianism and Socinianism require his use of the latitude afforded by the creedal statements.

³⁶Hambrick and Lodahl, "Responsible Grace in Christology?" 96.

perspective is built upon the premise that Wesley's comments throughout his *NT Notes* tended to qualify the humanity of Christ. Comments such as those found in Mark 6:6 and 13:32 refer to a superiority of Christ's divine nature over his humanity. Further, remarks concerning John 8:59 and Luke 4:30 possibly suggest that in the midst of conflict Jesus simply disappeared to avoid the crowds, thereby inferring a form of docetism that so easily "compromised, and so effectively dismissed, the human limitations of the Nazarene."³⁷ This implicit docetism comes to the fore, they argue, in Matthew 27:50. Citing Wesley's comments, the authors contend the passage reflects a logos-body dualism, akin to the Cartesian *ghost in the machine*³⁸ that "relegat[es] Jesus' human consciousness to irrelevance if not outright non-existence."³⁹

He alone, of all men that ever were, could have continued alive, even in the greatest tortures, as long as he pleased, or have retired from the body whenever he had thought fit. And how does it illustrate that love which He manifested in His death? Inasmuch as he did not use his power to quit his body as soon as it was fastened to the cross, leaving only an insensible corpse to the cruelty of his murderers; but continued his abode in it, with a steady resolution, as long as it was proper.⁴⁰

Further, Hambrick and Lodahl observe that in Wesley's redaction of the standard Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles for the development of the Methodist Twenty-Five Articles the Methodist founder curiously (and without explanation) omits the reference to Christ being "of [Mary's] substance" and that when speaking of the resurrection, he omits reference to

³⁷Ibid., 92 and n.11 on the same page.

³⁸Gilbert Ryle (1900-1976) famously described Cartesian duality as the "ghost in the machine." He argues Descartes placed the distinctiveness of the mind and the body in "collateral histories" such that "there exist both bodies and minds; that there occur physical processes and mental processes; that there are mechanical causes of corporeal movement and mental causes of corporeal movements . . . these and other analogous conjunctions are absurd," Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1949) 11, 15, 22. Here our authors suggest with this contemporary allusion that Wesley was on the same course as Apollonarius' "drift[ing] toward a strong Word-body dualism" that led to his inevitable condemnation. Hambrick and Lodahl, "Responsible Grace in Christology," 91-92.

³⁹Ibid., 92.

⁴⁰Wesley, *NT Notes*, Matt 27:50.

Christ's resurrected body as taking up again, "with flesh, bones." For the authors, this pattern of *avoidance*⁴¹ "underscore[s] Wesley's distinct tendency to distance himself and his audience from the concrete humanity of Jesus."⁴²

The disjunction between Christ's divinity and humanity they stress has serious implications for the book of Hebrews and Wesley's Christology. Functionally, Hebrews portrays the obedience of Christ in the midst of his sufferings as inexorably linked to the ability of believers to respond to the initiative of God's grace (3:6; 5:7-9; 10:5-10). Wesley, they claim, cuts the ties "between Jesus' faithful obedience and ours" when he states in his comments on 2:10, "But what is here said of our Lord's being *made perfect through sufferings* has no relation to our being saved or sanctified by sufferings."⁴³ Additionally, the author's interpret Wesley's silence with regard to Christ's sympathetic suffering/temptation (4:15) and apparent "sidestepping" of Jesus' obedience through suffering (5:1-10) (i.e., the cause of his humanity being perfected and the corresponding cause of believers perfection) as reinforcing an ahistorical and internal perfection subsequently carried out exclusively by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴ By denying the correspondence between the suffering and obedience of Christ with that of his disciples, he has "effectively drained Hebrews of its rhetorical appeal to Jesus as the pioneer who has blazed a trail through this world before us and beside us."⁴⁵ Consequently, by presenting Christ primarily as the "embodiment of God's pardoning and empowering initiative toward us," Hambrick and Lodahl assert that Wesley's corresponding *responsible* soteriology suffers from a one-sided Christology that lacks the impetus for human response. Through suffering and obedience Christ's human nature provides a pedagogical model that the authors suggest serves as the "embodiment of humanity's ideal reception of and response to that divine initiative"⁴⁶ from which believers are inspired to persevere in obedience and faithfulness.

⁴¹The authors' use of the term 'avoid' (and its cognates, i.e., sidestep, eschew,) is a central theme to their argument and will be discussed in the response section of the paper.

⁴²Hambrick and Lodahl, "Responsible Grace in Christology?" 93, 94.

⁴³Wesley, *NT Notes*, Heb 2:10.

⁴⁴Hambrick and Lodahl, "Responsible Grace in Christology?" 98-99.

⁴⁵Ibid., 99.

⁴⁶Ibid., 99-100.

**Wesley's Christology in the Epistle of Hebrews:
A methodological and theological consideration**

If one is to discover any merit in rehabilitating Wesley's reputation concerning his Christology in the book of Hebrews it is necessary to consider the presentation of the argument driving Hambrick's and Lodahl's assessment. In so doing, it is important to ask whether the authors have represented Wesley charitably by taking into consideration three significant factors in their analysis: context, method, and theology.⁴⁷ Although they present a short treatment, contextually, there is no mention of Wesley's theological interlocutors, the theological concerns facing Protestants, evangelicals and Methodists, nor of the themes stressed in Wesley's writings.

Methodologically, the authors overlook the nature of his writings. They fail to identify the primary purpose of the *Notes* as pastoral, philosophical and intellectual, or polemical. Nor is there any discussion of Wesley's methodological presuppositions and assumptions concerning his readers. Most importantly, they do not engage Wesley's exegetical approach, especially given his proximity to the rise of textual and historical-critical analysis. And finally, there is but brief attention given to Wesley's theological aims, which it could be argued it is not *his* primary aim they address. As tempting as it may be, evaluating Wesley's Christology as a theological abstraction apart from his contextual, methodological, and theological framework is hazardous (if not discourteous). Given that these authors themselves affirm that Wesley's statements do not indicate he did not believe in the Christological presuppositions of Hebrews but, instead, "preferred" to present a lop-sided Christology, for which "one can only wonder" as to why. However, Wesley did leave indications as to why his presentation was seemingly uneven. It is *in light of* these factors, if one is attentive, Wesley's treatment of the divine and human natures of Christ in the epistle to the Hebrews becomes less obscure and their implications for his soteriology comes into focus.

Before addressing Hebrews directly it is necessary to understand the nature and purpose of Wesley's *NT Notes* from which Hambrick and Lodahl base their assessment. Throughout, the authors lament Wesley's

⁴⁷Donald A. Bullen, *A Man of One Book: John Wesley's Interpretation and Use of the Bible* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2007); Mark L. Weeter, *John Wesley's View and Use of Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007). These two works in particular attempt to view Wesley's interpretive method in light of context and method with some consideration for theology.

“avoidance,” “silence,” and “reticence” concerning Christological propositions related to Christ’s humanity in a few key passages of Hebrews (2:10; 4:15; 5:2-10) as well as a willingness to “sidestep” and “eschew” the direct correlation of Jesus’ suffering to those of believers as he appears to have had “no desire to dwell on these points.”⁴⁸ In the introduction to the *NT Notes*, Wesley states that these notes “were not principally designed for men of learning . . . and much less for men of long and deep experience in the ways and word of God. . . . I write chiefly for plain unlettered men, who understand only their mother tongue, and yet reverence and love the word of God, and have a desire to save their souls.”⁴⁹ Wesley’s approach was born of the conviction that the scriptures could speak for themselves, “a most solid and precious system of Divine Truth,” and that together the Old and New Testaments comprised “one entire body, wherein is no defect, no excess.” Thus, he felt he should only attempt to aid in translating or commenting where doing so made the scriptures “better, stronger, clearer, or more consistent with the context” *for his audience*. With precisely this intent in mind, Wesley makes clear the very narrow scope for which his *NT Notes* should serve:

I have endeavoured to make the notes as *short as possible* that the comment may not obscure or swallow up the text: and as *plain as possible*, in pursuance of my main design, to assist the unlearned reader: for this reason I have studiously *avoided*, not only all curious and critical inquiries, and all use of the learned languages, but all such methods of reasoning and modes of expression *as people in common life are unacquainted with*: for the same reason, as I rather endeavour to *obviate* than to propose and answer questions, so I purposely decline going deep into many difficulties, lest I should leave the ordinary reader behind me.⁵⁰

⁴⁸The term *avoid* (and its cognates, as well as sidestep, eschew, silence, etc.) is used (at least) to imply intentionality on Wesley’s part. However, to what end? The inference is that Wesley, à la Deschner, has a reluctance to affirm the full humanity of Christ. Yet, as the discussion here is attempting to show there seems to be good cause given the specific contextual and theological concerns, which Hambrick and Lodahl themselves *shy away from* and chose not to explicate.

⁴⁹Wesley, *NT Notes*, Preface, §3.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, §6, *italics mine*. Wesley will go on further to state that he has used John A. Bengel’s translation of the *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* (1742) as the basis of his translation here, including a redaction of his comments along with those of “Dr. Heylyn, Dr. Guyse Dr. Doddridge.” While some have conjectured whether this was simply cribbing someone else’s work, this does not preclude his likely

The venerable church historian, Timothy Smith, suggests this brevity is further understandable given Wesley's perception of the Bible, especially the New Testament, as a unitary whole. It was expected that his preaching colleagues, well familiar with his preaching and writing style, held nearly identical views and perceived the Bible in much the same way.⁵¹ Therefore, his brevity was a practical consequence of shared hermeneutical expectations that led to a narrow selection of passages upon which he would comment. Thus, rather than assume a weak doctrinal position, "[t]he more sensible conclusion is that he did not intend in the *Notes* to duplicate what he had already proclaimed from one end of the British Isles to the other, in meetings great and small and in public print as well."⁵² Deschner, himself, affirms this methodological and theological presupposition when stating that Wesley viewed the *Notes*, like the scripture, as a unitary whole that functioned to interpret itself and "[t]he silences often indicate that Wesley has spoken on the matter elsewhere. . . ."⁵³ In addition, Wesley spoke on

and implicit agreement with those comments that made the publication. Smith notes, "To be sure, his revisions of the text of the Scriptures themselves, many adopted from Bengel, rested on exegetical work he had done across the three previous decades." Timothy L. Smith, "Notes on the Exegesis of John Wesley's 'Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament,'" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 16, no. 1 (Spring, 1981): 107.

⁵¹Not only did preachers have this grasp but also much of the catechized church. In my forth coming dissertation, I will address the issue of biblical and theological literacy in the years preceding Wesley's ministry. Historically, the people of England have had a close relationship with the Bible, its content, and the theological doctrines associated from a devotional perspective at minimum. For a general overview of the relationship of English people and the bible, see Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1993); David Daniell, *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England, c. 1530-1700* ed. Kevin Killeen, Helen Smith and Rachel Willie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); and *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: Volume 3, from 1450 to 1750*, ed. Euan Cameron (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁵²Timothy L. Smith, "Exegesis of Wesley's 'Explanatory Notes,'" 108, 109.

⁵³Deschner, *Wesley's Christology*, 11. In understanding the limitations of the *Notes* as a conclusive source for Wesley's view of any doctrinal position, Deschner does argue that John, rather, than Hebrews is central for Wesley on Christology because he associates the doctrine with "the appropriate passages." This may help us understand why there is some difficulty in Hambrick and Lodahl's interpretation since they are relying, perhaps, more heavily on cryptic descriptions than those that may be plainer. Robin Scroggs also notes the primacy of John in Wesley's *NT Notes* as the source for his Christology. Robin Scroggs, "Wesley Biblical Scholar," 419.

several occasions on the danger of theological controversies and sought to avert such conflicts. He felt that interfering too much with the written Word of God would become a catalyst for division within the Church.⁵⁴ With these considerations in mind, it is indispensable to appreciate, despite our contemporary desire for clarity and precision in intent when determining doctrinal content, that Wesley on many specific and salient passages of scripture was abbreviated or silent.

One other important methodological note for consideration is Wesley's interpretive scheme.

Wesley was ever aware of his mortality and sought one thing, "the way to heaven." The Bible was the record of God's condescension to make the way known, and thus, the Methodist divine famously stated, "O give me that book! At any price give me the Book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*."⁵⁵ Consequently, "Wesley believe[d] Scripture to be a unitary coherent whole." In this sense, he often justifies his interpretation of the Bible with phrases such as "the whole tenor of Scripture," "the whole Scripture" or the "general tenor of Scripture." Scott Jones notes that there are at least fifty-seven occurrences of these types of phrases in the Wesley corpus. He argues that in Wesley's description of the unitary whole of scripture, *wholeness* describes the overall pattern contained within the scriptures while *unitary* describes the consistency and coherence throughout the biblical corpus. Thus, the bible "not only functions toward a single end, but it is throughout consistent and coherent" with itself and its message.⁵⁶

Related to this general tenor of scripture, for Wesley, is the analogy of faith.⁵⁷ The analogy of faith builds on the general tenor of scripture by

⁵⁴Wesley, *NT Notes*, Preface, §9.

⁵⁵John Wesley, preface to "Sermons on Several Occasions," *Works*: 1:105.

⁵⁶Scott J. Jones, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood, 1995), 43, 44.

⁵⁷In the *NT Notes*, Wesley notes the following in Romans 12:6 to make the connection between the general tenor and analogy of faith: "But it seems here to mean the ordinary gift of expounding scripture. Let us prophesy according to the analogy of faith - St. Peter expresses it, 'as the oracles of God;' according to the general tenor of them; according to that grand scheme of doctrine which is delivered therein, touching original sin, justification by faith, and present, inward salvation. There is a wonderful analogy between all these; and a close and intimate connexion between the chief heads of that faith 'which was once delivered to the saints.' Every article therefore concerning which there is any question should be determined by this rule; every doubtful scripture interpreted according to the grand truths which run through the whole." Wesley, *NT Notes*, Romans 12:6.

interpreting scripture by scripture with distinct attention given to the doctrinal content of its teaching.⁵⁸ More specifically, it provides the normative guide "as a rule for interpretation" by bringing the reader to correct conclusions and preventing incorrect ones while following along the order of salvation, "according to that grand scheme of doctrine which is delivered therein, touching original sin, justification by faith, and present, inward salvation."⁵⁹ As a result, while Wesley did not ignore the immediate context of a passage, he did give preference to the larger context of the whole singular theology of the bible. In this respect, Wesley sought to emphasize the simplicity of allowing the scripture to speak for itself, and therefore, presented doctrine assuming the unity of the scriptures and its message while avoiding polemically "wresting the Scriptures' to bolster his own theology."⁶⁰

With these methodological dynamics as a backdrop, at the heart of Hambrick and Lodahl's "indictment" of Wesley's Christology is the assertion that "Wesley denied any analogy between the suffering and obedience of Jesus and the suffering and obedience of his disciples, despite Hebrews' strong rhetorical appeal to that very analogy" and that Christ is portrayed in a state of "static perfection," that is, Christ is denied *becoming* perfect through his sufferings.⁶¹ Specifically, Hambrick and Lodahl's primary bone of contention is with Wesley's comments from the *NT Notes* on Hebrews 2:10:

But what is here said of our Lord's being *made perfect through sufferings* has no relation to our being saved or sanctified by sufferings. Even He Himself was perfect, as God and as man, before ever He suffered. . . . It is His atonement, and His Spirit carrying on "the work of faith with power" in our hearts, that alone can sanctify us. Various afflictions indeed may be made subservient to this; and so far as they are blessed to the weaning us from sin, and causing our affections to be set on things above, so far they do indirectly help on our sanctification.⁶²

⁵⁸Weeter, *John Wesley's View and Use of Scripture*, 201.

⁵⁹Jones, *John Wesley's Conception and Use of Scripture*, 48, 49; Wesley, *NT Notes*, Romans 12:6.

⁶⁰George A. Turner, "John Wesley as an Interpreter of Scripture," in *Inspiration and Interpretation*, ed. John F. Walvoord (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957), 172.

⁶¹Hambrick and Lodahl, "Responsible Grace in Christology?" 87, 98.

⁶²Wesley, *NT Notes*, Heb 2:10; c.f. Hambrick and Lodahl, "Responsible Grace in Christology?" 96-97.

If only taken at face value⁶³ it is understandable why Hambrick and Lodahl might perceive Wesley as severing any relationship between the sufferings of Christ and those of believers. However, it is also reasonable to consider a potential polemical appeal given Wesley's concern for antinomianism among Christians of his era.⁶⁴ But even in isolation, if 2:10 is taken together with the comments in 2:13 and 17 where Wesley reaffirms the correspondence of Christ to believers, "[a]s one that has communion with his brethren in sufferings, as well as in nature" as it was "highly fit and proper, yea, necessary, in order to his design of redeeming them. *To be made in all things*—[t]hat essentially pertain to human nature, and in all sufferings and temptations,"⁶⁵ it is at least evident that Wesley believes there is a shared experience between Christ and humanity in both essence

⁶³Hambrick and Lodahl quote the passage twice at length in the course of their argument. However, in both quotations (96-7, 98) they omit a significant section of Wesley's comments that contextualizes his statements. The comments of 2:10 do not betray the human nature of Christ, but rather make a distinction of kind between the purposes of Christ's sufferings for himself and the purposes for which they serve humanity. Namely, Christ's sufferings reveal his glory and are the means by which he is "made a perfect or complete sin-offering." Yet, these sufferings, Wesley states, are intended to by His Spirit carry on "the work of faith with power in our Hearts, that alone can sanctify," which affirms Wesley's expectation of the Epistle's pedagogical function of confirming faith for believers by "connecting (Christological) Doctrine and use." *NT Notes*, introduction to Hebrews, 3:89, (parenthesis mine).

⁶⁴In her work, "Understanding Christian Perfection and its Struggle with Antinomianism," Victoria Campbell discusses the revival of antinomianism which John Wesley sought to address in his ministry. Closely related to his controversies with the Quietists and Calvinists, Wesley was concerned that Christians either gave up pursuing God and the means of grace altogether when lacking complete assurance or considered their destiny secure in one way or the other (predestination) that obviated the need for pursuing holiness. In both cases Wesley saw salvation as hollow if justification lacked the process of sanctification. Victoria Campbell, "Understanding Christian Perfection and its Struggle with Antinomianism," *The Asbury Journal* 68, no.2 (2013):58-77. In this light, Wesley's comments on Hebrew's 2:10 in which, Christ "being *made perfect through sufferings* has no relation to our being saved or sanctified by sufferings," is more understandable. It is more likely that the commonly shared Chalcedonian divine-human nature was assumed in abbreviated comments designed to address antinomian concerns rather than intentionally severing the divine-human natures of Christ or isolating his human experiences from that of Christians believers.

