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Enquiries should be addressed to Glen O'Brien, Editor, *Aldersgate Papers* PO Box 4063 Bexley North NSW 2207 or [glenaobrien@gmail.com](mailto:glenaobrien@gmail.com) Back copies of some issues of the journal are available for \$15 each.

## **Guidelines for Submissions**

*Aldersgate Papers* has been published since September 2000 and is an international journal publishing articles and reviews in theology and all related disciplines. The journal follows the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th ed. for all matters of style with the exception of spelling which follows the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Authors may also refer to Kate L. Turabian's short guide to the Chicago style, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 16th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

1. Submissions should be sent as attachments in electronic format to the editor, [glenaobrien@gmail.com](mailto:glenaobrien@gmail.com) ph: 0451010799 or +61 (0)3 9717 1065
2. Books for review and correspondence about reviews should also be sent to the editor.
3. The email in which the submission is sent functions as a cover sheet, with the title of the paper, name and title of the author, institutional affiliation and teaching or research post (if relevant), postal address, phone, fax, and email. Except for the cover sheet, all identification should be removed.
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5. The length of published articles is restricted to a maximum of about 8,000 words including footnotes.

9. Except for brief quotations of no more than a line, the body of all papers should be in English.

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**Modern Book:**

8. M. A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 96-97.

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9. Noll, 112.

**Early Book:**

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10. William Baldwin, *A Treatise of morall philosophy Contaynyng the sayings of the wyse* (London, 1579).

**Government Publication:**

11. U. K. *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 5th ser., vol.13 (1893), cols.1273-74. and subsequently :

12. *Parl. Deb.*, Lords, 5th ser., 13 (1893): 1273.

**Archival Source:**

13. Report of the Committee into Convict Discipline, 24 March 1842, CSO 22/50, Archives Office of Tasmania, Hobart.

**Manuscript:**

14. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 581, fols. 23-24v. and subsequently
15. Bodley 581, fol. 23.

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16. Heb. 13:8, 12-13.

For standard scriptural abbreviations see *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14.34-35.

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17. Abelard *Epistle 17 to Heloise* (Migne PL 180.375c-378a).

18. Cicero *De officiis* 1.133, 140.

Abbreviations should follow the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

13. Subsequent citations to a work previously cited should provide only the author's last name and the page number(s) and, in the case of citations to more than one work by the same author, a short title of the work. Do not use *Ibid* or other Latin contractions.

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**Gregory Young** was an outstanding student in philosophy and theology at Houghton College (Houghton, New York) who passed away in February 2013.

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## **EDITORIAL**

This 11<sup>th</sup> volume of *Aldersgate Papers* comes after considerable delay and with apologies to authors and readers who have waited longer than they ought to have. It contains research articles and addresses that originate from a range of sources including papers that presented at the 13th Oxford Institute for Methodist Theological Studies, the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference (Sydney 2013) and Sixth Annual Conference (Melbourne 2014) of the ACWR, and papers presented to Workshops on the History of Australian Methodism held at Queen's College, Melbourne (2011), and the Adelaide College of Divinity (2013). These presentations were then further developed and passed through a careful process of peer review before publication.

The ACWR has continued to see expansion over the last twelve months with the addition of several new Members and Research Fellows including Research Fellows, Dr. Arseny Ermakov, PhD, Head of Biblical Studies, Booth College, Sydney, Dr. Janice McRandal, PhD, Director of Studies in Systematic Theology, Trinity College, Brisbane and new Members including Rob A. Fringer, PhD candidate, Nazarene Theological College, Manchester and Lecturer in Biblical Studies at Nazarene Theological College, Brisbane, Caroline Jewkes, Master of Theology student at Laidlaw College, New Zealand, and Kalie Webb, MTh candidate, MCD University of Divinity.

Our 7th Annual Scholarly Conference took place in Melbourne on 15-16 August 2014 at the Uniting Church's Centre for Theology and Ministry with Dr. Deirdre Brower Latz, Principal of Nazarene Theological College, Manchester as our keynote speaker. Two papers from that Conference appear in this issue of the journal. Due to extenuating circumstances the 2015 Conference on *Wesleyans at Worship* has been postponed until 2016 at which time it will be held on the campus of the Nazarene Theological College, Brisbane. We encourage scholars from a broad range of disciplines to submit paper proposals via our website on any aspect of the chosen theme.

The ACWR has been closely associated with the publication of a new scholarly history of Australian Methodism and we are pleased to announce that *Methodism in Australia: A History*, ed. Glen O'Brien and Hilary Carey has been published in the Ashgate Methodist Studies Series. The ACWR has being among the financial contributors to the series of Conferences that led to this multi-

contributor book. Several chapters have been written by ACWR Research Fellows including Ian Breward, Glen O'Brien, and D'Arcy Wood. Our website gives a fuller indication of the research and publishing activity of our Members and Fellows. It is certainly an impressive body of work <http://acwr.edu.au/current-research>

All work done for the ACWR is entirely voluntary. The costs of operation relate mostly to the publication of this journal, the maintenance of our website and the running of the annual scholarly conference. Monies are received from subscriptions to the journal, Members' fees, Partner Institute fees and Conference fees. Any surplus is able to be used to support other scholarly activities that meet the aims of the Centre. Your continued interest in Wesleyan scholarship is vital to enable the ongoing development and activities of the Centre.

Glen O'Brien  
Editor

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# **WESLEYAN ESCHATOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH'S ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER RELIGIONS**

**Christopher T. Bounds**

This article has been peer reviewed

*Wesleyans believe the Kingdom of God has been inaugurated and manifests itself currently through the Church in varying degrees so that eschatology has implications for the present life. With this theological framework as an underlying assumption, this article attempts to identify distinctive Wesleyan eschatological themes running consistently through the history of Methodism relevant to inter-religious relationships: the centrality of Christ, the renewal of the created order, the renewal of the full image of God in humanity, the dynamic nature of the eschaton, and an optimism for 'God fearers and workers of righteousness.' It then explores how these themes should influence a Wesleyan engagement with other religions: through genuine openness to relationships of mutual love and learning, through faithful witness to the saving and sanctifying grace of Jesus Christ, and through joint collaboration in the stewardship of creation and in the promotion of human eudaimonia.*

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## **Introduction**

Eschatology as Christian doctrine seeks to express the Church's understanding of final events in the present age; the consummation of the created order when God will be 'all in all'; and how eschatology impacts contemporary life and reality. While some Wesleyan theologians have been reticent to address the subject, or reluctant to speculate on particular issues surrounding Christ's second coming and millennial reign, there has been a consistent articulation of a Wesleyan vision of the 'life everlasting' since the eighteenth-century Methodist revival, with provisional implications drawn for the present age.<sup>1</sup> Because John Wesley and his theological

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<sup>1</sup> John B. Cobb in *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995) does not address eschatology; H. Ray Dunning in *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon

heirs believed ‘first evidences’ of the ‘age to come’ were being expressed already in the lives of Christians, adjectives like ‘realized,’ ‘anticipated,’ ‘inaugurated,’ and ‘processive’ are used to describe their eschatology.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of my paper is twofold: (1) to identify key features of this historic Wesleyan eschatological vision relevant for Christianity’s engagement with different religions and (2) to explore their implications within the larger framework of the Church’s openness, dialogue and witness, and collaboration with other faiths.

In the last twenty years there has been a renaissance among Wesleyan scholars attempting to connect Wesleyan ‘New Creation’ eschatology with contemporary issues: ecclesial, social, economic, ecological, and inter-religious.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the work done on Christianity’s relationship with other religions, while helpful, has been limited in scope; usually restricted to the applicability of John Wesley’s eschatological views; to the contributions other religions make to Wesleyan eschatology; to common conceptions of heaven, to inter-religious cooperation; or to the fate of people in final judgment who have never heard the Gospel.<sup>4</sup>

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Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988), 569-89 relegates the bulk of his discussion on eschatology to an appendix. See Timothy L. Smith’s *Called unto Holiness*, vol. 1, *The Story of the Nazarenes: The Formative Years* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1962), 35, 127, for a discussion of Wesleyans who affirmed the major points of eschatology, but refused to engage in ‘divisive themes’ over unsettled issues regarding Christ’s millennial reign. Among theologians who have explored the implications of a Wesleyan eschatology for the present age, most notable is Theodore Runyon’s *The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998); see also Randy Maddox’s development of personal, social and ecological ethics out of Wesley’s eschatology in his work, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 242-47.

<sup>2</sup> See Jerry Mercer, ‘The Destiny of Man in John Wesley’s Eschatology,’ in *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 2:1 (1967): 58-59; James Cecil Logan, ‘Toward a Wesleyan Social Ethic,’ in *Wesleyan Theology Today*, ed. Theodore Runyon (Nashville, TN: Kingswood, 1985), 363; and Clarence Bence, ‘Processive Eschatology: A Wesleyan Alternative,’ in *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 14:1 (1979): 45-59.

<sup>3</sup> See the plenary lectures from the Eleventh Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies edited by M. Douglas Meeks and published in *Wesleyan Perspectives on the New Creation* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2004). These lectures explore the implications of Wesley’s ‘New Creation’ eschatology from different theological disciplines for a full range of contemporary issues.

<sup>4</sup> For examples of these types of Wesleyan eschatological work, see Jong Chun Park, ‘Christian Perfection and Confucian Sage Learning: An Interreligious Dialogue in the Crisis of Life,’ in *Wesleyan Perspectives on the New Creation*, 119-48; Joe Gorman, ‘Grace Abounds: The Missiological Implications of John Wesley’s Inclusive Theology of Other Religions,’ *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 48:1 (2013): 38-53; Michael Hurley, ‘Salvation Today and Wesley Today,’ in *The Place of Wesley in the Christian*

This article attempts to make a modest contribution to Wesleyan reflection by identifying the major eschatological themes relevant to interreligious relationships; by going beyond a simple appeal to John Wesley's teaching on these subjects, tracing a distinctive and clear eschatological perspective running through many of the major theologians in Methodist history; and by helping consolidate, through an eschatological lens, the central points made by Wesleyan scholars regarding the Church's relationship with other faiths.<sup>5</sup>

## I. A Wesleyan View of Eschatology Relevant to Christianity's Engagement with Other Religions

While there are differences in eschatological understanding among major theologians in the Methodist tradition, certain fundamental ideas germane to Christianity's engagement with other religions can be traced historically, originating in the eighteenth century and

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*Tradition*, ed., K. A. Rowe (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1976), 94-116; Randy L. Maddox, 'Wesley and the Question of Truth or Salvation through Other Religions,' *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 27 (1992), 7-29; Runyon's *The New Creation*, 215-221; Godwin R. Singh, 'New Creation in the Contexts of Religious Pluralism and the Wesleyan Critique' at <http://oimts.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/2002-5-singh.pdf>.<sup>5</sup> In a survey of the most important contributions of Wesleyan theology from the last twenty-five years on this subject, limitations in scope are apparent. First, there are treatments limited to one or two major eschatological areas, but which lack a more comprehensive eschatological approach. For examples see Eric Manchester, 'Why is Evangelism Important if One Can Be Saved without the Gospel?,' *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 37:1 (2002): 158-70; Philip R. Meadows, 'Candidates for Heaven: Wesleyan Resources for a Theology of Religions,' *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35:1 (2000): 99-129; and Singh, 'New Creation in the Contexts of Religious Pluralism and the Wesleyan Critique.' Second, there are studies limited to the theology of John Wesley. For examples see Gorman, 'Grace Abounds: The Missiological Implications of John Wesley's Inclusive Theology of Other Religions,' 38-53; Maddox, 'Wesley and the Question of Truth or Salvation through Other Religions,' 7-29; and Frank Whaling, 'Wesley's Premonitions of Inter-Faith Discourse,' in *Pure Universal Love: Reflections on the Wesleys and Interfaith Dialogue*, ed. Tim Macquiban (Westminster Wesley Series No. 3, Summer 1995), 17. Finally, there are Wesleyan reflections on interfaith relationships that enter into dialogue with other Wesleyan scholars on the subject, but attempt no correlation or organization of these contributions under eschatology. For examples see Cobb, *Grace and Responsibility*, 145-54; Floyd T. Cunningham, 'Interreligious Dialogue: A Wesleyan Holiness Perspective,' in S. Mark Heim, *Grounds for Understanding: Ecumenical Resources for Responses to Religious Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 188-207; Thorsen, 'Jesus, Ecumenism, and Interfaith Relations,' 59-71; and Amos Yong, 'A Heart Strangely Warmed on the Middle Way? The Wesleyan Witness in a Pluralistic World,' *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 48:1 (2013): 7-27.

culminating in the present: from early Methodists: John Wesley, John Fletcher, and Richard Watson; nineteenth and early twentieth-century Wesleyans: John Miley, William Burt Pope, and Thomas Ralston; and twentieth and twenty-first century Nazarene and Methodist theologians: A.M. Hills, H. Orton Wiley, Kenneth Grider, Thomas Oden and Randy Maddox.<sup>6</sup>

Specifically, there are six eschatological themes consistently held in the Wesleyan tradition relevant to Christianity's relationship with other religions: (a) the centrality of Jesus Christ in the eschaton (b) the renewal of the created order, (c) the renewal of the full divine image in humanity, (d) the dynamic nature of the eschaton, (e) divine judgment and (f) optimism for 'God fearers and workers of righteousness.'

### **a. The Centrality of Jesus Christ**

Because the Wesleyan tradition as a whole has embraced historic orthodox Christology, as represented in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, the centrality of Christ to eschatology is clear.<sup>7</sup> Certainly,

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<sup>6</sup> Central to my task is the identification of certain fundamental ideas about the eschaton running throughout the history of the Wesleyan tradition. To do so, I draw upon the works of early Methodists: John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872; Reprint by Baker Book House, 1978), and *Sermons*, ed. Albert C. Outler, *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1976-); John Fletcher, *The Whole Works of the Reverend John Fletcher* (London: Partridge and Oakley, 1835); and Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1889), and *A Biblical and Theological Dictionary* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1856); from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: William Burt Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1880); John Miley, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1894); and Thomas N. Ralston, *Elements of Divinity*, ed. T. O. Summers (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1924); and from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: A.M. Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology: A Systematic Theology* (Pasadena, CA: C. J. Kinne, Pasadena College, 1931); H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1943); Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994); Maddox, *Responsible Grace*; and Thomas C. Oden, *Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology* (New York: HarperOne, 2009). I will also draw upon the work of other theologians including Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), and H. Ray Dunning's *Grace, Faith, and Holiness* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1988). While there are obvious limitations to this approach, the attempt is to show the relevance of these elements of a Wesleyan eschatology, consistently held throughout Methodist history, to inter-religious engagement.

<sup>7</sup> For an example of the typical affirmation of historic Christology in the Wesleyan tradition, see *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012* (Nashville,

there have been Methodist theologians who have challenged traditional Christology, but their appeal has been limited.<sup>8</sup> Wesleyan theology has consistently rejected any form of pluralism, conceiving of no redemption and final salvation apart from the person and work of Jesus Christ.<sup>9</sup>

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, one in nature with the Father, but distinguishable in person, who assumed full human nature in the incarnation to redeem humanity and the created order from all forms of sin and evil. He is the theandric one: fully divine and fully human.<sup>10</sup> Through his life, death, resurrection, and exaltation he inaugurates the work of recreation in the present age and will consummate it in the coming eschaton. Christ is key to the eschaton: he will come again in his humanity to usher in the 'Kingdom of Glory;' the general resurrection from the dead is made possible by and is patterned after his physical resurrection; he presides over the 'great assize' of every human being in the final judgment; and he makes possible in heaven 'an intimate, and uninterrupted union with God; a constant communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit; a continual enjoyment of the Three-in-One God, and all the creatures in him.'<sup>11</sup>

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TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), 102-4, particularly Articles of Religion I-III and Confession of Faith, Articles II and XII.

<sup>8</sup> A recent example is retired United Methodist Bishop C. Joseph Sprague's *Affirmations of a Dissenter* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Here I am working with the standard categories of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism as popularized by Alan Race in *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (London: SCM Press, 1983).

<sup>10</sup> For a helpful overview of the official doctrinal statements on Christology among the diversity of Wesleyan denominations, see Thomas Oden, *Doctrinal Standards in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis and Taylor, 1988), 132-36, 142-44, 156-58, 159-61, 163-72.

<sup>11</sup> The quote is taken from John Wesley, Sermon 64, 'The New Creation,' § 18 in *Sermons II*, ed. Albert C. Outler, vol. 2 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 510. The centrality of Christ in these eschatological categories can be seen in John Wesley, Sermon 15, 'The Great Assize,' *Works*, 1: 354-75; Sermon 51, 'The Good Steward,' *Works*, 2: 282-98; Sermon 64, 'The New Creation,' *Works*, 2: 500-510; Watson, *A Biblical Dictionary*, 438-39, 445-46, 521-27, 554-56, 820-22; Pope, *Compendium of Christian Theology*, III: 367-454; Miley, *Systematic Theology*, II: 430-80; Ralston, *Elements of Divinity*, 473-544; Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology: A Systematic Theology*, II: 337-431; Wiley, *Christian Theology*, III: 211-392; Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 529-52; Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 767-840; and Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 247-56. For the purpose of this study, I will cite theologians in their chronological order.

## b. Renewal of the Created Order

In contrast to any form of Gnosticism infecting Christian eschatology, a Wesleyan view of the 'life everlasting' teaches that God does not destroy fallen creation. Because of the 'goodness' of creation and divine love, God renews and perfects it. Humanity's full nature ('body and soul'), the diversity of natures in the created order, and the entire universe will be redeemed from all forms of corruption and brought to their ultimate end: union with God.

In the eighteenth century, John Wesley inherited from his Anglican tradition a form of medieval eschatology focused on a 'spiritual' view of heaven. At death Christians are immediately ushered into a transcendent reality free of the physical world, obscuring traditional teaching of an intermediate state, bodily resurrection at Christ's second coming, and a new heavens and earth.<sup>12</sup> However, Wesley rejected this model and shifted focus. He recognised a conscious intermediate state at death for humanity, in which there is separation from the body, but this is only temporary and anticipatory of ultimate glory.<sup>13</sup> At Christ's second coming, the intermediate state of death will cease. The dead will be reunited with their bodies, now transformed and suited for their respective destinies through bodily resurrection.<sup>14</sup> After final judgment, the entire created order will be transformed and made incorruptible for 'life everlasting,' no longer subject to disease, decay and death. This change is not a change in nature, but in 'qualities,' encompassing plants, animals, and the geo-physical activity of the world.<sup>15</sup>

Wesley's theological heirs generally followed in his same tracks, recognizing the place of human nature and the entire created order in the eschaton. Regarding humanity, they are keenly aware of the necessity of the human body to human nature. The human body is honoured.<sup>16</sup> Without bodily resurrection, even though persons have

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<sup>12</sup> Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 231-35. Here, Maddox is reliant upon Colleen McDannell and Bernard Lang, *Heaven: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).

<sup>13</sup> Wesley, Sermon 132, 'On Faith,' *Works*, 4: 188-200.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin Calamy, 'The Resurrection of the Dead,' ed. John Wesley in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, VII: 474-85.

<sup>15</sup> John Wesley, Sermon 64, 'The New Creation,' 2: 500-510. See Maddox's discussion of Wesley's vision of animals in the 'new creation' in *Responsible Grace*, 246-47, 253.

<sup>16</sup> Watson, *A Biblical Dictionary*, 820-21; Pope, *Compendium of Christian Theology*, III: 405-8; Ralston, *Elements of Divinity*, 496-98; Wiley, *Christian Theology*, III: 325-26; and Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 791.

conscious existence in an intermediate state, they are incomplete.<sup>17</sup> Following the pattern of Christ's resurrection, a person's resurrected body is identical with the one that died, although with a change in its properties; it will not be a different body, but a different form of the same body. The resurrected body of the righteous will be perfectly suited for the 'new creation,' able to participate fully in creation and enjoy union with God and fellow humanity.<sup>18</sup> It will be 'consummately radiant, agile, fine, and not subject to suffering,' reflecting the glory of God.<sup>19</sup>

Regarding the created order, Wesley's heirs by and large made the connection between humanity's bodily resurrection and the necessity of a physical world in which to live.<sup>20</sup> Christ's bodily resurrection anticipates the future of all created existence, when God will transform the world and be 'all in all.' Jesus' glorified body is the sign of creation's future. More specifically, humanity's resurrected bodies must have a physical order in which to live. Humanity is inseparable from the created world. As creation has shared in humanity's corruption and 'fall' in the Garden, it will participate in the full work of God's redemption, in the glorified and incorruptible state of resurrection.<sup>21</sup> While few have addressed the full ramifications of the 'new creation' in regard to animal and plant life, their theology certainly sets the foundation for such reflection. Indeed, Wesleyans more recently have begun to press the ramifications of the 'new heavens and earth' for animal and plant life.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Watson, *A Biblical Dictionary*, 430-32; Pope, *Compendium of Christian Theology*, III: 406, 452; Ralston, *Elements of Divinity*, 504-5; Wiley, *Christian Theology*, III: 235, 327-32; Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 784-85; and Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 248-50.

<sup>18</sup> Watson, *A Biblical Dictionary*, 822; Pope, *Compendium of Christian Theology*, III: 406-8; Miley, *Systematic Theology*, II: 453; Ralston, *Elements of Divinity*, 408-9; Wiley, *Christian Theology*, III: 325-38; Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 794-95.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Aquinas as quoted by Oden in *Classic Christianity*, 794.

<sup>20</sup> Pope, *Compendium of Christian Theology*, III: 447-48; Miley, *Systematic Theology*, II: 472-73; Wiley, *Christian Theology*, III: 388; Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 820-21.

<sup>21</sup> See the sources in the previous footnote and Christopher T. Bounds, 'God's Ongoing Redemption of All Creation,' in *Creation Care: Christian Voices on God, Humanity, and the Environment*, ed. Joseph Coleson (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2010), 40-57.

<sup>22</sup> Maddox, 'Nurturing the New Creation,' 43-45; Runyon, *The New Creation*, 200-206.

### c. Renewal of the Full Divine Image in Humanity

If renewal of the created order is about the redemption of creation's diverse natures, the full restoration of the *imago dei* speaks to the reclamation of the human person. The former addresses humanity's 'body and soul'. The latter treats human personhood. Both have prominent places in Wesleyan eschatology. Like other Protestant traditions, Wesleyan eschatology affirms the full restoration of the divine image in humanity, but what sets the Wesleyan perspective apart is the degree to which it can happen in the present life.

John Wesley believed humanity reflects the image of God in three ways: moral, natural and political.<sup>23</sup> The moral image enables humanity to enjoy true righteousness, holiness, love, and knowledge of God through the immediacy of a relationship with God. The moral image forms the guiding principle of humanity's disposition, thoughts, words and deeds. The natural image endows humanity with immortality, rationality, understanding, free will, and perfectly ordered affections.<sup>24</sup> The political image gives humanity the power of governance, whereby it exercises dominion in the created order and relates appropriately to God and neighbour.<sup>25</sup> Before the Fall, holiness, righteousness and love informed humanity's reasoning, understanding, will and affections, resulting in the wise exercise of stewardship in the created order, rightly ordered relationships with fellow humanity, and perfect love and obedience to God.

However, as a result of original sin, the moral image was destroyed and the natural and political extensively marred.<sup>26</sup> Wesley believed that through participating in 'God's eschatological work' in the present life, the moral image would be completely restored and progress could be made in the renewal of the natural and political.<sup>27</sup> This is Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection. Ultimately, what is

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<sup>23</sup> Wesley, Sermon 45, 'The New Birth,' I.1, *Works*, 2: 188.

<sup>24</sup> Wesley, 'The New Birth,' I.1, *Works*, 2: 188; Wesley, Sermon 62, 'The End of Christ's Coming,' I.3-7, *Works*, 2:474-76.

<sup>25</sup> Wesley, 'The New Birth,' I.1, *Works*, 2: 188.

<sup>26</sup> Wesley, 'The New Birth,' I.1, *Works*, 2: 188; I.2-3, *Works*, 2: 189-90; Sermon 62, 'The End of Christ's Coming,' I.10, *Works*, 2: 477. Also see John Wesley, Sermon 141, 'The Image of God,' *Works*, 4: 290-300.

<sup>27</sup> Maddox, 'Nurturing the New Creation,' 29; Wesley, Sermon 77, 'Spiritual Worship,' II.6, *Works*, 3: 96; Sermon 62, 'The End of Christ's Coming,' III.1-6, *Works*, 2: 480-84; Sermon 76, 'Christian Perfection,' *Works*, 3: 70-87; Sermon 141, 'The Image of God,' III.1-3, *Works*, 4: 299-300.

left undone in God's restoration of the *imago dei* culminates in glorification and the full image is made incorruptible.<sup>28</sup>

While not all of Wesley's theological heirs appropriate his moral, natural and political paradigm, they do describe in similar ways the divine image in humanity, its ruin through sin, and its restoration through Christian perfection in the present life and glorification in the eschaton.<sup>29</sup> The image of God entails: holiness and love; rationality, understanding, judgment, affection, and will; and relationships of love.<sup>30</sup> What was lost of holiness and love in the divine image through the fall is recovered through Christian perfection in this life and made incorruptible in the eschaton.<sup>31</sup> This enables believers to walk in loving obedience to God and service to neighbour. While there can be progress presently in rationality, understanding, and judgment, these will not be fully renewed and made perfect until glorification.<sup>32</sup> Therefore Christians may be able to live a life motivated and empowered by holy love, but be subject to mistakes, misunderstandings, and errors in judgment until final restoration. Through the full renewal of the image of God, all forms of separation and alienation in every sphere of human relationships will exist no more.

#### **d. The Dynamic Nature of the Eschaton**

With the full renewal of human nature and the *imago dei* through Jesus Christ, humanity is equipped for dynamic growth and

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<sup>28</sup> Wesley, Sermon 76, 'Christian Perfection,' I.1-3, *Works*, 3: 72-74; Sermon 40, 'Christian Perfection,' I.1-9, *Works*, 2: 100-10 5.

<sup>29</sup> For examples of those who follow Wesley's basic paradigm, see Watson, *Theological Institutes*, II: 8-18; Pope, *Christian Compendium*, I: 424-28; Wiley, *Christian Theology*, II: 32-39; Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 68-72; and Runyon, *The New Creation*, 14-19.

<sup>30</sup> Watson, *Theological Institutes*, II: 8-18; Pope, *Christian Compendium*, I: 424-28; Miley, *Systematic Theology*, I: 406-14; Ralston, *Elements of Divinity*, 98-102; Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology*, I: 330-32; Wiley, *Christian Theology*, II: 32-39; Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 236-47; Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 278-83; Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 68-72.

<sup>31</sup> Watson, *Theological Institutes*, II: 450-68; Pope, *Christian Compendium*, III: 44-61; Miley, *Systematic Theology*, II: 356-82; Ralston, *Elements of Divinity*, 457-72; Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology*, II: 222-50; Wiley, *Christian Theology*, II: 440-517; Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 267-420; Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 478-504; and Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 176-90.

<sup>32</sup> Watson, *A Biblical Dictionary*, 439; Pope, *Christian Compendium*, III: 450-54; Miley, *Systematic Theology*, II: 473-75; Ralston, *Elements of Divinity*, 538-42; Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology*, II: 411-14; Wiley, *Christian Theology*, III: 380-85; Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 794, 824-26, 836-39.

activity in the 'new creation.' A Wesleyan eschatological vision navigates well between two Christian extremes: an 'anthropocentric' view focusing on heaven as an idealized picture of human life as presently known, with God receding to the background, and a 'theocentric' understanding emphasizing contemplation and rest in the beatific vision of God, with God being fully known and human society fading in the light of divine glory.<sup>33</sup> A Wesleyan eschatology sees the righteous growing in their love of God and each other, as well as in their knowledge and understanding of God and creation. While there is 'rest' in heaven, there is also perpetual increase and activity.

John Wesley believed that when Christians die they are ushered directly into 'paradise,' the intermediate state of the righteous, the 'ante-chamber' of heaven,' waiting for the day of resurrection. There, their 'physical' senses of sight and hearing are heightened; memory and understanding are freed from the limitations of the fallen world; will and affections are made incorruptible; new senses are given to perceive the imperceptible in the created order; and growth in knowledge and love occurs in the presence of God.<sup>34</sup> Christians enjoy the 'intermediate' expressions of their full destiny.<sup>35</sup> As growth in love and holiness do not happen apart from community in present life so the eschatological 'communion of saints' continues its role.<sup>36</sup> After the general resurrection, final judgment, and the 'new creation,' human destiny is fully expressed in 'an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God...a continual enjoyment of the Three-One God and all the creatures in him,' where ongoing growth takes place in the knowledge and love of God, humanity and the created order. Humanity's physical, intellectual, rational, social and spiritual abilities transcend what was ever experienced in Adamic perfection and are directed to God, others, and creation. <sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> McDannell and Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 88-93, 177-80, 303-6.

<sup>34</sup> Wesley, Sermon 51, 'The Good Steward,' II.6-8, *Works*, 2: 288-90; Sermon 132, 'On Faith,' *Works*, 4: 187-200.

<sup>35</sup> Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 249.

<sup>36</sup> Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 249. One of Wesley's most famous quotes in his 'Preface' to *Hymns and Sacred Poems* 1739 in *The Works of Wesley* (Jackson), 14: 321 makes this clear, 'Directly opposite to this is the Gospel of Christ. Solitary religion is not to be found here. "Holy solitaries" is a phrase no more consistent with the gospel than holy adulterers. *The Gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness.*'

<sup>37</sup> Wesley, Sermon 64, 'The New Creation,' 18, *Works*, 2: 510; 'Farther thoughts upon Christian Perfection, Q. 29,' ed. Thomas Jackson, *The Works of John Wesley*, 11: 426;

Wesley's dynamic eschatological view of ever increasing degrees of glory in the intermediate state and in the 'new creation' is embraced for the most part by the historic Methodist tradition that follows.<sup>38</sup> With all impediments of sin and corruption removed, with the created order transformed into an incorruptible state exceeding original creation, with humanity renewed in the *imago dei* and fully in the likeness of Christ, humanity is set free for an eternal life of growth in the infinite love of God, in mutual love and service to one another, and the care of creation. What begins in the present life, a participation in the life of God shared in 'communion of saints' in the created order, intensifies in the intermediate state, and is experienced in ever increasing 'full measure' in the 'life everlasting.'<sup>39</sup>

### e. Divine Judgment

The dynamic nature of the eschaton is seen also in a Wesleyan understanding of divine judgment. Wesley and his theological successors believed each human being's eternal trajectory is set at death by their placement in the intermediate state for the righteous or unrighteous.<sup>40</sup> This is no second 'probationary' period. As addressed previously, the saints in paradise will be 'continually ripening for heaven...perpetually holier and happier,' while the unrighteous carry on in their recalcitrant spirit.<sup>41</sup>

However, a Wesleyan eschatology places emphasis on final judgment when Christ returns in glory and the dead are bodily resurrected. People will stand individually before Christ and give an

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See Maddox's discussion of Wesley's commendation of Charles' Bonnet's *Conjectures Concerning the Nature of Future Happiness in Responsible Grace*, 253.

<sup>38</sup> Just as there are debates over the nature of the intermediate state in larger Christianity, there are debates over this state in Wesleyan theological circles, both presently and historically. The larger issue here is the basic Wesleyan understanding of the dynamic nature of the eschatological state. Here, the Wesleyan tradition speaks with great uniformity in regard to the eschatological heaven.

<sup>39</sup> Watson, *A Biblical and Theological Dictionary*, 438-39; Pope, *Christian Compendium*, III: 384; Miley, *Systematic Theology*, II: 430-40, 473-75; Ralston, *Elements of Divinity*, 532-43; Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology*, II: 376-85, 411-14; Wiley, *Christian Theology*, III: 237-40, 375-86; Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 249-50, 252-53.