⁶⁵Wesley, *NT Notes*, Heb 2:13, 17.

and experience. Wesley's note on the Incarnation (John 1:14) emphasizes the permanency and humanity of this shared experience.⁶⁶ Yet, further careful observation of Wesley's Christology reveals much more going on at work here, especially for those (like his fellow Methodists) who would be familiar with his preaching and other writings as well as a shared theological background.

For instance, Hambrick and Lodahl claim that the comment on the passage (Heb 2:10) reveals a static perfection concerning the nature of Christ by declaring that Christ was perfect prior to his Passion. However, the statement, "Even He Himself was perfect, as God and as man, before ever He suffered," is more plausibly understood as a truncated comment on the *broad* assumed Christological understanding shared by colleagues and listeners described more fully in other portions of the *Notes*. Earlier in the article the authors accuse Wesley of a Word-Body dualism when citing the Methodist's *NT Notes* on Matthew 27:50 in which Christ is depicted as distinctly and separately Word-Body, as one who can flip a corporeal switch if desired.⁶⁷ However, this entry also contains a significant cross-reference to John 10:18 (I lay down My life so that I may take it again) concerning the operation of his divine pre-existent power in tandem with his human nature:

I lay it down of myself - By my own free act and deed. I have power to lay it down, and *I have power to take it again* - I have an original power and right of myself, both to lay it down as a ransom, and to take it again, after full satisfaction is made, for the sins of the whole world. *This commission have I received of*

⁶⁶"And in order to raise us to this Dignity and Happiness, *the eternal Word*, by a most amazing Condescension, *was made flesh*, united Himself to our miserable Nature, with all its innocent infirmities. And He did not make us a transient Visit, but *tabernacled among us* on earth, displaying his Glory in a more eminent Manner, than ever of old in the Tabernacle of Moses." Wesley, *NT Notes*, John 1:14.

⁶⁷The following is the citation that Hambrick and Lodahl refer to: "He alone, of all men that ever were, could have continued alive, even in the greatest tortures, as long as He pleased, or have retired from the body whenever He had thought fit. And how does it illustrate that love which He manifested in His death! inasmuch as He did not use His power to quit His body as soon as it was fastened to the cross, leaving only an insensible corpse to the cruelty of His murderers; but continued His abode in it, with a steady resolution, as long as it was proper." In Wesley, *NT Notes*, Matthew 27:50; cf. Hambrick and Lodahl, "Responsible Grace in Christology?" 92.

my Father - Which I readily execute. He chiefly spoke of the Father, before his suffering; of his own glory, after it. Our Lord's receiving this commission as mediator is not to be considered as the ground of his power to lay down and resume his life. For this he had in him self [sic], as having an original right to dispose thereof, antecedent to the Father's commission. But this commission [as mediator through suffering] was the reason why he thus used his power in laying down his life. He did it in obedience to his Father.⁶⁸

In both Matthew and John, Wesley is not depicting a Word-Body dualism or necessarily a static perfection, but rather describing in shorthand the nature of Christ's personage, power, and submission in relation to the glory of his divine pre-existence and humanity, which suffered in obedience to the will of the Father. This can be further seen in several sermons⁶⁹ in which he speaks of Christ Jesus being the "fullness and supreme height of the Godhead," who "'being made in the likeness of man,' a real man, like other men," offers in his self-emptying and death on the cross, "[t]he greatest instance both of humiliation and obedience."⁷⁰ Wesley's strong Chalcedonian Christology is more than evident in these passages. Therefore, when one reflects on Hebrews 2:10, it is not unreasonable to consider that, in his desire for brevity, Wesley's statement is likely functioning as a form of *theological shorthand* with which he is directing readers to other familiar and more explicit statements he has made on the subject in his sermons and other writings.

But more directly, what does *made perfect through sufferings* imply? Is Wesley attempting to connect the perfection of believer's with Christ's perfection? Again, Wesley does not fully expound his understanding of this concept here, but there are other indicators throughout the *NT Notes* and some parallel indicators here in Hebrews. In both Matthew 16:21 and 26:24, Wesley comments that the purpose of Jesus' suffering is that "Christ must through sufferings and death enter into his glory."⁷¹ In Hebrews, Wesley not only affirms this purpose and states that these suf-

⁶⁸Wesley, *NT Notes*, John 10:18, [brackets mine].

⁶⁹Wesley, Sermon 15, "The Great Assize," §II:1; Sermon 85, "On Working Out our Own Salvation," Intro:4; Sermon 40, "Christian Perfection," §I:2; Sermon 59, "God's Love to Fallen Man," §I:5; Sermon 51, "The Good Steward," Intro:1.

⁷⁰Wesley, Sermon 85, "On Working Out our Own Salvation," *Works* 3:201.

⁷¹Wesley, *NT Notes*, Matthew 16:21, 26:24.

ferings were the means by which he received his exaltation (1:3) as the "God - Man, who is now crowned with glory and honour - As a reward for his having suffered death," but correlates the significance of his coming to glory as the "procuring and efficient cause" for salvation by "doing and suffering his whole will." (5:9). Thus, "[t]o *perfect or consummate implies the bringing him to a full and glorious end of all his troubles*" indicates the obedience of Christ to the will of the Father that led to death and his exalted glory, that is, "[t]his consummation by sufferings intimates, the glory of Christ."⁷² Perfecting, in the context of Hebrews, is best understood by Wesley as bringing the God-Man to glory *through* suffering rather than growth in character formation toward holiness as the authors argue.⁷³

As Wesley has conjoined the ideas of suffering and glory with the statement of Christ's humanity he has, indeed, laid the foundation for the pedagogical function of perfection for believers in the book of Hebrews. In his comments on Romans 8:14 and 17, Wesley indicates that the believer, led by "the Spirit of God [Christ, cf. 1Ptr. 4:1] - [i]n all the ways of righteousness," receives all the blessings of Christ, namely salvation through justification and sanctification. These, he says are summarized by the Apostle in Romans 8:30 by the word "glorified," "though, indeed, he does not describe mere glory, but that which is still mingled with the cross. The sum is, through sufferings to glory." In the same way, Christ entered his glory through (not as a result of) sufferings, so the believer does as well as they share in his sufferings; that is, they "suffer with him - willingly and cheerfully."⁷⁴ Yet, as is indicated above, suffering with Christ involves a "mingling with the cross." That is, believers share in Christ's crucifixion, to be made "inwardly and truly conformable to the sufferings of Christ" so that in suffering for his sake, one is "dead to things here below," but gains "the resurrection to glory."⁷⁵ It is here Wesley makes an interesting connection to perfection from the context of suffering and glory. In his *Notes* on Philippians 3:10-15, when speaking of whether the Apostle has obtained resurrection glory (Phil 3:11), or having been made perfect (Phil 3:12): "There is a difference between one that is perfect, and one that is *perfected*. The one is fitted for the race . . . the other, ready to

⁷²Wesley, *NT Notes*, Hebrews 2:9, 5:9.

⁷³Hambrick and Lodahl, "Responsible Grace in Christology?" 86, 91.

⁷⁴Wesley, *NT Notes*, Romans 8:30.

⁷⁵C.f. Wesley's *NT Notes* on 1 Peter 4:1, 13-14; Phil 3:10-15.

receive the prize. *But I pursue, if I may apprehend that* - Perfect holiness, preparatory to glory.”⁷⁶ Two observations need to be made at this point. First, for Wesley suffering is the path to becoming *perfected* not the condition of *being made perfect*. If being made perfect relates to holiness, as described above, it makes sense that he describes Jesus’ atoning sacrifice as the “perfect (holy) or complete sin offering” (2:10). That is, in Jesus coming to his glory (being perfected) it is his sacrifice in his humanity that is *made perfect* (i.e., made holy) which is in focus more so than any assertion concerning his human nature being perfected.⁷⁷ For Wesley, this had a clear pedagogical function for believers. In 1 Peter 2:5, 9, Wesley stated that believers like Christ in Hebrews 2:9-10, are consecrated (made perfect/holy) in God as a “holy priesthood” and as such they offer their souls and bodies, thoughts, words, and actions, “for offering spiritual sacrifices.”⁷⁸ Second, by sharing and participating in the suffering of Christ both willfully and cheerfully (as well as being made perfect) the function of human agency remains intact. This rebuts two arguments from Hambrick and Lodahl: First, the idea that Wesley is claiming a static perfection is voided since the term *perfect* corresponds to Jesus’ sacrifice being holy rather than his own character growth. Second, it indicates despite Hambrick and Lodahl’s skepticisms that Wesley does take seriously human agency as “the receptive and obedient response of the human being.”⁷⁹ However, does this negate the call to obedience so often associated with Hebrews through the perfection of Christ’s human nature?

In asserting that “Hebrews offers the strongest connection between suffering and the holy life . . . [in which it] distinctively argues that Jesus is the great Exemplar of this process of growth in character through suffering,” the authors had quickly turned to David deSilva to provide a framework for understanding the relationship between the two. Citing deSilva’s work, “Despising Shame,”⁸⁰ Hambrick and Lodahl argue that the

⁷⁶Wesley, *NT Notes*, Phil 3:12, 3:13.

⁷⁷Two well respected examples of a very similar point of view from contemporary commentaries come from Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 228, 298; and Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 80-81, 132-133.

⁷⁸Wesley, *NT Notes*, 1 Peter. 5, 9, 3:162.

⁷⁹Hambrick and Lodahl, “Responsible Grace in Christology?” 95.

⁸⁰David A. deSilva, “Despising Shame: A Cultural-Anthropological Investigation of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113 (Autumn 1994): 439-461.

Hebrews were motivated to avoid persecution and restore themselves to a status of honor. They suggest that by learning obedience through suffering, as epitomized by Christ (and those in the Hall of Faith; 11:4-40), the Hebrews were provided with an alternative system of honor and shame in which perseverance is achievable. The authors conclude it is the humanity of Jesus, particularly through his obedience, that is "precisely what makes it possible" for believers to attain the perseverance of Christ since "the actions of human beings in this world [are a] means of responding to, and perhaps even of finding, God's favor." In this light, (and further quoting deSilva), "sufferings are recast as proof of the believers' legitimate descentance from (or adoption by) God." Therefore, for the authors (who seem to additionally borrow from David Peterson's framework of perfection),⁸¹ Wesley's weak portrayal of the humanity of Christ "disallows appreciation for the power of Hebrews' message regarding the sufferings, struggles, and obedience of Jesus as the paradigm for Christian discipleship and growth in holiness."⁸² In this way, Hambrick and Lodahl set up obedience as an essential feature for the argument of Hebrews in relation to connecting the humanity of Christ to Christian believers.

While there is no doubt obedience is a presupposition for those who turn to Christ as the source of eternal salvation (Heb 5:9), it is only explicitly mentioned of believers in relation to Christ's obedience in this one passage. What is to be understood concerning obedience with regard to Christ's humanity and subsequently for the believer? Hambrick and Lodahl insist that Jesus was perfected through obedience. Moreover, they not only present Wesley as denying this process, but suggest that Jesus was perfected as he "gr[e]w through struggle, heartache, suffering, and obedience learned through facing and resisting all manner of temptation," that is, "Jesus is the great Exemplar of this process of growth in character through suffering."⁸³ In this portrayal, the humanity of Christ is idealized in its reception and response to the divine initiative of salvation. But is this portrayal warranted? Did Jesus *grow in character* through his sufferings and temptations?

⁸¹The concept of the "the paradigm for Christian discipleship" reflects that found in David Peterson's *Hebrews and Perfection*. David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 187.

⁸²Hambrick and Lodahl, "Responsible Grace in Christology?" 86, 89-90, 94; cf. deSilva, "Despising Shame," 457.

⁸³Hambrick and Lodahl, "Responsible Grace in Christology?" 91, 86.

Wesley describes the obedience of Jesus in terms of his atoning sacrifice, and in particular, to have learned this obedience during the time of his passion, “when he began to suffer; when he applied himself to drink that cup: obedience in suffering and dying.” For Jesus, his humanity was on full display as he “offered up prayers and supplications – [t]hrice. With strong crying and tears – [i]n the garden. To him that was able to save him from death.” In this, Wesley speculates, Jesus, rather than call upon God for rescue, ‘so greatly did he ever thirst to be obedient to the righteous will of his Father . . . that in his human nature “he endured, in obedience to the will of his Father” with support of divine omnipotence (Heb 5:7). Two things need to be recognized here in Wesley’s portrayal that makes Christ’s obedience a viable paradigm for discipleship. First, the desire to do the righteous will of the Father reflects a learning of obedience not through growth, but an understanding of it as a cost. This is further reflected in Hebrews 10:5-9 as Jesus had an awareness from the time of his incarnation of his commitment to perseverance to do the will of the Father from the start; that is, Christ’s decision to obey both predicated and *established* his determination to persevere. Consequently, “he set out from the start on the path to obedience to God, and learned by the sufferings which came his way in consequence just what obedience to God involved in practice in his humanity.”⁸⁴ Thus, Wesley is right to say he “endured” as this is precisely the term (*upemeinen*) used similarly in Hebrews 12:2 (cf. 12:3,7) concerning the chastisement of Christ in relation to the believer at the hands of a loving father.⁸⁵ Second, the need for divine omnipotence as evidenced in the prayers of Christ reveals that while human agency is at work it is not self-sufficient and can only carry out its work of perfection through “‘the work of faith with power’ in our hearts, that alone can sanctify us.”⁸⁶ Wesley, unlike the authors, placed the locus of sanctification and perfection in the real change that comes when obedient to Christ through faith in his suffering on our behalf rather than in the *example* of obedience, “upon [which] our own struggles and sufferings [are seen] as God’s means of perfecting us.”⁸⁷

⁸⁴Bruce, *Hebrews*, 131.

⁸⁵Both Bruce and Ellingworth (among others), describe the 12:1-5 in terms of obedience, but the term does not show up here, but rather endurance, which appeals to the epistle’s emphasis on faithfulness. Bruce, *Hebrews*, 130; Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 71 n.19.

⁸⁶Wesley, *NT Notes*, Heb 2:10.

⁸⁷Hambrick and Lodahl, “Responsible Grace in Christology?” 99.

For Wesley, the obedience of Christ to suffer as willed by the Father is no less expected or evident in the lives of believers. When Wesley states that the sufferings of believers are *nearly* related to those of Christ, he was not dismissing the pedagogical function of suffering for believers, but rather making a substantive difference of kind, so that, “unless we were to be made the same sacrifice, and to atone for sin, what is said of [Jesus] in this respect is as much out of our sphere as his ascension into heaven.”⁸⁸ Although Wesley states that the obedience of Christ through sufferings “has no relation to our being saved or sanctified by sufferings,” he goes on to say later in the same comment, “[v]arious afflictions indeed may be made subservient to this; and so far as they are blessed to the weaning us from sin, and causing our affections to be set on things above, so far they do indirectly help on our sanctification.” In other words, sufferings do serve pedagogically for Wesley despite Hambrick and Lodahl assertion that Wesley’s view are to the contrary, but sufferings are not the *source* of salvation (i.e., justification or sanctification) or perfection (either holiness or glorification).⁸⁹ In “the Character of a Methodist,” Wesley interweaves these pedagogical themes of obedience, faith, suffering, perfection and glory as parts of a unitary description of the believer’s experience of salvation derived from the love of God in Christ. By corresponding these themes with the unified biblical revelation of the plan of salvation, Wesley uses them as a model for perseverance built upon, “the method laid down in the [example revealed] of Jesus Christ.” Therefore, in response to the

⁸⁸Wesley, *NT Notes*, Heb 2:10; c.f. Phil 2:7, Wesley is clear in acknowledging that Jesus, as the God-Man, was human but in his humanity was not identical to humanity. He discusses in his comment on Phil 2:7 (the Christ Hymn) that Jesus “emptied himself” yet “remained full,” that is “though not exactly the same, are nearly related to each other.” This paradoxical sensibility concerning the divine and human natures of Christ compared to that of humanity appears to be an egregious flaw in Wesley’s Christology for Hambrick and Lodahl. However, this may be rooted in fundamental ontological differences between the two parties concerning the person of Jesus and humanity, in which case Wesley’s hermeneutic will inevitably come up short.

⁸⁹My disagreement with Hambrick and Lodahl on this count also stems from my agreement with Lerch, Scroggs and others that Wesley is dealing with Deism and other forms of rationalist religion. Rationalism sees in the example of Christ’s suffering a justification to perceive human agency capable of responding to the initiative of God that is less reliant on the work of the Holy Spirit and more on an attainable perfection that comes through the person and work of Christ.

initiative of grace, now having the mind that was in Christ he so walks as Christ also walked:⁹⁰

[T]he tree is known by its fruits. For as he loves God, so he keeps his commandments; not only some, or most of them, but all, from the least to the greatest. He is not content to “keep the whole law, and offend in one point;” but has, in all points, “a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.” Whatever God has forbidden, he avoids; whatever God hath enjoined, he doeth; and that whether it be little or great, hard or easy, joyous or grievous to the flesh [*sufferings*]. He “runs the way of God’s commandments,” now he hath set his heart at liberty. It is his glory so to do; it is his daily crown of rejoicing, “to do the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven;” knowing it is the highest privilege of “the angels of God, of those that excel in strength, to fulfil his commandments, and hearken to the voice of his word.” All the commandments of God he accordingly keeps, and that with all his might. For his obedience is in proportion to his love, the source from whence it flows. And therefore, loving God with all his heart, he serves him with all his strength. He continually presents his soul and body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God; entirely and without reserve devoting himself, all he has, and all he is, to his glory. All the talents he has received, he constantly employs according to his Master’s will; every power and faculty of his soul, every member of his body. Once he “yielded” them “unto sin” and the devil, “as instruments of unrighteousness;” but now, “being alive from the dead, he yields” them all “as instruments of righteousness unto God.”⁹¹

As Christ came into the world to do the will of the Father (Heb 10:7-9), the believer, having learned through suffering the cost of obedience in the person and work of Jesus, finds their glory, their joy, and their holiness in presenting themselves as a living sacrifice, akin to the sacrifice of Christ, according to this same will of God.

Conclusion

This study presents a response to Hambrick and Lodahl and offers a more charitable approach to Wesley’s Christology as extrapolated from his

⁹⁰John Wesley, “The Character of a Methodist,” in *Works* 9:41.

⁹¹Wesley, “The Character of a Methodist,” 39.

Notes (NT) on the Epistle to the Hebrews. Any understanding of Wesley's doctrine of Christ must take seriously his own hermeneutical methodology (the "whole tenor of Scripture" and the *analogy of faith*) as set within an intentionally concise commentary designed to avoid speculative controversy. Yet, Wesley was no stranger to engaging controversy in defense of the Christian faith. The early eighteenth century was steeped in Antinomian controversies that challenged authentic Christian piety and Christological heresies that stressed the human nature and sought to subjugate, if not extirpate, the divinity of Christ. Thus, while the orthodox Christology of early Methodism might be seen as "theologically suspect," in his alleged *preference* for the divinity over the humanity of Christ "it is reasonable to suppose that Wesley . . . [was] simply responding to what [he] perceived to be a major theological problem of [the] age. Conversely, speculation on the part of twentieth- and twenty-first century Methodist theologians about John Wesley's supposed [weakened Christology] may say more about their concerns and contexts than about his."⁹² And finally, the authors' assertion of perfection as a means to grow character in Jesus, and therefore serve as a model of discipleship, has been seriously questioned (if not refuted) based on Wesley's larger concepts of perfection, suffering and glory as demonstrated in his *Notes*. Sufferings, especially in his comments on Hebrews, do not serve as the *source* of obedience (perfection), but rather are the *cost* of obedience as depicted in the sacrificial work of Christ. Believers, in kind, will by obedience rooted in love for God share in suffering that grows perseverance through faith towards perfection to ultimately receive the glory Christ secured for those called the children of God.

APPENDIX 1

EXCERPTS FROM "LETTER TO A ROMAN CATHOLIC" (1749)

4. But I think you do. I think you deserve the tenderest regard I can show, were it only because the same God has raised you and me from the dust of the earth, and has made us both capable of loving and enjoying Him to eternity; were it only because the Son of God has bought you and me with his own blood. How much more, if you are a person fearing God (as without question many of you are) and studying to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man?

⁹²Vickers, "Christology," 555-556.

7. I believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Saviour of the world, the Messiah so long foretold; that, being anointed with the Holy Ghost, he was a prophet, revealing to us the whole will of God; that he was a priest, who gave himself a sacrifice for sin, and still makes intercession for transgressors; that he is a king, who has all power in heaven and in earth, and will reign till he has subdued all things to himself.

I believe he is the proper, natural Son of God, God of God, very God of very Gods and that he is the Lord of all, having absolute, supreme, universal dominion over all things; but more peculiarly our Lord, who believe in him, both by conquest, purchase, and voluntary obligation.

I believe that he was made man, joining the human nature with the divine in one person; being conceived by the singular operation of the Holy Ghost, and born of the blessed Virgin Mary, who, as well after as before she brought him forth, continued a pure and unspotted virgin.

I believe he suffered inexpressible pains both of body and soul, and at last death, even the death of the cross, at the time that Pontius Pilate governed Judaea under the Roman Emperor; that his body was then laid in the grave, and his soul went to the place of separate spirits; that the third day he rose again from the dead; that he ascended into heaven; where he remains in the midst of the throne of God, in the highest power and glory, as mediator till the end of the world, as God to all eternity; that in the end he will come down from heaven to judge every man according to his works, both those who shall be then alive and all who have died before that day.

8. I believe the infinite and eternal Spirit of God, equal with the Father and the Son, to be not only perfectly holy in himself but the immediate cause of all holiness in us; enlightening our understandings, rectifying our wills and affections, renewing our natures, uniting our persons to Christ, assuring us of the adoption of sons, leading us in our actions, purifying and sanctifying our souls and bodies, to a full and eternal enjoyment of God.

9. I believe that Christ by 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 nations 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 in his faith and fear.

10. I believe God forgives all the sins of them that truly repent and unfeignly believe his holy gospel; and that at the last day all men shall rise again, every one with his own body. I believe that, as the unjust shall after their resurrection be tormented in hell for ever, so the just shall enjoy inconceivable happiness in the presence of God to all eternity.

11. Now, is there anything wrong in this? Is there any one point which you do not believe as well as we? But you think we ought to believe more. We will not now enter into the dispute. Only let me ask, if a man sincerely believes thus much, and practises accordingly, can any one possibly persuade you to think that such a man shall perish everlastingly?⁹³

⁹³Wesley, "Letter to a Roman Catholic," *The Works of John Wesley*. 10:81, 82.

MIRACLES, THEODICY, AND ESSENTIAL KENOSIS: A RESPONSE TO JOHN SANDERS

by

Thomas J. Oord

The problem of evil is a conundrum for those who believe in God. Unsolved, it leaves belief in God vulnerable to the charge of being implausible. Atheists cite the problem of evil as their primary reason for not believing God exists. But believers also wonder why genuine evils occur despite the existence of a powerful and loving God. And without a plausible explanation, many believers lack confidence in identifying God's action in the world.

Added to the long-known problem of evil is the relatively more recent problem of God's relation to randomness and chance. In recent centuries, science and philosophy have strengthened reasons for believing random and chance events are real (ontological) and not merely based on a lack of creaturely knowledge (epistemic). Many now wonder whether it makes sense to believe in a providential God if random and chance events occur in the world.

My recent book, *The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence* offers solutions to these problems (and others).¹ In a recent *Wesleyan Theological Journal* article, John Sanders explores my solutions. Sanders focusses especially on my theodicy and view of miracles.

I'm grateful to Sanders for reading my work seriously and pondering its implications. I admit to having mixed feelings as I began reading his article. Part of me worried that perhaps Sanders had discovered a fatal flaw in my arguments. Another part was eager to see if a more viable alternative exists or at least see if Sanders could spark ideas about how I might strengthen my proposals.

After reading Sanders's *Wesleyan Theological Journal* article and dialoguing with him at an Open and Relational Theologies session during the 2016 American Academy of Religion meeting, I do not believe

¹Thomas Jay Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 2015).

Sanders has discovered a fatal flaw in my proposal.² I remain convinced that my essential kenosis proposal solves the crucial aspect of the problem of evil pertaining to God's love and power. My proposal also solves the issue of randomness and chance in light of God's providence. I also continue to find my explanation of miracles satisfying. But after reading Sanders's article and dialoguing with him in person, I can see that my writing is not as clear as I had hoped it would be. In this essay, I hope to clarify and expand my ideas in response to Sanders's criticisms.

The Uncontrolling Love of God

Before addressing Sanders's specific concerns, it seems wise to offer an overview of the book's arguments. As I see it, we all want to make sense of life, but evils—whether caused by creaturely free will, agency, or random events—make it difficult to do so. Most people give unsatisfactory explanations for God's role in evil or randomness. *The Uncontrolling Love of God* proposes what I believe are satisfying explanations to the key issues at stake.

Scientists and philosophers describe at least some events in the universe as random, in the sense of their not being entirely determined by anyone or anything. For these reasons and others, I affirm the reality of randomness and chance at various levels of existence. No creaturely agent, factor, or law controls these events. God neither foreordains nor foreknows them. Randomness is both ontologically and epistemically real.

Law-like regularities are also present in the cosmos. Many call these regularities the "laws of nature" and some theologians argue God created them. I disagree. While I affirm the persistence of law-like regularities, I say they are natural expressions or entailments of the all-embracing, all-sustaining love of God. They are neither the result of wholly free divine decisions nor immutable laws imposed in the created order.

God's self-giving, others-empowering loving activity makes possible both regularity and randomness. God also provides free will, agency, self-organization, and spontaneity, depending on the complexity of the creature. In fact, God's love makes these features of life possible. Along with other open and relational theists, I argue that God's gifts and the flowing

²John Sanders, "Why Oord's Essential Kenosis Model Fails to Solve the Problem of Evil While Retaining Miracles," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 51:2 (Fall 2016): 174-187.

nature of time mean that neither the creatures nor the Creator can exhaustively foreknow which possible events will become actual.

Most attempts to describe God's providence in the universe are not compelling. In a pivotal chapter of *The Uncontrolling Love of God*, I explore seven major models of providence. Some models present God as controlling. They say God always or occasionally controls creatures. Some models deny genuine randomness, saying these events actually follow a preordained divine blueprint. Some models of providence offer little explanatory consistency, which does not help us make sense of life. Some models portray God as unaffected, impersonal, and uninvolved. These models make it difficult to fathom how God lovingly relates to creatures. Some models deny that we can comprehend God in any important way, employing elaborate appeals to mystery.

Open and relational theologies come in many forms, and most are well suited to account for the world's randomness and regularities. These theologies make sense of our intuitions about creaturely free will, agency, self-organization, spontaneity, and other modes of causation. Open and relational theologies support the view that both good and evil events occur. And they argue love resides at the center of satisfying answers to life's questions.

In *The Uncontrolling Love of God*, I devote an entire chapter to John Sanders's influential book, *The God Who Risks*. I mention many things on which we agree. But I criticize his view on a couple key issues. Sanders does *not* regard love as the logically preeminent attribute of God's nature. Instead, he believes divine power precedes divine love. His statements about God creating especially reveal his view of the priority of controlling power in God over persuasive love.

Placing sovereignty logically prior to love, as Sanders does, should prompt us to wonder why God doesn't occasionally control creatures to prevent genuine evils. The God Sanders describes could control others or situations if this God wanted to do so. Sanders says God permits or allows genuine evil. But we rightly wonder why the God capable of control does not, in the name of love, prevent genuine evil.

I propose a model of providence I call "essential kenosis." This model draws from the broad themes of Christian scripture, especially those pertaining to divine love, creaturely agency, and the God-creation relationship. It appeals to key claims from John Wesley about God's inability to control creatures or change the past. Essential kenosis says God's almighty love graces all creation, all the time, but never controls.

Uncontrolling love is the mode by which divine providence always operates, because uncontrolling love logically comes first in God.

The distinguishing feature of essential kenosis is its claim that God cannot deny God's own nature of self-giving, others-empowering love. This means that God necessarily gives freedom, agency, self-organization, or spontaneity to creatures, depending on their complexity. Because the divine nature is this kind of love and because God "cannot deny himself" (2 Tim 2:13), God cannot withhold, override, or fail to provide these gifts to creation. In other words, the Creator necessarily self-gives and others-empowers, and God's gifts and call are irrevocable (Rom 11:29).

Essential kenosis solves both questions raised at the outset of *The Uncontrolling Love of God*. To the question of why a loving and almighty God does not prevent genuine evil, essential kenosis says God necessarily loves by self-giving and others-empowering. Consequently, God *cannot* prevent the genuine evil that creatures cause.

To the question of how God can be providential despite randomness and chance, essential kenosis says such events are possible because of God's existence-giving love. Random events emerge from the generative capacity God gives creatures to act and be. God cannot foreknow with certainty which possible random events will become actual. And God cannot prevent random events from generating negative consequences. But God works for the good with no matter whatever occurs—the results of random events or free will—with those who respond well to the call to love (Rom 8:28).

God's kenotic love enables complex creatures to act freely. When free creatures respond well to God's uncontrolling love, well-being is established. The kingdom of God is present. When they respond poorly, they sin. Evil results. God cannot prevent free creatures from sinning or prevent the evil that results from such sin.

God's kenotic love provides agency and self-organization to simpler creatures and entities. When they respond well to God's uncontrolling love, well-being is established. When they respond poorly, evil occurs. God cannot control the agency and self-organization of simpler creatures and entities that cause evil.

God's kenotic love is expressed to all creation, all the time. Because of this steadfast love, law-like regularities emerge in the world. God cannot interrupt these regularities to prevent evil, because they are the natural outcomes of God's necessary and omnipresent love. We might say God's love pulses throughout the entire universe, and that love pulse creates the consistencies necessary for order.

In all this, God's essential kenosis comes before and makes possible creaturely response. In other words, essential kenosis is one way to talk about what the Wesleyan tradition calls "prevenient grace." But essential kenosis insists that God necessarily expresses prevenient grace to all creatures and all creation, and God cannot control creature or situation.

The God of essential kenosis has plans and purposes. This loving God invites, commands, and empowers creatures to respond well to those plans and purposes. But God does not operate from a foreordained or foreknown blueprint. Instead, God enables creatures and creation, and God works moment by moment to establish the kingdom of God.

The uncontrolling God of essential kenosis is both faithful to provide the regularities of existence and to initiate miracles. Miracles are good and unusual events that involve God's special action to provide beneficial forms of existence to the world. God does not supernaturally intervene in, control, or violate creation. But through God's persuasive love, both law-like regularities and the special action in miracles express divine providence. Creatures must cooperate with God's activity for miracles to occur. Or appropriate conditions among non-agential creation must exist for miracles to take place.

Essential kenosis offers an adventure model of reality. Adventures have general goals not predetermined designs. Adventures involve calculated risks, free decisions, and sometimes random occurrences. A life of love—for both the Creator and the creatures—is an adventure without guaranteed results.

The essential kenosis model of providence fits well the world in which we live. And if we read the Bible through the lens of God's self-giving, others-empowering, and uncontrolling love, we will find the essential kenosis model fits the broad biblical witness. In my view, essential kenosis helps us make sense of life, especially God's relation to evil and randomness.

Sanders's Concerns

With an overview of *The Uncontrolling Love of God* in mind, I turn to John Sanders's concerns. Sanders believes that the essential kenosis model "cannot affirm both 1) a complete solution to the problem of evil and 2) traditional belief in divine authorship of miracles." He says that although it "provides a successful theodicy, it cannot realistically support miracles such as the bodily resurrection of Jesus" (174). He offers other criticisms, but he identifies this as his overarching argument.

I will argue that essential kenosis both offers a solution to the central aspect of the problem of evil and supports belief in miracles, including

the resurrection of Jesus. I will also address many other concerns and statements from Sanders's journal article.

I had difficulty knowing how best to structure my responses to Sanders. Given the diverse claims in Sanders's article, I was unable to imagine an overarching framework for my response. Consequently, I will address Sanders's statements more or less in the order they arise in his text.

I affirm open theism.

Sanders begins his article with several summary statements, most of which I think fairly represent my argument. His first surprising statement, however, is this: "Though Oord has much in common with open theism, he rejects it as well" (175). In this section and elsewhere, Sanders pits my theory of essential kenosis against Arminianism and open theism.

Sanders's statement here surprised me, because I do not reject open theism. I affirm it. It is true that I don't find Sanders's version of open theism as plausible as other versions. In light of Sanders's claim and my response, perhaps the question underlying our disagreement is this: "What comprises the essence of open theism?" A related question also emerges: "Who gets to decide the essence of open theism?"

Answering these questions proves difficult, at least in terms of gaining agreement among self-identified open theists. In my view, Sanders should have 1) argued for an essence to open theism and tried to show how my view doesn't fit or 2) simply compared essential kenosis to his own version of open theism. I took the latter approach when I devoted a chapter in *The Uncontrolling Love of God* to exploring and critiquing his version of open theism before presenting essential kenosis.

I don't talk about "physical control."

Early in his article, Sanders tries to summarize my statements by identifying four kinds of coercion. He invents the phrase "physical control" to describe one form of coercion. "[Oord] gives four senses of what it means to 'coerce' an entity," he writes. The third sense, he says, is "Physical control: for example, when a parent places a toddler in a crib even though the child does not want to be there" (178). But in this, he wrongly summarizes my view of coercion, and this leads him to misunderstand other aspects of essential kenosis.

Nowhere in my book do I use the phrase "physical control." But Sanders seems to coin this phrase to account for a paragraph in which I

say *others* might call the act of picking up a child to “coerce or control” it. I say, “we might call this the bodily impact sense of *coerce*, because it involves bodies exerting force upon other bodies and things in the world.”³ But the important point that Sanders does not seem to realize is this: I’m not endorsing this meaning or use of the word “coerce.” I say “some” people use the word this way.

Because this seems to be the basis for other misunderstandings Sanders has, I want to relate what I actually say about coercion. I begin exploring possible meanings of “coercion” by saying “*coerce* has multiple meanings,” and it “is especially vulnerable to confusion.” I note that in “everyday language,” coercion is sometimes used in a psychological sense. In the following paragraph, I say “others equate the word *coerce* with violence.” Notice that I’m not personally endorsing this equating; I’m simply talking about how some *other* people use the word.

I begin the paragraph from which Sanders coins the phrase “physical control” by saying “a third way some use *coerce* pertains. . . .” Again, I’m not endorsing this use of the word; I say “some” people use the word this way. I say the parent who picks up a child “may be said to coerce or control.” I don’t use “coerce” in this way; this activity “may be said” to be coercion. I call this activity “bodily impact,” instead of coercion.

The very next paragraph begins with my understanding of coercion. “I am not using *coerce* in the psychological, violence, or bodily impact senses,” I write. “I’m using it in the metaphysical sense. In the metaphysical sense, to coerce is to control entirely. This involves unilateral determination, in which the one coerced loses all capacity for causation, self-organization, agency, or free will. To coerce in the metaphysical sense is to act as a sufficient cause, thereby wholly controlling the other or the situation. To coerce is to control” (182-183).

Sanders later notes in his article that I define coercion in the metaphysical sense. But he also suggests that I endorse what he calls “physical control.” By contrast, I argue often in the book that I don’t think God has a localized divine body and I don’t think God controls others. I never use the phrase “physical control” to describe bodily impact, even of creatures.

Just before the section on coercion that Sanders tries to summarize, I argue that God is an omnipresent spirit without a localized physical body. God doesn’t have a divine body with which to make divine bodily impact upon creatures. “While we may sometimes be blameworthy for failing to

³Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God*, 182.

use our bodies to prevent genuine evils, the God without a localized divine body is not culpable.”⁴ As we will see, Sanders’s misunderstanding of this issue is the source of many other misunderstandings.

Creaturely bodily impact can be good or bad.

In a section he titles, “Essential kenosis and evil,” Sanders moves to what he thinks are potential errors in my theodicy. My view says, as Sanders puts it, “the reason God is not culpable in any respect for evils is that God neither metaphysically controls nor physically controls any entity or event” (178). Notice that Sanders uses the phrase “physical control” here, which again is not my phrase.

Sanders continues, saying that “Oord clearly admits that not all types of control are bad.” To be precise, I say exerting bodily impact can be good or bad. Sanders would have correctly represented me had he used “bodily impact” language rather than “control” or “physical control” language.

Sanders concludes that “if love sometimes requires us to control others in certain respects then it is false to say ‘love *never* controls.’ Hence, genuine love is not necessarily uncontrolling” (178-179).

This is a strange argument. It’s strange, first, because I never say that love sometimes requires us to control others. Sanders invents and uses the phrase “physical control” in this argument, then attributes it to my view, and finally criticizes me for it.

It is also strange that Sanders places quotation marks around the phrase “love never controls” and adds a footnote. The quotation marks might give the reader the impression that he’s quoting me. But I use the phrase “love never controls” only once in the book. And when I use it, I’m describing an intuition that *some* people have. I don’t claim this intuition is mine or that it tells us something true. And when we read the text in Sanders’s footnote, we find that he doesn’t reference my book.