<sup>40</sup> Wesley, Sermon 51, 'The Good Steward,' III.1, *Works*, 2: 292-93; Pope, *Christian Compendium*, III: 376; Miley, *Systematic Theology*, II: 430-31; Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology*, II: 376-78; Wiley, *Christian Theology*, III: 234-42; Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 782-86.

<sup>41</sup> Wesley, Sermon 132, 'On Faith,' 5, *Works*, 4: 191.

account of their lives: outward actions and words; and inward thoughts, desires, inclinations, and intentions.<sup>42</sup> They will be judged according to their stewardship of gifts and receptivity to the measure of light and truth given to them. Those who never heard the Gospel will be evaluated according to ‘the law of their own nature, their conscience guided by their reason, and the law written in their hearts;’ Jews will be assessed by the Law of Moses; and Christians will be judged by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Final pronouncement will be based on their responsiveness to God’s grace in faith.<sup>43</sup>

The righteous will be rewarded in the new creation in proportion to their active response to grace, in their faith becoming active in love through works of mercy. Therefore the saints will reflect the divine goodness in the ‘life everlasting’ in a different and individuated way.<sup>44</sup> ‘Though each individual shares in the same salvation, the refracted glory will not be monotone, but varied.’<sup>45</sup> The unrighteous will receive their due punishment in hell based on their sin in the present life. Just as there are different rewards in glory for the saints, there are different punishments in hell for the unrighteous.<sup>46</sup>

A Wesleyan eschatology has historically rejected any form of universalism, annihilationism and predestination to damnation. While the exact nature of hell is unclear, it is a spiritual state and physical place existing in alienation from God. It is for those who freely have chosen to resist and reject God’s overtures of grace, whether through conscience, the Mosaic law or the Gospel. God ultimately respects and honors humanity’s refusal to cooperate with divine grace. ‘While this possibility is truly grievous, the alternative would ultimately involve either irresistible or indiscriminate salvation, both of which are contradictory to a God of responsible grace.’<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Wesley, Sermon 15, ‘The Great Assize,’ II: 2-6, *Works*, 1:360-63; Pope, *Christian Compendium*, III: 418-19; Miley, *Systematic Theology*, II: 461-69; Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology*, II: 402-3; Kenneth Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 320-21; Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 816-19.

<sup>43</sup> Pope, *Christian Compendium*, III: 416-18; Miley, *Systematic Theology*, II: 436-37; Ralston, *Elements of Divinity*, 515; Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology*, II: 403-4; Wiley, *Christian Theology*, III: 345-48; Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 818.

<sup>44</sup> Watson, *A Biblical Dictionary*, 554-56; Ralston, *Elements of Divinity*, 515; Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology*, II: 404; Wiley, *Christian Theology*, III: 351; Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 548; Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 838.

<sup>45</sup> Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 838.

<sup>46</sup> Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*, 545-6.

<sup>47</sup> Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 251.

## **f. Optimism for ‘God Fearers and Workers of Righteousness’**

A Wesleyan eschatological view expresses hope that there will be people in heaven who never professed faith in Christ in the present life. In contrast to the exclusive ‘restrictivist’ understanding as seen in the Augustinian-Tridentine Catholic tradition, there is a strong sense of optimism that all who ‘fear God and work righteousness’ according to the grace given them will be ‘accepted of Him’ through Jesus Christ.<sup>48</sup> In contrast to Reformed doctrines of predestination and common grace, a Wesleyan eschatology believes that God’s prevenient grace given to all, made available through Jesus Christ’s atoning work, makes salvation possible for all.<sup>49</sup> Undergirding Wesleyan hope is belief in the unlimited atonement of Christ, confidence that ‘God wills that all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth,’ (1 Timothy 2:4) and that judgment shall be according to the light given.

This optimism originates in John Wesley, who increasingly expressed such hope as he aged.<sup>50</sup> First, Wesley refused to make judgments about the eternal destinies of people from other religions. Regarding Jews, he stated that Christians should ‘leave their fate in the hands of God;’ about Muslims, he believed some had come to ‘true religion’ through prevenient grace; and he praised the response other religions had made to the ‘light’ given them.<sup>51</sup> Second, Wesley began to see the possibility that people who were not Christians might have ‘saving faith’ in an ‘infant state,’ enabling ‘everyone that possesses it to ‘fear God and work righteousness.’<sup>52</sup> Finally, Wesley believed God will be ‘rich in mercy’ to the ‘heathen’ who ‘call upon him ‘according to the light they have,’ and they will be ‘accepted’ by God in final judgment if they walk in that grace.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Thomas A. Noble, ‘Only Exclusivism Will Do: Gavin D’Costa’s Change of Mind,’ *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 48:1 (2013): 71.

<sup>49</sup> Noble, ‘Only Exclusivism Will Do,’ 71.

<sup>50</sup> It should be noted that not all Wesleyans or contemporary interpreters of Wesley read Wesley in as inclusive light as I do here. See Donald Thorsen, ‘Jesus, Ecumenism, and Interfaith Relations: A Wesleyan Perspective,’ in *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 47: 1 (Spring, 2012): 69, and Stan Rodes, ‘Was John Wesley Arguing for Prevenient Grace as Regenerative?,’ *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 48: 1 (2013): 73-85.

<sup>51</sup> Wesley, Sermon 130, ‘On Living without God,’ 14, *Works*, 4:174.

<sup>52</sup> Wesley, Sermon 106, ‘On Faith,’ 10, *Works*, 3:497.

<sup>53</sup> Wesley, Sermon 91, ‘On Charity,’ I.3, *Works*, 3: 295-96. For more detailed discussion of Wesley’s views, see Maddox, ‘Wesley and the Question of Truth or

Wesley's theological heirs generally followed him on this point to varying degrees. John Fletcher recognised that humanity in every age and place has been given varying 'dispensations' of divine grace by which they can be saved.<sup>54</sup> Through prevenient grace every person can 'cease to do evil, learn to do well, and use the means which will infallibly end in the repentance and faith peculiar to the dispensation they are under, whether it be that of Heathens, Jews, or Christians.'<sup>55</sup> William Burt Pope repeatedly affirmed the necessity of refraining from judgment on the eternal destinies of people from other religions and of people who have never heard the Gospel. Judgment must be reserved to God alone.<sup>56</sup> However, he articulates the nature by which all will be judged: 'as there is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, all who are not saved must reject that Name in some way revealed to them.'<sup>57</sup> Richard Ralston taught that everyone has a dispensation of divine grace and even those without the Gospel can live by the Holy Spirit according to the light given them and be saved from 'inevitable destruction.'<sup>58</sup> Thomas Oden has argued that everyone has been given grace to 'enable each to respond rightly to whatever opportunities are made possible,' and to develop at least 'nascent faith' such as 'the Letter to the Hebrews ascribes to Abel,' and be saved in the end.<sup>59</sup>

Perhaps, Kenneth Collins has stated the Wesleyan belief here concisely, 'That is, in each instance, in the past as in a future reign, the children of Adam and Eve, at any step along the way of salvation history, are given sufficient, even if differing, grace for their needs.'<sup>60</sup> Even without the Gospel and the Church, humanity has available grace capable of leading to salvation.<sup>61</sup> There is a strong optimism in the Wesleyan tradition that there will be some people in heaven who never formally professed Christ in the present life.

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Salvation through Other Religions,' 7-29, and Philip R. Meadows, 'Candidates for Heaven: Wesleyan Resources for a Theology of Religions,' 99-129.

<sup>54</sup> Fletcher, 'Third Check to Antinomianism,' *Works of Fletcher*, I: 80-85.

<sup>55</sup> Fletcher, 'Third Check to Antinomianism,' I: 80.

<sup>56</sup> Pope, *Christian Compendium*, III: 385-86.

<sup>57</sup> Pope, *Christian Compendium*, III: 386.

<sup>58</sup> Ralston, *Elements of Divinity*, 336, 515.

<sup>59</sup> Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 737-38, 826.

<sup>60</sup> Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 315.

<sup>61</sup> The real issue is whether people truly cooperate with the grace made available to them.

## II. Implications of a Wesleyan Eschatology for the Church's Engagement with Other Religions

In 2005 the World Council of Churches released a paper on *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement* that expresses well an ecclesiology resonating with much of the Wesleyan tradition. The Church is a sign of the eschaton, 'pointing beyond itself to the purpose of all creation, the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God;' it is also an instrument through which 'God's reconciliation, healing and transformation of creation is already taking place;' as it participates presently in the life and love of God in anticipation of the 'glory to come.'<sup>62</sup>

Given this nature of the Church, what are the possibilities of a Wesleyan vision of the eschaton for the Church's engagement with other religions? While Wesleyan scholars in the last twenty years have given fruitful thought to interreligious relationships, they have lacked a comprehensive theological lens through which to consolidate their contributions. A historic Wesleyan eschatology centered on the six themes discussed in the last section can provide a framework in which to do so. Wesleyan theological reflection on the Church's engagement with other religions has focused in three areas and can be grounded appropriately in its eschatology: (a) openness to people of other religions, (b) dialogue and witness about salvation in Jesus Christ, and (c) joint collaboration in the stewardship of creation and in the promotion of human eudaimonia.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper 198 (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2005), 11.

<sup>63</sup> In the last twenty years the most important Wesleyan reflections on interfaith relationships include Cobb, *Grace and Responsibility*, 145-54; Cunningham, 'Interreligious Dialogue: A Wesleyan Holiness Perspective,' 188-207; Gorman, 'Grace Abounds', 38-53; Maddox, 'Wesley and the Question of Truth or Salvation through Other Religions,' 7-29; Manchester, 'Why is Evangelism Important if One Can Be Saved without the Gospel?,' 158-70; Meadows, 'Candidates for Heaven: Wesleyan Resources for a Theology of Religions,' 99-129; Thorsen, 'Jesus, Ecumenism, and Interfaith Relations,' 59-71; Whaling, 'Wesley's Premonitions of Inter-Faith Discourse,' 17; and Yong, 'A Heart Strangely Warmed on the Middle Way?: The Wesleyan Witness in a Pluralistic World,' 7-27. While there is overlap and dialogue with other Wesleyans in their contributions, as well as an appropriation of eschatology by some, there has been no attempt to pull their most important contributions together into a coherent whole. This paper attempts to do so under the rubric of a Wesleyan eschatology.

### **a. Openness to People of Other Religions**

A Wesleyan eschatological vision opens the Church to relationships with people of other religions in three primary ways. First, a Wesleyan understanding of final judgment based on the ‘measure of light’ given to people and its optimism for ‘God fearers and workers of righteousness’ predisposes Wesleyans to genuine interreligious friendships without the necessity of conversion to Christianity.

Because of sin and evil, every human being needs redemption and requires God’s saving grace to enter into ‘life everlasting.’ Unlike other forms of Christianity which see the eschaton determined by a divine decree prior to creation, or strictly limited to people who formally profess Christian faith in the present life, a Wesleyan view of the ‘new creation’ takes seriously that Christ died for all; is actively at work in the world drawing people to salvation through the Spirit; and makes grace available so that all are truly ‘candidates for heaven,’ even apart from adequate exposure or formal response to the Gospel.<sup>64</sup> God’s future ‘kingdom of glory’ is truly open to all in the present.

Amos Yong has described this orientation as the natural tendency for Wesleyans to respond to other religions in a ‘much less “us” versus “them” manner,’ and approach people of other faiths ‘less as representatives of religious labels than as people made in the image of God and existing within the realm of prevenient grace.’<sup>65</sup> Similarly, Douglas Mills has asserted that Wesleyans bring a unique theological emphasis in inter-religious relationships: recognition that God is ‘very much active’ in the world and that people in other religions ‘have already experienced the love of God in good measure through the activity of the Holy Spirit.’<sup>66</sup>

Some Wesleyans have pressed this truth to the point of universalism; however, the consistent view has been to see all who are responding fully to ‘the light’ given by the Holy Spirit as ‘fellow travelers’ on the way paved by the work of Jesus Christ.<sup>67</sup> God’s

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<sup>64</sup> ‘Candidates for heaven’ is a phrase taken from Meadows, ‘Candidates for Heaven,’ 99.

<sup>65</sup> Yong, ‘A Heart Strangely Warmed on the Middle Way?’, 9, 11.

<sup>66</sup> Douglas Mills, ‘A Very Short Theological Basis for Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation,’ paper, Commission on Interfaith Relations, New York, 21 February 2009.

<sup>67</sup> An example of a Wesleyan who holds to universalism is David Lowes Watson, *God Does Not Foreclose: The Universal Promise of Salvation* (Nashville: Abingdon,

prevenient grace is operative in other religions seeking to lead their followers to Christ whether they fully realise it or not.<sup>68</sup> As such, this understanding of the eschaton opens the Church to the possibility that in its engagement with sincere people of other religions, the Church develops relationships with people who will be in heaven and provisionally mirrors the eschatological ‘communion of saints.’<sup>69</sup>

Second, a Wesleyan understanding of eschatological renewal in the *imago dei* and the dynamic nature of heaven opens the Church to truth, wisdom and grace found in other religions through the Holy Spirit. As Christians develop relationships with people from other faiths, mutual understandings and shared experiences of the created order, human society, and the divine are found.<sup>70</sup> A Wesleyan approach however will go beyond simple acknowledgment of ‘common ground’ and recognise that there is much to learn from other religions.

Christians are not and never will be omniscient. Growth in all areas of knowledge characterises humanity’s present and future life. The thirst ‘to know’ is carried from this life into eternity. As the Church engages other faiths, Christians open themselves to new discoveries, adding to their field of knowledge and enabling them to plumb more deeply the reality of existence. Through the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit at work in other faiths, Christians gain new knowledge from their interreligious relationships.

To any knowledge learned, Christians must add greater understanding, wisdom and judgment. While Wesleyans believe the moral image of God can be fully restored in the present age, the natural and political remain marred until glorification after death. Wesleyan eschatology helps the Church understand that in this life it sees ‘through a glass darkly.’ Even with the fullness of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, Christians stand in need of greater light in every area of life. Other religions offer a different set of lenses

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1990), 101ff. Some representative Wesleyans who express this type of understanding include Lycurgus Starkey, *The Work of the Holy Spirit: A Study in Wesleyan Theology* (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 43; and Ole Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments: A Theological Study* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 126.

<sup>68</sup> Meadows, ‘Candidates for Heaven,’ 126.

<sup>69</sup> See Joe Gorman’s discussion of Karl Rahner and the use of the term ‘anonymous Christian’ from a Wesleyan perspective in ‘Grace Abounds: The Missiological Implications of John Wesley’s Inclusive Theology of Other Religions,’ *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 48:1 (2013): 41-44.

<sup>70</sup> Amos Yong describes this type of relationship Christians can have with Buddhists in ‘A Heart Strangely Warmed on the Middle Way?’, 11-13.

through which to look at the world, providing chances for new insight, wisdom and ways of seeing a multifaceted reality.

More specifically, through friendships with people of other religions, the Church has opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of its own faith, to have 'blind spots' exposed in its self-understanding and experience of salvation, and to critically appropriate into its life spiritual practices found in other religions. Through openness to learning, edification and growth through interfaith relationships, the Church participates in and mirrors the coming eschaton.

Third, a Wesleyan eschatology provides a clear vision for present human relationships: the complete renewal of the divine image in humanity, enabling mutually reciprocating relationships of self-giving love. Wesleyans believe that by God's grace Christians can be renewed presently in the moral image, making it possible for humanity to participate already in the perfect love of God and neighbour as seen in Heaven.

Christians therefore do not have to 'force themselves' to reach out in self-giving love to their neighbours in other religions. Spirit-infused love compels and empowers this life, even in the most difficult of circumstances. While knowledge and understanding may be lacking, motivation and intention must not. Christians are enabled to work toward reconciliation and fellowship in interfaith relationships, overcoming obstacles the fallen world thrusts in the way.

However, perfected love is not one-sided. While love opens Christians to giving and serving their neighbours in other faiths, it also opens them to the reception of love as well. Holy love makes Christians vulnerable to their neighbours, not just to the possibility of rejection or misunderstanding, but to their neighbours' actions of self-giving love. Perfect love opens Christians to receive in gratitude the love initiated or returned by their neighbours in other religions, reflecting in varying degrees the dynamic, mutually reciprocating relationships of love in the eschatological family of God.

## **b. Dialogue and Witness about Salvation in Jesus Christ**

The Church's conversation with and witness to people of other religions about salvation in Jesus Christ flows from the Church's openness to relationships. Foundational for Wesleyans here is personal holiness of heart and life. Christians must experience and

manifest holy love in their interreligious friendships through personal renewal in the moral image of God. Dialogue and witness therefore is not grounded ultimately in 'right belief' or right information, but in the personal experience of sanctifying grace, establishing Christians in the love of God and neighbour which defines all relationships in heaven.

Wesleyans recognise that one of the strongest witnesses to the truth of Christ is a believer's life defined by holy love. Wesley said that when the Church mirrors the 'kingdom of God,' unbelievers will 'look upon' Christians 'with other eyes and begin to give attention to their words...and the holy lives of Christians will be an argument they will not know how to resist.'<sup>71</sup>

As Christians enter into friendships defined by holy love with people of other religions, sincere discussion about religious beliefs will naturally arise. While there is fear that sincere dialogue may side-track some Christians down another religious path, it also opens people from other faiths to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>72</sup> A Wesleyan eschatology helps provide a theological framework for this type of engagement.

First, while the Church 'appreciates, learns from, and receives something of value' from its interfaith relationships, true openness naturally leads Christians to share about the person and work of Jesus Christ, the end to which all prevenient grace leads and the key to the present and eschatological Kingdom of God.<sup>73</sup> In the historic Wesleyan tradition, Christ is an inescapable 'scandal of particularity,' a *sine qua non* in Christian dialogue with and witness to people of other faiths.<sup>74</sup> Christ truly is Lord and Saviour. However, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is shared in love and humility with others, inviting others to Christian faith rather than driving and compelling them.

Second, while Wesleyans believe people of other religions will be judged by the grace afforded them and have optimism about seeing them in eternity, this does not mean members of other faiths have 'lived up to the light' given them. The gravity of original sin burdens human cooperation with divine grace. Many resist the full measure

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<sup>71</sup> Wesley, Sermon 63, 'The General Spread of the Gospel,' 22, *Works*, 2:496. See Joe Gorman, 'Grace Abounds,' 46-48.

<sup>72</sup> Yong, 'A Heart Strangely Warmed on the Middle Way?,' 16.

<sup>73</sup> Quote taken from Yong, 'A Heart Strangely Warmed on the Middle Way?,' 13.

<sup>74</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Praeparatio Evangelii: The Theological Roots of Wesley's View of Evangelism*, ed. James C. Logan, *Theology and Evangelism in the Wesleyan Heritage* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 77-78.

of God's prevenient grace required to create a 'fear God and work righteousness' faith, that faith minimally necessary to make people 'accepted of Him.'<sup>75</sup>

Because of the threat of hell and an eternity of separation from the 'communion of saints,' Christians share the Gospel in love. Wesleyans recognise that the grace of Jesus Christ as found in the Gospel is the primary means by which spiritual sloth and the recalcitrance of human hearts are broken, leading to 'fruits worthy of repentance,' faith, and good works. While there is hope that sharing the Gospel results in Christian faith, it may lead some to a deeper devotion to their native religion. In either case a fuller embrace of divine grace has occurred.<sup>76</sup>

Third, the Gospel of Jesus Christ makes possible a greater potential of renewal in the present life of the *imago dei*, enabling greater degrees of holiness of heart and life than what is experienced through prevenient grace alone. 'The Gospel does not add extra content to the task of obedience, but it brings a 'renewing power for the life of obedience' enabling the manifestation of the personal and social character of the eschaton in deeper and fuller ways here on earth.'<sup>77</sup>

A similar idea exists in Roman Catholicism. In the most recent edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* there is recognition that other religions, particularly monotheistic ones, have elements of truth and salvation in them. However, only in the Catholic Church are 'all the means of salvation' found, capable of establishing a person in the fullness of God's revelation, in the fullness of relationship with the Triune God, in the fullness of the 'communion of saints,' and in the fullness of holiness possible in present life.<sup>78</sup> The Gospel of Jesus Christ as mediated through the Church opens people up to a more robust 'dispensation' of holy living.

Fourth and closely related, as Wesleyans engage in dialogue and witness, it is to aide spiritual progress in the present life, setting the foundation for development in the life to come.<sup>79</sup> Because of the

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<sup>75</sup> Michael Lodahl, *The Story of God: Wesleyan Theology and Biblical Narrative* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994), 232.

<sup>76</sup> Manchester, 'Why is Evangelism Important?', 162.

<sup>77</sup> Maddox, 'Wesley and the Question of Truth or Salvation through Other Religions,' 18.

<sup>78</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, second edition (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1995), 819, 837.

<sup>79</sup> See Meadows, 'Candidates for Heaven,' 119-20 and Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 251.

dynamic nature of 'life everlasting,' a Wesleyan eschatology recognises that there are degrees of glory based on a person's realisation of holy love in this life. Speaking of those who serve God in 'low degree,' Wesley states, 'they will not have so high a place in heaven as they would have had if they had chosen the better part.'<sup>80</sup> This understanding permeates Wesley's theological successors, who see spiritual progress in the present life having implications for people in glory. Christians seek to enhance spiritual formation in holy love through their relationships with people of other religions whether or not they convert to Christianity.

### **c. Joint Collaboration in the Stewardship of Creation and in the Promotion of Human Eudaimonia**

A Wesleyan eschatology eschews any Gnostic tendencies in Christianity. Genesis clearly establishes the value of the entire created order with God's unequivocal declaration of its goodness. Persons formed as physical beings in the divine image flourish in relationship with God, with creation, and with others. A Wesleyan eschatology reiterates God's assessment of creation's goodness through a vision of the world's redemption and consummation in the future eschaton where humanity, along with the rest of creation, flourishes even more than in the beginning. Even now, the Holy Spirit is at work enabling the world to participate in the 'new creation' to some degree through prevenient, saving and sanctifying grace. This Wesleyan eschatological vision informs and empowers the Church as it works with other faiths to further the expression of creation's renewal and human eudaimonia, while also confronting threats arising from the present order's fallen nature.

Collaboration here happens on two levels. First, in regard to the created order, as God restores the full divine image in humanity, not just the moral, but the natural and political as well, the work of reconciliation between humanity and creation deepens. The 'curse' existing between humanity and the physical world is being lifted through the deepening experience of prevenient and sanctifying grace. Because of the riches of God's grace in salvation, and the deepening understanding of God's revelation, the Church and other religions are able to realize the importance to God of the created

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<sup>80</sup> Wesley, Sermon 89, 'The More Excellent Way,' I.8, *Works*, 3:266.

order and collaborate in the wise care of it.<sup>81</sup> The Church has a vested role in working together with other faith communities in addressing issues like global warming, renewable energy, ecosystem sustainability, and animal care, not simply for the benefits to humanity, but for the goodness and redemption of creation itself.<sup>82</sup>

Second, in regard to human eudaimonia in creation, there are particular elements of a Wesleyan eschatological view relevant to collaboration: physical, social, and intellectual. Humanity is an embodied soul. While a Wesleyan eschatology often recognises a conscious existence in an intermediate state, the doctrine of bodily resurrection and ‘new creation’ show that humanity is not fully human apart from the body. Furthermore, emphasis is given to humanity’s present body because it is the body that is resurrected and made incorruptible. There is no human flourishing in present or future life without a healthy body. This understanding of the necessity of the body helps set the foundation for interfaith collaboration in meeting humanity’s physical needs: adequate food, water, shelter, clothing, and medicine.<sup>83</sup>

A Wesleyan view of the eschaton also accentuates the social nature of humanity. Humanity’s interpersonal relationships do not fade in a beatific vision of God, but grow and deepen more fully in final union with God. Humanity is made for relationship with other human beings and within these relationships holiness and love intensify. Humanity is incomplete and cannot flourish without other people. The impinging ‘new creation’ provides grace to overcome what divides, empowering reconciliation between divided parties and supporting stable social conditions necessary for human flourishing. This perspective undergirds collaboration with other faiths to establish healthy, stable human relationships and social structures in today’s world.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Cobb, *Grace and Responsibility*, 52-53; Maddox, ‘Nurturing the New Creation,’ 43-49; Runyon, *The New Creation*, 200-207.

<sup>82</sup> For further discussion, see John Harrod, ‘Wesleyan Reflections on Ecology,’ in *Windows on Wesley*, ed. Philip Meadows (Oxford: Applied Theology Press, 1997), 129-52; Michael Lodahl, ‘The Whole Creation Groans: Is There a Distinctively Wesleyan Contribution to the Environmental Ethic?,’ *CTNS Bulletin* 18:2 (1998): 10-19.

<sup>83</sup> See Gorman, ‘John Wesley’s Inclusive Theology of Religions,’ 50-51; Thorson, ‘Jesus Ecumenism, and Interfaith Relations,’ 63.

<sup>84</sup> For an excellent discussion of this issue from a larger Christian perspective, see Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011).

Finally, a Wesleyan eschatology recognises the intellectual nature of humanity, the thirst to grow in knowledge, wisdom and understanding. In eternity with the perfected natural image, humanity will ever be fathoming the depths of God, exploring the created order, appreciating the beautiful and exercising creativity. Developing the life of the mind and heart is essential to being human. This helps solidify the natural impulses of historic Christianity in the formation of educational institutions, not only as a means to the end of a particular vocation, but as an end unto itself, reflecting in part a Wesleyan vision of the new creation. It is natural for the Church therefore to partner with other religions in the formation of educational institutions where skills necessary for learning and exploration of reality are developed and the acquisition of wisdom takes place.

## **Conclusion**

With the ‘communion of saints,’ Wesleyans pray the Lord’s Prayer, ‘thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’ Eschatology has implications for the present life; Wesleyans believe the Kingdom of God has been inaugurated and is made manifest in varying degrees in the present age through the Church. With this theological framework as an underlying assumption, I have attempted to identify distinctively Wesleyan eschatological themes running consistently through the history of Methodism relevant to inter-religious relationships: the centrality of Christ, the renewal of the created order, the renewal of the full image of God in humanity, the dynamic nature of the eschaton, and an optimism for ‘God fearers and workers of righteousness’ in other religions. I have then tried to explore how these themes impinge on a Wesleyan engagement with other religions: through genuine openness to relationships of mutual love and learning, through giving witness to the saving and sanctifying grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in word and personal life, and through working together in the stewardship of the created order and human eudaimonia.

# **PREVENIENT GRACE AND UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT IN THE THEOLOGY OF WILLIAM BURT POPE**

**David N. Field**

This article has been peer reviewed

*This article examines William Burt Pope's interpretation of prevenient grace: it does so by showing its rootedness in his Christology and in particular his understanding of the atonement. The contours of his theology of prevenient grace are analysed in relation to anthropology, pneumatology and the soteriological goal of prevenient grace. Finally his interpretation of the relationship between Christianity and other faiths is used to illustrate the significance and potential of his theology in a contemporary context.*

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William Burt Pope (1822-1903) was probably the most significant British Methodist theologian of the nineteenth century, however to the loss of contemporary Methodist theology, his profoundly Christocentric and Trinitarian exposition of the Wesleyan theological tradition has been sadly neglected.<sup>1</sup> This is particularly true of his theology of prevenient grace which takes up and develops the more scattered references in the writings of John Wesley,<sup>2</sup> and was described, by Herbert B. Workman in 1909, as his 'most lasting contribution to Methodist theology.'<sup>3</sup> From a more contemporary perspective José Míguez Bonino proposed that it could make a significant contribution to the development of a contemporary

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<sup>1</sup> The only significant studies of Pope's theology I was able to locate are Dale Elden Dunlap, 'Methodist Theology in Great Britain in the Nineteenth Century: With Special Reference to the Theology of Adam Clarke, Richard Watson, and William Burt Pope,' PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1956 and Robb Wicke Shoaf, 'The Theology of William Burt Pope: A Nineteenth Century Wesleyan Systematic,' PhD dissertation, Drew University, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> For Wesley's understanding see Charles Allen Rogers, 'The Concept of Prevenient Grace in the Theology of John Wesley,' PhD dissertation, Duke University, 1967, and J. Gregory Crofford, *Streams of Mercy: Prevenient Grace in the Theology of John and Charles Wesley* (Lexington: Emeth, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Herbert B. Workman, 'The Place of Methodism in the Life and Thought of the Christian Church,' in W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman and George Eayrs, *A New History of Methodism*, vol. 1 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), 1-73, 53.

Methodist theology by providing resources for responding to the challenges articulated in liberation theologies.<sup>4</sup>

The lack of attention to Pope's theology of prevenient grace is striking given its relevance to the pressing issues of the development of a Christian theology of religions in the context of the growth of Christianity in the non-western world and the rise of secularism and religious pluralism in the western world. Pope wrote in the context of a renewed encounter with non-Christian religions as a consequence of British colonial imperialism and the renewal of Christian mission that accompanied it. Pope at one time considered becoming a missionary in India. His brother, George Urglow Pope, was a missionary in India and became an acknowledged expert on Tamil literature.<sup>5</sup> Pope's theology of prevenient grace provided him with the theological spectacles through which he interpreted this new awareness and knowledge of other faiths. Remarkably, his theology of religions, which in some ways reflects his colonial context and in other ways transcends it, anticipates developments that have emerged in the twentieth century often related to the proposals of Vatican II. In common with these perspectives, Pope viewed revelation and salvation in Christ as a corrective to and fulfilment of non-Christian religions.<sup>6</sup> His approach to these issues thus provides a case study for the significance of his work in our contemporary context.

This article is an attempt to stimulate new interest in Pope's theology and its potential contribution to contemporary theology by providing an analysis of his understanding of prevenient grace as it

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<sup>4</sup> See 'Wesley in Latin America: Theological and Historical Reflection,' in *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Kingswood, 1998), 169-182 and 'Salvation as the Work of the Trinity: An Attempt at a Holistic Understanding from a Latin American Perspective,' in *Trinity Community and Power: Mapping Trajectories in Wesleyan Theology*, ed. M. Douglas Meeks, (Nashville: Kingswood, 2000), 69-83. I have attempted to take up Miguez' proposal in 'The Prevenient and the Penultimate: Towards a Methodist Theology of the Political for the Twenty First Century,' unpublished paper, Thirteenth Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, 2013

<http://oimts.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/2013-3-field.pdf> accessed 12.10.2014.

<sup>5</sup> See R.W. Moss, *The Rev W.B. Pope, D. D.: Theologian and Saint* (London; Robert Culley, n.d.), 28, and Robert Eric Frykenberg, 'Pope, George Urglow (1820-1908),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35572>, accessed 12.10.2014

<sup>6</sup> Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 63-106 provides a careful analysis of this fulfilment model which he portrays as a twentieth century Roman Catholic development deriving from the work of Karl Rahner.

is expounded in his two systematic works *A Compendium of Christian Theology* and *A Higher Catechism of Theology*.<sup>7</sup> The analysis of Pope's theology is challenged by a characteristic feature of his writings - his use of provocative but often ambiguous or enigmatic statements. While such statements are stimulating and suggestive for further theological development their meaning and relation to the argument in a particular context are not always clear. His biographer, R.W. Moss, quotes him as responding to a question about the meaning of a passage in the *Compendium*, 'I don't quite know what it means; but the more I think about it, the nearer I come to knowing what I must have meant when I wrote it.'<sup>8</sup> Hence in the analysis that follows some of these statements will be quoted in their provocative ambiguity as a stimulus to further thought without attempting to fully discern the authorial intention.