Perhaps even strangest of all is that Sanders takes back his criticism of me in the footnote: “To be consistent,” says Sanders, “Oord can only mean this in the sense of metaphysical, not physical, control, but he fails to adequately explain this” (179). Of course, I don’t use the phrase “physical control.” So I shouldn’t be expected to explain what it means and why it may or may not be loving. I explain the meaning of bodily impact in

⁴Ibid., 178-179.

four pages prior to my book's discussion of coercion and, as we've seen in the quotes above, what I mean by metaphysical coercion.⁵

God never coerces.

Sanders begins a new paragraph and new line of argumentation in his article by incorrectly saying, "Oord agrees with his fellow freewill theists that love does not ordinarily coerce someone but that there are times when love requires such actions" (179). I say often in the book, however, that God *never* coerces. I also don't think creatures can coerce in the metaphysical sense of the word. So Sanders is wrong to say I agree with those freewill theists who say love sometimes coerces. (Later in the article, Sanders says freewill theists deny metaphysical coercion but affirm physical coercion [181]. It's not clear which form of coercion Sanders means in the quote above.)

Sanders's confusion seems to be, again, that he thinks I use "coerce" in a way that I say *others* use it. Consequently, we should not be surprised that Sanders thinks he's found an "astonishing conclusion that runs counter to much of the book." The conclusion is only astonishing if one confuses my use of "coercion" with the way Sanders uses it or how others use it. I argue that God never coerces.

God is a spirit without a localized divine body.

In a subsequent section of his article, Sanders addresses my statement that God is an omnipresent spirit without a localized divine body. Here he sees what he seems to have missed in earlier statements. He correctly identifies as my position the view that God is uncontrolling in the metaphysical sense and does not possess a localized divine body with which to exert bodily impact. This is why God cannot exert what Sanders earlier calls "physical control."

Sanders goes on to say, however, that the incorporeal God I describe is not "capable of bringing about physical states of affairs" (179). I disagree. If bringing about a physical state of affairs means that God controls others, Sanders would be right about my view. After all, I don't believe God can control. But I *do* believe God is capable of bringing about a physical state of affairs in the sense of being a necessary cause for physical states of affairs. What we mean by "bring about" makes all the difference.

⁵Ibid., 176-179.

I use the phrase in causal ways that don't require it to be understood as sufficient causation.

Sanders doesn't build on this "physical states of affairs" criticism. But this is one place I could have elaborated in my book. Because this has bearing for my later comments in response to Sanders, let's look at what I write on this issue in *The Uncontrolling Love of God*: "To say that God is an omnipresent spirit does not need to mean that God has no physicality whatsoever. I believe there is always a physical dimension to the divine presence, although we cannot perceive it with our five senses. Describing God's omnipresence and physicality in God has always been difficult for Christians, because God is not locally situated and not perceptive to our five senses."⁶

For methodological and metaphysical reasons that I did not have space in the book to explain, I think God is an omnipresent spirit with physical and mental dimensions. I also think God causally influences creatures with physical dimensions. But saying God is an omnipresent spirit with physical and mental dimensions is different from saying God has a localized physical body with which to exert bodily impact. I affirm the former and not the latter.

Sanders moves from his statement about "physical states of affairs" to erroneously say "[Oord] says that a parent putting an infant into a crib is a case of bodily coercion but is not a case of metaphysical coercion" (180). I do not call the act of putting an infant into a crib "a case of bodily coercion." Just as Sanders's phrase "physical control" appears nowhere in the book, his phrase "bodily coercion" also never appears. Sanders seems to be misunderstanding again the book's statements about common uses or the way *some* people use the word "coerce." But these are not meanings I endorse.

Sanders then writes that "Oord never explains why it is the case that if a parent puts a child in a crib then it is not metaphysically coercive but if God brings the same event about then it involves totally overriding the agency freedom and self-organization of the person" (180). I don't need to explain this, however, because I don't think God can bring about any event through metaphysical coercion or by using a localized divine body. I say a parent puts a child in a crib using "bodily impact" not bodily coercion.

To be clear, I do believe God can *call* upon a parent to use her body to put a child in a crib. But this divine call doesn't require overriding a

⁶Ibid., 177.

person's freedom and self-organization. It doesn't require coercion in the metaphysical sense. And parents can reject God's call. So no explanation is necessary for what Sanders (wrongly) thinks is a problem.

God loves people and their cells.

Sanders addresses my example of an infant born with severe genetic mutations. In my description, I say God loves the child and all the entities that comprise her body, including her cells, genes, and organs. Because of divine love, God must provide self-organizing and agential capacities to her cells, genes, and organs. These bodily entities sometimes mutate or form, however, in ways that prove harmful.

Sanders concludes from this that "a loving God necessarily empowers cancer cells and genetic mutations to harm creatures." This wording suggests that God *wants* cells to become cancerous and *wants* genes to mutate in ways that harm us. But I don't believe this. And my view doesn't require us to think such harm is God's desire.

Perhaps an analogy would help Sanders understand my view that God empowers and gives agency to simpler entities. As a fellow freewill theist, Sanders would likely agree that God necessarily gives freedom to humans. Of course, humans can use their God-given freedom wrongly or rightly. But we wouldn't say "God necessarily empowers rapists and murders to harm creatures," as if God wants rape and murder. We'd say God necessarily empowers people who in turn may choose rape and murder. Analogously, God giving agency and self-organization to cells that become cancerous and to genes that harmfully mutate is like the idea that God gives freedom to humans who then choose to use that freedom wrongly.

Sanders goes on to say that "many Christians will be unable to swallow this, because it means not only that God cannot prevent cancer cells, it means that God can't even want to prevent them" (180). As I show above, the last phrase mischaracterizes my view. We can say God necessarily gives existence and agency to cells while also saying God does not want cells to become cancerous.

Sanders continues his criticism by saying that according to my view, "God must love all entities equally so God cannot love [a human] more than God loves the cancer cells in [its] body." He adds that loving parents ought to "show favoritism to their children over cancers and viruses," and "most of us do not think we act immorally when we take antibiotics, but Oord says it is immoral for God to destroy [bacteria]" (180).

As I see it, there are two mistakes here. The first is that Sanders's view implies that God wants to destroy creation instead of heal it. Instead of seeking the good of all creatures and creation, Sanders seems to suggest God seeks only the good of some. By contrast, I think God's love seeks to heal and transform all creation—including cells that become cancerous and bacteria that harm—rather than destroy any of it.

The second mistake pertains to misunderstanding the implications of bodily impact. Most, if not all, creaturely entities exert bodily impact. Antibiotics, for instance, are comprised of chemicals that exert impact at the micro levels of existence. Just as humans cannot control others in the sense of being a sufficient cause, chemicals also cannot control other entities. They cannot control cancerous cells or viruses (although we may wish they could!), although they often influence them.

As I say often in the book, I don't believe God cannot control any aspect of creation. God neither coerces in the metaphysical sense nor has a localized divine body to exert bodily impact upon microorganisms, cells, or other micro-entities. God loves people, their cells, and even bacteria.

Some Open theists and Arminians say God coerces (in the metaphysical sense).

Sanders says he's not aware of an open theist or Arminian who says God coerces others, in the metaphysical sense of coercion. "What freewill theist would say that God 'totally' controlled the child if God brought it about that the child was placed in a crib?" he asks (181). Arminian and most open theists "are going to affirm physical coercion not metaphysical coercion," Sanders adds (181).

To remind us, I define metaphysical coercion as acting as a sufficient cause or unilaterally determining. In *The Uncontrolling Love of God*, I quote self-identified Arminian theologian Jack Cottrell, who says God can "remain in complete control" and can "intervene if necessary."⁷ Perhaps I'm wrong, but that sounds like metaphysical coercion. When writing the book, I didn't spend much time looking for more examples of self-identifying Arminian theologians who talk about God's control. So perhaps Cottrell is a rare case.

⁷Jack Cottrell, "The nature of Divine Sovereignty," in *The Grace of God, The Will of Man*, Clark H. Pinnock, ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1989), 112.

More importantly, Sanders own statements sound like he affirms metaphysical coercion. In *The God Who Risks*, Sanders says that “God sometimes decides alone what will happen.”⁸ That sounds like metaphysical coercion, in the sense of unilaterally determining. Sanders says “sometimes God unilaterally decides what shall be . . .”⁹ The phrase “unilaterally decides” also sounds like metaphysical coercion, and there is no mention of physical coercion. Sanders also says “there are some things that the almighty God retains the right to enact unilaterally.”¹⁰ The phrase “enact unilaterally” also sounds like metaphysical coercion to me. Given these statements, Sanders should not be surprised when I and others interpret him as believing God sometimes coerces in the metaphysical sense.

It would be interesting to know what Sanders means by his phrase “physical coercion.” If this is similar to what he calls “physical control?” If so, does it require God to have a localized divine body? I can see how our Mormon friends could affirm physical coercion, because they believe God has a localized body. But I’m not sure what Sanders means. He doesn’t define “physical coercion” here, and I don’t recall him defining it in his work.

The essential kenosis view affirms miracles.

In my chapters on miracles in *The Uncontrolling Love of God*, I offer an overall framework for understanding miracles in light of my belief that God never controls. I suggest possible ways God and creation work in tandem and the miraculous thereby occurs. Sanders begins his article’s discussion of miracles by rightly pointing to the role that creation plays in my understanding of miracles. He rightly says my view involves God providing forms, possibilities, and ways of being in situations. These are essential if miracles are to occur. He rightly notes that I believe God never suspends law-like regularities. God acts in uncontrolling ways.

In my chapter on miracles in *The Uncontrolling Love of God*, I begin by dealing with God’s special action by focusing on the most common miracles in scripture: healings. These are also the most commonly reported miracles today. Healings are person or organism-oriented miracles.

⁸John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: a Theology of Divine Providence*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 2007), 174.

⁹Ibid., 198.

¹⁰Ibid., 247.

In his article, however, Sanders begins addressing my view of miracles with a discussion of nature miracles and my speculations about them. When he concludes, Sanders says “Oord does not discuss the narratives of Jesus’ healing people” (184). This is not true; I spent several pages in the book talking about Jesus’ healings.¹¹ It is unfortunate that Sanders missed my discussion. He may have understood my overall explanation of miracles better had he followed my progression of arguments about miracles, which started with healing miracles.

No one knows exactly how God does each miracle.

Sanders voices a concern early and often in his discussion of my view of miracles. When criticizing me, he asks, “Exactly what role does God have in a miracle?” (182). “Oord does not provide any concrete examples,” Sanders complains, “but does say that God invites creatures to “cooperate to enact a future”” (182). He says similarly, “Oord fails to say exactly what God did to bring about [feeding thousands with fish and bread]” (182).

Sanders asks me to meet a standard no one can meet: stating the *exact* way God does each miracle. Not only was I not present when the miracles occur, but no one present could give an exact explanation of how God acts miraculously. In fact, I doubt exact explanations are possible for *any* events, let alone the dramatic events involving someone most Christians believe is an omnipresent spirit not perceivable by our five senses. Sanders sets a standard that neither he nor I nor anyone could meet.

Essential kenosis provides an overall framework for understanding miracles.

What I can do, and what I think at least some theologians should attempt, is provide an overall framework for how best to think about miracles. This framework will necessarily make metaphysical claims meant to describe divine and creaturely activity, or the absence of one or both. I provide such a framework in *The Uncontrolling Love of God*.

The essential kenosis framework says miracles are good and unusual events in which God specially acts in relation to creation. Miracles occur when creatures cooperate well with God or when the creaturely conditions are right for the miraculous to occur. I make the metaphysical claim that miracles *always* involve actions from both the Creator and creatures/creation.

¹¹Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God*, 202–205.

The essential kenosis view of miracles typically uses words like “invites,” “commands,” “calls,” “coordinates,” “persuades,” “organizes,” “woos,” “directs” and talks more about God’s action in miracles. These words suggest that God never controls when initiating miracles. Essential kenosis also incorporates major theories in the social and natural science theories. It speculates about how these theories, along with uncontrolling divine action, account for the miraculous.

God can be responsible for miracles without being their sole cause.

Sanders addresses three proposals I make with regard to nature miracles. The first strategy affirms that random events occur at the quantum level. I suggest that God might identify opportune events and coordinate them in ways that produce the incredible results we call miracles.

In response to this proposal, Sanders says that this strategy is “vague.” It fails to show how God “was responsible for these miracles.” I would reply that if by “responsible for these miracles” Sanders means “God controlled creation to cause a miracle,” he’s right. I don’t argue for this. After all, I don’t think God can control. But if God being “responsible for these miracles” means God coordinated random events, this strategy identifies one way God can be responsible for nature miracles.

To remind us, no one can know what God does *exactly* in any miracle. But I am proposing a general theory that identifies God’s working with creation at the quantum level. My strategy here is similar to the work done by leading science and religion scholar and physicist Robert John Russell.¹²

The second strategy I suggest for how God might do nature miracles in conjunction with creation says, as Sanders rightly quotes, “God offers novel possibilities to intentional agents and calls them to respond in ways that subsequently affect inanimate objects and natural systems.” I mention chaos theory when addressing this strategy, but chaos theory could also be a factor in the other strategies I mention. My strategy here is similar to the work done by leading science and religion scholar and physicist John Polkinghorne.¹³

¹²Robert John Russell, *Cosmology: From Alpha to Omega* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2008).

¹³Polkinghorne has written many books, and several address this issue. For a collection of his major ideas in one volume, see Thomas Jay Oord, *The Polkinghorne Reader: Science, Faith, and the Search for Meaning* (Philadelphia: Templeton, 2010).

Sanders complains that “once again, no details are provided and we are left wondering what role God had in these events, since Oord says it was brought about by *human* actions causing nature to respond in these ways” (183). Sanders seems to be wanting details that no one could provide. He also oddly wonders what role I think God played in these miracles. But he quotes my view that God offers possibilities and calls agents to respond. This is God’s initiating and information-providing role in miracles. And I am not saying humans alone enact miracles. The line that might best summarize Sanders’s concern is this: “In this model there is no genuine way to affirm that God is responsible for miracles” (183). For Sanders, the word “responsible” seems to mean “sole cause.” But if “responsible for miracles” means that God initiated and played a necessary role in miracles, I have suggested ways God acted and is responsible: “offering and calling.” I could suggest other ways God acts in relation to inanimate objects, such as coordinating, organizing, sustaining, and more. But none of these ways say God controls as their sole cause.

Sanders briefly looks at the third strategy I offer to explain nature miracles. This strategy says that God can perceive what’s going on in the world and communicate to freewill creatures in light of that information. Sanders says “this strategy doesn’t explain other nature miracles, such as turning water to wine and feeding the multitudes.” It may not. But I do not claim this strategy as a way to explain those miracles.

The biblical narrative I do use when illustrating this strategy is the parting of the Red Sea. I suggest that God could have called Moses to guide the Israelites across the sea at the opportune time. God could have known weather patterns and predicted the opportune time for passage. I also believe God directly influences and communicates to minds, including the mind of Moses, without controlling neurons. God can be responsible for miracles such as this without being their sole cause.

God loves people with disease and wants to heal them.

In a series of strong criticisms, Sanders returns to issues he addressed earlier in his article. “A key problem for Oord,” says Sanders, “is that he says both that God wants to change entities such as viruses and cancers and also that God must empower cancer cells and viruses to be all they can be” (184).

But this is not a problem for my view. Sanders seems to have not seen the difference between entities causing evil and inherently evil enti-

ties. God can empower humans, want them to do good, but those humans act badly. Likewise, God can empower entities, want them to be healthy and do good, and yet those entities do harm.

Continuing this line of argumentation, Sanders says “it is contradictory to claim that God must love the integrity of cancer cells and also claim that God wants to destroy the cancer cells” (184). But I did not claim that God wants to destroy cancer cells. I would claim God wants cells that have become cancerous to be transformed into healthy cells.

He continues, saying that if I believe “God necessarily loves and sustains diseases, then it does not make sense for Oord to claim that Jesus healed people of such things” (184). It makes little sense to talk about diseases as entities that are loved and sustained. But it does make sense to talk about people with diseases that God loves, sustains, and wants to heal. And this helps us make sense of Jesus’ healings.

I affirm the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Sanders concludes his criticism with thoughts on the bodily resurrection of Jesus. His summary of my view of Jesus’ resurrection is mostly correct, at least in his article’s first paragraph addressing the subject. I affirm the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I say Jesus’ spirit and body cooperated with God’s raising activity.

Sanders wonders what it means for Jesus to cooperate with God’s resurrection power. He wonders if inert molecules can respond to God. He speculates that I must be thinking that “God somehow presented the dead molecules of Jesus’ body with a novel possibility of returning to life and these molecules somehow activated themselves back to life.” (185).

Sanders seems to be making an assumption that the creaturely entities in a dead body are unresponsive substances, or what Alfred North Whitehead called “vacuous actualities.”¹⁴ But for a host of reasons, it makes better sense to say the entities that comprise a body have spontaneity, interiority, and can be affected by others. It doesn’t make sense to say molecules “live” or “die.” The molecules that make up a body continue existing and changing long after the heart stops beating.

My theory says Jesus’ bodily members retained responsiveness after his spirit/mind/soul departed. His bodily members could respond to

¹⁴Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, corrected edition, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978; orig. ed., 1929), 167.

God's continued omnipresent activity and to the re-initiating activity of Jesus' own spirit/mind/soul. (I use "spirit/soul/mind" to account for the animating agency we typically think humans and perhaps other creatures possess.)

In what I'm not sure are earnest speculations or mocking questions, Sanders asks, "So what happened? Was [Jesus' resurrection] a random event for which God was very grateful?" "Did a butterfly flap its wings in Australia, which set off a chain of chaotic events that resulted in the dead body of Jesus returning to life at just the right time and place?" Sanders concludes, "Oord speaks of God's resurrecting action on Jesus's body, but none of these three ways of explaining miracles plausibly has a role for God to play in this event" (186).

The "three ways" Sanders refers to in this quote are the three strategies I suggested for thinking about God's actions in nature miracles. The explanations I would give for the resurrection of Jesus, however, are similar to those I would give for healing miracles. Crucial in my account but unmentioned by Sanders is my claim that Jesus' mind/spirit/soul played a cooperating role in Jesus' resurrection. It could also exert causal influence over Jesus' bodily members, which it had been doing for the prior thirty-three years. Psychosomatic relationship can play a crucial role in miracles alongside divine action.

Sanders says I have a problem, because I think that "since God necessarily loves the self-organization of entities and never wants to make changes to the regularities of nature so God cannot even want to resurrect the dead body of Jesus." But as I've shown in my responses previously, God can provide self-organization to entities and also want them to cooperate. God could have done so in Jesus' resurrection.

Oddly, Sanders claims that I offer a "just so story of the resurrection and other miracles." But I have offered a metaphysical explanation for miracles that says both God and creatures play a role. This is not a "just so" account. Admittedly, I cannot nor can anyone provide all the specific details of miracles. But I can and do provide a metaphysical model for how God does miracles, including the resurrection of Jesus.

I answer the questions from Sanders's conclusion.

In his article's conclusion, Sanders says "the amount of control sufficient to bring about miracles would be sufficient to prevent evils. If God cannot prevent evils, then God cannot author miracles" (186). I claim and provide arguments, however, for the theory that God "authors" miracles

using creaturely cooperation, or in light of creaturely conditions, and God cannot prevent evils unilaterally. The two ideas in the theory are consistent. I can have it both ways. Miracles occur through both creaturely and divine action, but God cannot prevent evils by acting alone.

I was struck by the word “author,” Sanders uses to describe God’s action in miracles. It reminds me of the claim some make that God “authors” the Bible. If this means “God alone determines what we find in the biblical text,” I doubt many Wesleyan, Arminian, or open theists would affirm this. But if the idea that God “authors” the Bible can mean God inspired humans to write it, we have a nice analogy for what I think happens when God does miracles.

Sanders also concludes, saying I must “explain a couple of items.” He asks four questions that arise from issues I have already addressed in this response. The first question (about parents picking up children) rests on his error that I affirm what he calls “physical control.” The second (Jesus calming a storm) relies on his mistaken view that I think God sometimes does miracles by violating the law-like regularities of nature. The third (Jesus’ resurrection) relies on his wrongly thinking that I believe God must “change the self-organization” of entities. I don’t know what he means. The last question pertains to God loving cells with disease. I claim that diseases derive from cells and organisms that have gone awry, and God wants to heal rather than destroy them.

In his final paragraph, Sanders says “the book claims to solve all aspects of the problem of evil.” I don’t make that claim in the book. In fact, my full solution to the problem of evil involve four other dimensions that I don’t address in any detail in the book. I briefly sketch out my five-fold solution in my contribution *God and the Problem of Evil: Five Views*.¹⁵ But in this book I do claim to have offered a solution to a crucial aspect of the problem of evil: we best understand God’s almighty power in terms of essential kenosis.

God cannot coerce, but God does miracles.

In the roughly one year since *The Uncontrolling Love of God* was published, I’ve heard significant praise and criticism. The conversations have been helpful. I have not yet encountered arguments that make me think I should rethink substantive aspects of my book. But I have noted ways in which I could have written more clearly or elaborated my ideas.

¹⁵Chad Meister and James K. Dew, Jr. eds., *God and the Problem of Evil: Five Views* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 2017).

My basic arguments for essential kenosis have been well-received. The most questions come on issues of miracles, which is the source of many of Sanders's questions. Although I feel good about the heart of my proposals and arguments about miracles, I wish I had developed them to a greater extent.

I've also learned that two issues hinder some in making sense of how God does miracles in cooperation with creaturely response or in light of creaturely conditions. I suspect both issues are at play in Sanders's criticisms.

The first issue is less commonly acknowledged but I suspect widespread. This is the idea that with the exception of humans, other creatures, and creation in general, are vacuous actualities with no real capacity for freedom, agency, self-organization, or responsiveness. This seems to be an issue for Sanders's difficulty in fathoming how God can resurrect Jesus or do nature miracles.

Miracles don't require God to control creatures or creation.

Another issue sometimes gets in the way of understanding how God can do miracles without controlling others. This issue pertains to God's power. When some readers hear my claim that God always does miracles *in relation* to creation rather than accomplished by God alone, they are surprised. To many, miracles by definition are events done by God *alone*.

I know of no miracle described in the Bible that *explicitly* denies all creaturely contribution and appeals to divine control or God acting alone. Of course, sometimes biblical writers only mention God's action when miracles occur. But this is not an explicit denial of creaturely action in the miraculous event. Most often, biblical writers speak of God and some creaturely action both occurring in relation to the miracle identified. Numerous healing miracles mention the faith of those healed, for instance. Sometimes biblical writers even talk about miracles and do not mention divine action (e.g., some miracles done by Peter).

Often in his criticism of my views on miracles, Sanders uses the phrase "bring about" to describe God's action in miracles. To cite one example: "Does the God of essential kenosis have the ability to bring such events about?" And Sanders writes, "Oord's explanations do not allow us to ascribe genuine responsibility to God for nature miracles" (184).

The phrases "bring such events about" and "ascribe genuine responsibility" suggest to me that Sanders presupposes that God must control creation to do miracles. That's a metaphysical claim on his part, and he's

certainly entitled to it. My argument, however, is that miracles occur when both Creatorly and creaturely causation are at play. I'm making a metaphysical claim that is fundamentally different from Sanders's claim. I don't think the Bible settles our difference about which metaphysical framework is best.

My claim that miracles involve both divine and creaturely causation offers numerous benefits, however, and I list a half dozen to conclude my chapter on miracles in the book. Not least, of course, is that my view of miracles says God is not culpable for failing to prevent evil. And yet God does miracles when creatures respond appropriately or when creaturely conditions are apt.

Sanders doesn't mention a major problem with the belief that God controls creation when doing miracles. I call it "the problem of selective miracles." This problem asks why a loving God who controls when doing miracles fails to do miracles far more often. In fact, I suspect failing to have a solution to the problem of selective miracles is the primary reasons many believers from more liberal Christian traditions no longer believe in the miraculous.

In the book I list other advantages of the essential kenosis way of thinking about miracles. It helps us make better sense of God working alongside health-care providers, for instance, to bring healing. It allows us to blame uncooperative cells and organs when healing doesn't occur, instead of blaming faith-filled believers for failing to have enough faith. It provides a framework for understanding the relation between science and theology. Etc.

Essential kenosis is prevenient grace "all the way down."

There is value to thinking of essential kenosis as expanding the usual view of prevenient grace. If "prevenient grace" is God acting first and enabling humans to respond, essential kenosis says God's expresses prevenient grace to and seeks uncoerced responses from *all* creatures, not just humans. Essential kenosis affirms responsible or cooperative grace instead of irresistible grace, and says God lovingly interacts with but never controls any of the world's features and creatures. Essential kenosis is prevenient grace all the way down the creaturely complexity scale.

Wesleyans have grown accustomed to explaining how prevenient grace makes a huge difference in understanding salvation. This explaining must often be done in the face of presuppositions about divine control and sovereignty others bring to the discussion. But when God's action is understood in the light of love, prevenient grace makes sense to many.

Essential kenosis faces a similar challenge. It expands the notion of God's prevenient grace for salvation to speculate that God's expresses uncontrolling love for all creation. Because this way of thinking is new to many, I'm not surprised that it is susceptible to misunderstanding.

As I say throughout this response, Sanders has misunderstood many things I write in *The Uncontrolling Love of God*. Some of this misunderstanding may have emerged from the presuppositions about God's power he brought to the book and its topics. But I'm sure I also could have written more clearly and in greater explanatory detail. I consider John Sanders a good friend with whom I agree on many things but with whom I also have a few disagreements.

BOOK REVIEWS

Wall, Robert W. *Why the Church?* Reframing New Testament Theology. Nashville: Abingdon, 2015. 186 pages. ISBN-13: 978-2536759484.

Reviewed by Richard P. Thompson, Professor of New Testament and Chair, Department of Philosophy and Religion, School of Theology and Christian Ministries, Northwest Nazarene University, Nampa, Idaho.

University library shelves are already lined with multiple works dealing with biblical and New Testament theology. So why another series on NT theology? The series “Reframing New Testament Theology” (Abingdon) promises a different perspective. Prefacing the series, Editor Joel Green frames some basic issues for such theologies, noting that *this* series will also wrestle with “what the New Testament *teaches* (present tense) us” (viii) and how scripture might “instruct and shape the church’s faith and life” (ix). Thus, unlike most biblical theologies that end up accessible mostly to the theologically educated, these works are intended to stimulate conversation within academy *and* church, including students in the classroom and worshipers in the pew.

This specific review focuses on one contribution to that series: Rob Wall’s *Why the Church?* Wall, Paul T. Walls Professor of Scripture and Wesleyan Studies at Seattle Pacific University, offers an insightful perspective regarding New Testament ecclesiology as he peruses the biblical landscape from his distinctive canonical approach to biblical studies. He describes the church as the address of the Bible “shaped and sized ... to size and shape the church” (9), so one must organize the diverse biblical materials for the sake of contemporary faithful readers. Wall organizes his thoughts around the four marks of the church in the Nicene Creed: *one, holy, catholic, and apostolic* (9). His rationale is both basic and sound: “the creed is *hermeneutical* of the canon . . . [which] helps the interpreter locate and extract theological goods from the canon for use in a variety of Bible practices” (10). The four marks function as a rubric for Wall’s reading of NT texts to discern what they say about the church.

After the initial chapter, this work has five additional chapters and a brief epilogue. In each chapter, Wall assesses selected materials with the

fourfold creedal rubric. The chapter on the Gospels explores how all four Gospels function *together* as “the fourfold Gospel,” telling Jesus’ story and offering an implied ecclesiology more fully developed in Acts and subsequent canonical collections (69). Rather than reading the Gospels separately with historical, redactional, or literary considerations in mind, Wall insists this *fourfold* Gospel, as Irenaeus first understood it and as later canonized, creates a unified and sequential reading for church readers throughout all the Gospels. According to this view, Matthew’s Gospel introduces this collection and several questions about the church, to which the other Gospels respond (30-31). Taking his lead from Irenaeus, Wall also contends that the four Gospels, because of their final canonical sequence and form, function together within the canon to speak to the church’s four creedal characteristics. Thus, the church’s *oneness* is in its identity and mission: the Synoptic Gospels describe disciples’ confession of Christ, and John’s Gospel depicts believers resisting an unbelieving world and loving one another. Second, in the Synoptic Gospels the church’s *holiness* was embodied in Jesus, who defined and lived out the holy life, modeling God’s holy will for God’s holy people in the midst of an unholy world. The Fourth Gospel balances that image: Jesus as God’s holy Son called the faith community into existence to be sent out as a sanctified people, which would be recognized most by acts of self-sacrificial love (52-54). Third, the church’s *catholicity* may be seen in Jesus’ commission to reach out to the nations (see, e.g., Matt 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-49) and in the important call in John’s Gospel to care for all believers—what Wall describes as “catholicity from within” (61). Fourth, the Gospels depict the church’s *apostolicity* not in exemplary apostles but in Jesus defining future apostleship for their “unwitting successors” (61).

The third chapter focuses on the Book of Acts, which Wall understands in two ways: (1) a narrative introduction for the two NT epistolary collections (Pauline and Catholic); and (2) a further development of the fourfold Gospel’s implied ecclesiology, which focuses on the formation of Christian communities and patterns of church practice. Wall contends the same four creedal descriptors of the church apply here. For example, he correctly notes that *holiness* vocabulary is largely absent from Acts, yet the *subtext* of the church’s expanding mission to Gentiles and Jews includes questions about those whose hearts God had purified and the practices of God’s holy people (83-85), which address the church’s holiness.

If Acts serves as a narrative/canonical introduction to the epistolary collections, then the epistolary collections follow the developments intro-

duced by Acts. Wall focuses on the church's *collection* of these letters at canonization (rather than on individual letters), which created collections of a specific "size and shape for subsequent generations to use *as the church's scripture*" (105). Thus, although he recognizes the different contributions of each letter, he contends a *single* letter is now understood as an integral part of a canonical collection, which provides a theological context for all interpretation. In the case of the Catholic Letters, Wall argues that the formation of this collection of "different but complementary voices" added some "apostolic checks-and-balances" to ensure that the church was still faithfully interpreting scripture for their day (125-26). Since these letters came mostly from James, Peter (Cephas), and John—those whom Paul identified as the "pillars" of the Jerusalem church (Gal 2:9)—Wall labels this as the "Pillars" collection, providing canonical balance to the first (Pauline) letter collection. He notes a significant general distinction between the two collections: the Pauline collection emphasizes what the church is, whereas the Pillars collection focuses on how the church responds and lives. As Wall's approach reveals, these two collections ground the church's *apostolicity* in two different but significant experiences: the Pauline collection in Paul's experience of the risen Lord, the Pillars collection in their leaders' eyewitness and experience of Jesus and his ministry (138).

In the final chapter, which deals with the Apocalypse of John, Wall admits that the text itself does not assume apostolic authority (142) but suggests that a canonical approach to the book offers a message to and about the church. Here too he finds the depiction of the church to be consistent with the church's four creedal descriptors. Two examples will suffice. First, Wall suggests the church's *holiness* is best seen in the vision of the 144,000 redeemed, standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion (Rev 14:1-5; cf. 7:4-12), in contrast to the unholy trinity and its practices in the previous chapter (147-52). He notes that "holiness is presented not so much as a moral perfection but as a radical obedience to God's commandments, as nonparticipation in a corrupt political and economic reign of terror, and as a faithful confession of God's truth" (161). Second, the church's *apostolicity* may be seen in the repeated use of the number "twelve," which alludes to God's covenant people and the apostles, the latter being "an image of the apostolic witness that squares with the teaching of the NT" (158). As Wall concludes, "The people who populate the New Jerusalem form a very different community, one that makes good at long last what

the church confesses about itself today: we are one, holy, catholic, and apostolic" (160).

There is much to affirm in this work. The use of the creedal marks of the church to organize and filter materials from the various NT texts is helpful, given how much material there is, and appropriate, given the simultaneous historical development of creed and canon. What Wall has provided is a coherent reading of the entire New Testament on the church, one that offers a plausible account for the ways these diverse texts were collected and read *together as one canon*.

But some readers will disagree with aspects of this proposal. First, the canonical approach will not be persuasive to some. Many will agree (at least partially) with Wall's statement: "Readers should assume that the production of a single biblical canon under the Spirit's direction brings together different texts in fresh ways that relativize and thicken the meaning of any one passage" (30). Although Wesleyan readers may resonate with canonical emphases, this statement hints at other hermeneutical debates lurking behind this methodology. Among the debates is the prioritization in this approach of the moment of canonization for interpretation, over the author's composition of the text, possible redaction within a given passage or book, or even other subsequent interpretive/reading moments as part of the reception history of a passage, book, or the canon itself. Second, although this canonical approach encourages the interpretation of a passage within its canonical context, it often minimizes important contributions offered by other interpretive approaches emphasizing the literary integrity of individual biblical books. Third, given the broader context to which this work is aimed, it is surprising that some issues were left unexplained or unengaged. For instance, the inclusion of the longer ending of Mark within the fourfold Gospel may not have needed explanation for this reviewer—who may still have disagreed with the decision! But for such issues, a brief explanatory footnote would help many.

Despite these issues, Robert Wall has offered a fresh and creative look at the NT teachings on the church. This will be a work to which I will turn in the future in my work on the church and ecclesiology. I recommend this book on the church to the church!

Jackson, Jack and F. Douglas Powe Jr., eds. *E. Stanley Jones and Sharing the Good News in a Pluralistic Society*. Nashville: Foundery, 2018. 136 pages. ISBN: 978-1945935107.

Reviewed by Tammie Marie Grimm, Assistant Professor of Congregational Formation, Indiana Wesleyan University. Marion, IN.

For more than thirty years, the Foundation for Evangelism (FFE) has endowed chairs of evangelism at thirteen Methodist seminaries around the globe in the name of E. Stanley Jones for his exemplary missionary and evangelistic work. Contributors to this volume, as ESJ professors or Harry Denman Fellows, are vested in the efforts of FFE to bring the principles and practices of Jones to life for the next generation of church leadership. The book examines Jones's commitments and practices in context, offering insights for sharing the gospel with integrity within a religiously diverse and plural world.

Any text seeking to unpack the essence of Jones' ministry cannot avoid discussing Jones himself. Jones was consulted by Presidents Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Generals Douglas MacArthur, John Foster Dulles and Japanese Emperor Hirohito. He was a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize (1962) and the recipient of the Gandhi Peace Prize (1963). He had an FBI file opened on him for his support of India's independence. Yet Jones shunned the limelight of attention that his work garnered him. Driven by genuine love of God and humanity to share the uniqueness of Christ in dialogical and relational ways, Jones defied conventional missionary efforts prevalent in India. His ministry was defined by three unique hallmarks which the authors believe have relevance for today; the public lecture, the Round Table Conversation and the Christian Ashram.

All three practices as developed by Jones sought a religiously diverse audience of Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, agnostics and others. Public lectures followed by question and answer (rather than an altar call), typically held in a Hindu temple or other public space (rather than a Christian church), were initial points of contact for persons to come to non-threatening spaces to hear, question, and discuss the gospel. The Round Table and Christian Ashram provided further opportunity for conversation and Christian community building in more intimate venues.

Round table conversations comprised of fifteen to forty participants, two-thirds typically non-Christian, eschewed debate and doctrine in order to focus discussion on personal experiences of God. The Christian Ashram, adapted from the Tibetan custom of retreat into nature,

immersed participants in Christian community to experience the practices and disciplines of Christian faith.

Disarmingly, and in a spirit consistent with Jones, editors Jack Jackson and F. Douglas Powe do not seek to replicate the templates of other edited multi-authored volumes by dividing the book into sections examining each method in turn. Rather, their approach is organic and, as the chapters unfold, the reader is presented with a holistic picture of Jones's life, ministry, and methods. Contributors explore Jones' unyielding commitment to Christ and his understanding of how the Christian life with regards to evangelism, ecclesiology, conversion, spiritual formation, witness, and mission undergirded his methods. Each chapter considers insights from Jones's ministry and methods that are applicable for Christian leaders today.

Robert Haynes' essay, "Come in the Right Way': Effective Evangelism in Pluralistic Cultures," addresses Jones's commitment to present Christ, not Christianity, to a culture in which Christian religion was intimately associated with colonial British rule. This commitment inspired Jones to develop particular methods of evangelism and conversion that were contextual to twentieth-century religiously plural India. Haynes contends that Jones's posture of humility towards others, combined with a stalwart belief in Christ and deference to prevailing culture is important for today. In "Christ, Kingdom, and Church: E. Stanley Jones on Ecclesiology and New Ecclesial Community," Jeffrey Conklin-Miller discusses how the Christian Ashram functioned as a parachurch renewal movement breaking down barriers with regard to race, status, and gender in order to know true Christian fellowship. Conklin-Miller believes Jones challenges contemporary leaders of new ecclesial communities and suggests that Rowan Williams offers a framework to evaluate the ways in which the church seeks to be faithful, as Jones was, to God's mission in the world. Joon Sik Park's chapter, "Victory through Surrender: E. Stanley Jones's Understanding of Conversion" examines Jones' belief that the object of Christian mission is not simply conversion, but that salvation seeks reconciliation and restoration of relationships with Christ and others. Both the Round Table and Christian Ashram were means Jones developed for persons to seek Christlike character and served as venues through which persons were reconciled to one another as they pursued discipleship. In "Returning to the Round Table," Mark Teasdale shows how Jones' focus on experience of God, rather than debate or doctrine, created a safe space for Christians and non-Christians to hear the Gospel.