## I. The Christological Centre of Pope's Theology

In tune with the rest of Pope's theology, his understanding of prevenient grace is rooted in and shaped by his Christology and in particular by his understanding of the atonement. Fundamental to his Christology is the relationship between the historical life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the eternal life and purposes of the triune God. Pope portrays this relationship through two dialectically related affirmations. The first is that Jesus Christ is the ultimate revelation of the triune God; a revelation that reaches its most profound expression in the crucifixion. Hence the life, and particularly the death, of Christ reveal the dynamics of the life and purpose of the Trinity. The second is that the significance of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ can only be understood in relation to the eternal purpose of the Trinity.

Pope roots his understanding of the saving mission of Christ in the eternal purpose of the triune God. In the eternal counsel of the Trinity the Son was designated as the vicarious representative of humanity as a whole and of all human beings and thus 'ordained to

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<sup>7</sup> William Burt Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology Being an Analytical Outline of a Course of Theological Study, Biblical, Dogmatic and Historical*. Volumes 1-3 (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1880), hereafter referred to as Pope, *Compendium*; William Burt Pope, *A Higher Catechism of Theology* (London: T. Woolmer, 1885), hereafter referred to as Pope, *Higher Catechism*.

<sup>8</sup> Moss, 87.

take human nature.<sup>9</sup> Hence ‘we can speak of the incarnation as a Divine reality before time was.’<sup>10</sup> The purpose of the vicarious representation of the Son and the associated assuming of human nature was for the renewal of human nature and the reconciling of humanity to God. It is the eternal response of the Trinity to the eternal divine awareness of Adam’s fall. The Son is thus eternally constituted as the second head of humanity prior to the creation and fall of Adam, the first head.

This eternal reality was actualised in history through the incarnation when the Son assumed a human nature that ‘was the perfect realisation of the eternal idea of mankind.’<sup>11</sup> Yet he is the representative of fallen humanity and comes in the likeness of sinful flesh. Pope thus states, ‘Christ in his person is the Son of man, and as the new Adam, the Head and summary of mankind, stands in the stead of all he represents. All that He is and does and suffers He is and does and suffers for the entire human family.’<sup>12</sup>

The historical incarnation was both a means and an end. In itself it was the accomplishment of salvation, for in the assumption of our humanity the Son of God accomplished reconciliation between God and humanity. Thus Pope states, ‘When the Son of God became man the human race was declared to be a saved race.’<sup>13</sup>

The incarnation is also a means to an end – Christ’s atoning death. In Pope’s understanding the atonement has two dimensions. Firstly as the vicarious representative of humanity Jesus Christ lived a life of righteousness, fully obeying and loving God and loving his fellow human beings. This righteousness was consummated in his death on the cross. Thus in his death he offered to God a life of active obedience on behalf of humanity satisfying the demands of divine justice and expiating ‘the punishment due to the guilt of human sin.’<sup>14</sup> Second, this obedience, consummated on the cross, was simultaneously an endurance of the punishment for sin. Thus as the vicarious representative of humanity his passive obedience was ‘a propitiation of the Divine displeasure.’<sup>15</sup> The consequence of Christ’s vicarious action is reconciliation and redemption. The atonement thus removed the barrier between God and humanity, reconciled

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<sup>9</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 90.

<sup>10</sup> Pope, *Higher Catechism*, 163, see also *Compendium*, 2: 46, 117.

<sup>11</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 117.

<sup>12</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 270.

<sup>13</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 143.

<sup>14</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 264.

<sup>15</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 264.

God with humanity and established peace. Pope describes it thus: 'Man was in Christ reconciling God to himself by the most precious oblation.'<sup>16</sup> However, the dilemma of humanity is not only enmity with God; it is also its bondage to sin and the consequences of this bondage; that is, captivity to the devil and death as the penalty for sin. Thus the second dimension of the atonement is that it frees humanity primarily from bondage to sin and its consequences. Drawing on the language of redemption and ransom in the New Testament, Pope argues that the life of Christ is the payment for the liberation of humanity from sin. He does not provide an explanation of how Christ's death frees humanity, rather he emphasises the metaphorical character of the terminology and sees this as 'faintly reflecting an eternal reality.'<sup>17</sup>

While the atonement is actualised at a particular point in history this event does not bring about a change in God or in God's relationship with humanity. The death of Christ did not reconcile a hostile God to humanity. It is the historical actualisation of the eternal purpose of God. 'The self devotion of the *One Mediator* dated before He became *Christ Jesus Man*: His incarnation was a testimony in time of an eternal fact in the Divine counsel.'<sup>18</sup> The atonement is pre-eminently the expression of God's love for humanity out of which God desires to redeem all human beings. Reconciliation and redemption are thus the Triune God's eternal purpose for humanity involving all three persons of the Trinity. 'The Father is the God Who sends his Son; the Son is God Who takes our nature that in it he may redeem us; the Holy Ghost is God, Who orders the process of our salvation from alpha to the omega.'<sup>19</sup> The atonement was God's act of reconciliation and redemption, it was the Triune God who expiated humanity's sin and propitiated the divine displeasure.

The atonement is however more than an actualisation of the purpose of the Triune God, for the death of Jesus Christ was the ultimate revelation of the Triune God. The actualisation of the atonement in history is the manifestation of an eternal reality always existing in the life of the Trinity. Pope thus argues that 'God is the Reconciler in the Atonement, in as much as He provides the sacrifice which propitiates himself: the very existence or possibility of the

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<sup>16</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 268.

<sup>17</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 291.

<sup>18</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 92.

<sup>19</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 293.

sacrifice proves Him to be already propitiated.<sup>20</sup> Thus the 'atonement declares a propitiation already in the Divine heart.'<sup>21</sup>

The Lamb was slain...*before the foundation of the world*. Therefore whatever exhibition of wrath against sin and love to the sinner we now read in the cross must only be the expression of the same wrath and love in the mind of the Holy Trinity before the world was. Nothing has been added, nothing has been taken away from it, since. The whole matter or word of redemption was *settled in heaven*...All that Atonement means was transacted in the bosom of the Deity before the world was.<sup>22</sup>

Elsewhere he states:

Our Lord was sent to declare a reconciliation with sinning human nature preceding and presupposing the sin that needed it, which was no other than the reconciliation of the mercy of love and the justice of holiness in the Divine nature itself through the Incarnation rendered possible by the adorable mystery of the Three Persons in the Godhead.<sup>23</sup>

Hence Christ came as the 'Redeemer and Deliverer who had already saved the world in purpose and in effect.'<sup>24</sup>

Pope emphasises that this locating of the atonement within the eternal life of the Triune God does not mean there is an eternal dissonance within the life of the Trinity. While the exact nature of the atonement lies beyond human inquiry Pope insists that within the mystery of the Triune life:

The Son does not propitiate an anger in the Father that He does not Himself share; nor does the Eternal Father represent a holy justice in the Divine nature which is to be satisfied by an atoning love only found in the Son; nor does the Eternal Spirit witness a covenant that solves a discord in which he has no part. <sup>25</sup>

The atonement is therefore an expression of the character and life of the Triune God and its concrete actualisation in human history through Christ as the vicarious representative of humanity.

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<sup>20</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 282.

<sup>21</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 272.

<sup>22</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 1: 348, emphasis in the original.

<sup>23</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 283.

<sup>24</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 143.

<sup>25</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 293.

As he states in another context, ‘The economical Trinity is the absolute Trinity.’<sup>26</sup> This historical manifestation in the death of Christ is to be understood as the public vindication of God’s government of the world.

As a consequence of Christ being the second Adam, and of the rootedness of the atonement in the character and life of God, the atonement has salvific consequences for all humanity – past, present and future. ‘Christ’s LIFE was one satisfaction for all offenders, and for every kind of offence summed up in one.’<sup>27</sup> Redemption is universal; all humanity and the complete human nature have been redeemed. Similarly, reconciliation is universal. ‘The entire world of mankind God is said to have reconciled to himself in Christ, inasmuch as the atoning sacrifice was the actual realisation of a purpose that had been regarded as wrought out from the beginning of human history.’<sup>28</sup>

The result is that ‘the race in its unity is, notwithstanding sin, placed in a relation of peace with the Supreme Ruler.’<sup>29</sup> God’s government of the human race has always taken place within the context of the reconciliation between God and humanity actualised on the cross. As Pope states, ‘Under a decree of redemption virtually accomplished the whole world has lived and moved and had its being.’<sup>30</sup> It is only as a consequence of the atonement that a Holy God can relate to sinful humanity. The redemption accomplished by Christ is thus ‘a reality underlying all of human history.’<sup>31</sup> This, however, does not exclude necessity for persons to reconcile themselves to God through faith in response to the gospel. Rather this personal reconciliation takes place within the context of, and is interrelated with, the universal reconciliation.

## **II. The Anthropological Consequences of the Universal Atonement**

In Pope’s theology the atonement has consequences for the entire human race and for human nature. These consequences must be

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<sup>26</sup> William Burt Pope, *The Person of Christ: Dogmatic, Scriptural and Historical* (London: Wesley Conference Office, 1875), 60.

<sup>27</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 290 – capitalisation in the original.

<sup>28</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 285.

<sup>29</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 286.

<sup>30</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 92.

<sup>31</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 91.

seen against the background of two key elements in his anthropology; these are the creation of humanity in the image of God and the dual headship of the human race.

Pope argues that an important element of what it means to be created in the image of God is to be created as ‘a free spiritual personal agent.’<sup>32</sup> This is an indestructible component of human nature which he designates the natural image of God. As various biblical texts describe human beings after the fall as bearing the image of God, Pope argues that this image is a permanent component of human nature unaffected by sin. However, New Testament authors also write of the renewal of human beings in the image of God. Hence Pope argues for a second dimension of the image of God, the moral image. The moral image is capable of being defaced and lost. Creation in the image of God establishes a particular relationship between humanity and the divine Son, for to be created in the image of God is to be created in the image of the Second Person of the Trinity who is the ‘original, absolute archetypal Image of God.’<sup>33</sup> The unfallen Adam as the bearer of the divine image was indwelt, guided and governed by the Holy Spirit who unites the human soul with God.

The particular relationship between humanity and the Son is intensified in that the incarnate Son is designated in the eternal purpose of God as the second Adam. Hence in the counsel of the Triune God the human race stands in relation to both Adam and Christ, so that ‘[a]ll human life and destiny is bound up with the relations of these two: The First and the Last Adam.’<sup>34</sup> Adam was the organic and representative head of humanity. After his creation he entered into a probationary state on behalf of humanity so that when he fell into sin it had a twofold consequence for the human race. The first consequence is hereditary guilt as a result of which all humans are subject to death. The second consequence is hereditary depravity through which all humans have a bias towards sin; that is a bias ‘to forget God, to serve the creature and to live for self.’<sup>35</sup> As such, human beings are powerless to save themselves. In Pope’s understanding ‘those who are born with a sinful bias are therefore condemned’ rather ‘than that being condemned they are necessarily depraved.’<sup>36</sup> In his *Compendium of Christian Theology*, Pope

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<sup>32</sup> Pope, *Higher Catechism*, 102.

<sup>33</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 1: 427.

<sup>34</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 56.

<sup>35</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 64, 65.

<sup>36</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 55.

proposes that these two consequences are united in the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from human beings.<sup>37</sup> Later in his *Higher Catechism of Theology* he argues for a partial withdrawal of the Spirit who remains present with the human race despite human sin.<sup>38</sup>

However, humanity even before the fall does not exist only in Adam. Pope proposed that the human race ‘was virtually redeemed before it sinned and before it existed.’<sup>39</sup> Hence ‘[t]he Fall of the world and its recovery were never separated.’<sup>40</sup> Humanity, and hence Adam himself, always existed in Christ. Thus Pope suggests that it ‘might seem as if God, in the creation of man, took account of his coming fall and decreed redemption.’<sup>41</sup> As he puts it less prosaically: ‘Apart from Christ and in hard theory, the ruin of man was complete. But man has never been in such a far country as not to hear the appeal of the Father: the *far country* is still the land of Emmanuel.’<sup>42</sup>

The interpretation of humanity as created in the image of God under the dual headship of Adam and Christ, which is integrally related to the universal atonement, has significant anthropological consequences. The first is that the universal effect of the atonement came into expression simultaneously with the fall, mitigating the consequences of human sin so that the fall was never total. Human nature is ‘universally redeemed’ so that humanity retained not only the natural image of God but also elements of the moral image.<sup>43</sup> While the fall led to the depravity of all human faculties, it did not lead to their destruction. ‘The Human mind retains the principles of truth; the heart the capacity of holy affections, the will its freedom, not yet the freedom of necessary evil.’<sup>44</sup> Pope grounds this Christologically in two ways. Firstly, this is a consequence of the atonement that flows to the whole human race. Secondly, he

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<sup>37</sup> See Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 59.

<sup>38</sup> See Pope, *Higher Catechism*, 131.

<sup>39</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 296.

<sup>40</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 92.

<sup>41</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 1: 430, he comments in *Higher Catechism*, 104: ‘The creation of man is bound up with his redemption...St Paul, while he never speaks of man’s creation as an eternal purpose, speaks of his redemption as such: especially in relation to the mankind of which Christ will be the Head.’

<sup>42</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 63.

<sup>43</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 58.

<sup>44</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 59.

proposed, more speculatively, that Christ could not have assumed human nature if it was totally corrupted.<sup>45</sup>

The second anthropological consequence is that while all human beings experience physical death as a consequence of Adam's fall, human nature has been reconciled to God, hence no human being is eternally condemned as a consequence of Adam's sin. Pope states that 'original sin as condemnation in the fullest sense, and as absolute doom, never passed beyond Adam and the unindividualised nature of man. It was arrested in Christ as it regards every individual, and changed into a conditional sentence.'<sup>46</sup> Human beings come under God's ultimate judgment when they reject the reconciliation offered in Christ for their sin.

### III. The Pneumatological Administration of Salvation

Within the economy of salvation Pope held that the particular work of the Holy Spirit was the administration of the redemption and reconciliation accomplished through the atonement. Pope deliberately used the word 'administration' to avoid two dangers. On the one hand he rejected the term 'application' as a word which assumed a Calvinistic understanding of a limited atonement sovereignly applied to the elect. On the other hand he proposed that the term 'appropriation' over emphasised the human dimension and thus tended to Pelagianism. The word 'administration' avoided these extremes and allows for the interactive drama of divine initiative and human response which characterises a Wesleyan understanding of salvation. As Pope emphasised, 'In every age the work of the Spirit in extending the Kingdom of God has been bound up with human agency.'<sup>47</sup>

The Holy Spirit intervenes to administer the consequences of the atonement from the moment of Adam's fall. Pope affirms that, 'The Holy Ghost was given at the outset as, in a particular sense, the Ernest of redemption.'<sup>48</sup> In his *Compendium*, Pope argues that the

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<sup>45</sup> Pope without argument adopts a particular solution to the historical discussion of the relationship between Christ's humanity and our fallen humanity; for an overview of this discussion see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation: A Constructive Christian Theology for a Pluralistic Age*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 168-178.

<sup>46</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 59.

<sup>47</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 343.

<sup>48</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 296.

Spirit withdraws himself from humanity as a consequence of the fall, severing the original union with God. This constitutes spiritual death and renders sinners unable to save themselves. The Spirit is then given back to humanity, beginning the process of recovery from spiritual death. In the *Higher Catechism* he proposes an alternative understanding: that the Spirit remains in some sense present despite the fall. In both cases this is an outworking of the atonement. In both cases the consequence is that the 'state of nature' is a 'state of...preliminary grace.'<sup>49</sup> This grace is the presence of the Spirit within all human beings administering the consequences of the atonement to humanity. This grace influences all of humanity in a secret and hidden manner providing both a foretaste of and a preparation for the fuller redemption that is to come. It is the 'manifestation of Divine influence which precedes the full regenerate life.'<sup>50</sup>

In this preliminary administration of salvation, the Spirit enters into the deepest recesses of the human person to draw them to salvation and to struggle with that which opposes God's salvific purpose. Human beings are totally dependent upon this work of the Spirit for their salvation, for they are enslaved to sin and powerless to save themselves. While exercising a powerful influence on persons the Spirit does not compel them; persons can and often do resist the influence of the Spirit. When persons respond positively to the Spirit's drawing and striving they experience a greater degree of the Spirit's influence. The consequences of the Spirit's work are thus dependent upon the human response to this preliminary grace. Pope writes, 'this prevenient grace is literally bound up with the human use of it being without meaning apart from that use.'<sup>51</sup> Pope's views may thus be described as synergistic, though he used this term to refer to Lutheran views that he found to be inadequate and bordering on semi-Pelagian.<sup>52</sup> A possible alternative would be to designate his views as Wesleyan synergism, that is, a synergism which emphasises the indispensable initiative of the Spirit and the absolute dependency of human beings on the work of the Spirit. It equally emphasises the necessary co-operation of human beings who can yield to or resist the work of the Spirit. The transforming influence of prevenient grace requires a person's positive human

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<sup>49</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 390.

<sup>50</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 359.

<sup>51</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 358, 359.

<sup>52</sup> See Pope, *Compendium* 2: 77, 78, 389, 390.

response to the presence and work of the Spirit who in turn responds to the person. This grace does not save but it is directed towards salvation, preparing the person for regeneration, which they experience when they respond in faith to the gospel. The Spirit's drawing and striving can be described as having three interrelated facets.

First, prevenient grace counters human sinfulness. The Spirit brings about awareness deep within human persons of their deformed and enslaved state, giving rise to a sense of shame, loss and guilt. They are thus made aware that sin is alien to their nature. Positively the Spirit restrains human sinfulness, curbs the tendency toward evil and implants a desire for freedom from the bias to evil and a yearning for fellowship with God. The combination of these dimensions of the work of the Spirit limits the impact of the inborn bias to sin that humans inherit from Adam.

Second, prevenient grace overcomes the human powerlessness to do good and to save themselves that is a consequence of original sin. Pope goes into some detail to explain the relationship between the human bias to evil, the freedom of the will and the impact of God's grace. A brief summary will suffice for our purposes. Pope distinguishes between the human personality or person and the elements of a person's nature such as the will. Unregenerate persons are free in that their will is not determined by a power outside of the person. Hence the sinner is a free and responsible agent. However, the person who 'is behind and beneath' the will is in bondage to sin;<sup>53</sup> that is, their motives, thoughts, desires and feelings are shaped by the bias toward evil. The strength of this bias is increased as the person acts upon it developing sinful habits. Hence, while the will as an agent of initiating volition is free from external compulsion, its decisions are shaped by the person's sinful motives, thoughts and desires. Prevenient grace intervenes not by restoring the power of the will but by transforming and renewing a person's motives, attitudes and intellect. In doing so the Spirit works within the depth of persons influencing them and enabling them to resist sin, to choose that which is good, and to submit to God. The Spirit thus restores a person's moral ability. The extent of this restoration is dependent upon the response of the person to the work of the Spirit.

Thirdly, the Spirit is also the Spirit of enlightenment who enables a person to see God's revelation. Central to Pope's theology is his affirmation that 'Jesus Christ is Himself in Person and in Word the

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<sup>53</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 363.

revelation of God.’<sup>54</sup> The Spirit has always been the Spirit of Christ. While God is ultimately revealed in the incarnate Christ; from the dawn of history God was revealed in the Son. By virtue of the Son being eternally constituted as the head of humanity destined to take human nature, ‘He is within our nature – generally in every man who shares it, specially in every regenerate soul – the living eternal “Word of life”.’<sup>55</sup> So that, ‘He makes the knowledge of God in some sense “common to man,” unveiling the Father through our own faculties and “in our own language wherein we were born” as “the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” or that cometh into the nature that he has made his own.’<sup>56</sup>

The Spirit enlightens all human beings by enabling them to perceive the revelation of the Son. Pope understands this to have three elements. The first is an original revelatory promise given to Adam after the fall. Pope argues that through the work of the Spirit aspects of this promise continue to be remembered and articulated in diverse ways in different cultures and religions. Secondly, there is the re-inscribing of the law of God on the hearts of human beings so that they know in some form God’s moral requirements. All awareness of truth comes from the Spirit of truth. The third is God’s revelation in the nature and providence through which God is continually revealed to humanity. The consequence of the work of the Spirit is that we find throughout history, both in individuals and societies, perceptions of God’s revelation. Yet these perceptions are incomplete and distorted by human sin. The ultimate revelation is to be found in the birth, life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus. This revelation presupposes yet fulfils and completes all previous revelation.

The combined consequence of the first three facets is, negatively, that the evil that is innate within humanity, as a consequence of original sin and its consequences in human history, are ‘restrained, controlled and mitigated.’<sup>57</sup> Positively, the combination is that the Spirit inspires the person to search after God and the good, thus drawing them towards God. Hence from deep within the human person there now arises a desire for communion with God. This groping after God is expressed concretely and diversely in various non-Christian religions. Further, humanity is not as evil as it could

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<sup>54</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 1: 10.

<sup>55</sup> Pope, *Person of Christ*, 41.

<sup>56</sup> Pope, *Person of Christ*, 40.

<sup>57</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 58.

be; rather, evil is restrained and there are found human beings who are moral, just, merciful and compassionate.

Those who yield to the influences of the restraining and prompting Spirit of conviction, and strive to *cease to do evil and learn to do well*, are in the way of duty approved by God. It is wrong to say that all sincere works done before regeneration are only splendid vices, and counted by the Judge as evil: however true it is that they are not meritorious, and can do nothing towards justification, they are in a way the preparation for Divine acceptance. It is incorrect even to affirm that there is no ethical duty possible to the unregenerate...there is a religious life before the regenerate life, and it has its morals. There are *fruits meet for repentance*, which are also *the fruit of the Spirit*, though not yet the Spirit of regeneration.<sup>58</sup>

Hence throughout human history, cultures, and religions we find signs pointing toward the fullness of redemption that came in Jesus Christ.

#### **IV. The Soteriological Goal of Preventive Grace**

Fundamental to Pope's understanding of preventive grace is that it is directed towards salvation. This salvific *telos* has two dimensions. The first is redemptive-historical. In this dimension, preventive grace was given to humanity in the wake of the fall to prepare humanity for the coming of the Redeemer. Secondly, it has a personal dimension: preventive grace prepares persons for, and leads them toward, conversion and regeneration.

In its redemptive-historical dimension, preventive grace anticipated the redemption that was to come in Christ and prevented humanity from falling into a state of total degeneration, preserving human nature 'from sinking below the possibility of redemption.'<sup>59</sup> It produced in human beings a longing for salvation, recalling to remembrance aspects of the original revelation and pointing to general revelation. As human beings responded to God's grace so God responded to them and this gave rise to a diversity of anticipations of the gospel in human religion and culture. This is a partial experience of redemption and a promise of its coming fullness. The coming of Christ is the historical fulfilment of this

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<sup>58</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 3: 193.

<sup>59</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 2: 58.

anticipation of redemption. The Holy Spirit working through prevenient grace is ‘the herald and forerunner of Christ.’<sup>60</sup> The coming of Christ reveals to humanity the salvation whose benefits they have already enjoyed. However, as the message of the gospel has not reached all people, there is a continuing aspect to this redemptive-historical dimension of prevenient grace in cultures and societies that have not been exposed to the gospel.

On a personal level there is a concentration or intensification of the universal prevenient grace that connects with the person’s previous movement towards God in response to universal prevenient grace. This concentration accompanies the proclamation of the gospel and calls persons to salvation. Through this, the Spirit works deep within persons to convict them of sin, to draw them to God, and to enable and dispose them to respond in repentance and faith to the gospel. In all this the Spirit takes the initiative to make it possible for human beings to respond; yet human co-operation is imperative. It is possible for human beings to reject the work of the Spirit. Those who respond in faith and obedience experience the new birth. Regeneration is thus the consummation of the unfolding work of the Spirit in prevenient grace.

Pope contrasts the Methodist understanding of prevenient grace with the Reformed theology of common grace. He affirms that prevenient grace is present in diverse ways and different intensities yet he maintains it is always directed toward the goal of salvation. There is continuity of grace from its most universal forms to regenerating, sanctifying and glorifying grace. There is no influence of the Holy Spirit that arises from the atonement that is not directed toward salvation. Hence the Reformed idea of common grace that restrains sin and enables human goodness, but is not directed toward human salvation is to be rejected. Pope states that Methodist theology ‘will not tolerate the irreverent distinction between common grace and special grace, believing all grace was purchased at the cost of Christ’s most precious blood, and is intended to lead to salvation.’<sup>61</sup>

This raises the question of whether it is possible for people who have not heard the gospel to be saved through the effects of prevenient grace. Pope insists that God’s mercy ‘in every age guided

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<sup>60</sup> William Burt Pope, *The Peculiarities of Methodist Doctrine* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1878), 10, quoted in Dunlap, 297.

<sup>61</sup> William Burt Pope, ‘Methodist Doctrine,’ in J.O.A. Clark, ed. *The Wesley Memorial Volume, or, Wesley and the Methodist Movement, Judged by Nearly One Hundred and Fifty Writers Living or Dead* (New York: Philips and Hunt, 1881), 168-190, 179.

the instincts of the sincere...towards an unknown Saviour.<sup>62</sup> He rejects the idea that there will be a general eschatological condemnation of all who have not heard the gospel and argues that humanity will be judged on the basis of the revelation that they have received. Those who have not heard the gospel will be judged according to their moral conscience. He provides no systematic development of this preferring to leave it to the justice of God. Rather surprisingly, given his understanding of the universality of the atonement and of prevenient grace, he states that it is a mystery as to how this judgment on the basis of conscience can be reconciled with the affirmation that Christ is the only name given by which humanity can be saved.<sup>63</sup>

## **V. Christianity and Other Faiths**

The dynamics of Pope's theology of prevenient grace can be seen in his interpretation of religions other than Judaism and Christianity. He interprets human religiosity as a product of a complex dynamic interaction of six factors. These are: the original revelation to humanity in the aftermath of the fall; general revelation in nature and the human person; the continuing work of the Spirit of God in all humanity; the human desire for God that arises out of the Spirit's work; original sin and the consequent human bias towards evil; and the diversity of human cultures. In the case of Islam, he adds Christian revelation as a further element. The consequence of original sin and human resistance to the Spirit is that all religions other than Judaism and Christianity are corruptions of the original revelation yet elements of the original revelation remain; God continues to communicate with humanity and the Spirit continues to work within these religions. This work is seen in reformations which return these religions to greater faithfulness to God's revelation. Further these religions give expression in a multiplicity of ways to the deep-seated spiritual longings of humanity.

Christianity is not merely one among the other religions as it arises out of the ultimate revelation in Christ. 'God has in sundry times and diverse manners spoken to the human race, and finally consummated all in the words of His Son.'<sup>64</sup> Hence the Christian

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<sup>62</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 1: 58, 59.

<sup>63</sup> See Pope, *Compendium*, 3: 416-417.

<sup>64</sup> Pope, *Compendium* 1: 60.

revelation 'is the last of many words.'<sup>65</sup> The non-Christian religions are to be evaluated against the norm of the ultimate revelation of God in Christ. This evaluation will result in the rejection of some elements of a particular religion, the affirmation of others and the attempt to show how the spiritual longings expressed through the religion are fulfilled in Christ. Pope thus asserts that: 'The Christian Religion explains the religiousness of mankind, and pays respect to the forms in which this has been expressed.'<sup>66</sup>

The non-Christian religions are part of the process by which 'God has in every age been training the nations for the full disclosure of Himself.'<sup>67</sup> They are a preparation for the coming Christ, redemptive both historically and through the ongoing expansion of the church. Thus the revelation of God in Christ fulfils, corrects, and perfects the non-Christian religions. It explains and corrects their errors and affirms the truth contained within them. Truth is to be found scattered throughout the different religions. Pope provides examples of this in his discussion of the doctrine of creation (where he treats early Hinduism particularly favourably) and the incarnation.<sup>68</sup> Further he affirms that the Spirit is at work in members of other religions and argues that those who have not heard the gospel will be judged by the light that they have received and many will ultimately be accepted by God. However, Pope is confident that Christianity will in the long term succeed in overcoming all other religions. Even though eastern religions were strongly resistant to the influence of Christianity, Pope believed this resistance was slowly being surmounted. He thus confidently asserted that: 'No species of heathenism has ever effectually withstood the power of the Christian religion.'<sup>69</sup>

## **VI. With Pope beyond Pope: Some Critically Constructive Proposals**

A major critique of Pope's theology has been that he failed to engage and explore the intellectual and theological debates of his context and that he preferred instead to restate and reinvigorate the received

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<sup>65</sup> Pope, *Compendium* 1: 59.

<sup>66</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 1:52, 53.

<sup>67</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 1:53.

<sup>68</sup> Pope, *Compendium*, 1: 367-381; 2: 147.

<sup>69</sup> Pope, *Compendium* 1:145.

tradition.<sup>70</sup> While aspects of this criticism are valid, his theology of prevenient grace opens up new perspectives that anticipate developments in twentieth-century theology and have the potential to contribute to twenty-first-century theology in the Methodist tradition. In concluding this article I want briefly to note three areas which merit further investigation and development.

The first is Pope's understanding of the relationship between time, eternity, history, and the divine counsel as expounded in his atonement theology. Pope presented what might be described as an Arminian surpralapsarian understanding of the counsel of the Trinity. The divine decision to create human beings and permit them to fall is dependent on the prior constitution of the Son as the vicarious head of humanity who will make atonement for human sin. Further this constitution of the Son as the Second Adam (and the atonement itself) is an aspect of the life of the Triune God that precedes not only the incarnation but also creation. He can thus state that: 'Time, with all its redeeming wonders is only the revelation of the mystery of eternity. And that mystery is the Christ of God.'<sup>71</sup> Pope's intention is not merely to root his understanding of the atonement in the inner life of the Trinity but to argue that forgiveness was not something that had to be earned by the human Christ. It is something inherent to the nature and character of the Triune God. By locating the atonement within the inner life of the Trinity he provides a basis for an integrated and dynamic understanding of the interrelationship between creation and redemption that overcomes potential dualisms. Pope's exposition provides an important model of a Christological and Trinitarian understanding of the purpose of God which brings together creation, fall, prevenient grace and salvation into a dynamic relationship. As a consequence there is a coherency and consistency in his interpretation of the divine attitude toward and action in the world.

However, Pope's proposals leave a number of unanswered questions, which are compounded by the ambiguity of some of his formulations. If the atoning death of Christ is a manifestation of an already existing eternal reality, why was its historical manifestation necessary? Does the cross actually achieve anything or is it merely the revelation of something that already existed? While recognising that we are dealing with the divine mystery, a contemporary attempt

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<sup>70</sup> See Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity*, Vol.1, *Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 59-63.

<sup>71</sup> Pope, *Person of Christ*, 33.

to develop Pope's ideas would need to give careful attention to this, particularly in the light of challenges raised by open theism to traditional understandings of the relationship between the divine purpose and human history.

A second critical issue is Pope's proposal that one effect of the atonement is to arrest the effects of the fall so that humanity is not as fallen as it could be. On the one hand, Pope's interpretation opens the way for a positive assessment of human life and culture as the outworking of the potential given by God in creation which was not seriously affected by the fall. On the other hand, it is questionable whether this lessening of the tension between sin and grace does justice to the New Testament portrayal of humanity outside of Christ as dead in sin. In developing Pope's ideas, further attention needs to be given to the dynamic interrelationship and interaction between God's creative purpose for humanity, human sin and its consequence, and the influence of prevenient grace. I would argue that such a dynamic understanding of prevenient grace should not be understood as a universal upgrade of all human beings but rather as the dynamic interactive presence of God in the midst of the human reality in all its complexity.