Drawing on current demographic trends, he contends that by emulating Jones' humility the dialogue that defined the Round Table is transferable to any community in America today as an effective vehicle for evangelism. Thomas Albin, in "The Christian Ashram," examines the evolution of the retreat from Jones' initial adaption to the present. He argues the Ashram setting provides an experience of embodied Christian community that strengthens the inner landscape of participants as they model servant leadership toward others. Brian Yeich's contribution, "Leading Change in a Plural World: The Art of Christian Advocacy and Orchestration" explores the ways in which Jones utilised the dialogical nature of his public ministry in his personal correspondence and relationships with world leaders. He maintains that an articulate Christian witness consistent with the personhood of Christ is necessary for advocacy and instrumental to lay groundwork for change within the public square. Kimberly Reisman's essay, "Public Witness," argues Jones' embodied humility, clarity, and integrity in his approach to the Public Lecture were what made it so effective. Her essay offers personal testimony to how Jones's unwavering commitments to live out the ideals of Christ impacted the ministry of her father and, by extension, their family life and the lasting influence that persists in her ministry today.

For church leaders and students looking to impact their neighborhood for Christ, editors Jackson and Powe present the patterns and practices of Jones's life and ministry. At the same time, they make the case that what lay at the heart of Jones's ministry and effectiveness was his personal philosophy and commitments. This collection of essays provide insight on how a man with unwavering confidence in the person of Christ managed to speak through the cacophony of voices of religiously plural India. The three hallmarks of Jones's ministry are certainly transferable for today, but only, as Powe indicates, if we are as engaging, dialogical, and relational as Jones was.

Jérôme Grosclaude, *Le Méthodisme: un tison tiré du feu*, préface de Bernard Cottret (Éditions Ampelos, 2017). ISBN: 978-2356181183.

Reviewed by David Bundy, Associate Director, Manchester Wesley Research Centre; Research Professor of World Christian Studies, New York Theological Seminary.

The volume entitled *Le Méthodisme: un tison tiré du feu* [Methodism: A Brand Plucked from the Fire] is one of the rare studies of Methodism to be published in French. The volume is based on the author's doctoral thesis, "La question des ministères dans les relations entre l'Église d'Angleterre et les Méthodistes (1791-1979)" presented at the Université de la Sorbonne-Nouvelle-Paris III (2011). Grosclaude is currently Master of Conferences in British Civilization at the Université Clermont Auvergne. In *Le Méthodisme* he examines the ecumenical history of Methodism, from Wesley through the ongoing discussions between the Methodist Church of Great Britain and the Church of England. As a scholar from outside the Methodist and English-speaking worlds, but thoroughly aware of the history of both, he provides a useful perspective on two centuries of Methodist-Anglican relationships. The fact that it has appeared just prior to the fiftieth anniversary (2019) of the failure of merger considerations of the post-WW II period makes it a timely piece as reflection begins on those events a half century ago.

Grosclaude's argument is that the Methodists were aimed at separation from the Anglican Church from the beginning, because of Wesley's emphases on particular structures of devotion in the Christian life and because of a different conception of the ministry sustained by those concerns. The separation took its initial form with Wesley's own approach to established ecclesiological structures, the naming of assistants, and his definition of the characteristics of the Methodist ministry. As the Methodist churches evolved, that understanding of Methodist ministry became foundational for the theology and praxis, indeed the identity of the Methodists. The argument is presented in three sections: (1) "The Birth of Methodism and its Separation from the Anglican Church;" (2) "The mutations and expansion of Methodism;" and (3) "Methodism in Transition since 1907."

The first section sets the ecumenical problem squarely in decisions made by Wesley about the organization of the revival, his assistants, and the practices of piety encouraged in the developing communities of Methodists. Wesley found the established ministry and church structures

inadequate to facilitate the revival and generally opposed to it. The assistants rarely had the sort of social, economic, or religious backgrounds that would allow them to function as Anglican clergy, and when, after the death of Wesley, the Methodist Conference needed to structure the ministry, it was defined by what the Conference found lacking in the Anglican understanding and practice of ministry. Dissatisfactions with the resulting definitions and with the implementation of Wesley's ideal forms to support the evolving community of faith are seen to be the primary factors in Methodist schisms during the early nineteenth century.

The second section, "The mutations and expansion of Methodism," deals with the definitions of the Methodist ministry which, with unintended consequences, led to the fragmentation of Methodism. Methodist leaders were struggling to develop a church to institutionalize the revival. Wesley's desire was that the Methodist revival not be a church, but the need to establish continuity, community, and common purpose for the Methodists required compromises and structures which, in the eyes of some, threatened the Wesleyan values of the revival. The crusade of the Anglo-Catholic movement in the Church of England pushed that church toward its Catholic roots, especially in its understanding of clergy and liturgy. This in turn led Methodists to further define themselves as churches, rather than renewal movements, as they both provided denominational structures and received more authority from the English government (records, marriage, funerals) to function as churches. Essential to defining early Methodist ministry were policies favoring lay preachers as well as the ministry of women. The preaching ministry of women, allowed/encouraged by Wesley, was rescinded by the Wesleyan Methodists in 1803. The roles of women and laity figured in each of the later Methodist schisms. The schisms were soon followed by discussions of the possibilities of reunion of the various Methodist denominations.

The third section, "Methodism in Transition since 1907," analyzes the evolving definitions of the Methodist infrastructure during the twentieth century. The focus of this last section is the presentation and analysis of the Methodist-Anglican conversations of the 1950s and the 1960s, focusing on three primary issues: (1) the lack of Anglican respect for Methodist theology and ecclesiology manifested in the discussions and documents, (2) the top-down approach of the discussions, and especially (3) the understanding of clergy and episcopacy which were never adequately dealt with in the discussions. Grosclaude suggests that there remains significant confusion among clergy and laity about subsequent

ecumenical documents and the ongoing discussions between Methodists and Anglicans.

The title of the volume is more than a little ambiguous and appears to be a secondary thesis: "Methodism . . . the brand plucked from the fire." Hints in the volume, including the discussion of France, suggest the perils of ecumenism between Methodism and other traditions: the Methodist memory disappears and discourse about Methodism comes to a halt. In France the Église Réformée de France (ERF) retained none of the theological perspectives of Methodism and has not honored Methodism's history as part of the story of French Protestantism. Methodism is regarded as a closed parenthesis of minimal importance. The same can be said for Methodist unions in Canada, Australia, India, Belgium and beyond. In the case of France, two generations of Methodist pastors (and potential pastors) were eradicated in WWI, and the churches never recovered. The solution was absorption by the ERF. This secondary thesis can be seen in Grosclaude's suggestions for the future: why not develop knowledge, understanding, and appreciation between Methodists and Anglicans and see what happens? Does Methodism have anything in its present and history that is a gift to the larger Christian world?

The volume will be an important milestone in world Methodist historiography. There are some problems with the production of the volume due to publisher's mistakes (introduction, formatting that is hard to follow). One would hope that, in a subsequent study, the author would bring his considerable skills to the questions implicit in the current analysis regarding the embourgeoisement that took place in the varieties of British Methodism resulting in the repudiation of the ministry of women and decrease of attention to ministry to the poor. As Grosclaude suggests, these theological and social trajectories are important aspects of the problems of ministry and ecumenism.

O'Donovan, Oliver. *Entering into Rest*. Vol. 3 of *Ethics as Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017. 236 pages. ISBN: 978-0802873590.

Reviewed by Aaron Perry, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care, Wesley Seminary at Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, IN.

With *Entering into Rest*, Oliver O'Donovan, professor emeritus of Christian ethics and practical theology at the University of Edinburgh, completes his trilogy exploring ethics as theology. After covering the consciousness of the moral agent ("self," in volume 1), the place of ordered moral thinking in the faithful life and the moral structure and context of ethical action ("world," in volume 2), O'Donovan now turns his final reflection to the duties of the moral life and the ends of moral actions. Wearying of abstract implorations to love and justice for humanity without sufficient evangelical moral reflection in contemporary sermons (196), O'Donovan's concluding volume attempts to describe an ordered ethical life with the subjects of work (ch. 5), friendship (ch. 6), and meaning (ch. 7).

Acts of work, friendship, and meaning are framed in love and are aimed at love, love being both the "summit of moral reasoning" (14) and the anticipated, oncoming eternal future currently being disclosed in history (18). In this anticipation, these acts of work, friendship, and meaning may enjoy provisionary rest—a proper fulfillment of duty under the work of God—even as they await complete rest. To rest means to cease the effort, to rest "from," *and* to enjoy achievement, to rest "in" (30). The full expression of rest is therefore eschatological where our work, friendship, and meaning will be decisively judged, allowing us both to cease from their ongoing necessity and ambiguity. Those familiar with O'Donovan will not be surprised to sense the evangelical nature of this anticipated judgment as it presently "encourages us to accept the forgiveness of our sins and to step forward into the next future God is giving us" (44).

The moment of ethical reflection is necessary because we have not entered final rest. We are *entering* into it, most assuredly, yet the present evangelical moment means that work, friendship, and meaning all have present duty and teleological purpose formed by the work of God in Christ. Thus, while work may become exploitation and friendship may become manipulation and meaning marred as the lie, each of these efforts can also be sanctified. Sanctification is not a "normative map of spiritual progress" (73), but it is part of the *one* gracious work of God that is done in Christ and subsequently done through us. While it remains the work of

God, sanctification does not restrict human action, but “human action follow[s] in faithful correspondence and obedience to God’s action” (76). Sanctification involves the life of the agent taking the form of love, thereby restoring the moral life of the agent “at every stage” (77). Yet sanctification is not solely individual; God is revealing his work in “communities of the church” (79) and wider society as well, seeing the Spirit’s “mission in transforming the conduct and norms of world organizations” (95).

O’Donovan investigation into work, friendship, and meaning can be fleshed out by summarizing their (1) theological understanding and purpose, (2) sanctification, and (3) communication. O’Donovan begins with work. The purpose of work is to make a difference in the world, whether through “office, farm, or factory” (108). Work is about finding and using the goods of creation, contributing and reflecting the sociality of the world by giving and defining responsibilities with and for neighboring beings (114). Work is sanctified when it is under the umbrella of Christ’s agency, thereby given meaning that work’s actions do not hold in themselves (128). Work is communicated—shared for the purpose of community—when it is life-affirming, obtaining to the exercise of meaningful agency for the good of community. With this in mind, theological ethicists must not simply be asking, for example, what is a just wage? They must ask what meaningful work is for human agents, especially with regard to increasing technology and the prevalence of mundane work that requires only minimal human action and thought.

Second, O’Donovan turns to friendship. Neither merely friendliness nor cooperation, friendship involves mutual goodwill that may, unlike marriage, extend across space. It is not proximity that affirms friendship, but response in time of need and request. Friendship can exist without proximity because the sanctification of friendship is the presence of Christ by his mediating (not substituting) Spirit (155). The Spirit makes possible friendship with God and others through the friendship of Jesus. Practically, this is a friendship that receives guests, visits the sick (159–160), and discloses the future friendship of God visibly through the church.

Finally, after exploring what it means to communicate in material goods (work) and “mutual presence” (friendship), O’Donovan argues that human beings communicate in meaning by using language about the way the world is *and* correcting and having this language corrected. Reality is not something human beings simply bring into being, but something human beings discover and communicate with others through language.

The communication of meaning takes two forms: narrative and description. "Narrative presents reality as events in time, description presents it as formal relations" (171). To communicate in a sanctified way is to bear witness to resurrection, not simply the event of resurrection, but to resurrection-formed reality in words and through proper living (i.e., work and friendship). To communicate meaning is to give moral instruction that forms our thinking (soul), our emotions (spirit), and our work (body).

Just as *Entering into Rest* began with a reflection on love, so does it conclude with a reflection on love. This bookend approach recognizes the *sovereignty* of love and the *endurance* of love. Love is the appropriate form of our life and love endures through time, even in the face of its enemies (death) and in shifts of power (generation to generation), until all is built up into love. This recognition of the order of love reflexively affirms the effort of ethics as a love of appropriate moral order. We order our lives in love because we have a love for order. The human impetus for ethics is a reflection of its desire for the order of God. Thus, love can be at home in the world in its past and present and will be "at home" in God's future (225).

Entering into Rest is a dense conclusion to a challenging trilogy. At times it sings with the voice of one with warm heart and disciplined mind, one who is carefully exercising the energy of a life of ethical reflection to convey with crystal clarity the nature of the world. At other times, the lyrics become dense prose, especially when exegeting other scholars.

No doubt, this final volume, along with the two preceeding, is the result of a life's work by a first class theologian and scholar. But what about *Entering into Rest* is most helpful to Wesleyans? O'Donovan is critically appreciative of the Wesleys, Charles more than John. His theology of sanctification in individuals, communities, and societies will be of interest to Wesleyan theologians, though they will likely carry the categories beyond O'Donovan's use. Further, framing ethics in terms of love and the anticipation of love will find Wesleyan affirmation. Here resides a deep optimism about the power and redemptive work of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, O'Donovan's reflections on work and the abstract demon that the "market" can become, in contrast to the market's historical function of bringing producer and consumer together, are also important for 21st century theological ethics, Wesleyan or otherwise.

Kisker, Scott T. and Kevin M. Watson. *The Band Meeting: Rediscovering Relational Discipleship in Transformational Community*. Franklin, TN: Seedbed, 2017. 172 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1628244953.

Reviewed by Howard A. Snyder, International Representative, Manchester Wesley Research Centre, Manchester, England.

Kevin Watson and Scott Kisker call the band meeting “the engine of holiness” within early Methodism. Bands were “the core strategy to bring about holiness, or deep life change, which John Wesley believed God had particularly planted within Methodism’s DNA” (121). This book makes a strong case for the central role of bands in early Methodism and for their continuing relevance today.

The Band Meeting is the most timely book I’ve read over the past year, for three reasons: The history of the early Methodist band meetings that it traces; the theological analysis provided; and the book’s practical guidance on forming Wesleyan bands today. This third reason is buttressed by a wealth of personal testimonies—those of the authors themselves, but also of a score of others, men and women representing various walks in life who are now engaged in bands on the original Methodist model.

Although I had read Wesley and studied Methodism for many years, until this book I never fully grasped the strategic significance of the band meeting within the ecology of early Methodism. Few books combine so well the elements of historical explanation, theological analysis, and practical discipleship challenge. The nearest thing to it in my experience would be Wesley’s own journals and sermons.

Academics tend to read books for academic reasons and to find their spiritual nurture elsewhere. For Wesleyans, this is doubly ironic. The essential point of nearly everything Wesley said and did was that people should experience the transforming love of God and manifest this in “all inward and outward holiness.” Unlike many books on Wesleyan theology, Watson and Kisker’s book *The Band Meeting* combines theology, history, and experience in a thoroughly Wesleyan way.

Using a historical lens, the authors document the band meeting’s strategic role in early Methodism. Kevin Watson discussed bands in more depth in his earlier book, *Pursuing Social Holiness: The Band Meeting in Wesley’s Thought and Popular Methodism Practice* (Oxford University Press, 2014), which was based on his doctoral dissertation. This new book provides a very enlightening history of early Methodist bands in shorter

and somewhat more popular compass and with more focus on contemporary application.

Although this book focuses specifically on bands, it covers a broad sweep theologically. It thus provides a good introduction to Wesleyan theology for readers who may not be familiar with this tradition. Chapters two through four focus successively on "Creation, Light, Order, and Abundant Life," "Salvation in the Wesleyan Tradition," and "Salvation and Community." These meaty but accessible chapters lead then into chapters that discuss the function of early Methodist bands and on practical matters such as how to start a band and keys to their thriving.

The authors demonstrate that the bands were undergirded by clear theological assumptions. The fundamental conviction concerned the nature of the Triune God. The human need for community is grounded in the Trinitarian—that is to say, social or communal—nature of God. Watson and Kisker stress this Trinitarian dimension somewhat more specifically than Wesley himself did, though it is present also in Wesley.

Wesley's often misused and abused term "social holiness" is grounded in the nature of God. For Wesley, *social holiness* meant people experiencing God *together*, primarily through joining in classes and bands. Watson and Kisker clarify a key point here. Though class meetings were essential and required of all early Methodists, bands were the real engines of deep spiritual change and discipleship. Wesley well understood that disciples ought to go deeper in their Christian experience than typically happened even in the classes. To be entire Christians and really live inward and outward holiness required actually doing what James 5:16 says, "Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed." This was the biblical charter for bands; such confession and healing seldom happen without them. I doubt any church today, at least in most contexts, can be healthy without practicing James 5:16.

There come times in history when the church must adopt stronger or stricter disciplines. Certainly this is true in the North Atlantic region today, and very likely throughout the world. Watson and Kisker call for a depth of spiritual experience and accountability that clearly is countercultural. Bands were just as countercultural in Wesley's day. They worked, however, because they provided an essential ingredient in discipleship. Bands were the context for the kind of spiritual growth-to-maturity that makes a difference not only in the church but also in the world.

Kevin Watson and Scott Kisker write as true Wesleyan scholars. One can hardly read this book without being convinced, and perhaps con-

victed. In my case, reading the book convinced me to join together with other brothers and form a weekly band on the original Wesleyan pattern. Watson teaches Wesleyan and Methodist studies at Candler School of Theology, Emory University. Kisker serves as professor of church history and associate dean for masters programs at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. Both also participate in bands.

Brack, David. *Luke's Legato Historiography: Remembering the Continuity of Salvation History through Rhetorical Transitions*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications. 140 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1498299107.

Reviewed by Bart B. Bruehler, Associate Professor of New Testament, Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, IN.

John Wesley spoke of the “whole scope and tenor of Scripture” as a guiding interpretive principle for specific passages. He saw a deep unity in the narrative and theology of scripture that provided a hermeneutical framework for explaining specific (and difficult) passages as well as for guiding the structure of the Christian proclamation of salvation. David Brack, working with a similar sensibility, examines the continuity of Luke’s narrative presentation of salvation history in his book *Luke's Legato History*, a recent publication based on his doctoral work at Asbury Theological Seminary. Brack’s study aims to demonstrate that Luke structured transitions in his two-volume narrative in order to communicate continuity in salvation history and to remind his first century audience that there were no irreconcilable differences between the various stages of early Christianity (xv).