Thirdly, Pope's understanding of prevenient grace demonstrates an unusual valuing of non-Christian religions and philosophies. It is notable that his appreciation is not confined to the classical sources of western thought but includes an appreciation for other religions, notably Hinduism. While some of his thinking reflects the triumphalism of Victorian imperialism and the nineteenth-century missionary movement, other parts express a nuanced attitude which honours the agency of those who had not heard the gospel. He thus affirms not only that the various religions contain genuine reflections of God's revelation but also that the work of various religious reformers was a response to the Spirit of God. His critique of other religions must be seen in the light of his critique of some forms of Christianity. In various places he describes how the concrete reality of the church is a mixture of faithful response to the revelation of God in Christ and the distortions of human sin and fallibility. Thus when Pope refers to Christianity in relation to other religions he is referring to the revelation of God in Christ recorded in the scriptures; this revelation has been expressed imperfectly in the historical life of the church.

## **Conclusion**

Much has changed in the religious world in last 120 years. While Christianity has grown strongly in Africa it has made less significant gains in Asia; Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism are living and vital religious traditions which show no sign of being 'overcome' (in Pope's imperialistic terminology) by Christianity. In Europe and North America, Christian influence is rapidly declining. A chastened and humbler approach to the other living faiths is required. Pope's contribution remains significant. It provides a way for viewing other faiths as genuine responses to God's revelation, which, like Christianity, are corrupted by sin. It affirms that the Spirit of God is present and working in them – thus when Christians bring the gospel to people of other faiths they recognise and affirm that the Spirit is already present and at work. It affirms a Christological basis for recognising God's work in other faiths but in such a way as to recognise the Spirit-enabled agency of the members of these faiths. It remains hopeful that those who have not heard the gospel may be saved but does not sacrifice the necessity of proclaiming the gospel. It could provide a basis for genuine dialogue with people of other faiths when it is recognised that in our encounter with them we might come to a fuller understanding of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ witnessed to in the Scripture. In the context of increasing religious pluralism, it opens the way for finding new ways to live together which both affirm the uniqueness of God's revelation in Christ and respects the faith and life of others.

# **AUSTRALIAN METHODIST THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND THEOLOGIAN**

**Garry W. Trompf**

This article has been peer reviewed

*This article describes the development of Australian Methodist theological education from the nineteenth century until the formation of the Uniting Church in 1977. It supplements and complements an earlier article by Norman Young in this journal on Methodist ministerial education in the Victoria and Tasmania Conference. Significant Australian Methodist theologians are also discussed and their contributions to Methodist and ecumenical intellectual life are described. It asserts that Australian Methodist theological endeavour was one of steady educational betterment and public influence.*

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In the early nineteenth century the ministers of the various Methodist denominations came from England, having received their ministerial education there. When Australian-born ministers began to be ordained, their education was primarily as probationary ministers working in circuits under the direction of a superintendent minister, sometimes supplemented with instruction in secular subjects at a secondary school. Australian Methodists simply lacked resources to secure adequate training for home-grown candidates to the ministry. By 1861 the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in Australia was determined to provide theological education at tertiary level for its ministerial candidates, maintaining that since these had ‘expressed a desire to spend some time at a theological college...let us follow in the footsteps of the parent church in England’,<sup>1</sup> which

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ran a number of seminary-style theological colleges. But an appeal to finance a comparable (Australia-wide) institution failed and this proposal was abandoned. All that could be done was to outline a 'course of study' and list of books suitable to absorb should anyone seek acceptance into the ordained ministry.<sup>2</sup>

## I. Early Training Efforts

The reliance upon Local Preachers among Methodists is legendary, but until the post-war period no one expected uniform examinations for their accreditation; they simply arose out of the acceptance and sponsorship of local congregations and their class meetings.<sup>3</sup> Since Methodism never expanded in Australia to become the second-most populous Protestant denomination as it did in the United States, or possessed resources for anything like a Duke University (founded 1889), its leadership was in a disadvantaged position to cultivate clerical scholarship.<sup>4</sup> Apart from being disunited until 1902, Methodists lacked the services of an overseas powerhouse of erudition like the University of Edinburgh Faculty of Divinity offered for the Presbyterians (who were admittedly torn by their own serious divisiveness until 1901).<sup>5</sup> Theological Halls for training Presbyterian clergy at Ormond and St Andrew's Colleges, established at the Universities of Melbourne (1865) and Sydney (1873) respectively, and the Congregationalists' Camden College (Sydney, 1864), were displaying their credentials a generation or two

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in the *Wesleyan Chronicle*, 1861. See also, for example, Irving C. Benson, *A Century of Victorian Methodism* (Melbourne: Spectator, 1935), 276–9; Don Wright and Eric G. Clancy, *The Methodists: A History of Methodism in New South Wales* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993), 40–42.

<sup>2</sup> Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church, *Minutes of Conference* (1861); cf. *Sydney Morning Herald* (9 February 1861), 3. Apart from Wesley's writings, such books as J. Fletcher's (Five) *Checks to Antinomianism* and R. Watson's *Theological Institutes* were recommended, officially listed in C.W. Rigg, *A Digest of the Laws and Regulations of the Australasian Wesleyan Connexion* (Auckland: Stephen Rabone, 1872), 144–45.

<sup>3</sup> See G.S. Udy, *Key to Change* (Sydney: Donald Pettigrew, 1962), chs 5–6.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. K.S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol. 5: *The Great Century: The Americas, Australasia, and Africa, 1800 A.D. to 1914 A.D.* (New York: Harper, 1943), 142–48, 153–55; cf. the estimate of sociologists R.N. Bellah et al., *The Good Society* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 182–3 that the United Methodist Church was the single biggest Protestant denomination in the USA from 1844 to 1890.

<sup>5</sup> This is not to overlook the earlier Methodist Theological Colleges in England, as at Manchester, Headingly (Leeds), Handsworth (Birmingham), etc.

before comparable Methodist institutions.<sup>6</sup> Even though there were preliminary ‘theological institutions,’ properly provided programmes of theological tertiary education were not offered by the Methodists until after the turn of the twentieth century, the earliest at Queen’s College (University of Melbourne) by 1900, then at King’s College (University of Queensland) and the autonomous Leigh College (Sydney) from 1913 and 1918 respectively, and in later jumps at Wesley College (Adelaide) in 1927, and Barclay Theological College (Perth) in 1951.<sup>7</sup> Even then, well into the second half of the twentieth century, most better-accredited candidates for the ministry did not come to possess university degrees, but only Licentiates in Theology (LTh);<sup>8</sup> and many were not trained in theological colleges at all but in less demanding institutions (the Brighton Methodist Training Home, Adelaide; Otira Methodist Mission College, Kew, Melbourne; and the Sydney Missionary and Bible College, etc.) because they had not completed final-year schooling.<sup>9</sup> Those in the latter centres commonly kept up the legendary view, held earlier among many non-mainstream preachers (Primitives, Free Churchers), that there was only one book

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<sup>6</sup> D. Chambers, *Theological Teaching and Thought in the Theological Hall of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, 1865–1906* (Melbourne: Theological Hall, Ormond College, 1967); C.A. White, *The Challenge of the Years: A History of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales* (London: Angus & Robertson, 1951), 196–202; J. Garrett and L.W. Farr, *Camden College: a Centenary History* (Sydney: Camden College, 1964), 6–16. Cf. also K.J. Cable, ‘Presbyterian Secondary Education in New South Wales in the Nineteenth Century’, [N[ational] L[ibrary of] A[ustralia] MS 2835].

<sup>7</sup> Wright and Clancy, *The Methodists*, 41–2; C.J. Prescott, ‘The Evolution of Leigh College’, *Journal of the Australasian Methodist Historical Society* vol. 49 (1946): 680–82; E.H. Sugden, *The History of Queen’s College within the University of Melbourne*, ed. A. Wyvern ([Melbourne: Queen’s College, 1952?]), [rare], esp. 45–60; [Publications Committee], *Annals of King’s College, Affiliated with the University of Queensland, Silver Jubilee, 1913–1938* (Brisbane: King’s College, 1938); A.D. Hunt, ed., *Number 20: A Pictorial History of Theological Education at No. 20, King William Road* (Adelaide: Uniting Church of South Australia Historical Society, 1980).

<sup>8</sup> General background, A. Cooper, ‘Ministry in the 18th and 19th Centuries’, in *Ministry in the Australian Churches*, ed. William Tabbernee (Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1987), 49–56; Ian Breward, *A History of the Churches in Australasia* (Oxford: Oxford, 2001), 138–9; A. Somerville, ‘The Training of the Methodist Ministry in New South Wales, 1919–1939’, MA thesis, Macquarie University, Sydney, 1982.

<sup>9</sup> For leading figures involved, see, for example, P.M.T. Tilbrook, *The Life and Times of Dr. William George Torr*, Reverend Gordon Rowe Memorial Lecture (Adelaide: South Australian Methodist Historical Society, 1972), 13–16 (Brighton); I.F. McLaren, ‘Thomas Craike Rentoul (Rintoul), 1882–1945’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (hereafter *ADB*) (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988), 11: 365 (Otira).

necessary to know for all the lessons of life – the Bible.<sup>10</sup> Still, the Methodists were heavily committed to education, founding great schools, and worked hard disseminating literary knowledge through their famous Book Depots.<sup>11</sup>

In Sydney the training of Methodist ministers began humbly as a subsidiary development of Newington College for boys (from 1863), ‘to promote the intellectual improvement of the junior preachers’, and out of this the Revs Joseph Horner Fletcher (1823–90) and Charles John Prescott (1857–1946), both learned in Methodist theology and governance, developed the Stanmore Wesleyan Theological Institution (from 1881).<sup>12</sup> A full-fledged Methodist Theological College – named ‘Leigh’, after Australian Methodism’s founder-figure, the Rev Samuel Leigh – started in 1915 in the inner Sydney suburb of Enfield. Its first Principal, the Rev William E. Bennett (1872–1949), was a ‘diligent scholar’ who combined Fijian language and mission study with New Testament commentary while administering the (Methodist) Theological College and High School in Suva.<sup>13</sup> Leigh College was detached from a university setting because the New South Wales Methodists had not been ready to

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<sup>10</sup> For background on the founding Methodists as ‘men of one book’ (*homines unius libri*), still an honoured outlook, see B. Miller, *John Wesley: The World his Parish* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1943), 33. On Australia, see S. Piggin, ‘A History of Theological Education in Australia’, in *The Furtherance of Religious Beliefs: Essays on the History of Theological Education in Australia*, ed. G. Treloar, special issue of *Lucas* 19: 20, 1995–96 (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1997): 24, 41 n. 2.

<sup>11</sup> On Methodist schools, see, for example, Benson, *Century of Victorian Methodism*, esp. 288–9; and see below. On depots, see, for example, Methodist Church of Australasia, New South Wales Conference, *100: Methodist Book Depot (NSW), 1858–1958* ([Sydney: Methodist NSW Conference, 1958]) (lasting under another name until 2000) (Oral Testimony [=OT hereafter]: John Oldmeadow, Sept. 2010); [Methodist Church, Victoria], *The Centenary of the Methodist Book Depot, 1859–1959* (Melbourne: Methodist Book Depot, 1959).

<sup>12</sup> Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church, *Minutes of Conference* (1862) (quotation); cf. ‘R.G.P.’ ‘Leigh Has a History,’ *Vocatus* (Leigh College) (1956): 6–7; D.S. MacMillan, *Newington College 1863–1963* (Sydney: Newington, 1963), chs 1–2; and see J. H. Fletcher, *Sermons, Addresses and Essays* (Sydney: Wesleyan Book Depot, 1892); *The Second Century of Australian History and the Principles Most Likely to Influence it* (Melbourne: Mason, Firth & M’Cutcheon, 1888); C. J. Prescott, *Official Addresses* (Sydney: Epworth, 1912 [?]); *Matters for Methodists* ([Methodist] Book Depot, 1933); ‘Wesley and the Germans,’ *Journal and Proceedings of the Australasian Methodist Historical Society* 7 (pt. 1): 19 (1938): 311–18; P.L. Swain, *Charles John Prescott, Headmaster and Educationalist in New South Wales* (Sydney: Newington College, 1978).

<sup>13</sup> Wright and Clancy, *Methodists*, 41–2; J. Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea: Christianity in Oceania to World War II* (Geneva: WCC, 1992), 165–6.

follow other major churches in building a college at the University of Sydney, although it was only after the splendid (residential) Wesley College was built there (from 1917) that Leigh received its own impressive set of buildings at Enfield (from 1927).<sup>14</sup> To the south, Victorian and Tasmanian ministers were early taught by the pioneering missionary to Fiji and son of the first Australian-born Methodist minister, John Watsford (1820–1907), at the so-called Affiliated College, Melbourne, before the establishment of Queen's College in 1888.<sup>15</sup> In contrast to the New South Wales reactions, in Victoria the Wesleyan Methodist Church did accept a land grant (from the University of Melbourne) and agreed to build the residential College of Queen's on the condition that an integral part of its community would be theological students and teachers training them for ministry. Starting in a limited way, at least by 1890 students were fortunate enough to have access to Arts Faculty courses as part of their studies, and to experience life within a kind of microcosm of the whole society. This was 'a bold experiment', and 'had no parallel' in homeland Methodism.<sup>16</sup> Queen's soon became Australasian Methodism's 'Central Theological Institution' (1897); additional personnel and the founding of the ecumenical Melbourne College of Divinity in 1910 made for a solid programme of studies, taught largely by the first Master of Queen's, E.H. Sugden, noted theologian, biblical scholar and editor. The first theological professor at Queen's was appointed a decade later.<sup>17</sup>

In Brisbane and Adelaide comparable achievements had to wait. Up until 1897, Queensland's candidates for the ministry were sent to Stanmore, and thereafter to Queen's until 1913, the Melbourne paradigm then being adopted for King's College (founded 1912, with 'affiliation' to the University of Queensland). In South Australia,

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<sup>14</sup> G. Hickson, 'Leigh College – A Brief History,' *Leigh: The Magazine of Leigh Theological College Enfield* vol. 1 (1950): 7–8; J.S. Udy, 'The Tortuous Pilgrimage towards Union,' *Uniting* (26 April 1985): 11.

<sup>15</sup> J. Watsford, *Glorious Gospel Triumphs* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1900); R. Howe, 'Watsford, John, 1820–1907,' *ADB* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1976), 6, 61; and see N. Young, 'Queen's and the Methodist Theological Institutions', in *The Master: The Life and Work of Edward H. Sugden*, ed. R. Howe (Melbourne: Uniting Academic Press, 2009), 45–51.

<sup>16</sup> I. Breward, 'Historical Perspectives on Theological Education in Australasia', in *Furtherance of Religious Beliefs*, ed. Treloar, 13 (quotations); O. Parnaby, *Queen's College, University of Melbourne: A Centenary History* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1990), chs 1–2.

<sup>17</sup> Methodist Church of Australasia, *Minutes of General Conference, 1900–11* (Box 1336A): 13–14; cf. Parnaby, *Queen's College*, 14.

although during the 1880s some Methodist school-leavers had access to the pioneering Union College experiment in Protestant ministerial training, the Brighton Training Home served most candidates (from 1901), with the best sent interstate to Queen's until higher-level teaching was achievable at the new Wesley Theological College in Wayville, Adelaide, in 1927. The model became like Sydney's, with Lincoln College, as a separate residential institution attached to the University of Adelaide, opened as late as 1952.<sup>18</sup> In the West, at last, after heavy expenses in sending select ordinands to Queen's for two-year stints, along with 43 (broken) years of ministerial training by the Wesley College Theological Institution, South Perth (from 1927) and at the Barclay Theological Hall (from 1951), there arose Kingswood College, close to the University of Western Australia (from 1962). Kingswood definitely took inspiration (and some of its Masters) from Queen's.<sup>19</sup> As for the Northern Territory, in 1973, and thus just four years before the Uniting Church in Australia was born, the Methodist Overseas Mission cooperated in setting up The Joint Training Centre (later Nungalinya College), Darwin, to educate Aboriginal and Torres Strait adults 'for ministry and service'. Nungalinya strictly lies outside our scope of reference, though, because Northern Territory Methodists had already joined the United Church of North Australia (from 1946).<sup>20</sup>

## II. Sugden and Queen's College

By the turn of the twentieth century, Queen's College was pivotal for Methodist theological education and was especially noted for

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<sup>18</sup> On Brisbane, see esp. *Annals of King's College* (1938); T. Faragher, *Men and Masters: A Centenary of King's College within the University of Queensland* (Brisbane: King's College, 2012), 1–2, 10–12. On Adelaide, see W. Phillips, 'Union College Adelaide, 1872–1886: A Brief Experiment in United Theological Education', in *Furtherance of Religious Beliefs*, ed. Treloar, p. 65; *The Register* (Adelaide), 7 June 1909 (Brighton being alleged there to be 'the first of its kind in Australia.'). Arnold D. Hunt, *This Side of Heaven: A History of Methodism in South Australia* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1985), 258–9, 337–40; C. Shearer, *Lincoln College, The First Twenty-Five Years* (Adelaide: Lincoln College, n.d.).

<sup>19</sup> C.A. Jenkins, *Centenary of Methodism in Western Australia* (Perth: Methodist Book Depot, 1930), esp. 46–8; Smith, 'Transplanting Tradition', 40–41; J.H. Smith, 'A Brief History of Theological Education in Western Australia', in *Furtherance of Religious Beliefs*, ed. Treloar, 50.

<sup>20</sup> See esp. W.W. and S. Emilsen, 'The North,' in *The Uniting Church in Australia: The First 25 Years*, ed. W.W. and S. Emilsen (Melbourne: Circa, 2003), 67–9.

‘exporting’ the model of the dual-purpose college and its advantages to other states.<sup>21</sup> It was hardly insignificant that its first Master Edward H. Sugden produced a standard edition of Wesley’s *Standard Sermons*.<sup>22</sup> By 1902, when the various offshoots joined to form the Methodist Church of Australasia, little distinguished Methodism theologically but the use of Wesley’s *Notes upon the New Testament* (1754) and his four volumes of *Sermons* (1796–99) as a doctrinal standard.<sup>23</sup> Even before the famous 1932 Deed of Union in Great Britain, however, it was obvious that the Methodists were Protestants, subscribing to ‘the historic creeds’ of the Christian Church and upholding an ‘Evangelical faith’ that took the Bible as divine revelation but with liberty of individual interpretation, accepting justification by faith and not works, and stressing personal reliance on and relationship with Christ. The theology of Jacob Arminius on free and responsible decision to receive salvation was preferred to the Calvinist insistence on divine election ‘before the foundation of the world’.<sup>24</sup> In Australia, the Wesleyan Methodist camp was dominant and Whitefield-style predestinarianism barely existent, so that the call to freewill repentance, acceptance of the Gospel and embracing of ‘the holy life,’ albeit under the ‘necessity of Divine Grace,’ was preponderant.<sup>25</sup> As Australia’s first great theological educator, Sugden fitted the bill of this ‘practical Arminianism,’ as it has been dubbed, but very individually and with extraordinary erudition. His leaning was more humanist than most Methodist leaders, and if much of the distinctiveness about Wesley’s doctrine of sanctification got snatched away in the holiness movement, Sugden was very urbane in saintliness, eagerly served the Defence Department in wartime, joined the Masons, and, above

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<sup>21</sup> Since Queen’s is covered in detail in the previous issue of this journal it will not be considered in detail here. Readers are referred again to N. Young, ‘Ministerial Education in the Victoria and Tasmania Conference, 1874-1977,’ *Aldersgate Papers* 10 (September 2012): 95-110.

<sup>22</sup> For Sugden’s critical edition and reading of Wesley’s *Sermons* see G. O’Brien, ‘Reading Wesley’s *Sermons* in Edwardian Melbourne,’ in *The Master*, ed. R. Howe, pp. 109–24.

<sup>23</sup> J. Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (London: William Boyer); *Sermons on Several Occasions* (London: Epworth Press, various eds.)

<sup>24</sup> Ephesians 1:4.

<sup>25</sup> H. Watkin-Jones, *Methodist Churchmanship and Its Implications* (London: Epworth, 1946), 12–14. But see N. Gunson, ‘The Contribution of the Calvinistic Methodist Movement to the Church History of Australia,’ *Church Heritage* 4: 1 (1985): 28–59.

all, shone out among university academics. He naturally had his detractors.<sup>26</sup>

At Queen's, the Rev Edward Albiston became Professor of Theology and Principal of the Theological Hall in 1921 in order to ease the burden on the Master. With King's in Queensland the same separation of offices sadly came very late (1967), while with Kingswood in the West it applied straightaway; though in King's, any professorial appointment was exceptional, and at Kingswood absent. A main reason King's was built was to accommodate those training for ministry and to facilitate access to university courses.<sup>27</sup> In New South Wales and South Australia, by comparison, Leigh and Wesley Colleges and their study arrangements have always been under church-appointed principals and tutors, with involvement in the university system worked out through negotiations with and alongside other churches. For most of the twentieth century Methodist collaboration with Presbyterians and Congregationalists was strong. In Sydney, for instance, the Joint (later United) Faculty of Theology (UFT), centred at Harper House on St Andrew's College grounds at the University of Sydney, included Leigh College students from its inception in 1918. That meant a deal of travel (that did not apply to Queen's), even for the staff who had to participate in the combined Theological Hall, and even for those students not also undertaking university degrees, because all candidates, exclusively male until the sixties, domiciled at Enfield and traditionally forbidden to marry until after ordination, had to take transport to the campus.<sup>28</sup> By contrast, Adelaide's Wesley Theological College at first kept training and student movement within Methodist fences until 1930, and even then collaborated only with the Congregationalists for the next decade.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> B. Semmel, *The Methodist Revolution* (London: Heinemann, 1974), ch. 6 (quotation). Access to Arminius' writings by English speakers was strikingly limited; cf. Arminius, *Works*, trans. J. and W. Nichols (London: Thomas Baker, 1825–75), 3 vols. See also R. and B. Howe, 'E.H. Sugden and Civic Liberalism in Melbourne,' in *The Master*, ed. R. Howe, ch. 7; Breward, *A History of the Australian Churches*, 84.

<sup>27</sup> Faragher, *Men and Masters*, 2, 4, 13, 65, 69, 192; OT: Leigh Cook, founding Master, Kingswood, July 1969.

<sup>28</sup> Leigh College, Minutes, re: Joint Faculty, 1919–50 (UCA Archives, Synod of NSW and the ACT: Audrey Somerville Research Papers), Box 70178; cf. G. Barnes, *Doing Theology in Sydney: A History of United Theological College* (Adelaide: Openbook, 2000), 16. One student in the 1950s, Robert Lehr, was renowned for jogging between college and hall. (OT: Ruth Dicker, 5 April 2013).

<sup>29</sup> See Hunt, ed., *Number 20*, 32; cf. 52–3 for later collaborations.

Three recurring themes in Methodist theological education deserve some attention here: curriculum, standards, funding and ecumenical co-operation in the teaching process.<sup>30</sup>

### **III. Curriculum**

In Methodist programmes in all the states, the pattern of leading subjects was the same as at Queen's College: Old and New Testaments, Church History, Systematic Theology, Greek, and some Hebrew with additional courses in pastoral care. In most cases study was *in situ*. For Leigh College students in Sydney, however, most teaching took place at the United Faculty of Theology (UFT) Theological Hall at the university. As cooperative classes with Presbyterians and Congregationalists settled, two terms over three years of study involved travel to the university campus, but each third term was spent at Leigh itself, to concentrate on Methodist theology and laws, and on pastoral care.<sup>31</sup> Candidates who were doing degrees (such as the BD) through Methodist establishments, rather than just a licentiate, would choose extra relevant subjects from a university Arts programme, their subject loads being heavier and travel schedules different. Across the country well into the 1980s the favoured way of securing BD (Hons) was through the Melbourne College of Divinity (MCD); and in Sydney a renowned supplement for ministers from all denominations was the coursework in social sciences named the Diploma in Sociology (in the Anthropology Department, under the Rev. Prof. Adolphus Elkin).<sup>32</sup>

### **IV. Educational Level of Candidates**

In the post-war years those offering as candidates for ministry had first to be fully accredited Local Preachers. If then recommended by the local circuit, they were subsequently examined, both at Synod

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<sup>30</sup> Again, detail on Queen's College is omitted and the reader is referred to the earlier article referred to in footnote 21.

<sup>31</sup> King's College Archives, Box. memorab; OT: R.G. Peterson, 2 April 2013 for Leigh.

<sup>32</sup> P. Beirne, 'The Melbourne College of Divinity: A Selective Historical Overview', *Pacifica* 23 (2010): 127–36; C. Turney, U. Bygott and P. Chippendale, *Australia's First: A History of the University of Sydney, vol. 1: 1850–1939* (Sydney: University of Sydney, 1995), 518–20.

and Conference level, in Theology, Biblical Studies and Church History, and their capacity to lead worship and to preach was also assessed. When the results were to hand, acceptance came by a vote of all ministers at the Ministerial session of the Annual Conference.<sup>33</sup> In the late 1950s handy introductory textbooks to help were produced by London's Epworth Press, particularly Greville Lewis's edited *Approach to Christian Doctrine* (1957), in which a small host of British Methodist theologians clearly set Wesley's positions in the contexts of Patristic, mediaeval-scholastic and modern Protestant reflection.<sup>34</sup> The level of educational standards of Methodist ministers had been steadily rising, organisational procedures were tighter and preachers' knowledge of their own tradition generally sharper.

A common problem concerned differences in attitudes and aptitudes between those doing university degrees and those not. In Adelaide, with training set apart from the university, few did degrees, a large minority were happy with the Diploma course (DipDiv from MCD) extending over three years, and most did not make even that, but simply completed six years' 'training' and still became ministers in the end.<sup>35</sup> At King's in Brisbane, poignantly, between 1913 and 1934 only 30 out of 75 theological students took out their licentiates, but this was because the MCD LTh was only accessed from 1928, and from thereon anxieties over an under-educated, non-matriculated clergy eased.<sup>36</sup> In Sydney between the wars, most students faced a sharp contrast between the evangelical and often unquestioning tone in Leigh itself and the critical atmosphere in the Hall, where Presbyterian Professor Samuel Angus was causing a stir. Gordon Dicker, who on taking a university degree was developing early into a fine theologian, remembers being

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<sup>33</sup> Young, *Queen's College and its Theologs: Reflecting Church and Society*. Sir Halford Cook Lecture, 4, for Queen's College Friends of the Library Occasional Paper, 8 (Melbourne: Queen's College, 1999), 7-8.

<sup>34</sup> H. Cleaver, *An Approach to the Old Testament*; G.P. Lewis, *An Approach to the New Testament*; Lewis, ed., *An Approach to Christian Doctrine* (London: Epworth Press, 1954-55).

<sup>35</sup> [Rev.] C[harles R.] Bigg, 'Wesley (Theological) College, Adelaide', (unpublished memo., April, 2013), 1-2; but for later developments, Bigg, *An Ecumenical Adventure: A History of the Adelaide College of Divinity, 1979-2009* (Adelaide: Adelaide College of Divinity and Historical Society of the Uniting Church in South Australia, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> H.H. Trigge's reflections reported in *Queensland Methodist Times* (27 Sept. 1934); I. Gillman, 'Theological Education in Queensland: A History', *Colloquium* 37:1 (2005): 71.

frustrated in the early 1950s that for most Leigh collegians their self-expressed 'call by the Holy Spirit' did not go along with real diligence at study. Even by 1963, of the fifty men at Leigh only sixteen were engaged in university courses (six by that time at the University of New South Wales, founded 1949), and there was fear that narrow, 'previously held opinions' had not been dislodged by the useful 'earthquake' of university experience. But there was a detectable realisation that the expected levels of education of trainees were rising and were ready for more improvement.<sup>37</sup> As Leigh's Assistant Principal during the 1960s, Allan Loy spent time dispelling the illusion that a circuit minister should not be a theologian, reminding students that for John Wesley 'only the man who thinks theologically can preach with passion'.<sup>38</sup> But across the country, in Perth, laments grew louder over the unsatisfactory and uninviting nature of the Methodist training for ministers – only three people candidating per annum from 1946 to 1957, with a worrying 'amount of difference' in their intellect, and a residential college wanting for so long.<sup>39</sup>

## **V. Funding**

In Victoria and Tasmania, the Conference agreed to impose a levy on all circuits to fund theological education which made funding more secure. Elsewhere, state Conferences mostly budgeted for free theological training and board, although in Queensland there was an expectation that candidates pay their own way as much as they could. If in Sydney Leigh students also needed an allowance to travel between Enfield and the Theological Hall, the lion's share of fundraising drives for theological students had to do with the erection, expansion and improvements of the college from the 1920s to 70s. As costs increased, of course, the later that Methodist building projects were left the greater the expenses entailed, as in the cases of the move of King's to the new university campus at St Lucia in 1954 (the then Master Hubert Trigge travelling around Queensland to raise AU £54,000) and the building of Kingswood College (funded

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<sup>37</sup> OTs: Mrs Winifred Walker interview by B. Howe, 2004; Ruth and Gordon Dicker, 2 and 5 April 2013; L. Cliff, 'Theologians in a University,' *Vocatus* (1963): 13 (quotations); Anonymous pamphlet calling for ministers inside *Vocatus* (1963): 18–19.

<sup>38</sup> Loy, 'Theological Training,' *Vocatus* (1963): 10–11.

<sup>39</sup> S. Croker, 'The Church in Western Australia,' *Vocatus* (1958): 27.

with £100,000).<sup>40</sup> Special financial burdens along the way included travel and board costs for the relevant state Conferences sending candidates to study at Queen's, or at Leigh in Sydney keeping up the responsibility inherited from the tradition of hosting some students from Tonga and Papua New Guinea.<sup>41</sup>

## VI. Ecumenical Cooperation

By the 1950s, Congregationalist, Methodist and Presbyterian students increasingly studied together, and from the mid-60s all Queen's and Ormond College theological students were combined. With the formation of the United Faculty of Theology (UFT) in 1970, educating Catholic and Protestant students together, Melbourne became Australia's pre-eminent centre for theological studies.<sup>42</sup>

Elsewhere, the ecumenical story was different, although growing student access to the MCD from other states shows the national importance of the Victorian developments. But in Sydney, of course, the Methodists' cooperation in the Theological Hall went back to 1918, and Leigh staff (normally only two or three persons anyway) were expected to give lecture courses. Access to a (postgraduate) university degree of BD was there to be had for students of any affiliation by 1936, because the University of Sydney established a Board of Studies in Divinity to administer it (the University of Queensland thereafter deploying Arts Faculty departments to achieve the same result, and adding a Diploma of Divinity).<sup>43</sup> In Adelaide the Methodists and Congregationalists shared teachers in their courses from 1930, and in 1968 they merged their institutions into Parkin-Wesley College; whereas with Kingswood in the west,

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<sup>40</sup> See esp. Leigh College, Minutes, re: Building Fund 1919–28 (UCA Archives, Synod of NSW and the ACT: Audrey Somerville Research Papers), Box 70178; Corresp. Overall Development, 1945–75 (UCA Archives), Box 70171; Faragher, *Men and Masters*, pp. 53–6, 67–8; Croker, 'The Church in Western Australia,' 28.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, S. Gaius, 'The Ministry in New Britain,' *Vocatus* (1958): 8.

<sup>42</sup> For some of this story, see C. Sherlock, *Uncovering Theology: The Depth, Reach and Utility of Australian Theological Education* (Adelaide: ATF, 2009), 26–8.

<sup>43</sup> Barnes, *Doing Theology*, 13–14 (Sydney also administering an MTh in the late 1970s; OT: R.W. Hartley, 28 April 2013); Gillman, 'Theological Education in Queensland', 71, 74; M. Franzmann, 'Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands', in *Religious Studies: A Global View*, ed. G. Alles (New York: Routledge, 2008), 221. Queensland mainline Protestants moved towards a United Faculty of Theology in 1934, and joined with the Catholics to form Trinity Theological College in 1983, after the Uniting Church was formed.

its educational programme was merging with the Presbyterians' at St Columba College before union in 1977.<sup>44</sup>

For Methodist theologians, the opportunity to confer across Australasia and with thinkers from other traditions increased exponentially with the annual conferences of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools (from 1968), which, especially through the journal *Colloquium*, exposed the common interests and methods of those who forged the ecumenical training arrangements known today.<sup>45</sup>

## VII. Post-War Developments

Of Methodism's theological colleges, Queen's and King's were the only ones old enough to feel the effects of the Great War seriously,<sup>46</sup> and World War Two had less drastic effects on ministerial training, though some candidates 'heard the bugles of England' and did enlist.<sup>47</sup> Shortages of ministers resulted, yet one incidental benefit at Queen's was that select married candidates – ex-servicemen – were permitted to reside at Queen's during the week and study in the Theological Hall.<sup>48</sup> Methodism's Anglophile connections made its adherents typically respectful of the ANZAC tradition, although as one Leigh student put it at the characteristic annual Commemoration Service in 1950, if 'it takes war to call out the finest qualities of the human spirit,' the Kingdom of God has none of war's 'barbarity and horror', and urges rather a new 'patriotism' within an 'international brotherhood of nations'.<sup>49</sup> Some famous Methodist pacifists (such as wartime President-General John Burton and

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<sup>44</sup> Hunt, ed., *Number 20* (the college joining the degree-conferring Adelaide College of Divinity in 1979, after the Uniting Church was formed); Smith, 'Transplanting Tradition,' chs 4–5. (By 1999 Kingswood and St Columba's were administered jointly as Trinity).

<sup>45</sup> G.L. Barnes, *ANZATS: The First 35 Years* (Sydney: Sydney College of Divinity, 2007).

<sup>46</sup> For the response of the Victorian and Tasmanian Conference to the Great War see G. O'Brien, "The Empire's Titanic Struggle": Victorian Methodism and the Great War,' *Aldersgate Papers* 10 (September 2012): 50-66.

<sup>47</sup> Methodist Church of Australasia, *Minutes of the Victorian and Tasmanian Conference*, 1941 (for indicative quotation); Faragher, *Men and Masters*, esp. 9, 17–20.

<sup>48</sup> See Young, 'Ministerial Education in the Victorian/Tasmanian Conference,' 100–105.

<sup>49</sup> P.K. Davis, address in Leigh College Chapel, Anzac Day, 1950, in *Leigh* 1 (1950): 18.

emergent preacher Alan Walker) were having their effect;<sup>50</sup> and when the Cold War developed Leigh's Senior Student Gordon Dicker warned against the smug conclusion that 'the Western world would survive', or that the Church think itself on the side of military victors. Eventually theologians would be marching against Australia's involvement in questionable wars, the Rev. Dr Robert Maddox of Kingswood, for one, memorably out in front through Perth's central business district in 1970.<sup>51</sup>

The visiting 1941 Cato lecturer, Dr Lynn Harold Hough, Dean of Divinity from Drew University (New Jersey), offered to make an annual tuition scholarship at Drew available to a graduating Methodist.<sup>52</sup> Colin Williams was the first to benefit from this (Drew BD, 1947–50 and PhD, 1954–58), followed by Norman Young (Drew BD and PhD, 1954–59). Williams and Young returned to Queen's, famously acquitting themselves as Professors of Theology (1947–50 and 1970–95 respectively), Young first cutting his teeth as a teacher at King's. In Queensland he was Deputy Master to Ian Grimmett, the sequence of whose degrees best illustrate what was happening: BD (MCD), MA (UQld), followed by masters and doctoral degrees in Systematic Theology from Union Theological Seminary (Columbia University, New York). Leading lights in the development of Sydney's Leigh College, Enfield in Sydney, Allan Loy, Robert Maddox and Gordon Dicker, also gained American doctorates (Yale, Harvard, Union), and American Methodist university opportunities diversified after 1948.<sup>53</sup> The return of these 'high-flyers' to lecture as theological educators paved the way for many more, to various American and British universities.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> A.W. Thornley, 'John Wear Burton (1875–1970)', *ADB* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1979), 7: 497–8; Don Wright, *Alan Walker: Conscience of the Nation* (Adelaide: Openbook, 1997), 34.

<sup>51</sup> Dicker, 'Election and the Church', *Leigh* vol. 3 (1952): pp. 15–17; G. Trompf, personal experience, Perth, 1970.

<sup>52</sup> The title of his lecture, and its later expanded published version was *Adventures in Understanding* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941). As was customary at the time for Cato Lecturers, Hough also gave addresses in other centres in Australia.

<sup>53</sup> See Methodist Church Division of Educational Institutions, *A Survey of Ten Theological Schools Affiliated with the Methodist Church* (Nashville: [Methodist Church, United States], 1948).

<sup>54</sup> N. Young, *Queen's College and its Theologs*, 9–11; Faragher, *Men and Masters*, 67–72, 93–94. See also I. Grimmett, Pref. to 'The Master Bids Farewell', *Kingsman* (1985): 6; C. Williams, R. Maddox, A.W. Loy, et al., *Religious Studies in a Modern University: Public Lectures given by the School of Divinity* (Sydney: [University of Sydney], 1976).

In 1963 Leigh's Principal recognised that his college had enjoyed a five per cent rise of candidatures over the previous four years, there being 186 theological students in Australia in 1963, 42 more than in 1960. The establishing of the BD at the Universities of Sydney and Queensland also made very high credentials available.<sup>55</sup> Yet just when the hopes of the former years appeared realisable, ironically, extraordinary problems arose. Unpredicted social upheavals led to radical challenges against many traditional views, with anti-authoritarian attitudes producing new visions of alternative living, early feminism, and opposition to Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.<sup>56</sup> Very soon the traditionally conceived 'nature and relevance of the ordained ministry', and 'the place of local congregations in relation to the Church's mission', came under severe scrutiny.<sup>57</sup>

What was worse, novel theological arguments for 'secularisation' took God's gift of freedom to humankind to include human independence and a 'coming of age', with the Creator cutting loose his parental ties and thus religious restraints. In a consequent unsettling of many younger ministers, wholesale resignations followed, and about half the ordinands in the Victorian and Tasmanian Conference were lost during 1967–69, coinciding with a marked decline in church membership among the under-forties. With such adverse developments it was natural for the General Conference to ask (by 1967) where the age-old 'idea of sacrifice' had gone for those preparing to be men of God, and financial help was soon only offered for theological training not for time doing university degrees.<sup>58</sup> Through transformative times, teachers were adjusting as best they could to adapt to 'changing patterns,' encouraging 'specialist skills' in candidates to prepare them for 'expressing their faith in tangible ways' in factories, hospitals and other institutions.<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile in the more traditional West the crisis was not really felt until well into the 1970s, and there at Kingswood, just prior to union, college life reproduced much of what

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<sup>55</sup> S.R. Bowyer-Hayward, 'The Principal Speaks of Missing Persons', *Vocatus* (1963): 4–5; Faragher, *Men and Masters*, 13 (30 King's theologians in 1960).

<sup>56</sup> Young, 'Ministerial Education,' 105–06.

<sup>57</sup> Quoting Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church, *Minutes of the Victorian and Tasmanian Conference*, 1966.

<sup>58</sup> Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church, *Minutes of the Victorian and Tasmanian Conference*, 1967.

<sup>59</sup> Quite early in this issue was R.G. Peterson, 'Changing Patterns in the Christian Ministry', *Vocatus* (1963): pp. 22–33.

used to apply in Queen's back in Victoria, where the previously impressive College/Hall paradigm of theological education was finishing its course.

The General Conference of 1966 determined that women should be accepted as candidates for the ordained ministry. The Victorian and Tasmanian Conference was quick to receive its first women candidates, and although they could not reside in the college until 1973, they trained within the Hall at Queen's. It made up for the common gripe that deaconesses, many of whom conducted services, had a longstanding role in Methodist life yet were barely trained in theology. For years the pleas of New South Wales outback deaconess Shirley Dunbar to be so trained went unheeded, a tragedy for which a formal apology eventually had to be issued in 2005.<sup>60</sup> Outside Victoria, however, women candidates before 1977 were very few, Methodists being not so inclined to encourage female ministers (when compared, say, to the Congregationalists). In New South Wales there were only two ordained female ministers by that year, although out of 38 theological students six were women.<sup>61</sup> Significant female leaders under the new system, though, were only to achieve high office after union – Shirley Maddox (1994) and layperson Margaret Reeson (2000–2002), for examples, as state Moderators. A by now famous Methodist woman leader, Tasmanian the Rev Dorothy [McRae-]McMahon (1934– ), was working administratively for the National and World Councils of Churches while beginning candidature with the Methodists in 1976 (but being ordained as a Uniting Church minister in 1982).<sup>62</sup>

## **VIII. Methodist Theologians**

Australian Methodist theological educators left their stamp over the years, although most seemed too restrained by pressures of institutional duty and feelings of isolation to make their mark in

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<sup>60</sup> 'Uniting Church Rights an Old Sexist Wrong', *Impact* (Sydney) (Easter 2006): 12 (on the Dunbar case); cf. Breward, *History of the Churches*, 210, 214 (on the larger issue).

<sup>61</sup> R.W. Hartley, comp., 'The Ministerial Index: Methodist Appointments in New South Wales', *Journal and Proceedings of the Australasian Methodist Historical Society* 97 (1977): 1,453–1,524, esp. 1,523–4.

<sup>62</sup> OT: esp. Rev. Elizabeth Walker, 24 April 2013; and see D. McRae-McMahon, *Memoirs of Moving On: A Life of Faith, Passion, and Resilience* (Sydney: Jane Curry, 2004).

publishing.<sup>63</sup> Here we will focus on those who are well-known figures in the history of Australian Christian intellectual life.<sup>64</sup> We will only consider figures whose major work belongs to the first three-quarters of the twentieth century, leading up to the formation of the Uniting Church.

In Australian Methodism high-level theologising was fitful but not uninteresting. Queen's first theological professor, Edward Albiston (1866–1961), was obviously a brilliant and inspiring teacher. Perhaps the Great War seemed to turn him into a kind of 'Methodist Quaker', restraining his writer's hand, but he doughtily defended a critical approach to Bible exposition (memorably foiling arch-conservative W.H. Fitchett, who opposed using Peake's Commentary); and his interest in personal spirituality and less institutionalised church life heralded the arrival of the college's well-known 'mystical Master', Dr Raynor Johnson.<sup>65</sup> At King's the first Master, Oxford-trained the Rev M. Scott Fletcher (1868–1947), son of Joseph Fletcher of Sydney's Stanmore Institution, produced his remarkable *Psychology of the New Testament* (1912), positing inter alia that there were no better means of keeping one's sanity than by following Christ's teachings. Fletcher went on to help an Australian readership to understand apocalypticism in its ancient context, and was active as a teacher about intellectual history for the Workers' Educational Association.<sup>66</sup> The writings of King's second Master, Leslie E. Bennett (1882–1969) nicely complemented part of his predecessor's opus, his impressive *Realm of God* (1920) deftly retrieving Christian hope in a finally fulfilled Kingdom of God from higher critics' dismissals and chiliasts' over-enthusiasm. Pursuing a distinctly Methodist middle way, he welcomed the best of human

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<sup>63</sup> Such a figure as Leigh's Principal Bowyer-Hayward, as a special case, spent years teaching NT Greek, never expecting on the basis of his Cambridge MA to add anything to language study. King's Rev. Prof. Trigge (1889–1965) was overwhelmed with administration, fundraising and teaching, even though he was appointed Professor of Biblical Exegesis in the Hall (1955) and was later a founder of the university Board of Studies in Divinity.

<sup>64</sup> For Methodist scholars who contributed beyond the discipline of theology see Garry W. Trompf, 'Australian Methodist Scholars,' in *Australian Methodism: A History*, ed. Glen O'Brien and Hilary Carey (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 225–41.

<sup>65</sup> E. F. Osborn, 'Albiston, Arthur Edward (1866–1961),' *ADB* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1979), 7: 28–9; Breward, *History of the Australian Churches*, 120–21. (Note Albiston being President-General in 1938).

<sup>66</sup> M. S. Fletcher, *The Psychology of the New Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1912); *Hellenism and Judaism as Reflected in the Apocalyptic Movement during the Maccabean Period* (Sydney: Penfold, 1926); *The Evolution of Modern Thought: 21 Lectures* (Brisbane: WEA, 1924).

progress while upholding the Bible's 'ringing message' that the last 'triumph' is God's.<sup>67</sup> If Fletcher was a Sydney 'export,' Bennett was a Tasmanian and a product of opportunities offered from Melbourne (including the London BD); and another Tasmanian, the Rev Dr W. Frank Hambly (1908–72), one of Sugden's last students and 'emissaries', became the first Master of Adelaide's Lincoln College (1952–65), his long researches into John's Gospel, though curtailed by administrative duties, eventually bearing fruit.<sup>68</sup>

Easily the most influential Methodist theological educator mid-century was Bendigo-born the Rev. Prof. Calvert Barber (1893–1967), succeeding Albiston at Queen's. Wise and long-serving (1937–59), and nurturing Williams and Young who followed him, Barber addressed the multi-religious context and the new intellectual and social challenges of post-war Australia. He completed his London doctorate on beliefs about sin in the great religions, and his wartime stretcher-bearing experience made him terribly aware of evil. Even though he began with an interest in natural theology he later faced Barthian suspicions toward all kinds of naturalism in full swing. Still, benefiting from attending the 1936 World Congress of Faiths (London), Barber bequeathed one of the earliest Australian exercises in Comparative Religion, and was in a good position to undertake some of the most penetrating criticisms of evolutionary social theory (and its racist implications) in his lecturing.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, when animal pathologist Harold A. Woodruff (and by then prominent layman) promoted a Methodist Social Justice Committee and a pamphlet series to go with it, Barber was quick to prepare readers to see an end of war and to learn the lessons of history – that every

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<sup>67</sup> Perhaps the first known extensive study of the Kingdom of God preferring the usage 'Realm': L.E. Bennett, *The Realm of God* (New York: G.H. Doran, 1920); cf. *The Queenslander*, 19 Jan. 1924: 3.

<sup>68</sup> Bennett, who became President of the NSW Conference, was the son of a President of the Victorian and Tasmanian Conference: *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 Feb. 1933: 13. And see Hambly, 'The Doctrine of the Church in the Fourth Gospel', unpublished Bevan Memorial Lecture (Adelaide: Parkin College, 1954); 'The Church in the Fourth Gospel', PhD diss., MCD, Melbourne, 1963; 'Creation and Gospel: A Brief Comparison of Genesis 1:1–2:4 and John 1:1–2:12', *Studia Evangelica*, 5, ed. F.L. Cross, *Texte und Untersuchungen* 103 (Berlin: Akademie, 1968), 69–74. Cf. I. Forbes (with A.P. Moore), *A History of Lincoln College* (Adelaide: Openbook, 2007), 24–9.

<sup>69</sup> C. Barber, 'The Concept of Sin in the Great Religions of the East,' PhD diss., University of London, London, 1938; "'The Social Organism' Theory and its Bearing on Sociological Theory', unpublished lectures, Uniting Church Archives, Esternwick, Vic; Calvert Barber, Box 2; B. Barber, 'Calvert Barber (1893–1967): Methodist, Apologist, Ecumenist', *UCA Historical Society* 9: 2 (2002): 4–7.

civilisation 'began in promise, rose to its climax, and fell on ruins because it failed to learn the lessons of righteousness'.<sup>70</sup>

In reconsidering the bases of the faith, Methodist theologians were addressing massive changes in the history of Western consciousness. In Barber's wake, Gippsland-raised the Rev. Prof. Colin Williams (1921–2000) gained quick renown for filling an obvious gap with his book on the relevance of Wesley for contemporary times. While his Queensland counterpart Ian Grimmett had been more interested in influences upon Wesley historically, Williams asked what claims the Methodist founder had to address new challenges of the times.<sup>71</sup> His very intelligent attention to secularisation (as a Christian humanist) and to key social issues (such as racial and religious conflict), made him a good choice for the Deanship of America's great Divinity School at Yale (1969–79).<sup>72</sup> Concentrating here on his role in Australia, Williams' lecturing adapted Barber's interests in the direction of modern thought from the nineteenth century, improving on it as a proud product of the 'Melbourne history school'. But he focused on the pressing question of authority and the competing claims of revelation, reason (and science) and recorded history, defending 'the Lordship of Christ' in bringing finality to cosmic meaning.<sup>73</sup> A worthy choice to be Australia's Methodist delegate at the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Evanston, Illinois (1954), he served again in New Delhi (1961) and Uppsala (1969).<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> C. Barber, *The Sovereignty of God* (Melbourne: Methodist Commission on Reconstruction, 1943); A.H. Wood, *'Not Lost but Gone Before': Memories of 100 Christian Men and Women* (Melbourne: Meerit Publications, 1987), 190.

<sup>71</sup> I. Grimmett, 'The Influence of English Thought of the Eighteenth Century on the Life and Teachings of the Reverend John Wesley, etc.', MA diss., University of Queensland, Brisbane, 1947; C. Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today: A Study of the Wesleyan Tradition in the Light of Current Theological Dialogue* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1961), yet note Williams' interest in historical questions, as in the App., 207–42.

<sup>72</sup> See, for instance, C.W. Williams, *What in the World?* (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ, 1964); *Faith in a Secular Age* (London: Fontana, 1966); *Black and White Together: The Race Struggle in the U.S.A.* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1973); 'Jerusalem: A Universal Cultural and Historical Resource' (Paper prepared for Aspen Institute of Humanistic Studies), Palo Alto, Ca., 1975.

<sup>73</sup> Williams, 'Unpublished Lecture Notes, etc.', ([collat. by] G.F. Fairhall et al.) (Melbourne: Executive of the Theological Students Society for Queen's College, 1963) (mimeograph, Sugden Collection, Queen's College), pts. 1–3, esp. 2, and 163–75.

<sup>74</sup> For this and more I rely on B. Howe, 'Colin Williams', unpublished paper delivered to the [second] workshop on 'Methodism in Australia', Queen's College, University of Melbourne, 9 Dec. 2011.

Williams' one-time colleague at Queen's, Cambridge-trained the Rev. Prof. Eric Osborn (1922–2007), whose pomposity irksomely challenged Williams' own formidable persona, achieved renown for his 1957 study of Clement of Alexandria, who was brilliantly engaged philosophically in the polyphony of Hellenistic religious life. Osborn emerged as the veritable Southern Hemispheric doyen of Patristic Studies during the 1970s, and even kept slightly ahead of his teacher (later Sir) Henry Chadwick's output, pounding out five other leading books on the pre-Nicene Fathers and attaining an Emeritus Professorship at La Trobe University.<sup>75</sup> While a strong ecumenist, Osborn never forgot Methodist interests,<sup>76</sup> but his attainments and output were unprecedented.

Protagonists for Australasian Methodist Mission concerns and/or experience sat high in the teaching ranks. The most productive of Adelaide's Principals at Wesley College, namely Arthur Blacket (1901–72), wrote sensitively on Fiji's Indian Christians, though again it was another Queen's academic, L. Douglas Fullerton (1918–2008), who shone more brightly as a teaching missiologist. Authoritative on the history of Fijian church-state relations, he secured UFT's professorship of Christian Ethics (1977–83) because of his cross-cultural experience, even in medical issues.<sup>77</sup> After Leigh had been run in the 1960s by Winston O'Reilly, the last great (but little published) 'mine of information' on Methodist affairs, the arrival of Robert Maddox (1931–82) as college Principal, presented a very special phenomenon outside the prestigious Victorian sphere.

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<sup>75</sup> E. Osborn, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957); *Justin Martyr* (Tübingen, J.C. Mohr, 1973); *Ethical Patterns in Early Christian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); *The Beginning of Christian Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); *The Emergence of Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); D. T. Runia, 'Eric Francis Osborn: A Tribute', *Vigiliae Christianae* 58 (2004): pp. 242–55.

<sup>76</sup> E. Osborn, *Church Union Now* (Melbourne: Methodist Publishing House, 1964); *The Faith of the Gospel* (Melbourne: Methodist Publishing House, 1964); *Word and History: Three Lectures in New Testament Themes*, Lectures in Biblical Studies 1 (Perth: University of Western Australia, 1967).

<sup>77</sup> A.H. Blacket, *The Growth of the Indian Church in Fiji within the Mission of the Methodist Church of Australasia* ([Adelaide]: Wesley College, SA, 1960); obit., Methodist Church of Australasia, *Minutes of the South Australia Conference*, 1972; L.D. Fullerton, 'From Christendom to Pluralism in the South Seas: Church-State Relations in the Twentieth Century', PhD diss., Drew University, Madison, 1969; for analysis, see J.E. Bush, 'Claiming a Christian State Where None Exists: Church and State in the Republic of Fiji', *Pacifica* 12 (1995): 57, 63–4. Cf. Fullerton Obit.: Victorian Institute for Forensic Medicine, Annual Report (2007–2008): 13.

Maddox emerged as one of Australia's finest New Testament scholars, considering *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (1982) and his stint as a Humboldt Fellow working with Ferdinand Hahn in Munich.<sup>78</sup> An experienced theological educator (moving from Kingswood), Maddox was a key Methodist visionary, along with his colleague the Rev Dr Allan Loy (1920–2005), behind the United Faculty of Theology at Sydney (now part of Charles Sturt University), though he died tragically before its complete actualisation at North Parramatta.<sup>79</sup> The involvement of Osborn and Maddox in the Australia New Zealand Association of Theological Studies (with its journal *Colloquium*), in the *Australian Biblical Studies Review* and in important *Prudentia* conferences can hardly be underestimated. Neither can the ecumenical involvement of Victorian Norman Young and New South Welshman Gordon Dicker.

Young (1930–), the first Australian Methodist to pen a positive work about a German higher-critical theologian, Rudolf Bultmann, was appointed foundation Professor in Melbourne's UFT (1969) and held various Visiting Professorships (including Yale, Drew, Princeton and Cambridge [UK]). He was Methodism's theological frontrunner in negotiations towards the Uniting Church, and was for twenty years a member of the World Methodist/Roman Catholic International Commission.<sup>80</sup> Dicker (1930–), for his part, being the first Methodist missionary to work with a non-Methodist church (in West Timor), offered advanced thinking about multi-cultural ministry and comparative Protestant theology for the emergent Uniting Church (heading Sydney's United Theological College, 1989–96).<sup>81</sup> He long supported Maddox and his widow Shirley

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<sup>78</sup> R. Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1982); cf. his *Witnesses to the Ends of the Earth: The Pattern of Mission in the Book of Acts* (Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1984); F. Hahn, *Historical Investigation and New Testament Faith: Two Essays*, trans. and ed. R. Maddox (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

<sup>79</sup> Barnes, *Doing Theology in Sydney*, 26–31; G. Lilburne, 'Robert James Maddox (1931–1982): Australian Theologian', *Uniting Church Studies* 12: 1 (2006): 19–36.

<sup>80</sup> See especially, N. Young, *History and Existential Theology: The Role of History in the Thought of Rudolf Bultmann* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969); *Introducing the Basis of Union* (Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1971); *Creator, Creation, and Faith* (London: Collins, 1976). For a festschrift on Young, see S. Winter, ed. *Immense, Unfathomed, Unconfined: Essays on the Grace of God in Honour of Norman Young* (Melbourne: Uniting Academic Press, 2013).

<sup>81</sup> G. Dicker, *Children of Timor* (Sydney: Sydney Methodist Church of Australasia, 1960); 'The Concept of "Simul Justus et Peccator" in Relation to the Thought of Luther, Wesley, and Bonhoeffer, and its Significance for a Doctrine of the Christian Life', PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1969; *Faith with*

(1929–) in bringing theological and expository issues to the people in the quarterly *With Love to the World* (1976–), and Dicker was game enough to defend in-vitro fertilisation in public debate, supported by his wife Ruth (1933–), who taught New Testament Greek in her own right.<sup>82</sup> The theological leadership in Queensland had a less adventurous soul in Ian Grimmett (1915–99), a bastion of the older Methodist orientation.<sup>83</sup>

Outside the Theological Halls, we find University of Sydney biologist Prof Charles Birch (1918–2009) making himself highly useful to the WCC as key theological defender of ‘the integrity of Creation’; and he became outspoken in his environmentalist concerns over Australia’s future. He joined American Methodist John R. Cobb, Jr to cultivate an international forum of ‘Ecological Theology’, and with coveted Templeton Prize money he set up a public lecture series on religion and science from 1991.<sup>84</sup> Birch had eventually pitched himself against Methodist orthodoxy and an interventionist God, often acerbically. As Vice-Master of Wesley College at the University of Sydney, and also active in the Methodist-founded Wayside Chapel, he claimed new scientific discoveries necessitated a ‘post-modern’ theological outlook, with the way open to engage in other religions with environmental sensitivities and compassion for all living things.<sup>85</sup> Facing the same challenges of

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*Understanding* (Sydney: Unichurch, 1981). Dicker was a case study contributor to A.F. and R.A. Evans and D.A. Roozen, eds, *The Globalization of Theological Education* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993).

<sup>82</sup> OT: R. Dicker, Nov. 2012; April 2013; cf. also G. Dicker, ‘Kerygma and Australian Culture: The Case of the Aussie Battler’, in *Towards Theology in an Australian Context*, ed. V.C. Hayes (Adelaide: AASR, 1979), ch. [5]; Dicker, ‘Australia: Sacred Sites,’ in *Human Rights: A Dialogue between the First and Third Worlds*, eds R.A. and A.F. Evans (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), ch. 4.

<sup>83</sup> For indications, I. Grimmett, ‘A Trinitarian Approach to the Doctrine of the Kingdom of God’, PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1957; and I. Grimmett, ‘William Moore, 1821–1893’, in *ADB* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1974), 5: 280; cf. Ministerial Retirements and Memorials, Uniting Church Qld Synod, 1999, vol. 1, addendum.

<sup>84</sup> C. Birch, *Nature and God* (London: SCM, 1965); ‘Nature, Humanity and God in Ecological Perspective,’ in *Faith and Science in an Unjust World: Report of the World Council of Churches’ Conference on Faith, Science and the Future*, ed. R.L. Shinn, MIT, 1979 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), 62–73.; C. Birch and J. B. Cobb, *The Liberation of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); C. Birch, W. Eakin and J.B. Daniel, eds, *Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), esp. chs 5, 13 and Cobb’s Afterword.

<sup>85</sup> R. Hughes, ‘Charles Birch: Full Interview Transcript’, accessed 5 November 2013, <http://www.australianbiography.gov.au/subjects/birch/intertext1.html>; Birch, ‘Eight

relativism and the weakening of institutional bonds, more distinctly Methodist pragmatists, such as American educated the Rev. Drs Geoffrey Peterson (1925–) and Denham Grierson (1935–), made valuable contributions as pastoral theologians.<sup>86</sup> Others such as Clifford Symons and Bruce Gentle played interesting if minor roles in pamphleteering Methodist theological outlooks to the pews.

## IX. Widening Intellectual Horizons

Australian Methodist theological attention was traditionally very Anglophile, so brief reflection should be allowed to those helping to break this cultural barrier. In Sugden's day, how much did he benefit from the presence of layman Prof. Boyce Gibson (1869–1935), who helped service ordinands' classes in logic. As Professor of Philosophy, Gibson (along with his wife) was also the first to introduce German personal idealism and Husserlian phenomenology to Australia.<sup>87</sup> German tutor to the colleges, the Lutheran-turning-Methodist Otto Krome (1863–1917) brought knowledge of Goethe and Germanic high culture, his skills quickly recognised for Methodist schooling. While headmaster of Melbourne's Methodist Ladies College, however, neither the combined efforts of Sugden and Fitchett could save him from parents' and public opprobrium during the Great War for being a 'Kraut'.<sup>88</sup> Still, one senses the inception of theological pursuit among Methodist women with Krome's daughters (one being headmistress of two well-known girls' schools) and also with Sugden's daughter, his biographer.<sup>89</sup>

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Fallacies in the Modern World and Five Axioms for a Post-modern Worldview', *Perspectives in Science and Medicine* 32 (1988): 122–30; C. Birch, *On Purpose* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1990); C. Birch, *Regaining Compassion for Humanity and Nature* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1993).

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, G. Peterson, *Conscience and Caring* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); *Anger: Basic Questions from the Bible and Daily Living* (Sydney: Geoffrey Peterson, 2012); D. Grierson, *Uluru Journey: An Exploration into Narrative Theology* (Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1996).

<sup>87</sup> See esp. B. Gibson (with A. Klein), *The Problem of Logic*, rev. ed. (1908; repr. London: A. & C. Black, 1930); Gibson, *God with Us: A Study in Religious Idealism* (London: A. & C. Black, 1909).

<sup>88</sup> For the story, see A.G.T. Zainu'ddin, *They Dreamt of a School: A Centenary History of Methodist Ladies College Kew, 1882–1982* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1982), ch. 4, and esp. 118, 145

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, I. Southall, *The Story of The Hermitage: The First Fifty Years of the Geelong Church of England's Grammar School* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1956);

In Sydney, the great Adolf Deissmann's student Presbyterian the Rev. Prof. Samuel Angus, a leading authority on the cultural atmosphere of New Testament times, generated great attention at the Theological Hall, much to many Methodists' consternation when he was widely accused of heretical opinions.<sup>90</sup> His successor the Rev. Prof. John McIntyre was much more acceptable, consistently relaying information about Continental (especially Swiss Protestant) theological developments to Methodist students; and philosopher of religion the Rev. Prof. Crawford Miller did the same regarding post-Kantian German thought.<sup>91</sup> In Melbourne, in more recent times, the Indian-born son of a Conference President Ian Weeks (1938– ), who became Head of Religious Studies at Deakin University, used his command of both Plato and Continental existentialism to support Methodist theological thinkers, including Bruce Barber (1937– ), Calvert's son, who became Dean of UFT, Melbourne.<sup>92</sup>

The story of Methodist theological endeavour is one of steady educational betterment and public influence, as Methodist leaders worked through their own tradition's inherent ecumenical possibilities towards the remarkable unity achieved in the Uniting Church in Australia.

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M.F. Sugden, *Edward H. Sugden: A Pen Portrait of the First Master of Queen's College, University of Melbourne* (Melbourne: Lothian, 1941).

<sup>90</sup> S. Emilsen, *A Whiff of Heresy: Samuel Angus and the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1991), esp. p. 173.

<sup>91</sup> See, for example, McIntyre, 'Theological Existence Today', *Leigh* vol. 2 (1951): pp. 20–21; R. Campbell, 'The Philosophical Environment for Theologising in Australia', in *Australian and New Zealand Religious History 1788–1988*, ed. R. Withycombe (Canberra: ANZSTS, 1988), pp. 33–43.

<sup>92</sup> For example, I. Weeks, with D. Reid, eds, *A Thoughtful Life: Essays in Philosophical Theology*, H. Wardlaw Festschrift (Adelaide: AFT, 2006), esp. ch. 14; cf. B.L. Barber and D. Neville, eds, *Theodicy and Eschatology* (Adelaide: AFT, 2005).