The book begins with two preparatory chapters. Brack orients his work as a sociorhetorical investigation with ancient rhetoric serving as the skeleton and social memory theory providing the living organs that make it work. He surveys the development of social memory theory, selecting the musical metaphor of *legato* (and *staccato*) history from the work of Eviatar Zerubavel. From here, Brack moves on to ancient rhetoric, specifically ancient historiography, surveying Aristotle, Polybius, Diodorus Siculus, Quintillian, and Lucian. He points out how each author recommends continuity and order when narrating history. Brack also mentions the work of Richard Longenecker, whose *Rhetoric at the Boundaries* (2005) provides the fundamental chain-link (A-b/a-B) structure that Brack adopts as a pattern for discerning Luke’s rhetorical transitions. The survey is deft and clear but leaves too many stones unturned. Brack could better ground his study as sociorhetorical by citing work after 1996 that has done more to model the interfacing of rhetoric and social-cultural theory. The passage from Quintillian (*Inst.* 9.4.129; p. 13) deals not with grand narrative transitions but with the style and meter of individual lines, and while Lucian does employ the chain metaphor, he uses a mixture metaphor as well. Greater clarity around the notion of “rhetorical transitions” is needed since the transitions are part of a narrative plot—

they are “rhetorical” in the sense that they are persuasive. Finally, more significant engagement with Longenecker seems in order given Brack’s dependence on his method and the overlap of the two studies on Acts.

In ch. 2, Brack presents a brief defense of widely held positions on the author (Gentile with Jewish background), genre (ancient historiography), and audience (urban, Christian, late first century) of Luke-Acts. To illuminate Luke’s purpose in light of his thesis, Brack then wades into the extensive discussion of the meaning and function of Luke’s preface in 1:1–4. Brack concludes that one of the purposes set forth here is that Luke had to address the lack of arrangement in previous traditions, particularly how their lack of arrangement failed to convincingly present the continuity of all the “things fulfilled among us.” Brack situates his argument well and with suitable humility among the various claims about Luke’s preface and purpose. His contribution here may have been strengthened by weaving the insights of social memory theory explicitly into this discussion.

Chs. 3–6 study the four key rhetorical transitions of Luke-Acts according to Brack: From John the Baptist to Jesus in Luke 1–4, from Jesus to the Disciples in Luke 5–18, from Jesus to the Holy Spirit in Luke 24–Acts 2, and from Peter to Paul in Acts 8–15. Each chapter opens with a brief exploration of the current *staccato* state of historiography/theology in late first century Christianity that prompted Luke to write his *legato* narrative. This is followed by an exposition of the chain-link structure exhibited in that portion of the narrative with regular references to its socio-historical and theological significance for Luke’s audience. Brack surveys the relationship of the pairs of figures at the end of the first century, drawing upon canonical and non-canonical resources (e.g., Josephus, *Protoevangelium of James*, *1 Clement*). However, he seems to assume that diversity equals confusion and discontinuity. For instance, in the late first century a number of Christians were discussing the relationship of Jesus and the Holy Spirit (85–89), but the different perspectives themselves offer continuity and theological coherence within their own writing. The situation is not one of several *staccato* presentations stressing discontinuity (one thinks here of Marcion) but of a diverse fray of competing *legato* presentations into which Luke enters.

Brack covers familiar ground when discussing the literary and rhetorical features that intertwine John and Jesus with the many parallels and interchanges between the two figures in Luke 1–4. Similarly, many have noted how the narration of the ascension at the end of the Gospel and the beginning of Acts serves to link the two volumes together. Brack’s

chain-link structure (A-b/a-B) helps to make sense of the re-presentation of Jesus's teaching in Acts 1:1–8, but he could perhaps nuance the structure by positing that the brief hint about the Spirit in Luke 24:49 is foreshadowing rather than a very weak chain-link. Brack's chain-link structure applies most neatly to the flow from Peter to Paul in Acts (106–108). It may be that his freshest contribution regards the transition from Jesus to the Disciples, which comprises most of Luke's Gospel and offers insights into the role of the travel narrative. The novelty of this observation merits deeper investigation to explore the preparatory function of 6:12–49, the placement of the two commissioning stories, and the role of the disciples in the travel narrative alongside the crowds and Pharisees.

All of the rhetorical transitions surveyed by Brack deal with characters as artifacts of larger changes in salvation history. One way to extend this study would be to explore how the beginning and end of Luke-Acts connects to larger cultural-historical changes. Brack mentions that the transition from John to Jesus also points to continuity with Second Temple Judaism, but perhaps this could be extended further to include continuity with the great salvation historical events in the emerging Jewish canon. Also, the thrice-narrated trials of Paul in Acts 16–28 may represent a cultural shift toward the Roman world.

Brack's study, as many these days, does not offer groundbreaking paradigm shifts. Rather, it employs a rich theoretical framework informed by new perspectives offered by the social and cognitive sciences to cast additional light on the complexity and profundity of familiar claims. His argument regarding Luke's *legato* history adds color to a chorus of other voices singing (relatively) harmoniously about the continuity and coherence of salvation in Luke-Acts.

Siker, Jeffrey S. *Jesus, Sin, and Perfection in Early Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 332 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1107105416.

Reviewed by Jerome Van Kuiken, Associate Professor of Ministry and Christian Thought, Oklahoma Wesleyan University, Bartlesville, OK.

Professor Siker, a Presbyterian minister, teaches at Loyola Marymount University. His book bills itself as “the first full-length study to trace how early Christians came to perceive Jesus as a sinless human being” (i). Siker unwittingly echoes ex-Methodist scholar John Knox’s *The Humanity and Divinity of Christ* (Cambridge University Press, 1967, 1992), which anticipated Siker’s conviction that Christ’s humanity rules out sinlessness or a divine nature.

Chapter 1 surveys the literature on early Christianity’s doctrine of Jesus’ sinlessness, noting a single major work, Carl Ullmann’s *Die sündlosigkeit Jesu* (1846; ET *The Sinlessness of Jesus*, 1870) without engaging it. Instead, Siker presents his thesis: the disciples’ Easter faith reinterpreted Jesus’ death as a perfect sin offering and his life as therefore sinless from birth. The early church thus shortchanged Jesus’ humanity, reifying the metaphor of his sinlessness and deifying him as part of the Trinity.

Chapter 2 discusses Siker’s methodology for studying the Gospels. He uses the historical-critical method to reconstruct early Christians’ evolution regarding Jesus’ sinlessness. Yet Siker also seeks to transcend modern criticism by hearing God’s Spirit speak through the text. God’s speech is dynamic, leading today’s Christians to question the morality of the New Testament’s portrait of Christ’s death as atoning. Once freed from the notion of Jesus as untainted sacrifice, we need not affirm the corollary of his perfect sinlessness.

Chapter 3 examines the concept of sin. Siker notes its conceptual diversity among first-century Jews. Christianity’s understanding of sin has dispositional, legal/covenantal, and relational dimensions, with faith in Christ as the solution. But contemporary (Western) society replaces the notion of sin with medical and psychological diagnoses of the human condition. Furthermore, what counts as sinful changes over time. Lastly, the Bible urges Christians to aim to be “perfect” (*teleios*) and expects them to avoid serious sin but not to be sinless from birth.

Chapter 4 investigates Jesus’ birth. Jewish and pagan sources called him illegitimate. Siker detects hints of this charge in the canonical

Gospels and proposes that in response, Matthew invented the story of the virgin birth from Isaiah 7:14. Luke picked up the tale, which grew in the telling until the virgin-born, sinless infant acquired a miraculously-born, sinless, ever-virgin mother in the *Protevangelium of James* and a miraculous, sinless childhood in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. Siker finds the notion of a sinless child just as “absurd” as a virgin birth or resurrection: “Can one learn and grow without making mistakes, without erring?” Did the teenage Jesus “tell his mother that he did not need to participate in Yom Kippur because he had not sinned, ever?” (88)

Chapter 5 studies Jesus’ baptism. Siker sees the canonical Gospels as suppressing Jesus’ baptism as a penitent sinner. Jesus’ real repentance is not only more historically plausible than the Gospels’ evasions, but also more theologically satisfying to Siker: it signals God’s unqualified embrace of humanity. Chapter 6 uses Jesus’ desert temptations, which Siker takes as fabricated, to discuss the doctrine of Christ’s impeccability, which Siker finds nonsensical. The next three chapters survey Jesus’ scandalous behavior during his ministry: spurning kinship ties (ch. 7), befriending sinners (ch. 8), and violating *halakah* (ch. 9). Siker sees Jesus as truly sinning against the Torah but as doing so out of obedience to his calling—except in the case of the Syrophoenician woman, who must overcome Jesus’ sinful prejudice (169–70; cf. 28, 225).

Chapters 10 and 11 trace how Jesus’ death as a sinner developed into a sinless sacrifice. Paul says that Christ “knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21), but Siker doubts Paul was preoccupied with “whether Jesus ever told a lie about stealing a cookie Rather, Paul was convinced by God’s raising Jesus from the dead that Jesus had not deserved the shamefully sinful death he received” (225). Mark interprets Jesus’ death as an atoning sacrifice, and Matthew, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and 1 John draw the corollary that he must have been sinless. By contrast, Luke’s Jesus dies simply as a martyr, not a sin offering. Siker appreciates Hebrews’ stress on Jesus’ learning obedience through temptation (which implies for Siker that Jesus cannot have been born fully God) but decries Hebrews’ “yet without sin.”

Chapter 12, “Saving Jesus from Perfection,” recaps and extends Siker’s proposals: Christ’s being “fully human” means that he must have experienced the fullness of our human condition, including “remorse, repentance, and reconciliation” (266). An impeccable, incarnate Person of the Trinity won’t do. Just as Christians’ views on God, atonement, and homosexuality have shifted, so too should their Christology. Jesus’ sinlessness is merely a metaphor. Siker applies the Eastern Orthodox doc-

trine of theosis to Jesus: rather than starting out divine, he became divine through lifelong progress in holiness. Viewing Jesus this way inspires us by revealing God's "full and transformative embrace of the human condition, and our own call to do the same" (286).

Siker's volume is more extended hypothesis than rigorous case. Sometimes he hastily takes one of two interpretive options without adequately addressing the other (72, 144, 218–19, 225). Significantly, his reconstruction of the virgin birth story's development seems to require that Luke's Gospel relied on Matthew's—hardly an uncontroversial assumption! Elsewhere he reads Luke as denying that Jesus submitted to John's baptism of repentance (116) or died for others' sins (236–40). These readings are only sustained by straining at exegetical gnats and ignoring or downplaying Lk. 22:19–20, 37 and Acts 1:5, 21–22; 8:32–35; 10:36–38; 20:28. More broadly, Siker's hermeneutic of suspicion treats all variations among the Gospels as marks of concealment and fabrication. Chapter 3's promising "taxonomy of sin" makes no real contribution to the rest of the book; instead Siker equates all human error with sin (88, 279). His *a priori* commitment to sin's inescapability and orthodoxy's impossibility shapes his entire approach. This absolute commitment to sin is ironic, since ch. 3 describes the notion of sin as relative and increasingly obsolete.

Also ironic for an anti-perfectionist book are its frequent falls into the perfectionist fallacy. If one rejects Anselm's atonement theory, one should dismiss the whole substitutionary atonement tradition (22). Either one must accept the extracanonical Gospels' theology and the Immaculate Conception or jettison the canonical virgin birth accounts (ch. 4). Either Christ is fully human and sinful or fully divine and not (*passim*). Yet Siker's all-or-nothing approach is inconsistent: he rejects the New Testament's reinterpretations of "sinful" incidents in Jesus' life *except* his ministry of "transgressive faithfulness" (chs. 7–9). He dismisses Christ's ontological deity, sinlessness, virgin birth, atoning death, and (apparently) resurrection as "mythic" (98, 286; cf. 88) while retaining equally unsecular belief in God, God's Spirit, divine revelation, theosis, and sin itself.

A final irony is that Siker reacts against orthodoxy's "docetic" Christology (xi, 271) with stances similar to another form of Gnosticism: an adoptionist Christology without atonement or resurrection, an inherently sinful humanity incompatible with Godhead, and the elevation of individual insight over Scripture and tradition. Reading Scripture whole might suggest that the teen Jesus at Yom Kippur and the adult Jesus bap-

tized by John followed prophetic precedent in confessing sin vicariously (e.g., Exod. 32:31–32; Jer. 8:21–9:2; Dan. 9:3–19), expressing innocent solidarity with sinners just as at Calvary. Likewise, less caricature-driven study of Christian tradition would familiarize Siker with the doctrine of Christ's healing assumption of sinful human nature. (See, e.g., my *Christ's Humanity in Current and Ancient Controversy: Fallen or Not?* [T&T Clark, 2017]. Siker betrays passing acquaintance with this doctrine [10n5; 250n3] but misconstrues it as supporting his view.) Certainly Wesleyans, with their "optimism of grace," may offer a better rendition of Jesus, sin, and perfection.

Terry, John Mark and Robert L. Gallagher. *Encountering the History of Missions: From the Early Church to Today*. Encountering Missions. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017. 362 pages. ISBN: 978-0801026966.

Rebekah R.S. Clapp, PhD Student, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY.

Terry and Gallagher's recent work *Encountering the History of Missions* offers an evangelical perspective of the role of Christian mission throughout history in order to provide insight and instruction to contemporary practitioners of missions. Their book is an essential addition to the Encountering Missions series which has the expressed purpose of "preparing [the church] for effective missional engagement in today's world" (viii). Terry and Gallagher approach church history from a missiological standpoint with a special eye to the diverse, global landscape. Though inclusive of various church traditions and movements, their evangelical commitment is apparent. Consistent with contemporary missiological scholarship, Terry and Gallagher emphasize that mission is God's work and highlight the role of the Holy Spirit in missional engagement; additionally, they uplift the importance of contextualization in cross-cultural mission, ultimately encouraging the church to continue in God's mission so that the whole world may be reached.

Working largely chronologically, our authors begin with the expansion of the early church, highlighting the methods of the apostolic age which were then adopted by the missionary bishops of the third and fourth centuries who led the church in evangelizing new areas, establishing new churches, and training up local leaders. Though Christianity was the leading religion of the late Roman Empire, our authors expand their geographic focus to the East and North, sharing the story of Christian expansion into Asia and Ireland. Here, our authors begin to focus on distinct traditions and movements. They include Orthodox, Catholic, and Reformation traditions, highlighting the movements of Dominicans, Franciscans, and Jesuits along with Pietists, Moravians, and Methodists. The unfolding narrative expresses the tensions of theological disagreement, the abuses of ecclesial leadership, and the various approaches to revitalizing the church. Along the way, they highlight many of the individuals who had a profound impact on the continuance of God's mission in their contexts, even in the midst of division and persecution.

A clear shift occurs when our authors introduce William Carey and nineteenth-century Protestant missions. What had been a global, ecu-

menical narrative, narrows to a Western-driven, Protestant practice of missions. The text then concludes with advice for evangelical missionaries today.

Terry and Gallagher's commitment to covering the broad historical, ecumenical, and geographic perspectives of Christian history provides the reader with essential foundations for understanding the vast and varied missional movement of the church. Unfortunately, they fail develop a clear definition of mission. In their historical sections, they seem to support the view that mission is God's work and that the Holy Spirit enables the church to engage in participating in God's mission. This is evidenced by their inclusion of historical movements and persons who would not have called themselves "missionaries" but contributed greatly to God's expansion of the church. However, they present their conclusions and their suggestions for contemporary missionaries in such a way that creates a limited image of missions as select Christian workers traveling to unreached populations for the purpose of evangelization.

This limitation excludes the important work of bringing about reformation and revitalization of the church in areas that have been Christianized for centuries. The Medieval Reformers, the Protestant Reformers, Pietists, and Methodists who populate their text primarily operated within an already evangelized context to bring about renewal and revival. And yet, as our authors analyze twentieth-century missions, they cover every geographical area in the world except the United States, despite it being an identified mission field by many Christians in the global South. In fact, their recognition of mission occurring from the church in the global South is minimal, making mention only of South Korea's mission-sending activity. This may be related to their worries about "localism" which they define as, "an excessive concern for local people and activities" (281). Terry and Gallagher argue that localism inhibits world mission, as more churches reserve their mission budgets for community-based projects. However, as Wesley exemplified by the Methodist movement, there is significant missional work to be done within one's local context. Moreover, given the impact of globalization and migration, local mission can have significant cross-cultural and global ramifications.

Positively, Terry and Gallagher present a comprehensive picture of Christian history inclusive of many major church traditions. Despite their evangelical commitments, they uplift the work of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, and recognize the way that God worked through persons and traditions whose theology differs greatly from their

own. The theme of God's movement is woven throughout their narrative, as they highlight particular persons from varying traditions who were empowered to make a significant impact for God's kingdom: be they monks, heretics, or women. In fact, they emphasize the role of women in the history of missions. They are intentional to include the significant impact that women had on the missional movement throughout history, noting that the role of the cross-cultural missionary was uniquely suited to empowering women to serve in leadership in the church.

Finally, Terry and Gallagher manage to balance the positive impact of Christian mission throughout the world while recognizing the sins committed in the name of Christ. They critique the superior attitudes of missionaries, their contribution to colonialism, and their failure to contextualize the gospel for indigenous cultures. So, while they believe that God has worked through missions across history to bring the gospel to every continent, they call missionaries today to learn from the mistakes of the past and to offer Christ in ways that are both contextual and holistic. *Encountering the History of Missions* would be particularly beneficial for missiologists, church historians, and contemporary practitioners of global mission, especially those with an evangelical worldview.

Koehl, Andrew C. and David Basinger, editors. *Earnest: Interdisciplinary Work Inspired by the Life and Teachings of B. T. Roberts*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017. 271 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1532606335.

Reviewed by Gregory R. Coates, PhD Candidate, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, IL.

The collection of essays assembled within *Earnest: Interdisciplinary Work Inspired by the Life and Teachings of B. T. Roberts* breathes new life into the study of the founder of the Free Methodist Church. They add significantly to our understanding of B. T. Roberts' life and thought while also bringing his legacy into the twenty-first century through constructive approaches from multiple disciplines. Written by thirteen faculty members of Roberts Wesleyan College and Northeastern Seminary from a wide variety of disciplines, the essays seek to revive the theological legacy of Roberts while applying his thought to pressing modern concerns. The eleven chapters collectively paint a fresh portrait of one of the most intriguing figures to emerge from the holiness movement.