# **AUSTRALIAN METHODIST ECUMENISM**

**James Haire**

This article has been peer reviewed

*This article surveys the Australian Methodist involvement in ecumenism from 1902, when the Methodist Church of Australasia was formed in a union of Methodist churches, until the formation of the Uniting Church in 1977. It traces the Methodist commitment to ecumenism to the 'catholic spirit' of its founder John Wesley and in the international ecumenical context. It argues that, though there were many setbacks, Australian Methodists never gave up on the vision of full organic union with other Protestants and were remarkably consistent in their advocacy of such union. The influence of the Faith and Order Committee of the World Council of Churches and the thought of Lesslie Newbigin are shown to have made a significant contribution to Australian Methodist ecumenism.*

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When he was ordained to the Methodist ministry in 1949, the Reverend Harvey Perkins, son of a Methodist minister in Tasmania, a General Secretary of the Australian Council of Churches, a minister of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) and a lifelong ecumenist, is reported to have said: 'I was born a Methodist; I pray that I do not die one.'<sup>1</sup> The Methodist Church of Australasia, united in 1902, was from that time until the inauguration of the UCA in 1977 strongly committed to ecumenism.

As we observe the progress of Methodism in Australia in relating to other Christians during these years it is important to realise the deep sense of what would later be termed ecumenism at the very heart of Methodism. Along with this sense of the need for ecumenical cooperation there was also strong Methodist pragmatism. Thus, at one end of the spectrum there was a sense of call to co-operation between the churches, particularly between Protestant churches, and co-operation with inter-denominational agencies, such as the Sunday School Union. At the other end of the spectrum there was the desire for full, organic church union.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Brown, Eulogy, Memorial Service for Harvey Perkins, Canberra City Uniting Church, 29 November 2012.

## **I. Wesley, Methodism and Ecumenism**

What was later to be termed ecumenism lay as central in John Wesley's theology. Since the time of Wesley, Methodism had been remarkably affirming of other Christian traditions. In relation to European Pietism, Gordon Rupp puts it very clearly:

[I]n Pietist Moravianism under Zinzendorf and in Wesley's Methodism the 'koinonia' – 'the fellowship' – came into its own, and gave something to the ethos of Methodism, which it has never entirely lost and which even now must constitute one of its most treasured gifts to a united Church...both stressed the inwardness of the true Church, as a union of believing hearts in Christ – and this is the clue to Zinzendorf's concern for Christian unity, and John Wesley's doctrine of a catholic spirit.<sup>2</sup>

Of course it is true that Wesley stood very clearly within the Protestant tradition of the Church of England. Nevertheless, we see a catholic and ecumenical spirit right at the heart of John Wesley's work.<sup>3</sup> He was much more open to other Christians than the Calvinists or the Independents of his time. Moreover, his concept of sanctification sees continuity between the saintly life of Methodist societies and the saintly life of the departed faithful. In fact, there were many commonalities between, for example, the holy life of Methodism and the holy life of the Benedictine Order. Here lies Wesley's theological basis for what would later have been termed ecumenism. This is further brought out, for example, in his exposition of John 13:14 on Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet:

He designed to teach them the great lesson of humble love, as well as to confer inward purity upon them. And hereby He teaches us (1) in every possible way to assist each other in attaining that purity; (2) to wash each other's feet, by performing all sorts of good offices to each other, even those of the lowest kind, when opportunity serves, and the necessity of any calls for them.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, though loyal to the English Reformation, he was prepared to reach out to Catholics in significant ways. His 'Letter to a Roman Catholic', written in 1749 in Ireland, is marked by an irenic

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<sup>2</sup> G. Rupp, 'Introductory Essay', in R. Davies and G. Rupp, eds., *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, vol. 1* (London: Epworth Press, 1965), xxxvi.

<sup>3</sup> J. Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1905), 726–727.

<sup>4</sup> Wesley, *Explanatory Notes*, 362.

tone and an acknowledgment of common doctrine with Catholics in many areas. Wesley pleaded for Catholics and Protestants to ‘reason together’ rather than engage in ‘endless jangling about opinions.’<sup>5</sup> In sharp contrast to the majority of Protestants of the time, he recognised Catholics as Christians despite what he saw as the errors and superstitions of their Church. He was himself deeply indebted to Thomas à Kempis’s *Imitation of Christ* and the early Fathers of the Church, which he recommended to Methodist readers. He also referred to Francis de Sales and other Catholic writers as model spiritual guides for Christian perfection.<sup>6</sup> It is this catholic spirit in Wesley which can be seen played out in the constant search by Methodists for church unity.

This needs to be seen within the wider international Methodist theology on communion between the churches, which had continued to follow and develop Wesley’s thought and to stress the communality between Christian believers, in addition to their fellowship in and with Christ. In other words, the Methodist tradition stressed that communion is both a vertical relationship (the communion together of Christians in and with Christ) and also a horizontal relationship (the communion together of Christians with each other in and because of Christ).

Australian Methodism between 1902 and 1977 was primarily influenced from outside by British Methodism. Two British Methodist theologians of the period clearly reflect this theology of ecumenism. Vincent Taylor, when writing on Holy Communion in relation to Paul, states: ‘The kind of communion which the Apostle describes is closely related to his teaching concerning union with Christ, but it is union with Him in the power of His reconciling death.’<sup>7</sup> Again, Taylor states:

Throughout the centuries, and still today the Church celebrates the Eucharist in its twofold aspect of a present experience of fellowship with the Living Christ and a joyful anticipation of the perfected Kingdom...In doing this, we...fulfil the intention of Christ, who instituted the Eucharist to give to those who love Him a part in His redeeming love, the

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<sup>5</sup> A.C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 493–499.

<sup>6</sup> See *The Grace Given You in Christ: Catholics and Methodists Reflect Further on the Church, Report of the International Commission for Dialogue Between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council, Eighth Series, 2006* (Lake Junaluska: World Methodist Council, 2006), para. 22, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> V. Taylor, *New Testament Essays* (London: Epworth Press, 1970), 56.

experience of His presence here and now, and the opportunity to plead that His Sacrifice be fulfilled in a renewed and transformed world.<sup>8</sup>

C.K. Barrett, who gave the Methodist Cato Lectures in Australia, emphasised the horizontal nature of communion and unity of Christians when, for example, he writes in relation to Romans 1:9 that;

Christians in fellowship with Christ share, not in His being (so Barth) but in his relation with the Father...The thought is that Christians share in the position of the exulted, eschatological Lord. This fact links up with the thought of God's faithfulness, which is the one guarantee of Christian existence both in the present and in the future.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, since the time of Wesley, Methodism has been generous in its affirmation of other Christian traditions. This gave Methodism a flexibility not always found in other Christian traditions. Although speaking of British Methodism, Rupert Davies puts it well for the whole Methodist tradition:

Methodism, since Methodist Union, has experienced many changes, some forced upon it, some actively and consciously willed by its leaders and people...Many of the changes have been in the direction of assimilation to other churches...The result...has been to maintain the essentials of Methodist teaching and spirituality...while dispensing with many of the formulae and activities in which they used to be clothed, and to fit the Methodist people in some measure for the reciprocal sharing of spiritual treasure with other Christians.<sup>10</sup>

From all of this, it can be seen how the strong ecumenical spirit in Wesley, developed as it was in Methodist theology, particularly in Britain in the twentieth century, was to be played out in Australia in the constant search for church unity. Despite the continuing frustrations and apparent let-downs which other partners would bring during the years 1902 to 1977, Methodist people on the whole kept striving forward, both for pragmatic terms of co-operation and finally for organic union. In the tripartite relations with the

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<sup>8</sup> Taylor, *New Testament Essays*, 59.

<sup>9</sup> C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1968), 40.

<sup>10</sup> R. Davies, 'Since 1932', in R. Davies, A.R. George and G. Rupp, eds, *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, Vol. 3* (London: Epworth Press, 1983), 390. The 'Methodist Union' referred to here is the British Methodist Union of 1932.

Congregationalists and the Presbyterians, Methodists more than the others and against the odds, kept pressing forward.

## **II. Methodism in the International Context of Ecumenism**

To be more precise, it is necessary to look at the international discourse on the theological motivations for ecumenism into which the Methodist Church of Australasia came in the period after 1902. From the Methodist point of view, the theological rationale for inter-church co-operation, moving towards the search for an organically united Church, was diverse. The issues in relation to ecumenism which were being presented internationally throughout the period from the lead-up to the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference through to the 1970s were varied. First, the New Testament bore witness to the central importance of Church unity. Second, the missionary calling of the Church demanded that the one gospel be proclaimed by a body organically united. Third, denominational titles needed to be superseded, as they bore poor witness to Christ in undermining the claim of Christians to be a reconciled, sanctified, reconciling and sanctifying community. Fourth, united churches had truly gone through the process of death and rebirth, death to the old system and new life in a new body. Fifth, united churches were proleptic signs of the united universal church, and pointed to the eschatological nature of Christian faith. Sixth, united churches represented good stewardship; they made better use of resources, both human and material. Seventh, for Christian unity to be meaningful it needed to be expressed in practical ways and in specific concrete bodies in each place.

During the period from 1902 to 1977 there were various forms of ecumenism. It is important that this international context is outlined, because in these years Australian Methodism was to seek ways forward, time and again, from the experiences of others. It was to do so within its dual foci of ecumenism, between the ideal of organic union on the one hand and pragmatic co-operation on the other. Three factors need to be raised. First, there came about before and during these years a great number of intra-confessional unions, most notably between churches within each of the Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed (Presbyterian and Congregationalist) traditions, as had been the case with Australian Methodism in 1902. Second, there came into being the inter-confessional unions produced mainly, but not always, in the English-speaking world, and

often in the areas of former British colonial influence. These unions mainly involved Anglicans, Baptists, Brethren, Disciples, Lutherans, Methodists, Reformed and Evangelicals. The first major union of this kind was that of the United Church of Canada in 1925. Many of these unions came about in independent, post-colonial, nations. The movement to create united churches of this kind had its high point between 1965 and 1972, when in eight years church unions came about in Zambia (1965), Jamaica and Grand Cayman (1965), Ecuador (1965), Madagascar (1968), Papua, New Guinea and the Solomon Islands (1968), Belgium (1969), North India (1970), Pakistan (1970), Bangladesh (1971), Zaire (1971) and Great Britain (1972). The inter-relationship between these churches, on the one hand, and the World Council of Churches (WCC), on the other, was significant, in that the union negotiations of many, but not all, of these churches had been linked to the discussions within the WCC, especially in its Commission on Faith and Order. In South Asia inter-confessional unions uniquely involved Anglicans; for example, in two of the broadest inter-confessional united churches internationally, the Church of South India (1947) and the Church of North India (1970). Third, many inter-confessional unions resulted in sections of the uniting bodies deciding to stay out of the union. The existence of these non-uniting bodies was not surprising, given the voluntary nature of the unions, and, indeed, had to be expected. Nevertheless, the fact that they were minority movements attested to the overwhelming success of the church union negotiations of this type in general.

### **III. Australian Methodism and Ecumenism: The ‘Tortuous Trail’**

It is in this international context that it is now appropriate to look at the specific situation in Australia. Indeed, from the perspective of Australian Methodism, the search for organic unity was continuous. Although there were setbacks, Methodists never really totally gave up. Their major attempts, primarily involving the Congregationalists and Presbyterians, took place during six periods: from 1901 to 1913; from 1917 to 1926; from 1928 to 1934; in the late 1930s; between 1942 and 1947; and from 1953 (formally, 1957) to 1977. On the one hand, the journey to co-operation and eventual organic unity, as

Wright and Clancy portray it, was indeed to be a ‘tortuous trail’.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, right at the beginning of the period after Methodist Union in 1902, a spectacular and highly idealistic plan for Protestant corporate unity was launched. This was the first of five Methodist movements towards union which can be observed between 1902 and 1977.

This first, and grandiose, plan had been put forward by the Rev. T.E. Coulston in the Sydney Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in March 1901. His motion requested the Presbyterian General Assembly of Australia:

...to appoint an influential Committee to devise a scheme for the federation of as many as possible of the Protestant Churches of Australia, with power to confer with the representatives of other Churches, so as to promote closer fellowship and organised cooperation with a view to the ultimate formation of one grand Church of Australia.<sup>12</sup>

This was subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly. The Congregational Union was also approached, and was enthusiastic. In 1904 the newly formed Methodist General Conference of Australasia responded to this plan for ‘one grand Church of Australia’ or ‘a United Evangelical Church of Australia’,<sup>13</sup> and resolved:

...that in view of the overtures that have been made by the Presbyterian Church in the direction of Organic Union with the Methodist Church, this Conference expresses its cordial appreciation of the spirit which has prompted such overtures and declares that, in its judgement, such an Organic Union is eminently desirable provided that a satisfactory basis of Union can be formulated.<sup>14</sup>

Factors in the social and theological contexts of the period were supportive of moves towards organic union, particularly between Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Population growth, particularly in the last decade of the nineteenth century, meant that these three churches had been forced to co-operate closely in the developing housing and settlement areas. In efforts for religious education in schools and in the Sunday Schools movement

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<sup>11</sup> Don Wright and Eric G. Clancy, *The Methodists: A History of Methodism in New South Wales* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993), 154.

<sup>12</sup> Presbyterian Church of Australia, *Minutes and Proceedings of the General Assembly* (Blue Book of GAA) (1901), 93.

<sup>13</sup> Wright and Clancy, *The Methodists*, 155.

<sup>14</sup> Methodist Church of Australasia, *Minutes of General Conference* (1904), 61.

there had been close integration in their activities. This was also so in their welfare work, particularly in the difficult times of the 1890s. Moreover, in the Australian context differences within Protestant theology, for example between Arminianism and Calvinism, and in styles of worship, were diminishing. In addition, the stance of Roman Catholic leaders such as Cardinal Moran had tended to encourage pan-Protestant self-defence.<sup>15</sup>

From the beginning the churches most enthusiastic were the Methodists, the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists. At the 1904 Conference the specific Methodist interests in union, and the factors that were to sustain that interest into the future, were clearly set out, and emphasised:

...the creation of a strong national religious sentiment and force which may be applied and directed to a comprehensive system of Home Missions...the more adequate discharge of the great missionary obligation which rests upon the Christian Churches of Australasia in regard to the tribes and people of Polynesia and adjacent groups and to India, China, and other non-Christian countries...the giving more practical and visible effect to the Saviour's prayer, 'That they all may be one that the world may believe that thou hast sent Me.'<sup>16</sup>

Work began quickly. In August 1904 the Joint Committee of the three negotiating churches met and appointed sub-committees on doctrine, polity and co-operation in ministerial training. In the years immediately following, a number of patterns were to emerge which would set the tone for much of the subsequent two decades. First, at the outset, Anglicans, Baptists and Churches of Christ were invited to participate, but soon fell away. Although negotiations were conducted with the Anglicans in 1906 and 1907, the Lambeth Conference of 1908 rejected these.<sup>17</sup> Second, continuing and sustained interest in organic union was shown largely by Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists alone. Third, initially it was Presbyterians who provided conceptual leadership, but these Presbyterian leaders had difficulty in garnering and sustaining strong support throughout the denomination. Fourth, the concept of a way forward in a 'Basis of Union' had come from the

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<sup>15</sup> See J.S. Udy, 'Church Union in Australia', MA Hons diss., University of Sydney, 1983, vol. I, 33–8.

<sup>16</sup> Methodist Church of Australasia, *Minutes of General Conference (1904)*, 141–42.

<sup>17</sup> Ian Breward, *A History of the Australian Churches* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993), 99.

two recent intra-confessional unions of both Methodists and Presbyterians.

During the years that followed, the initial enthusiasm of the three Churches, particularly in the Joint Committee, faced a number of serious problems. The issues were very largely pragmatic. Presbyterian leaders could not sustain strong denominational support. The Congregational Church, as the smallest denomination of the three, feared the disappearance of its traditions. For Methodists in particular, despite the enthusiasm of the leaders, circuits showed little interest. Knowledge as to what was implied was limited. The result was that, although in the circuits there was little overt opposition, there was low interest.

Nevertheless, in 1907 a proposed Basis of Union was produced, and in 1910 the Methodist General Conference and the Congregational Assembly both gave approval to it.<sup>18</sup> However, the Presbyterian Assembly gave only general approval. In general, there was immense frustration among all in the three Churches seeking union. Impetus therefore declined before the First World War, and in the 1913 Methodist General Conference the double motion was passed: 'That this Conference expresses its profound sympathy with the movement which is seeking to bring about a closer Union among the Churches, and recommends our Annual Conferences to promote the movement as far as possible'; and 'That the Committee on Union of the Churches be thanked for its services and discharged.'<sup>19</sup> Despite its frustration, the Methodist Church as a whole remained the most enthusiastic of the three Churches.

The second attempt came after the experience of co-operation between the Churches during the First World War. Other international factors, following on from the war, were of significance, too. At the Lambeth Conference of 1920 the concept of organic union was taken up with the appeal:

We believe that it is God's purpose to manifest this fellowship, so far as this world is concerned, in an outward, visible, and united society, holding one faith, having its own recognized officers, using God-given means of grace, and inspiring all its members to the world-wide service of the Kingdom of God.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Udy, 'Church Union in Australia,' vol. 2, Appendix 1, 476–85.

<sup>19</sup> Methodist Church of Australasia, *Minutes of General Conference (1913)*, 113.

<sup>20</sup> Lambeth Conference, 1920, Resolution 9, Part 1.

This Anglican concern had its echo, for example, in South Australia.<sup>21</sup> There was also the stimulation of the events in Canada, where the three traditions of Methodism, Presbyterianism and Congregationalism were in the process of moving towards the formation of the United Church of Canada in 1925.

The 1917 General Conference reappointed a committee to prepare a Basis of Union, and the 1920 Conference resolved that a vote of members 18 years and above be taken on the questions: '1. Are you in favour of the organic union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches in Australia and Tasmania?'; and '2. If in favour do you approve of the proposed Basis of Union as adopted by the Joint Committee on Union, with such amendments (if any), as the General Conference or its Committees may agree to?'<sup>22</sup>

Of the Methodist voters throughout Australia, 88 per cent of Methodist members and 86 per cent of Trustees of Methodist Properties were in favour of this organic union.<sup>23</sup> Subsequently the Basis of Union was revised in September 1921<sup>24</sup>, and at the 1923 General Conference resolutions were passed that the Conference:

1. Affirms its conviction that Church Union in the direction contemplated and in accordance with the terms of the Basis of Union as finally revised would, if harmoniously effected, tend to advance the interests of the Kingdom of God' 2. Expresses its gratification that the members and Trustees of the Methodist Church throughout the Commonwealth have by so large a vote shown their sympathy with a great ideal and affirmed their readiness to sink personal considerations in the desire to promote the unity of Christ's Church [and] 3. Is convinced that any movement towards Union can only be successful as it is based on a large measure of goodwill in its favour on the part of the negotiating Churches.<sup>25</sup>

These are significant statements of the attitude of the Methodist General Conference toward ecumenism. The second resolution clearly presents the centrality of the ecumenical spirit to Methodist identity. The third resolution underscores the incipient frustration

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<sup>21</sup> D. Hilliard, 'Anglican Relations with the Protestant Churches in South Australia, 1836–1996,' in *Heritage of Faith: Essays in Honour of Arnold D. Hunt*, ed. George W Potter (Adelaide: George W Potter, 1996), 200–201.

<sup>22</sup> Methodist Church of Australasia, *Minutes of General Conference (1920)*, 97.

<sup>23</sup> Methodist Church of Australasia, *Minutes of General Conference (1923)*, 184.

<sup>24</sup> See Udy, 'Church Union in Australia,' vol. 2, Appendix 2, 486–503.

<sup>25</sup> Methodist Church of Australasia, *Minutes of General Conference (1923)*, 185.

as to how negotiations would work. As it turned out, this third statement was an accurate prediction of what was to occur. The Presbyterian Church had difficulty carrying its constituency. The Congregational Union feared the disappearance of Congregational principles. This was stridently expressed by Principal E.S. Kiek of Parkin College of the Congregational Union in Adelaide. Again, frustration, largely on pragmatic issues, and primarily not of Methodist making, caused the negotiations difficulty. Ultimately, however, it was the Presbyterian General Assembly which brought the negotiations to an end. The 1926 General Conference was notified that, 'shortly after last General Conference information was received from the Presbyterian Union Committee that it has come to the decision that it was useless to proceed further with the movement at present'.<sup>26</sup> There was deep disappointment in the Methodist Conference, which – pointedly – immediately discharged its committee on union.<sup>27</sup>

After the disappointment in 1926, a third, more modest and entirely practical, attempt at union was made with the setting up of Canberra as the nation's capital in the 1920s. Each denomination was to be allocated a piece of land for their national cathedral or centre. In March 1928 a combined meeting of representatives of the three churches in Canberra declared that, 'Canberra offers an opportunity for the manifestation of fellowship in Christian service such as may not be ignored without grave responsibility'.<sup>28</sup>

As a result of the meeting, a document entitled 'Conversations, Concerning Cooperation at Canberra (Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational Churches)', and including 'Guiding Principles', was produced. A Co-operative Council was set up. The Presbyterians alone would build a church on their site, for the use of all three Churches. The Methodists would build a hall for Sunday school and other purposes for all three bodies. High hopes were raised for the 'United Church of Canberra'. However, in September 1934, just prior to the opening of the Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian members of the Canberra Co-operative Council informed the Methodist and Congregational Churches that the Presbyterian Church was now to be for exclusive Presbyterian use. To many, this appeared to add betrayal to the disappointment of 1926.

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<sup>26</sup> Methodist Church of Australasia, *Minutes of General Conference (1926)*, 254.

<sup>27</sup> Methodist Church of Australasia, *Minutes of General Conference (1926)*, 255.

<sup>28</sup> 'Conversations, Concerning Cooperation at Canberra (Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational Churches)', 1; see James S. Udy, *Living Stones: The Story of the Methodist Church in Canberra* (Sydney: Sacha Books, 1974), 74–93.

As seemed reasonable to those disappointed, a fourth move towards union, this time between the Methodists and Congregationalists (a so-called Dual Union) developed in the 1930s. It was heavily influenced by the Rev. John W. Burton, who, as General Secretary of the Methodist Missionary Society of Australasia, had been in Samoa, where he had seen the need for co-operation between the large Congregational Church, founded by the London Missionary Society, and the smaller Methodist Church. A Statement on Church Union was prepared in 1936, and information was shared with leading Presbyterian theologians.<sup>29</sup> However, an ambivalent Congregationalist outlook, fostered by Principal Kiek, produced a general lack of enthusiasm.

Nevertheless, this was an important intervention by Burton from the perspective of Methodist Missions, in that the Methodist General Conference of Australasia at that time included Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and New Zealand, in addition to the work in Papua, New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. In fact, for the future this would be an issue in relation to the formation of the UCA. New Zealand became a separate national Conference in 1913. Papua, New Guinea and the Solomon Islands became a part of the United Church there in 1968, as has been noted. Fiji, Samoa and Tonga each gradually became self-governing Conferences, similar to Australian State Conferences, but were also part of the General Conference of Australasia. Their separation as national Conferences only came with the formation of the Uniting Church, and with some pain.<sup>30</sup>

Fifth, between 1942 and 1954 there were a series of unfulfilled attempts at union, and one pragmatic achievement, the United Church in North Australia. In 1942, again the Presbyterians proposed to the Methodists and Congregationalists a Federal form of Union, based on the States, and highly pragmatic.<sup>31</sup> Discussion continued for some years, but again the Presbyterians were unable to garner support in their constituency. At the same time, forms of the Basis of Union proposals between the Methodist and the Congregationalists continued, with the same ambivalence from the late 1930s.<sup>32</sup>

During the same period there came into being the consummation of pragmatic ecumenical arrangements which had been made

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<sup>29</sup> Udy, 'Church Union in Australia,' vol. 2, Appendix 3, 504–13.

<sup>30</sup> Subsequently the Methodist Consultative Council of the Pacific (MCCP) was set up to overcome this factor.

<sup>31</sup> Udy, 'Church Union in Australia,' vol. 2, Appendix 4, 514–16.

<sup>32</sup> Udy, 'Church Union in Australia,' vol. 2, Appendices 5 and 6, 517–26, 527–47.

between the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational missions in the Northern Territory since the arrival in Darwin of the Rev A.J. Bogle from Adelaide to set up a Wesleyan Mission in August 1873. In fact, the first Wesleyan chapel in Darwin was erected with materials originally sent up for a Congregational building. There was co-operation between the three missions, although under comity arrangements each, mainly the Methodists in Arnhem Land and the Presbyterians in the Centre, largely worked in their own areas. On 5 August 1946 the joint committee of these three Churches accepted a recommendation that the co-operative arrangements in the Top End should be named 'The United Church in North Australia (Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian)'. Centres for worship were soon operating in Darwin and in five other places, and a range of co-operative welfare agencies were opened and developed. The work of this United Church gradually developed to include the Centre and the northern part of Western Australia.

The sixth, final, and this time successful attempt at union between the three Churches began in the 1954 General Conference. At the Conference there was to be final discussion on the Basis of Union for the 'Dual Union' between the Methodist Church and the Congregational Union. Great sadness was faced in the fact that the Presbyterians would not be part of the union. The frustrations of previous years were well summed up by Harold Wood, who had worked tirelessly for the tripartite union for over 20 years, in his words:

The refusal of the Presbyterian Church to unite with others seems to many friends of Union in that Church and outside, to be one of the greatest tragedies in the religious history of Australia. It is the greatest tragedy because there is no reason in doctrine or polity to justify separation.<sup>33</sup>

#### **IV. The Journey to the Formation of the UCA**

Just before the vote on Dual Union was taken, Mr R.H. Grove, 'after much thought and discussion with friends',<sup>34</sup> moved an amendment to give the Presbyterian Church one more chance to come into the proposed union negotiations.<sup>35</sup> The amendment was passed in the

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<sup>33</sup> *The Spectator*, 23 September 1953.

<sup>34</sup> Udy, 'Church Union in Australia', vol. 1, p. 290.

<sup>35</sup> See Udy, 'Church Union in Australia', Vol. 2, Appendix 7, 548–50.

Conference, and in September 1954 the Presbyterian General Assembly made a positive response, with the support of State Assemblies, Presbyteries and Congregations.

A Joint Commission on Church Union, consisting of seven members each from the three Churches, convened in November 1957. From the bitter experiences of the previous attempts at union, it was clear that there needed to be a fresh approach. Moreover, this approach could not simply be pragmatic, or based merely on comparative ecclesiologies, as events had demonstrated.

Here the international context, and in particular the work of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC, was to be central. The concept of inter-confessional organic unions, in fact, had gone back to the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910, where there had been strong argument against merely practical co-operation between churches of differing confessional backgrounds. In the first two Faith and Order conferences (Lausanne, 1927, and Edinburgh, 1937) the issue of organic union proved to be the most difficult. However, through the work of Faith and Order, particularly after the Toronto meeting of the Council's Central Committee in 1951 and the Faith and Order meeting in Lund in 1952, as well as the specific work of the theologian Lesslie Newbigin, forms of organic union began to be stressed internationally. In 1954 Newbigin reflected on the correct form of church unity:

...first that it must be such that all who are in Christ in any place are, in that place, visibly one fellowship; and second, that it must be such that each local community is so ordered and so related to the whole that its fellowship with all Christ's people everywhere, and with all who have gone before or will come after, is made clear.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, in 1959, as the result of Newbigin's work, Faith and Order presented to the Central Committee of the WCC a statement which was subsequently very largely adopted by the Third Assembly at New Delhi.<sup>37</sup> The Assembly used the critical words:

We believe that the unity which is both God's will and his gift to his Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptised into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the

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<sup>36</sup> J.E.L. Newbigin, 'The Quest for Unity through Religion', *Journal of Religion* 35: 1 (1955): 31.

<sup>37</sup> G. Wainwright, *Lesslie Newbigin: A Theological Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 113–14.

Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, New Delhi also formally enshrined the central ‘death-and-rebirth’ principle in relation to organic unions. ‘The achievement of unity will involve nothing less than a death and rebirth of many forms of church life as we have known them. We believe that nothing less costly can finally suffice.’<sup>39</sup>

The high point of the formation of united churches (1965–72) came immediately after this Third Assembly in 1961. In addition, the entry of the Roman Catholic Church into the ecumenical movement in the 1960s as a result of Vatican II was to have enormous impact. It was very much in this international context of theological discourse that the form and process of union towards the UCA took place. The two reports of the Joint Commission on Church Union, *The Faith of the Church* of September 1959 and *The Church: Its Nature, Function and Ordering*, together with a ‘Proposed Basis of Union’ of March 1963, followed closely from the discussions in Faith and Order noted above.<sup>40</sup> The influence of Davis McCaughey and his close involvement in Faith and Order was significant, as was the influence of Lesslie Newbigin, through his contacts with many in the three uniting Churches. However, there were strong influences as well, with much international experience, from the Methodist Church, including the influence of Harold Wood and Calvert Barber on the Commission, and of Colin Williams, as a theological advisor. Moreover, during this period a number of influential Methodists, including John Mavor, Winston O’Reilly, Harvey Perkins, Jean Skuse and D’Arcy Wood, were strong participants in the ecumenical movement internationally. The most contentious issue in the Proposed Basis of Union was that of a Concordat with the Church of South India and the provision of bishops, with the formation of which Newbigin had been involved. Harold Wood led the charge

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<sup>38</sup> WCC, *The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (London: SCM, 1962), 116

<sup>39</sup> WCC, *The New Delhi Report*, 117.

<sup>40</sup> Udy, ‘Church Union in Australia’, vol. 2, Appendix 8, 551–66.

against such a move in the Methodist General Conference.<sup>41</sup> Along with three Presbyterian members of the Joint Commission, four Methodists also opposed this move, and it was eventually dropped. The issue of bishops was left to be decided upon after, and not before, union. This style, again, came from the Faith and Order discourse. Moreover, the Australian negotiating veterans, like Wood, wanted nothing extraneous to stand in the way of this sixth attempt. The Standing Committee of the Methodist General Conference received the subsequent 'Basis of Union 1970'.<sup>42</sup> The primary areas of pre-union agreement were to be doctrine and polity, while other areas, including liturgical practice and the place of the episcopate and the diaconate, were to be finalised after the union. Finally, the General Conference received the 'Basis of Union (1971) of the Uniting Church in Australia',<sup>43</sup> and in 1972 Methodists voted 85 per cent in favour of the union, very close to the figures of the first vote in 1920. After further procedural and legal delays from the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church entered the UCA on 22 June 1977.

During the period from 1902 to 1977 Methodists presented a remarkable consistency in relation to developing ecumenism. The combination of their determination against the odds, their stoicism in the face of frustration and rebuff, and their deep call to unity for the sake of evangelism and diaconal service never wavered. In a sense, their moves towards organic unity never stopped. Certainly in Methodism there were concerns for Protestant unity in the face of the Catholic Church and later in the face of a hostile or indifferent Australian community. They found their ecclesiastical partners at times narrow minded and self-interested. Their understanding of ecumenism grew with their constant interaction with the worldwide ecumenical movement, as more than any other tradition internationally Methodists involved themselves in church unions. Despite everything they never gave up. It was indeed appropriate that it was the sorely-tried Methodist ecumenical veteran Harold Wood who was to pray, and to pray extemporarily, at the decisive liturgical moment of unity in the formation of the UCA, which the

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<sup>41</sup> See, too, the 'Reservation', in *The Church: Its Nature, Function and Ordering* (Melbourne: Aldersgate, 1963), 68–9.

<sup>42</sup> 'Minutes of the Joint Commission on Church Union held at Wesley College, 27–28 November 1970', 1; Udy, 'Church Union in Australia', vol. 2, Appendix 9, 567–79.

<sup>43</sup> Udy, 'Church Union in Australia,' vol. 2, Appendix 10, 580–92.

Catholic Archbishop Francis Rush described as ‘the most significant ecumenical event in Australia’s history.’<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *The Courier-Mail*, 16 June 1977.