The volume is divided into two sections. The first explores the genius and character of a man deeply committed to both personal piety and social transformation. Despite heavy opposition from many of his contemporaries, Roberts' life-long and abiding commitment to the full equality of women within both the realm of church and home are addressed in the first two chapters by Douglas Cullum and Elvera Berry. The third and fourth chapters focus on Roberts' brilliance as a social entrepreneur and his savvy financial investments, revealing how his commitment to the future of theological education for the benefit of the church absorbed much of the indefatigable preacher's time and energy. In chapter five, Timothy Vande Brake compares and contrasts Roberts' love for nature with the legacies of his contemporary environmentalists Henry Thoreau, John Muir, and Teddy Roosevelt. Vande Brake argues that though Roberts did not explicitly write much about his view of nature, proper stewardship of the land certainly informed his praxis as it related to the promotion of camp meetings and advocacy for farmers' rights. The final chapter of the first section places Roberts alongside his fellow Rochester native Walter Rauschenbusch, arguing that both men's lives evinced a deep concern for "the need for religious revival and the need for social transformation" (120). Collectively, these essays deal more explicitly with the life, work, and thought of B. T. Roberts and add significantly to our understanding of this complex activist-theologian.

The second set of chapters, gathered under the heading of "Every Relation of Life," seeks to bring Roberts' legacy into the modern day, focusing less on Roberts' life *per se* and placing him more explicitly in dialogue with modern theological concerns. J. Richard Middleton's chapter on Genesis 2-3 and its teaching about mutuality between humankind and the earth echo the themes raised in the previous chapter by Vande Brake, and his commentary on the mutual reciprocity between male and female compliments the volume's first two chapters on gender, though Middleton pays scant attention to the thought of Roberts himself. In Chapter 8 Andrew C. Koehl addresses Roberts' theology more straightforwardly, assessing the traditional doctrine of what he calls the "eternal abandonment view" of hell that Roberts espoused and preached (172). Koehl perceptively concludes that Roberts' strict adherence to a literal view of hell "is in such deep tension with other biblical themes, especially the love and mercy of God . . . [that] perhaps Roberts fell into the error he warned his readers about: 'We cannot by our zeal for one class of Scriptures atone for our neglect of other Scriptures of equal importance'" (187). Koehl's philosophical reflections on Roberts' traditional view of hell stand, in my opinion, as the highlight of the book.

The final three chapters of this anthology attempt to bring the legacy of Roberts into dialogue with the fields of modern psychology, nursing, and social work. Rodney Bassett argues that the Wesleyan emphasis of human encounters with divine "grace upon grace" can have a definite and discernible impact on the human brain, transforming a person physiologically, cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally. Susanne M. Mohnkern and Cheryl B. Crotser identify the ways in which Roberts' fourfold ethical emphasis upon piety, virtue, industry, and economy can provide moral guidance for the practice of nursing. Lastly, Lori M. Sousa presents the results of her qualitative research on the connection between religion and spirituality within the lives of seventeen social workers from various faith traditions, though the connection of this chapter to Roberts' legacy and the Wesleyan-holiness tradition remains unclear.

Earnest, taken as a whole, suffers from two significant, though not fatal, flaws. First, while the attempt to address the legacy of Roberts' life and thought from an interdisciplinary perspective is certainly laudable, the final result is a patchwork of quite unrelated chapters that do not provide the reader with any steady sense of continuity. For this reason, I recommend using the book as a reference for exploring particular topics, but doubt many readers will benefit from reading it in its entirety. Some

chapters, especially those of the latter sections, seem out of place inside a volume that purports to be centered upon the life and teachings of B. T. Roberts. Indeed, the final chapter makes no reference or mention at all to Roberts, the holiness tradition, or Wesleyan theology. A second shortcoming, which will likely alienate many readers, is the anthology's nearly exclusive focus upon Roberts' legacy as felt in northern New York. While this may be expected since all of the authors teach at Roberts Wesleyan, this provincialism leaves untouched the wider impact of Roberts' life and thought as it expressed itself within the larger Free Methodist Church and the multiple educational institutions that sprang from within the movement.

These criticisms notwithstanding, the contributors to *Earnest* are to be commended for taking the historical legacy of Roberts seriously and for attempting to place his diverse thought and practice into dialogue with modern academic disciplines. Roberts himself was a man of many interests, having written widely on theology, practical Christian living, economics, current events, and politics. Thus, the volume offered to us by this set of scholars certainly is in keeping with the spirit of a man who committed his life to a holistic, embodied, and socially transformative gospel message.

Oconer, Luther Jeremiah. *Spirit-Filled Protestantism: Holiness-Pentecostal Revivals and the Making of Filipino Methodist Identity*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Press, 2017. 220 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1498203609.

Reviewed by William Kostlevy, Director, Brethren Historical Library and Archives, Elgin, Illinois.

In his important book *Reforming the World: The Creation of America's Moral Empire* (2010), Ian Tyrrell identified holiness theology as a key factor in the explosive growth of networks both inside and outside North America dedicated to the reformation of personal and social life throughout the world. As Tyrrell notes, Methodists were especially active in these networks of personal salvation and social transformation. Luther Oconer's *Spirit-Filled Protestantism: Holiness-Pentecostal Revivals and the Making of Filipino Methodist Identity* brilliantly illustrates Tyrrell's key point in the context of a single country, the Philippines. In the process Oconer describes the rapid growth and maturing of Filipino Methodism and the crucial role it played in the emergence of Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement in the Philippines.

Building on the perspective of Donald W. Dayton and the work of David Bundy, Floyd Cunningham and earlier studies of Methodism in the Philippines, Oconer establishes the roots Filipino Methodism in the American holiness revival of the nineteenth century. In a very effective first chapter, Oconer illustrates how the American holiness movement built from the legacy of Wesley and early Methodism. Equally helpful is his important second chapter that details how the popular "Pentecostal meetings" held at American Methodist Annual Conferences became a standard feature of Filipino Methodism. Pioneered in the United States by popular holiness evangelist S. A. Keen, and after Keen's death, by Joseph Smith and Henry Clay Morrison, these spiritual renewal meetings held in conjunction with Methodist Annual Conferences helped make holiness piety an essential feature of Filipino Methodism through the 1930s.

As Oconer notes, Filipino Methodism also built upon an existing indigenous anti-Catholicism that played into the hands of such skilled holiness advocates as bishop William F. Oldham and early missionary revivalist Charles W. Koehler. Especially important in Oconer's account is the 1908 Manila Crusade conducted by evangelist Henry Clay Morrison. These ties were nurtured and expanded as early Filipino Methodist leaders Dionisio Alejandro, Nicolas Dizon and Cornelio Juan received training at Morrison's Asbury College. While the years 1911-1924 witnessed

the high-tide of holiness impact upon Methodism in the Philippines, the years 1925-1933 were a time of moral crusades and schism. Reminiscent of Methodism's role as a catalyst for prohibition in the United States, Filipino Methodists figured prominently in crusades against such social sins as drinking, cock-fighting and prostitution. Of special importance was Methodist educator and jurist Jorge Bocobo, who helped re-focus Filipino Methodism on ethical concerns and strict personal morality. As Oconer demonstrates, Methodism moved from a focus on anti-Catholicism, to a holiness-inspired campaign against sin, to a focus on fighting social evils by the late 1920s. These high moral standards Filipino Methodists projected, Oconer suggests, made several sexual scandals involving clergy even more divisive.

In an important chapter on Methodism from the 1930s to the 1960s, Oconer highlights the important role Methodism would play in the emerging Pentecostal Movement, especially the healing revival. Among the most important indigenous leaders in the healing revival were Methodist leaders Rueben and David Candelaria, who supported the evangelistic and healing ministries of Lester Sumrall and Clifton Erickson. The Candelarias would leave Methodism and play an important role in the Charismatic movement in the Philippines. But as Oconer's own experience demonstrates, the distinctive holiness spirituality of early Filipino Methodism remains an active ingredient in the United Methodist Church in the Philippines.

As David Bundy notes in his very helpful introduction, this book helps answer a question that has often puzzled observers. "Why do churches with roots in Europe and North America share liturgical styles and theological emphases with 'Pentecostals' while generally not being recognized as Pentecostal?" In fact, the answer is that these churches share a common radical holiness heritage. Often, as Bundy notes, these churches united versions of Methodist sanctificationist ideas with elements alien to conventional Methodism, such as faith healing, premillennialism or dispensationalism. In fact, a classic illustration of these developments is Henry Clay Morrison himself. An American Methodist of the Southern persuasion, Morrison worked easily with a wide variety of evangelical leaders while insisting that the common experience of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit transcended unimportant theological subtleties that divided so-called Wesleyans from like-minded Keswick-oriented evangelicals and even the theologically mistaken yet potential allies in the emerging Pentecostal movement.

This thoroughly researched study of Methodism in the Philippines is one of the most important contributions to holiness and Methodist studies to appear in recent years. By highlighting the role of Henry Clay Morrison, it demonstrates how radical holiness understandings could fuse with indigenous religious currents to create a dynamic but also unique Methodist culture in the Philippines. As other scholars have noted in other contexts, as Filipino Methodism moved away from its early holiness-inspired experiential faith it left a vacuum that would ultimately be filled by Pentecostalism yearning to recover lost power. This book compliments and supports the Wallace Thornton, Jr.'s conclusion that holiness-inspired missionaries played a decisive role in Christian missions in Africa and Asia in *When the Fire Fell: Martin Wells Knapp's Vision of Pentecost and the Beginnings of God's Bible School* (2014).

Oconer not only tells a compelling story, but locates that story in its proper and broader historical context. It is a must read for all serious students in holiness studies, Methodism, Pentecostalism and world Christianity.

Lempke, Mark A. *My Brother's Keeper: George McGovern and Progressive Christianity*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2017. 231 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1625342775.

Reviewed by Barton E. Price, Director of the Centers for Academic Success and Achievement, Indiana University – Purdue University Fort Wayne, Fort Wayne, IN.

President Ulysses S Grant said the three great parties of American democracy were Republican, Democrat, and Methodist. A century later, Methodist influence had waned as the religious and political landscape shifted with slow, deliberate intent. In 1972, the presidential campaign of George S. McGovern provided an opportunity for various branches of the Wesleyan family tree to cooperate and elect a man whose Wesleyan qualifications were unquestioned. This is the story of Mark Lempke's impressive, engaging history.

Lempke's book is three narratives in one: a narrative of Mainline Protestantism flexing its social muscle one last time before the evangelical insurgency; the development of an evangelical Left that sought to maintain the heritage of redeeming souls and society; and the central role that McGovern played in bringing these groups together and the influence of his own theological development on American policy. Early chapters focus on McGovern's upbringing and education, evincing his evolution from evangelical Wesleyanism to mainline Methodism. His early career included brief stints as a Methodist lay minister and history professor before turning to public service and Democratic Party organizing in South Dakota. His educational experiences shaped his view of the Bible, his flirtation with liberal Protestantism, his embrace of the Social Gospel, and his advocacy for political liberalism's social welfare and peace platforms. The second narrative involves a coterie of churchmen—most notably Methodist Bishop James Arthur Anderson—who carried the banner of liberal Protestantism into lobbying for many of the causes McGovern held. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, McGovern found himself in the sphere the National Council of Churches (NCC) and World Council of Churches (WCC), positions that refined and steeled his resolve on the issues he would champion in Congress. The third narrative tells of a group of radical evangelicals like Jim Wallis, Ronald Sider, and others who had come of age in the Civil Rights Movement and mobilized against the Vietnam War and against Richard Nixon. These evangelicals saw in McGovern someone whose progressive policies more closely aligned with

their own, despite his liberal theology being incongruent with evangelical orthodoxy.

The book's strength is giving us a window into the fluidity of the Wesleyan theological spectrum and the likely causes of its crystallization between conservative and liberal camps. That McGovern grew up in a theologically conservative home with a moderate Republican father who acquiesced to the New Deal illustrates the social concern embedded in the Wesleyan-Methodist heritage. McGovern was already a social progressive by the time he graduated from Dakota Wesleyan University, and his penchant for the Social Gospel was further encouraged by his training at Garrett Seminary. However, by October 1972, when he spoke to the students and faculty at Wheaton College, his message of Christian charity manifested in social welfare programs and reducing military spending did not resonate with evangelicals. Whereas chapters six and seven chart the role that mainline and evangelical Protestants worked to support McGovern, chapters eight and nine explain the decline of progressive Protestantism over the past five decades. Ongoing theological suspicions between evangelicals and mainliners and the failure of mainline denominations to enlist the laity into social causes hampered the effort for a united front of progressivism.

A point of confusion in this book is the author's use of "progressive" and "liberal" interchangeably and often with no clear definition. At the outset, Lempke provides a useful quadrilateral to describe progressive Christianity: (1) an affinity for the marginalized, (2) a prophetic approach, (3) a political program of peace and social justice, and (4) meaningful ecumenism. What Lempke author defines as progressive Christianity is socially progressive, not theologically. Moreover, what he defines as progressive is a product of the American context. Our brothers and sisters in the Global South advance these characteristics, but their social views are hardly progressive or liberal within their contexts. Lempke rightly assumes that such social and political positions among American Christians are progressive, even liberal. However, his interchangeable use of terms causes problems by the end of the book, leaving the reader wondering why the evangelical Left cannot build a coalition with the Protestant mainline. That is because "liberal" means something quite different within ecclesiastical circles, building barriers to ecumenism. The reader understands the evangelical Left to be liberal or progressive socially and politically but is confused when the same evangelical Left lambasts the "liberalism" of the NCC and WCC. This begs further

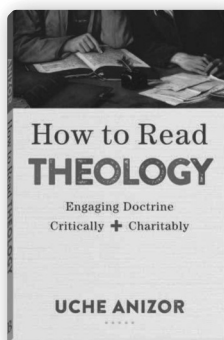
analysis and nuance by Lempke to tease out the different meanings and to provide more helpful qualifiers.

Equally helpful would have been a more detailed explanation of the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the 1920s and 1930s. Those controversies occurred when McGovern was a child, but they were foundational to understanding McGovern's transition from evangelical Wesleyanism that became captivated by fundamentalism to theological training at one of the liberal seminaries in the Methodist tradition. They are equally important to understanding the widening chasm between conservative and liberal branches of Protestantism and the eventual decline of the Social Gospel. Lempke gives an adequate treatment of the impression left on McGovern by Harry Emerson Fosdick's sermons and a passing discussion of McGovern's introduction to personalism and finite theism. These points arise once again briefly in outlining the theological orientation of Bishop Armstrong. Had Lempke explained these concepts more fully within the context of the fundamentalist-modernist controversies, the reader would appreciate how transformative they were to McGovern's. The controversies were also instrumental in ending the Social Gospel. Given the tendency of many of the book's characters to take up the mantle of the Social Gospel, Lempke would have done well to explain its tenants with greater diplomacy and understanding of the historical context. Instead, he holds it up as an ideal, yet untenable due to its liberalism. Lempke cites H. Richard Niebuhr's strawman depiction of the Social Gospel as a reason for the movement's deficiency without appreciating the theological breadth within the movement.

The book comes out at an ideal time in Christian history, which Lempke notes in his conclusion. The potential divisions between liberals, conservatives, and moderates within various branches of Methodism loom darkly. The devotion of conservative and moderate evangelicals to the Republican Party has parallels to the 1972 election when 84% of evangelicals voted for Nixon (compared to 87% of evangelicals who voted for Trump in 2016). Prominent evangelical celebrities, like Rachel Held Evans and Rob Bell, defecting to a more socially progressive (and in some cases theologically liberal) camp within American Christianity suggests tectonic shifts on the horizon. The Protestant mainline has not been powerful in nearly three generations, but potentially new coalitions among theological moderates and social progressives may result in new alignments within the next generation. For example, Jim Wallis's Sojourners organization is comprised of evangelicals, mainliners, and Catholics.

Lempke's book does not provide a blueprint for how to build coalitions so much as it offers a historical lesson in how and why the 1970s coalition never formed, largely due to theological squabbles. This reviewer found a message of hope in this book. It offers readers like me who have charted waters between evangelical and moderate Wesleyanism, between conservative and progressive social values, encouragement to find people with common values to seek a faithful witness to the world and to be our brother's and sister's keepers. This historical monograph is best suited for historians of American Christianity, but it could also be useful in an advanced undergraduate course, a graduate seminar, or seminary course that investigates how various forms of Wesleyanism adapted to the twentieth-century American political environment.

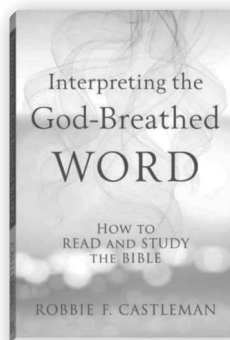
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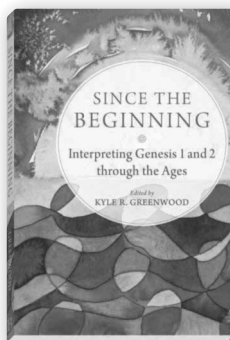


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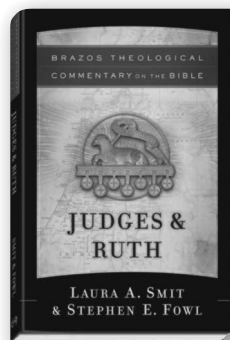
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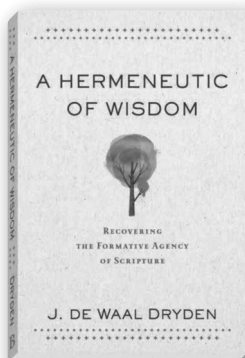
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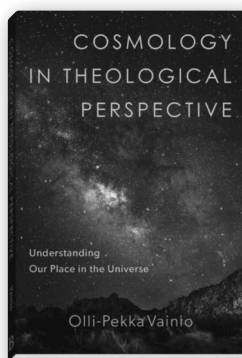
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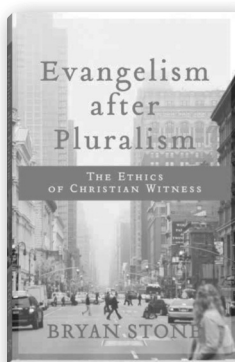
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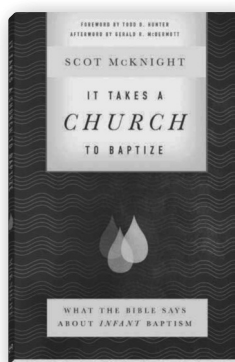
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