# **THE ANTITHETICAL IDENTITY OF THE PHILIPPIAN OPPONENTS AND PAUL'S SHAPING OF ESCHATOLOGICAL IDENTITY**

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*This article argues that Paul inserts oppositional references into his letter to the Philippians in order to provide an antithetical identity to that of the proposed eschatological identity he is seeking to bolster within the Philippian community. This antithetical identity presupposes a group of opponents who were very familiar to Paul's audience, namely, fellow Greeks and Romans, who were unbelievers and who lived alongside the Philippian Christians in Philippi rather than Jewish or Jewish Christian opponents. Explanations identifying Jewish opponents have proven inadequate because they do not fit convincingly into the overall flow of Paul's argument. Since the opponents' concrete identity is only important for establishing a familiar antithesis it is argued that seeking to identify them precisely has little value. Instead focus should shift to the eschatological identity of believers and how this new identity moves them toward transformation and unification, even in the midst of a difficult external situation.*

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The letter to the Philippians has multiple references to Pauline (1:15a, 17; 2:21; 3:2[?]) and Philippians (1:28; 2:15; 3:2[?], 18-19) opposition. Nevertheless, the tone of the letter remains extremely amicable and only once is there the possibility of a real warning (3:2). Thus, many scholars have judiciously noted that this letter is 'fundamentally a progress-oriented, not a problem-solving discourse.'<sup>1</sup> In other words, Paul is not addressing a problem of disunity in the Philippian community,<sup>2</sup> nor is he addressing an immediate threat to the gospel message. If the former, we would expect a response similar to 1 Corinthians (e.g. 1 Cor 1:10-13; 3:1-9; 11:1-22), if the latter, a response similar to Galatians (e.g. Gal 1:6-9;

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 25; Cf. Dean Flemming, *Philippians: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (NBBC; Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2009), 29-30; similarly, Loveday Alexander, 'Hellenistic Letter-Forms and the Structure of Philippians,' *JSNT* 37 (1989): 93-95.

<sup>2</sup> Davorin Peterlin, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians in the Light of Disunity in the Church* (NovTSup 79; Leiden: Brill, 1995).

5:7-12; cf. Phil 1:18). However, the question remains why Paul mentions opposition so regularly in this short epistle. It will be argued that Paul inserts these oppositional references into his argument to provide an antithetical identity to that of the proposed eschatological identity he is seeking to bolster within the Philippian community.

## **I. In-Group and Out-Group Identities**

It is common for a social group to mark the bounds of its identity in contrast to another similar yet rival group (cf. Deut 18:9-14; Esth 3:8). This is especially important when one has transitioned from a now rival group and continues to live in close proximity to them. The risk of re-assimilation is high since previous social pressures persist and many previous social norms remain part of one's new identity. When a person who has entered a new social group continues to live among their old group, they must have a clear understanding of what makes them unique or the requisite for separation will become untenable.<sup>3</sup> The difficulty increases when there is no clear physical distinction (e.g. colour, dress, markings). The Philippians found themselves in just such a situation. Therefore, Paul needed not only to make clear the boundary markers of their new identity but also to show clear distinction from their previous identity.

Jutta Jokiranta, evaluating social identity in the Qumran movement, explores the importance of a prototypical representative to evidence the uniquenesses of the group, especially over and against their opponents who are often represented by stereotypical classifications such as 'liar' or 'wicked priests' (cf. 2:15; 3:2, 18-19).<sup>4</sup> Jokiranta argues that within *pesharim* material, the 'teacher of righteousness' plays this role. The prototype 'maximizes the out-group differences and minimizes the in-group differences.'<sup>5</sup> Since the prototype is merely a human representative of the whole community, that person should not be overly elevated. It is not so much about the individual but about what they represent. The

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<sup>3</sup> Rupert Brown, *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 315-321.

<sup>4</sup> Jutta Jokiranta, *Social Identity and Sectarianism in the Qumran Movement (STDJ 105)* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 177; cf. Philip Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 21-22; Brown, *Group Processes*, 290-308.

<sup>5</sup> Jokiranta, *Social Identity*, 176.

prototype may have some special privileges, for instance revelation from God concerning the end times (1QpHab 7:3-5), however, '[t]he group shares this privilege simply by being on the side which has taken the message for the end times seriously and itself now disclosing the message.'<sup>6</sup>

This may explain why Paul mentions his personal opposition and suffering (1:12-26, 30) and why he stresses unity between himself, Timothy (2:19-24) and especially Epaphroditus (2:25-30). Paul's own opposition and suffering minimises the in-group differences, showing greater continuity between himself and the Philippian Christians, who are themselves suffering (cf. 1:29-30), and greater incongruity between them and any opponents. Timothy, who contrasts with those who seek their own interests (2:21), and Epaphroditus, who 'came close to death for the work of Christ' (2:30), serve this same purpose and are themselves elevated toward representative status. The unity between Paul and these men as well as their response to opposition and suffering provide an example for the Philippians to emulate and in so doing, strengthen their in-group identity. Christ is put forth as the ultimate prototype, mentioned thirty-seven times in this short epistle and providing the climactic example of suffering, unity and mission in the Christological hymn of 2:6-11. However, Christ is clearly presented as a divine figure and therefore moves beyond prototype to archetype and in so doing becomes not merely an example but the origin and foundation of the believers' new in-group identity, an identity shaped by a new eschatological reality rather than by the present evil age (i.e. an 'eschatological identity'). Additionally, Paul's extended autobiography in 3:4-14 provides the Philippians with an example of how to successfully transition from a previous identity to an eschatological identity, which is grounded in Christ and his mission.

## **II. The Opponents in 1:28 and 2:15**

Before addressing the oppositional references, it is necessary to point out their strategic location. As indicated above, the Christological hymn (2:6-11) and Pauline autobiography (3:4-11) form the heart of Paul's argument and of the epistle as a whole. It is therefore no accident that Paul frames these two pericopae with the

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<sup>6</sup> Jokiranta, *Social Identity*, 180.

four references to Philippian opposition (1:28; 2:15; 3:2, 18-19). In this way, he is able to show a marked difference between the Philippians' new eschatological identity and their opponents. While various Philippian opponents have been suggested for each of the four references, the greatest majority of scholars see at least two distinct opponents with 1:28 and 2:15 referring to one group and 3:2 and 3:18-19 referring to another group. For this reason, I will group my analysis into these corresponding sections.

The context of 1:28 and 2:15 gives some clues for unlocking the identity of this particular group of opponents.<sup>7</sup> All of the signs point to a group that lived in close proximity to those in the church; it was a group that was regularly able to witness the Philippians' lack of intimidation (1:28a) and their shining like stars (2:15). Additionally, Paul's reference to the Philippians having 'the same struggle,' which they saw he had and hear he still has (1:30), likely reflects some physical suffering on the part of the Philippians, including the possibility of imprisonment,<sup>8</sup> which correspond with Paul's current situation (1:12-20). Since such penalties would require local governmental involvement, it is most feasible to conclude that the opposition consists of 'an external threat from the surrounding civic community.'<sup>9</sup> The possibility for such action is strengthened by Luke's account of Paul and Silas in Philippi where they were scourged and imprisoned by local citizens and the city's magistrates (Acts 16:19-24; cf. 2 Cor 11:23-27). This hypothesis may also find credence in Paul's use of *πολιτεύεσθε* (1:27) and *πολιτεύμα* (3:20),<sup>10</sup> which would have had great significance to the Greeks and Romans in Philippi, and which Paul appears to repurpose as part of the

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<sup>7</sup> The connection between 1:28 and 2:15 is evidenced by their contextual placement as part of the larger unit of 1:27-2:18. The context also reveals that in both cases, Paul is referring to unbelievers living in close proximity. Cf. G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 98-101, 182-83.

<sup>8</sup> See Gregory L. Bloomquist, *The Function of Suffering in Philippians* (JSNTSup 78; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 158; Mikael Tellbe, *Paul Between Synagogue and State: Christians, Jews and Civic Authorities in 1 Thessalonians, Romans, and Philippians* (ConBNT 34; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2001), 226-28; Contra G.W. Peterman, *Paul's Gift from Philippi: Conventions of Gift-Exchange and Christian Giving* (SNTSMS 92; Cambridge: Cambridge, 1997), 146-49; Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (SNTSMS 110; Cambridge: Cambridge, 2001), 89-99.

<sup>9</sup> Tellbe, *Between Synagogue and State*, 233, emphasis his.

<sup>10</sup> Tellbe, *Between Synagogue and State*, 233, 239-243; see also Oakes, *Philippians*, 89; Craig de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts: The Relationship of the Thessalonian, Corinthian, and Philippian Churches with Their Wider Civic Communities* (SBLDS 168; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 262-265.

church's new eschatological identity. Those scholars emphasising the rather limited Jewish usage<sup>11</sup> of *πολιτεύομαι* and its cognates tend to ignore the copious secular references as well as the social milieu of Paul's audience.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, suggestions of Jewish,<sup>13</sup> or Jewish Christian,<sup>14</sup> opponents for 1:28 have proven indefensible,<sup>15</sup> especially in light of the lack of historical and archaeological evidence of any significant Jewish presence in Philippi during this period (cf. Acts 16:13-14).<sup>16</sup>

When we transition to 2:15, Paul refers to these same opponents as 'a crooked and perverse generation.' This is an echo of Deuteronomy 32:5 (LXX), which includes the words οὐκ αὐτῷ τέκνον (cf. τέκνα θεοῦ in reference to the Philippians). Markus Bockmuehl is correct that we cannot take this phrase to mean that Paul believes God has rejected the Jews, especially since Paul is not currently addressing Jewish opponents.<sup>17</sup> The contrast is rather between the Philippian believers and their local opponents. They are 'blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish' and their oppressors are 'crooked and perverse' (2:15). Paul's imperative for the Philippians to, 'Do all things without murmuring and arguing' (2:14), besides having possible correlation to Israel's desert murmurings (LXX Exod 15:24; 16:2, 7, 8; Num 14:2, 36; Deut 1:27; cf. 1 Cor 10:10), could be a reference to the opponents who may have regularly murmured against the gods. Paul Holloway gives several examples of contemporary Roman and Greek injunctions

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<sup>11</sup> E.g. Philo, *Decal.* 98; *Spec.* 1.60, 63; *Mos.* 2.211; Josephus, *Ap.* 2.260-61; 2 Macc 6:1; 11:25; 3 Macc 3:4.

<sup>12</sup> James Ware, *Paul and the Mission of the Church: Philippians in Ancient Jewish Context* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 135-37, 218; E.C. Miller, 'Πολιτεύεσθε' in Philippians 1:27: Some Philological and Thematic Observations,' *JSNT* 15 (1982): 86-96. Even if Ware and Miller are correct that Jewish usage forms the background of Paul's language here and in 3:20, this does not mean the opponents are Jewish, as Miller argues, nor that the Philippians would have perceived or understood this background.

<sup>13</sup> Gerald Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC 43; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), xlv-xlvii, 58.

<sup>14</sup> Miller, 'Πολιτεύεσθε,' *passim*; Jean-François Collange, *The Epistle of Saint Paul to the Philippians* (trans. A.W. Heathcote; London: Epworth, 1979), 71-75; Chris Mearns, 'The Identity of Paul's Opponents at Philippi,' *NTS* 33.2 (1987): 194-204.

<sup>15</sup> See esp. Oakes, *Philippians*, 84-89.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Association* (WUNT 2.161; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 191-212.

<sup>17</sup> Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.; BNTC; London: A&C Black, 1997), 156-57; *Contra*, Collange, *Philippians*, 112; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 102; cf. Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 294.

prohibiting complaint against the gods, thus suggesting it was a normal occurrence.<sup>18</sup> Whereas the opponents grumble against their gods/rulers when they face suffering, the Philippians are called to 'hold fast to the word of life' (2:16) in the midst of their suffering. Here, Paul takes the one difference for which they are acutely aware, their suffering, and turns it upside down. Persecution can move a group toward withdrawal and isolation,<sup>19</sup> or victimisation and paralysation.<sup>20</sup> Paul seeks to redirect them away from any understanding of identity not grounded in Christ. Their suffering is a privilege graciously granted by God; it is part of their eschatological calling (1:29; 2:12b-13), just as it is part of Paul's (1:30; 2:17). In this way, suffering becomes part of their in-group identity, and is able to draw the group together rather than tear them apart. It is no longer a mark of shame but a badge of honour, which is proof of their salvation and of their opponents' destruction (1:28).

Here, the antithetical identity of the opponents comes to the forefront. Paul's caricaturing of their faults over and against the Philippians' positive actions and attributes helps to solidify in-group identity and unity by weakening the attraction of the oppositional group.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, it provides additional information and affirmation about the in-group identity. Not only *are* they those who 'stand firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel,' and 'children of God without blemish' who 'shine like stars in the world...holding fast to the word of life,' they are simultaneously *not* those set for destruction, *not* those who murmur and argue, and *not* a 'crooked and perverse generation.' In this way, the oppositional references serve to shape the Philippian's identity and the concrete identity of the opponent becomes almost superfluous.

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<sup>18</sup> Paul A. Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians: Philosophical Sources and Rhetorical Strategy* (SNTSMS 112; Cambridge: Cambridge, 2001), 125.

<sup>19</sup> Jeremiah Cataldo, 'Remembering Esther: Anti-Semitism and the Conflict of Identity,' *The Bible and Critical Theory* 8.1 (2012): 22.

<sup>20</sup> Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Princeton: Princeton, 2011), 57.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Helmut Koester, 'The Purpose of the Polemic of a Pauline Fragment (Philippians III),' *NTS* 8 (1961/2): 319-20: comes to a similar conclusion saying the aim 'is not to describe the opponents, but to insult them.' See also: Anthony J. Saldarini, 'Delegitimation of Leaders in Mathew 23,' *CBQ* 54 (1992): 659-680.

### III. The Opponents in 3:2 and 3:18-19

There is near unanimous acceptance among scholars that 3:2—'Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh!'—is a reference to either Jews or Jewish Christ-followers who desired to see Gentiles judaized.<sup>22</sup> Yet, this hypothesis creates more problems than it solves. As noted, the epistle shows no evidence of an outside (non-Philippian/Roman) group of opponents<sup>23</sup> and the historical and archaeological data show little evidence of a Jewish presence in Philippi (cf. Acts 16:13-14).<sup>24</sup> For this reason, most scholars further postulate that Paul is giving a warning,<sup>25</sup> or holding up these opponents as a negative example,<sup>26</sup> rather than speaking about a current or imminent threat.<sup>27</sup>

Still another difficulty with a 'Jewish opponent view' (JOV) is discerning whether the 'enemies of the cross' mentioned in 3:18-19 are a continued reference to the proposed Jewish group mentioned in 3:2,<sup>28</sup> whether Paul has returned to the Gentile opponents referenced in 1:28 and 2:15,<sup>29</sup> or possibly Gentile apostates from the Philippian church.<sup>30</sup> While the scholarly scales are still tipped

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<sup>22</sup> For an overview of the argument see: Wolfgang Schenk, *Die Philipperbriefe des Paulus. Kommentar* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1987), 294-99.

<sup>23</sup> Oakes, *Philippians*, 58-59, 89.

<sup>24</sup> Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Association*, 191-212; Oakes, *Philippians*, 58-59, 87.

<sup>25</sup> Flemming, *Philippians*, 158; O'Brien, *Philippians*, 354.

<sup>26</sup> David E. Garland, 'The Composition and Unity of Philippians: Some Neglected Literary Factors,' *NovT* 27.2 (1985): 166-67.

<sup>27</sup> *Contra* Tellbe, *Between Synagogue and State*, 260; Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians: Revised* (WBC 43; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), liii-lv, 171-78.

<sup>28</sup> D.K. Williams, *Enemies of the Cross: The Terminology of the Cross and Conflict in Philippians* (JSNTSup 223; London: Sheffield, 2002), 224; John Reumann, *Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AYB 33B; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 589-90; Ben Witherington III, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi: The Letter of Paul to the Philippians* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 1994), 28-29, 97-98; O'Brien, *Philippians*, 454-57; Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 221.

<sup>29</sup> De Vos, *Church and Community*, 271-74; Tellbe, *Between Synagogue and State*, 269-74; cf. Mark J. Keown, *Congregational Evangelism in Philippians: The Centrality of an Appeal for Gospel Proclamation to the Fabric of Philippians* (PBM; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 226-27; and Moisés Silva, *Philippians*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 61-62: who see it as a general reference to all 'enemies of the cross' whether Jew or Gentile.

<sup>30</sup> Hansen, *Philippians*, 263-67; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 229-32.

toward a JOV in 3:18-19, the evidence against this reading is much stronger and is well surmised by G.W. Hansen:

The difficulties faced by this interpretation, however, are the absence of any clear connection between Jewish food laws and idolatry in Paul's letters, the absence of any evidence that Paul viewed circumcision or male genitals as shameful, and the absence of Paul's dismissal of Jewish privileges as earthly things. In fact, Paul expresses his approval of observing Jewish food laws in certain circumstances (1 Cor 9:20; Rom 14:1-17), views the Jewish practice of the circumcision of *Jews* (not *Gentiles*) as a sign of faithfulness to the law (1 Cor 7:18-19; Phil 3:5-6), and lists Jewish privileges as the irrevocable gifts of God (Rom 9:4-5; 11:29).<sup>31</sup>

While Hansen's observations are perceptive, this does not prevent him from seeing 3:2 as a reference to Jewish opponents, even though this reading also presents circumcision and *Torah* observance in a negative light. Were it not for 3:2, it is doubtful many would see 3:18-19 as a reference to Jews. Yet, the presence of 3:2 and the overwhelming acceptance of a JOV have become a hermeneutical lens through which many have read not only 3:18-19 but also 3:5-9. While this is not necessarily negative, it does tend toward negative and unhelpful readings of 3:5-9. For instance, Heikki Räisänen writes:

What Paul in effect renounces in the passage is not human achievement, but the biblical covenant. Of course he cannot admit that this is what his actual position implies. Had Paul argued in Phil 3 in a straightforward way, however, he ought to have said something like this in verse 9: 'not having the righteousness connected with God's ancient *covenant with Israel*, but the righteousness connected with the *Christ event*.'<sup>32</sup>

A significant recent exception to the JOV in 3:2 is Mark Nanos,<sup>33</sup> who argues Paul's castigations, and especially the first (dogs), are

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<sup>31</sup> Hansen, *Philippians*, 264; cf. Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 230-32.

<sup>32</sup> Heikki Räisänen, 'Paul's Conversion and the Development of His View of the Law,' *NTS* 33 (1987): 410, italics his.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Nanos, 'Paul's Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles 'Dogs' (Philippians 3:2): 1600 Years of an Ideological Tale Wagging an Exegetical Dog?' *BibInt* 17 (2009): 448-482; cf. Robert Brawley, 'From Reflex to Reflection?: Identity in Philippians 2:6-11 and Its Context,' in *Reading Paul in Context: Explorations in Identity Formation: Essays in Honour of William S. Campbell* (eds. K. Ehrensperger & B. Tucker; LBNTS 428; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 128-46; similarly Herbert Bateman, 'Were the Opponents at Philippi Necessarily Jewish?,' *BSac* 155 (1998): 39-61, who argues the

aimed at Gentile opponents. Nanos assesses the validity of the popular reading of Philippians 3:2, which holds ‘The Jews were in the habit of referring contemptuously to Gentiles as κύνες, “dogs”,’<sup>34</sup> and thus Paul reverses and redirects this slur toward his Jewish opponents.<sup>35</sup> Nanos traces the use of ‘dogs’ in Jewish literature including the Tanakh, OT Pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, Josephus, New Testament, and Rabbinic writings, to see if ‘dogs’ is ever used as a derogatory term by Jews to speak of Gentiles.

Systematically working through the various uses in their context, Nanos disproves previous claims and finds only two possible cases: 1) a medieval addition of *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 29 where, besides being very late, the reference to dogs is not present in all extant editions; and 2) Jesus’ statement to the Syrophenician woman that ‘it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs’ (Mark 7:27; Matt 15:26). Yet, even this latter case could be interpreted in multiple ways, which lessen the negativity of this statement. Jesus may have been using this statement to test the woman or, more likely, to teach the disciples an important lesson about purity (cf. Mark 7:1-22). After all, ‘Her theologically potent assertion implies that Jesus has sufficient resources for Gentiles as well’ as Jews and Jesus’ granting of her request proves this to be the case.<sup>36</sup>

Rather than a negative label used for Gentiles, ‘dogs’ was a general slur. ‘In a very real sense, calling someone or a group a dog or dogs or referring to dog-like behavior is simply name-calling. It does not make clear precisely who is in view in other definable terms, but functions as a word of reproach, commonly understood without being spelled out.’<sup>37</sup> Before coming to possible conclusions about the identity of these opponents, the other two epithets must also be assessed.

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opponents were local Gentiles Judaizers; similarly Kenneth Grayston, ‘The Opponents in Philippians 3,’ *ExpTim* 97.6 (1986): 170-72.

<sup>34</sup> Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 174; so also Brian Dodd, *Paul’s Paradigmatic T: Personal Example as Literary Strategy* (JSNTSup 177; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1999), 175, 181.

<sup>35</sup> O’Brien, *Philippians*, 355; Peter-Ben Smit, *Paradigms of Being in Christ: A Study of the Epistle to the Philippians* (LNTS 476; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 73-74.

<sup>36</sup> Kent Brower, *Mark: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (NBBC; Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2012), 203. See also J.R. Harrison, ‘Every Dog Has Its Day,’ in *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, Vol. 10 (ed. S.R. Llewelyn and J.R. Harrison; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 126-135.

<sup>37</sup> Nanos, ‘Paul’s Reversal?’, 460; see also Darrell Doughty, ‘Citizens of Heaven: Philippians 3:2-21,’ *NTS* 41.1 (1995): 104.

'Evil workers' (τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας) like 'dogs' has by most been considered a 'reverse insult' toward Paul's supposed Jewish opponents condemning either their prideful *Torah* observance,<sup>38</sup> and/or their malicious missionary activity among the Gentiles.<sup>39</sup> Concerning the former, Paul has already called the Philippians to 'work out' (κατεργάζεσθε) their own salvation because God was at 'work' (ἐνεργέω) in them enabling them to 'work' (ἐνεργέω) for his good pleasure (2:12-13). Similarly, Paul used συνεργός to describe Epaphroditus (2:25), Euodia, Syntyche, and Clement (4:3; cf. Rom 16:3, 9, 21; 1 Thes 3:2; Phlm 1), directly before and after chapter 3. Thus, this is not a works versus grace argument but rather a good work versus bad work argument. In other words, Paul's use of κακοὺς ἐργάτας contrasts the Philippians' positive actions and their opponents' negative actions rather than referring to prideful *Torah* observance. We should beware of conflating Paul's use of 'works of the law' found in Galatians and Romans with Philippians as they are very different churches and situations.<sup>40</sup>

Those arguing for malicious missionary activity emphasise the New Testament's use of ἐργάτης in connection to missionary activity (Mt 9:37-38; 10:10; Lk 10:2, 7; 1 Tim 5:18; 2 Tim 2:15; cf. *Did.* 13:2); they especially underscore Paul's use of 'deceitful workers' (ἐργάται δόλιοι) in 2 Corinthians 11:13.<sup>41</sup> Yet, Peter O'Brien has accurately articulated the differences between these opponents, noting especially that in 2 Corinthians the issue is apostleship and the opponents are also referred to as ψευδαπόστολοι who masquerade as ἀπόστολοι Χριστοῦ, but at Philippi Paul's apostleship was not in dispute.<sup>42</sup> Since the Philippians are not facing an immediate Jewish threat and Paul is not facing an immediate apostolic threat, we need not force ἐργάτης to refer to missionary activity (cf. Mt 20:1, 2, 8; Acts 19:25; Jas 5:4; esp. Lk 13:27 —ἐργάται ἀδικίας). Paul uses κακοὺς ἐργάτας as a general term referring to all those who are enemies of the cross of Christ (3:18),<sup>43</sup> whether Jew or Gentile. In fact, Colossians 1:21, regardless of Pauline authorship, provides an

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<sup>38</sup> Silva, *Philippians*, 169; Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 295-96.

<sup>39</sup> O'Brien, *Philippians*, 355; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 125; Bateman, *Opponents*, 55.

<sup>40</sup> Douglas Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 898-99.

<sup>41</sup> Reumann, *Philippians*, 472; F.F. Bruce, *Philippians* (NIBCNT 11; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1989), 104.

<sup>42</sup> O'Brien, *Philippians*, 356.

<sup>43</sup> Doughty, 'Citizens,' 104-06.

interesting parallel—'you (Gentiles)<sup>44</sup> were formerly estranged and enemies (ἐχθρούς) in disposition, as was shown by<sup>45</sup> (your) evil works (τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς πονηροῖς).'<sup>46</sup>

Many commentators, aware of the dubious footing for postulating a JOV based on the first two epithets, place the weight of their argument upon the third (τὴν κατατομήν).<sup>47</sup> The paronomasia between κατατομή and περιτομή has led to the conclusion that the former is a sarcastic reference to the physical act of circumcision and the latter a reference to spiritual circumcision, which distinguishes 'true' followers of God from those who depend on the flesh (i.e. Jews; cf. Rom 2:28-29).<sup>48</sup> However, we know of many pagan religious practises, which involved self-mutilation of some sort (cf. 1 Kings 18:28; Isa 15:2 LXX) and we have archaeological evidence for their flourishing in Philippi.<sup>49</sup> Of special note is the cult of Cybele, whose priests practiced self-castration.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, the *synkrisis* does not automatically need to be between true and false circumcision and thus between Jew and Gentile. It could equally be between Gentile pagans who find their identity in the Roman *polis*, which likely included Imperial Cult and Philippian goddess worship,<sup>51</sup> and Gentile Christians who belong to a heavenly *polis* (3:20; cf. 1:27) and who are therefore called by Paul to identify themselves as those who have been 'cut' into the people of God (Gen 17; cf. Rom 11:17-24) as a result of the eschatological in breaking.

A final question arises as to the identity of the Philippian opponents. How would a predominantly Gentile church in a city with little to no Jewish presence have understood Paul's epithets?

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<sup>44</sup> James Dunn, *The Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 106.

<sup>45</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*. (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 76 n. 173.

<sup>46</sup> My translation.

<sup>47</sup> See esp. Christopher Zoccali, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His People": Paul's Intra-Jewish Rhetoric in Philippians 3:1-9,' *CTR* 9.1 (2011): 21-31; O'Brien, *Philippians*, 354; Stephen Fowl, *Philippians* (THNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 145-46.

<sup>48</sup> The NASB and RSV translate 'we are the *true* circumcision' and the NLT and NCV translate 'the ones who are *truly* circumcised. See also the bold comments of Silva, *Philippians*, 148.

<sup>49</sup> Brawley, 'Reflex to Reflection,' 142-46; V.A. Abrahamsen, *Women and Worship at Philippi: Diana/Artemis and Other Cults in the Early Christian Era* (Portland: Astarte Shell Press, 1995), 25-26.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Juvenal, *Sat.* 2.110-19; Suetonius, *Dom.* 7; Catullus 63; See also A.T. Fear, 'Cybele and Christ,' in *Cybele, Attis & Related Cults: Essays in Memory of M.J. Vermaseren* (ed. E.N. Lane; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 37-50.

<sup>51</sup> Brawley, 'Reflex and Reflection,' 142-43.

Stated another way, how would a people surrounded by pagan examples of dogs,<sup>52</sup> evil workers, and mutilators of the flesh have understood Paul's appellations? A reversed insult would have caused more confusion than clarity.<sup>53</sup> It is more feasible for them to have seen these harsh words directed toward a group they understood rather than a group with which they had little experience. This is especially the case if the issue at hand is one of identity. Paul's words in 3:2 and 3:18-19, like his words in 1:28 and 2:15, served to construct a recognizable antitype by which to clarify Philippian identity. Furthermore, the negative stereotypical classifications given to these opponents help to distinguish the in-group from the out-group.

Somewhat irrespective of the concrete identity of this group of opponents, these statements all serve to narrow the boundaries of correct and incorrect social identity for the Philippian church. Rather than naming this particular group, Paul's descriptors provide further identity markers for the Philippians. Not only *are* they 'the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh' (3:3), they are simultaneously *not* dogs, *not* evil workers, *not* the mutilation (3:2), and *not* enemies of the cross (3:18).

## Conclusion

This essay has endeavoured to explain the reason for Paul's many oppositional references in the midst of this amicable and 'progress-oriented' correspondence. While many scholars have postulated particular identities for the various references, these hypotheses, and especially those emphasising Jewish opponents, have proven inadequate because they have not convincingly explained the purpose of these references within the overall flow of Paul's argument. By proposing an overall theme of identity formation and evaluating the oppositional references through this same lens, I have tried to show how these references functioned to provide an antithetical identity to that of the proposed eschatological identity of the Philippian Christians. This antithetical identity presupposes a group of opponents who were very familiar to Paul's audience. Thus, against the scholarly tide, I have argued that all four oppositional

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<sup>52</sup> See Nanos, 'Paul's Reversal?', 475-76.

<sup>53</sup> Grayston, 'Opponents,' 171.

references (1:28; 2:15; 3:2, 18-19) refer to the same opponents—namely, fellow Greeks and Romans, who were unbelievers and who lived alongside the Philippian Christians in Philippi. This also meant arguing against the near unanimous view that Paul was referring to Jewish or Jewish Christian opponents in chapter 3. Finally, since the opponents' concrete identity is only important for establishing a familiar antithesis, I have argued they are somewhat superfluous; scholars can thus spend less time arguing about who these opponents were, what they believed, and how they acted toward the Philippians. Instead, scholars might focus on the eschatological identity of believers and how this new identity moves them toward transformation and unification, even in the midst of difficult external situation.

# **SHAPING A SALVATIONIST RESPONSE TO SUFFERING WITHIN A WESLEYAN CONTEXT: MOVING BEYOND A THEOLOGICAL KNAPSACK**

**Kalie Webb**

This article has been peer reviewed

*This article considers the comparative lack of discussion of human suffering and divine sovereignty within The Salvation Army – and the absence of specifically Wesleyan teaching despite the Army’s historical roots within the Wesleyan tradition. It identifies the differences that exist between the ‘received theology’ of The Salvation Army and the ‘expressed theology’ of Salvationists. Consideration is given to contemporary Wesleyan scholarship in order to shape a Salvationist response to suffering in the light of the doctrine of divine sovereignty.*

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## **I. Introduction**

Finding an adequate picture of God in light of human suffering appears elusive. Suffering challenges what people believe; how they understand God’s role in human suffering; how faith is affected by it; and how they respond when confronted with human tragedy. Suffering has the potential to produce a distorted view of God: not because people have necessarily dismissed God’s relevance in their lives but because of the confusion and the uncertainty that suffering consequently produces.

As people are confronted with the enormity of their own personal suffering their perception of God becomes a strong factor in their response. Is God viewed as the instigator or as a God of love who has also been aggrieved? A person’s faith is then placed under some sort of theological microscope: will faith be strengthened or will faith be diminished; even lost? Influences on a Christian life often then become the driving force. These influences include many factors such as people’s experience and denominational teaching.

Over many years of my own ministry experience within The Salvation Army I have observed a difference between a

Salvationist's 'expressed theology' and the 'received theology' of The Salvation Army.<sup>1</sup> When faced with suffering, Salvationists appear to rely on their experiences as the major influence on their faith. The image of God can often be clouded by people's preconceived ideas. Consequently, Salvationists' expressed theology may be inadequate if they rely too heavily on lived experiences, since experiences alone cannot fully shape a person's understanding of God. A Salvationist's perception of God may not always match the teaching of the denomination.

Finding an answer to suffering is not the aim of this article. It seeks instead the shaping of a Salvationist response to suffering within a Wesleyan context by understanding what contemporary Wesleyan scholars are saying and how this is contributing to the wider discussion of God's sovereignty in the face of suffering. This article will consider the transcendent and immanent natures of God, along with contemporary theologies of the suffering God. It will also provide background to the historical development of The Salvation Army and its theological roots and how contemporary Wesleyan scholarship could shape and influence Salvation Army received theology.

Through crisis experiences the complexity of the dialectic nature of God's immanence and transcendence in the face of evil can increase confusion and uncertainty in people. Problems emerge if one of these seemingly contradictory concepts of God is considered in isolation from the other. For 'an overemphasis on transcendence can lead to a theology that is irrelevant to the cultural context in which it seeks to speak, whereas an overemphasis on immanence can produce a theology held captive to a specific culture.'<sup>2</sup> Moreover, these concepts need to coalesce to achieve a better representation of God's attributes, rather than an incomplete picture. Correlating an all-powerful God with the image of a vulnerable God who is also relational brings the immanent and transcendent aspects of God into sharp focus. The image of a vulnerable God may be more likely to resonate with some people but how this picture equates with an all-powerful God remains perplexing. How God is viewed then becomes a critical issue as the

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<sup>1</sup> "Received" theology here concerns the acceptance by individuals (Officers and Adult Salvationists) of official statements of doctrine/theology; whereas "Expressed" theology is how those same people actually function in life.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, and Roger E. Olson, *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, ILL: Inter Varsity Press, 1992), 11f.

immanent and transcendent nature of God is considered in the context of human suffering. The way contemporary scholarship has considered these issues in light of grief and pain – often on a global scale – can aid in the discovery of a deeper awareness of God.

## II. Contemporary Theology of a Suffering God

Throughout the centuries theologians have grappled with the immanent and transcendent nature of God.<sup>3</sup> In each century the culture of the time and tragic circumstances which had a profound impact on the era, often shaped the historical development of theological discussion. This was particularly evident in the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries. A significant shift in the theological landscape occurred in 1914, a year that ‘shattered the optimistic world view developed during the previous centuries and gave birth to...intellectual and cultural gloom.’<sup>4</sup> Over ensuing decades the effects of the Depression and the Second World War wreaked havoc across Europe, and brought further gloom. Consequently, by the 1960s there was a need to find a way through the theological maze of uncertainty as the future hung somewhere between gloom and optimism. Three distinct voices became prominent during this decade: the ‘Death of God’ phenomenon; Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s writings, especially his book *Letters and Papers from Prison*; and Jürgen Moltmann’s theology which connected strongly with a God who suffers.

The ‘Death of God’ phenomenon became a major influence on surrounding culture.<sup>5</sup> As Europe emerged through the cloud of death and destruction, people were still trying to recover their faith and identity. However, cultural responses of the time provided a

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<sup>3</sup> Immanuel Kant, G.W.F Hegel, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Rudolf Bultmann, Reinhold Niebuhr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Jürgen Moltmann, Karl Rahner and Hans Küng to mention just a few.

<sup>4</sup>Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 12.

<sup>5</sup> For further reference of the ‘Death of God’ phenomenon refer to: Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (London: SCM Press, 1974); Robert R. Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Frederick Depoortere, *The Death of God: An Investigation into the History of the Western Concept of God* (London: T & T Clark, 2008); Thomas J.J. Altizer, and William Hamilton, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968); Deland S. Anderson, *Hegel’s Speculative Good Friday: The Death of God in Philosophical Perspective* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995).

philosophical view that had been considered in the nineteenth century by Friedrich Nietzsche and which had now gained a new audience. ‘Nietzsche’s declaration...that “God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him!” thus expresses the general cultural atmosphere which finds no place for God.’<sup>6</sup> While this view emerged within wider cultural surroundings, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Jürgen Moltmann’s writings emphasised a contrasting view, within Christian circles, that God suffers. It was now possible to see how God, in light of the suffering of the cross, could identify with those who had suffered the terrible atrocities of war. Bonhoeffer’s writings particularly emphasised the self-limiting nature of God in suffering.

God lets himself be pushed out of the world on to the cross. He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us...The Bible directs us to God’s powerlessness and suffering; only the suffering God can help.<sup>7</sup>

Bonhoeffer’s writings provided a sense of hopefulness and a reminder to people that they were not alone in their afflictions as they saw a God who stoops to minister out of the pain of God’s own suffering. This picture of a suffering, immanent God reflects the preparedness of the Almighty Transcendent One to reach into humanity’s frailty and emerge victorious through it.

Additionally, a sense of optimism and hope emerged through Moltmann’s theology. Like Bonhoeffer, Moltmann’s experiences during the war contributed to his strong sense of connection between God’s suffering on the cross and that of humanity’s own suffering.

Understood in Trinitarian terms, God both transcends the world and is immanent in history...[God] is, if one is prepared to put it in inadequate imagery, transcendent as Father, immanent as Son and opens up the future of history as the Spirit. If we understand God in this way, we can understand our own history, the history of suffering and the history of hope, in the history of God.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 221.

<sup>7</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: SCM Press, 1999), 360f.

<sup>8</sup> Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 255f.

The suffering that unites God and humanity is the hope that leads out of that anguish and into the eschatological hope for the future. What Moltmann seeks to convey is that hope is not just for the immediacy of the moment but continues into eternity.<sup>9</sup> While these scholars were reflecting on a time in the twentieth century marked by oppression, death and the struggles of war, their message of hope continued to resonate as the new century commenced.

Soon after the dawn of the twenty-first century the world again bore witness to anguish and pain on a global scale with such events as 9/11 and the Boxing Day tsunami. Inevitably these events will be remembered as defining moments that have shaped current theological and cultural views on suffering and evil. It is not surprising therefore that Christians struggle to align what is happening in the world with what their faith should affirm. Consequently, it becomes increasingly difficult to find a way through the emotional turmoil of suffering and discover adequate responses that can affirm a person's faith.

Tragedies such as those described above bring the idea of God's sovereignty to the forefront of people's minds. A confrontation occurs between what we know to be certain and assured, and a vulnerable and uncertain future that is less predictable. Faith then needs somehow to speak into that confusion. Often that is where a combination of a person's experience and the teaching of their particular denomination can fill that space and people can find renewed hope.

The received theology of The Salvation Army not only needs to be readily accessible but also able to articulate its position on issues such as God's sovereignty in the midst of suffering in light of the current context. The Salvation Army has a rich heritage of Wesleyan teaching and this emphasis needs to be explicitly captured in the received theology of the denomination.

### **III. The Salvation Army's 'Received' Theology**

Historically, The Salvation Army – and in particular its Founder, General William Booth – held to a very pragmatic approach to mission and ministry which was also firmly grounded within a Wesleyan/Methodist theological framework. According to Eason

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<sup>9</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (London: SCM Press, 1977).

and Green, 'Although William Booth may have been a pragmatist rather than a systematic theologian, his actions did not amount to a thoughtless evangelism. As he had learned early in life, the business of saving souls required theological motivation and effective methods.'<sup>10</sup> The Wesleyan/Methodist influence upon William Booth guaranteed a firm theological framework for the Army in two distinct areas: salvation and holiness. 'Booth preached redemption, and the biblical doctrine of holiness was part of God's redemptive purpose for every believer. That doctrine was not an amendment to his theology but the core of his theology'.<sup>11</sup>

During the Army's formative years, Booth's passion for the salvation of the world contributed to the expansion of The Salvation Army. Additionally, Catherine Booth's passion for preaching, for women's equality and her definitive theology were embedded within the fabric of the movement they created. When the Booths arrived in the East End of London and saw the evidence of the socio-economically deprived, often the illiterate and rejected of society living in such spiritually and physically appalling conditions, Booth had found his destiny. The Salvation Army was established to minister to the people in the streets who were not welcomed in more formal church settings. Booth's passion and calling was to 'go for souls and go for the worst.'<sup>12</sup> While William concentrated his efforts in the East End of London, Catherine's connection with the West End of London provided her with the avenue to preach and bear witness to the work that the Booths were doing elsewhere. '[T]heir most reliable asset...was Catherine's preaching in the West End, provincial towns, and summer resorts, where she found generous individuals willing to support the family and the mission.'<sup>13</sup> These funds gave an opportunity for the

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew M. Eason and Roger J. Green, eds., *Boundless Salvation: The Shorter Writings of William Booth* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2012), 21.

<sup>11</sup> Roger J. Green, *The Life & Ministry of William Booth: Founder of the Salvation Army* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 34.

<sup>12</sup> There are many 'slogans' or epithets which are common currency within The Salvation Army despite their origins which are either unknown or suffering from dubious attributions. An example of this would be the so called 'While women weep' speech by William Booth which is embedded within the folklore of The Salvation Army. An abbreviated reference to the folkloric nature of the speech is recorded on The Salvation Army's new international website:

[http://web.salvationarmy.org/ihq/www\\_sa.nsf/00e47fe418f5c83280256cf4005d2293/13c5b771fd115c52802573cc005578bf/\\$FILE/Page20.pdf](http://web.salvationarmy.org/ihq/www_sa.nsf/00e47fe418f5c83280256cf4005d2293/13c5b771fd115c52802573cc005578bf/$FILE/Page20.pdf), accessed 30 January 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Norman Murdoch, *Origins of the Salvation Army* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), 49.

movement to reach out to the most marginalised people with the message of salvation. The emphasis on the pragmatic approach to ministry would seem to have overshadowed the theological framework which undergirded much of what the Booths had accomplished.

In the ensuing years the emphasis on the practical nature of the Army's ministry became paramount and – to its detriment – the willingness to reflect theologically has generally not been given the priority it deserves within the denomination. Arguably, in order to achieve the mission of The Salvation Army, a minimalist approach to theology combined with established doctrinal positions had proven sufficient to aid its missional outcomes. This minimalist emphasis appears to have been validated by General Frederick Coutts in *The Officer* magazine.<sup>14</sup> '[F]or the militant mission on which [the Army] set out...its doctrinal impedimenta had to go into the smallest of knapsacks...Common sense and immediate emotional power were the criteria of truth...essential for the campaign against sin.'<sup>15</sup>

In the establishment of The Salvation Army as a para-military organisation, the image of a portable, theological knapsack would not have seemed out of place. The military language employed only conveyed and reiterated the minimalist approach in order to keep only that which was sufficient to equip Salvationists (soldiers) as they headed out into the mission (battle) fields. The time has now come to move beyond the 'smallest of knapsacks' approach. A broadening of the theological framework needs to be developed to maintain the missional heartbeat of the movement in order to consider the many issues that confront Salvationists and the denomination as a whole. One of these issues is the defence of the goodness of God in the face of human suffering.

Since the inception of *The Officer* magazine in 1893 the contributions which have been made by officers in the area of suffering, have predominantly been from an experiential rather than a theological position. This response is perhaps indicative of the way theological reflection has been viewed in the past.

As Salvationists tend to operate more pragmatically, when they are confronted with tragedy, wrestling with suffering as a

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<sup>14</sup> *The Officer* magazine is a periodical to which Salvation Army Officers across the world are invited to contribute articles reflecting on ministry issues. It is not an academic journal.

<sup>15</sup> Frederick Coutts, 'Another Occasional Footnote: "The Smallest of Knapsacks";' *The Officer* November (1981), 504.

theological issue can become a daunting experience. Yet despite the pain that comes '[s]uffering does not prevent us from affirming our faith and trust in God; indeed, it may open up new ways of doing so.'<sup>16</sup> Suffering may bring people to the brink of a faith crisis or bring them to a deeper awareness of God.

While The Salvation Army should never lose its pragmatic approach to its mission, it is equally important that the Army maintain a strong theological framework that underpins all of its mission and ministry. Both elements are essential for a strong, vibrant expression of Salvation Army faith and practice.<sup>17</sup> The Salvation Army's eleven Articles of Faith have provided a sound framework within which Salvationists' received theology has been shaped. *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* outlines each of the eleven Articles of Faith; the second doctrine is critical for this discussion.<sup>18</sup> It has only been in the most recent edition of the *Handbook of Doctrine* (2010) that any reference to the issue of theodicy and God's divine sovereignty has been included within the explanation of the second doctrine.<sup>19</sup> In earlier editions of the *Handbook of Doctrine* there has been a minimalist approach to the discussion of the doctrine of God. However, given The Salvation Army's historical connection with the Wesleyan tradition, it is surprising to discover a significant absence of any distinct reference to Wesleyan teaching.<sup>20</sup>

In seeking to shape a Salvationist response to suffering consideration needs to be given to both the current teaching within

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<sup>16</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Suffering* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), 89.

<sup>17</sup> One sign of interest in theology that has emerged in more recent decades on an international scale for The Salvation Army has been the development of its theological journal *Word & Deed* which invites discussion on Salvation Army doctrine and theology. Additionally, in the last few years a tri-territorial theological forum including Australia Southern Territory, Australia Eastern Territory and New Zealand/Fiji Territory has been assembled for officers and Salvationists to present theological papers for discussion.

<sup>18</sup> The second doctrine states: 'We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.' The Salvation Army, *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* (London: Salvation Books, 2010; repr., 2013), xv.

<sup>19</sup> *Handbook of Doctrine*, 43-48. A significant change came in 1998 with the release of a new edition of the Army's doctrine book entitled, *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* (London: Salvation Army International Headquarters, 1998). This included a prepared study guide published a year later. For easier accessibility and usage, *Salvation Story* and its study guide were then combined to create the 2010 edition which was renamed *Handbook of Doctrine*.

<sup>20</sup> Historically, in earlier formulations of the *Handbook of Doctrine*, there has been a similar lack of such teaching material.

the *Handbook of Doctrine* and contemporary Wesleyan scholarship. Both these elements will assist in bridging the gap between how Salvationists view the received theology of The Salvation Army and how it correlates to their own expressed theology.

#### **IV. A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology of Suffering**

Shaping Salvationists' responses to suffering, and reconnecting with the Army's Wesleyan roots is a logical way forward. However, it is not a matter of simply applying earlier Wesleyan teaching to a twenty-first century context. Therefore, consideration will be given to various contemporary Wesleyan scholars on these presenting issues and these will now be briefly sketched.

In attempting to establish a contemporary Wesleyan framework, it is important to consider the classical theistic position and to avoid a caricature of the classical approach. Without this piece of the theological puzzle, there is no frame of reference for Salvationists to approach the more contemporary views that have developed over time. A person's intellectual reasoning that God's sovereignty and goodness can co-exist in the face of evil remains a perplexing paradox to negotiate. When suffering becomes personal, and intellectual reasoning is obscured from view, any responses are perhaps less likely to arise from a head knowledge but instead from a heart that is broken and less interested in drawing logical conclusions.

Evil is a comprehensive term...which appears to be inconsistent with the good and wise plan of a God of holy love. It comprises the suffering which exists in...all human suffering in body and mind, due to natural calamity, disease and death, human stupidity, weakness and mismanagement, and to deliberate wrongdoing and cruelty. The concept of evil also includes the notion of sin...rebellion against the moral and spiritual order of God. Clearly, the presence of evil is the great and final mystery of life. It is to be noted, however, that this mystery, which darkens the minds and spirits of so many with frustration, bewilderment, rebellion, and unbelief, is a mystery which is created by the doctrine of the goodness and wisdom of the one sovereign God.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> John Lawson, *Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1986), 66f.

While the classical theistic position may continue to be the predominant one within a Salvation Army context, this view may appear unable to offer satisfactory answers to the questions which are raised by suffering and evil. However it still needs to be considered alongside some contemporary Wesleyan positions that have tended to move towards process theology and open theism.<sup>22</sup> It provides a starting point to establish how contemporary approaches have been developed, how scholars have drawn their conclusions and what responses can be considered within a Salvation Army context.

Contemporary Wesleyan theologians such as Clark Pinnock, John B Cobb Jr, Thomas Jay Oord and Michael Lodahl have moved beyond the more traditional view. It is important to see the points of similarities and the differences in how process theologians and open theists within the Wesleyan tradition view God's involvement in the world.<sup>23</sup>

The open theistic position places God within time which conveys a more closely relational God instead of observing activities from some distant vantage point.<sup>24</sup> Clark Pinnock reflects on the importance of a relational God to humanity.

Too often in the past we have thought of God as unchangeable substance or an all-controlling power too seldom as a Triune communion of love, internally relational and involved with creatures...We need to view God as participating in human affairs and vulnerable for the sake of love; he is not an invulnerable onlooker.<sup>25</sup>

Perception is significant and Pinnock draws the focus away from the classical view of God as being distant and uncaring to entertain the idea that God becomes vulnerable in order to be relational. While this image is very helpful and resonates for people on an emotional level, this change in perception raises the dilemma of how a vulnerable God can also remain omnipotent and transcendent, especially since we consider such concepts to be

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<sup>22</sup> Classical theism includes a response to the enigma: 'God is omnipotent, and God is perfectly good, and evil exists.' See Stephen T. Davis, ed. *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973), 3.

<sup>23</sup> In fact, there may be some scholars who would not consider them Wesleyan at all.

<sup>24</sup> Stephen J. Wright, 'Theological Method and the Doctrine of God,' Lecture in Sydney College of Divinity Unit TH287 Wesleyan Theology, taught at Booth College, 2012), 1.

<sup>25</sup> Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), x.

mutually exclusive in order for them to function effectively. Additionally open theists view the future as being open.<sup>26</sup> Unlike conventional thinking which has a more deterministic focus, open theists see life as being contingent and far less controlled.

While these are the commonalities process theologians and open theists share, there are also distinct differences relating to the omnipotence of God and free will. 'While openness theists affirm that God voluntarily gives freedom to the creature, process theists see freedom as an essential characteristic of the creature.'<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, William Hasker highlights the differences between the two views as it relates to the omnipotence of God.

[A]ccording to free will theism, but not according to process theism, God has the power to intervene in particular cases, so as to prevent disasters....Since God has the power to do this, one may ask why...he has not done it. It seems, then, that there is still a question the free will theist must face, whereas for the process theist no such question exists.<sup>28</sup>

Pinnock encapsulates the views mentioned above in the following way. 'In the openness model, God still reserves the power to control everything, whereas in process thought God cannot override the freedom of creatures. This is a fundamental and crucial difference.'<sup>29</sup>

While a classical understanding of God's omnipotence reflects a more transcendent and distant image of God emphasizing God's power, sovereignty and Lordship, John Cobb Jr. redefines the term. The problem with the more classical understanding of God's omnipotence, according to Cobb is that:

[T]here can be no satisfactory explanation of the evil in the world that does not reject the power of God. To avoid both seeing God as the author of evil and denying God any significant power, we need a basic reconception of what is meant by power.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Wright, 'Theological Method,' 2.

<sup>27</sup> John Cobb, and Clark H Pinnock (eds), *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue between Process and Free Will Theists* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), xi.

<sup>28</sup> William Hasker in *Searching for an Adequate God*, 45.

<sup>29</sup> Cobb, *Searching for an Adequate God*, xi.

<sup>30</sup> John Cobb, *God and the World* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), 88.

One objection raised against the classical theistic argument is that if God is all-powerful then God must be implicated in the evil and suffering of this world, therefore, God cannot be both all-powerful and good. Cobb however, provides an alternative view as he perceives God's omnipotence as 'persuasive' power.<sup>31</sup> This does not mean that God's omnipotence is somehow reduced in its effectiveness but it provides an alternative way of interpreting God's power. Cobb articulates the differences between these alternative views.

It no longer means that God exercises a monopoly of power and compels everything to be just as it is. It means instead that he exercises the optimum persuasive power in relation to whatever is. Such an optimum is a balance between urging toward the good and maximizing the power – therefore the freedom – of the one whom God seeks to persuade.<sup>32</sup>

God's persuasive power therefore, is relational. Cobb moves beyond the idea that God's omnipotence comes from a distant, perhaps uncaring Deity to one of a relational Creator exercising power which 'depends rather on relations of respect, concern, and love.'<sup>33</sup> Cobb's redefinition of God's omnipotence as 'persuasive power' has significant implications for how humanity views God's response to the evil and suffering that exists in the world. God's omnipotence is not something that manipulates and controls the causes and effects in this world but instead Cobb redefines God's power to intervene by persuasion in the circumstances that have arisen.

Cobb's argument ultimately includes the concept of hope and belief in God but he also acknowledges that a circular argument exists: '[I]f there is no hope...we cannot affirm life and humanity...there can be no theodicy...we cannot believe in God.'<sup>34</sup> Cobb then affirms the contrasting view that, 'if we do believe in God, then we can hope...we can affirm life and humanity...if we can affirm life and humanity, then the problem of theodicy is existentially solvable, even if we must confess our perplexity about many questions.'<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Cobb, *God and the World*, 90.

<sup>32</sup> Cobb, *God and the World*, 90.

<sup>33</sup> Cobb, *God and the World*, 90.

<sup>34</sup> Cobb, *God and the World*, 100.

<sup>35</sup> Cobb, *God and the World*, 100.

Here Cobb seems to draw the emphasis away from the questions that arise and instead encourages a focus on the hope that belief in God brings. He acknowledges the reality that the questions will still arise but they should not remain the central focus. If the focus remains disproportionately on the questions that suffering raises, there is a greater chance that people will be drawn further away from God and hope will diminish.

By contrast, Thomas J. Oord considers theodicy in three distinct terms, each permeated with the essence of love: 'essential free-will theism...postulates that all existing individuals...possess a measure of freedom that cannot be entirely withdrawn or overridden by others.'<sup>36</sup> Secondly, 'accidental free-will theism...[suggests that] God *could* withdraw or override creaturely powers but has chosen to regulate divine power in conformity to divine love'.<sup>37</sup> Thirdly, as we often question God's role in human suffering, Oord speaks of the term 'essential kenosis...[which] affirms that God never coerces and is thus not culpable for failing to prevent evil.'<sup>38</sup>

Oord responds to the work of John Polkinghorne's 'kenosis theory'.<sup>39</sup> This theory predominantly considers God's self-emptying nature described in Philippians 2. While there might not be a consensus about what this passage means 'many speculate that it best be interpreted as divine self-limitation for the sake of others.'<sup>40</sup> As Oord outlines Polkinghorne's argument which considers God's self-limiting nature, he provides an alternative response.

A key to my *kenosis* theodicy is...that God's prevenient provision of the power for freedom to every creature derives from God's essence. This means that prevenient grace is a necessary, not wholly voluntary, aspect of deity.<sup>41</sup>

Within his argument Oord draws out the characteristics of God as love, as relational, and as possessing power that is given and not

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<sup>36</sup> Bryan P Stone, & Thomas Jay Oord, eds., *Thy Nature & Thy Name Is Love: Wesleyan and Process Theologies in Dialogue* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2001), 199.

<sup>37</sup> Stone and Oord, 199f.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Jay Oord, ed., *Creation Made Free: Open Theology Engaging Science* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 49.

<sup>39</sup> See John Polkinghorne, *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001).

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Jay Oord, 'A Kenosis Theodicy,' paper delivered at the *Wesleyan Theological Society Meeting* (Olivet Nazarene University, 2007), 3.

<sup>41</sup> Oord, 'A Kenosis Theodicy,' 7.

reserved exclusively for Godself.<sup>42</sup> While Salvationists might readily agree with the first two characteristics, it is the concept of God's power that may challenge their preconceived idea of God's nature. In his conclusion, Oord states categorically 'The loving God of this kenosis theory is not culpable for failing to prevent genuine evil. The necessarily kenotic God lovingly provides the power and freedom necessary for creatures to respond.'<sup>43</sup> God maintains the position of Deity but also shows the extent to which God reaches out to humanity, all for the sake of love.

Michael Lodahl also emphasises the nature of God's love – often relating his position to the creation narrative in Genesis and to the earliest accounts of humanity's rejection of God's desire for relationship. In *The Story of God*, Lodahl makes particular reference to God's immutability.

The doctrine of divine *immutability*...should not suggest...that God is flat and static...but that God is immutably and eternally *love*. But this in turn implies that God...is eternally ready and willing to love and to be loved, to be engaged and involved and at risk in the creation for the creatures. God's decision to share freedom with human beings...to create beings who can and quite often do act against His purposes, is actually a decision to limit himself.<sup>44</sup>

The extent to which God risks and is prepared to limit Godself in order to re-establish relationship with humanity is testament to the way God leaves the future open: not everything is determined, nothing is restricted and there is room for randomness to occur in suffering.<sup>45</sup> This may be perplexing for people who have a deterministic view of the world but Lodahl challenges people's perceptions of how God operates in the world. He reminds his readers that '[t]he God who is free creates an open future in which, because of the freedom He has shared with us, His own heart can be broken.'<sup>46</sup> This is the risk God takes in order for people to have the freedom that has been given to them.

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<sup>42</sup> Oord, 'A Kenosis Theodicy,' 5-7.

<sup>43</sup> Oord, 'A Kenosis Theodicy,' 8.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Lodahl, *The Story of God: Wesleyan Theology & Biblical Narrative* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994), 88.

<sup>45</sup> See also: John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove, ILL: Intervarsity Press, 1998).

<sup>46</sup> Lodahl, *The Story of God*, 89.

While this brief explanation of classical theism, process and open theism may appear to be an over-simplification, it provides a starting point for further exploration and comparison with the received theology of The Salvation Army.

While the current classical theistic position is evident in the *Handbook of Doctrine*, there is an opportunity to have a robust discussion in order to develop the received theology of The Salvation Army as it relates to God's sovereignty in the midst of suffering. Engaging with contemporary Wesleyan scholarship provides an opportunity to reflect theologically on several questions. Historically how has The Salvation Army's received theology articulated issues relating to suffering and Divine Sovereignty? To what extent does experience appear to be the primary influence on Salvationists' 'expressed theology'? To what extent do Salvationists' responses to suffering appear to be inadequate and comparatively unaware of The Salvation Army's teaching? How might contemporary Wesleyan approaches and classical Wesleyan theology inform Salvationists' expressed theology? What implications might a contemporary Wesleyan approach have for the existing received theology of The Salvation Army as part of the holiness movement? What might be the implications for The Salvation Army on an international level if it were to consider engaging in the debate concerning open theism within responses to Army doctrine?

Such a process of reflection would not be an attempt to find an 'answer' to human suffering but a search for a way through it. It has potential to bring a greater awareness within The Salvation Army of the role of God in human suffering; the bearing it has on what Salvationists believe; how faith can be strengthened; and how they can respond when confronted with human tragedy. Engaging with contemporary Wesleyan scholarship will undoubtedly enrich not only the received theology of The Salvation Army but in turn will also enhance Salvationists' expressed theology concerning human suffering. This would provide greater congruence and alignment between Salvationists' received and expressed theology, and allow the space to move beyond the theological knapsack.

# ***PLAYING IN THE CITY OF GOD***

***Brian Edgar***

*This article puts forward the idea that play is the essential and ultimate form of relationship with God. A playful attitude lies at the very heart of all spirituality and is critical for the whole of life. The article explores the notion of play in terms of the City of God; various interpretations of play and the need to relate a playful attitude with the reality of pain and suffering.*

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*The true object of all human life is play.  
When we are really holy we may regard  
the universe as a lark.*

- G.K. Chesterton

Play is the essential and ultimate form of relationship with God. A playful attitude lies at the very heart of all spirituality and is critical for the whole of life. With a thesis such as this it will, of course, be difficult to be taken seriously! But the great theorist of play, Johan Huizinga argued that only a playful way of living does justice to the seriousness of life.<sup>1</sup>

Explaining the connection between play and the way one lives as a Christian has not always been easy. Although everyone understands the spiritual significance of serious concepts such as ‘servanthood,’ ‘sacrifice,’ and ‘commitment,’ the concept of ‘play’ is apparently so lightweight that it is more difficult to see the connection it has with the Christian life. After the initial surprise, however, it soon becomes an interesting proposition for most people because of the fun, the freedom, the pleasure and the adventure associated with play. The downside is that there are also a number of negative dimensions associated with play: it is often considered to be

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\*This article is developed from a paper delivered at the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Scholarly Conference of the Australasian Centre for Wesleyan Research, Wesleyans and the City of God,<sup>1</sup> held at the Uniting Church Centre for Theology and Ministry, Melbourne, 15-16 August 2014.

<sup>1</sup> Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon, 1950).

frivolous, sometimes inappropriate and, almost inevitably in our culture, it is always seen as secondary in value to 'work' and 'service.' Our cultural presuppositions about play are ambivalent, to say the least.

On top of this there are a number of unhelpful assumptions about the metaphors that can appropriately be used to describe God. There is never a problem with the more transcendent terms such as 'Creator,' 'King,' 'Lord,' and 'Master' but, for some people at least, it is more difficult to work with the more immanent descriptions of God as 'Lover,' 'Friend' or even as 'Playmate.' Consequently, any explanation of this concept has to involve the deconstruction of certain assumptions.

Despite this difficulty there is actually nothing very original involved in developing an understanding of 'the playful dimension' of life or spirituality as this is an attitude to God and life that is found in both ancient philosophy and the biblical tradition. There is little claim for originality here except that there is a focus upon the needs of the present day. In the contemporary world it is a rare thing to find *any* sustained theological reflection upon play or the spiritual importance of a playful attitude (or associated concepts such as humour, dance, creativity, relaxation, spontaneity, and joy).

Nonetheless, considering our relationship with God in terms of play involves some important implications for the way that we live with others. I want to suggest that Christians should take much more seriously the traditional understanding of the church which interprets the future kingdom of God in terms of play, laughter and dance.

## **I. The City of God**

God's promise to the people of Israel, through the prophet Zechariah was that Zion, the city of God, would one day in the future be called the City of Truth and become a place of peace where 'men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets... and the city will be filled with boys and girls playing.' (Zechariah 8:5) This imagery of the future City of God is closely connected with the emerging field of child theology, which is not simply a theology of childhood but a child-orientated view of theology. This is a view that theologians need to take seriously – or perhaps playfully - because Jesus said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.'

(Matthew 11:25-26) Those who claim to be wise and learned among us need to be very careful that they have not become so learned that the truth has been hidden from them. ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’ (Luke 18: 15-17)

Jesus affirmed the way that children live and play. Adults have much to learn from children about the way that life in the kingdom is to be lived. The playful life of children is an example for everyone. But, unfortunately, there has been significant resistance to this ‘childish’ and ‘playful’ approach to the kingdom. People have persistently resisted the subversive wisdom of Jesus which not only insists that ‘the first shall be last’ and that ‘the greatest among you will be the least’ but also that adults should learn from children (rather than the more customary state of children learning from adults). It seems that a spirituality of play is to be preferred to one of self-denial.

## **II. Interpretations of Play**

The philosophical interpretation of life understood in terms of play goes back as far as Plato, one of the principal founders of western thought, who described humanity as being ‘God’s plaything’ and thus as having a responsibility to live playfully (‘Life must be lived as play’) with others and God.<sup>2</sup> The poet, playwright, and philosopher Friedrich Schiller famously argued that ‘man is only fully a human being when he plays’ and composer and philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche utilized the term “play” to characterize a life that transcended the ethical categories of ‘good’ and ‘evil.’<sup>3</sup> Martin Heidegger used the metaphor of ‘play’ to explain the unique nature of human being,<sup>4</sup> and Hans-Georg Gadamer used it to overcome the polarity of subject and object.<sup>5</sup>

Theological interpretations of life and relationship with God in terms of play are, however, relatively rare. It has been, at best, a

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<sup>2</sup> Plato, ‘Laws,’ Book 7, 803d in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vols. 10 and 11 trans. R.G. Bury (London: William Heinemann, 1967-1968).

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 107.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 111-113.

<sup>5</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. (New York: Bloomsbury, 1989), 106-114.

minor theme; yet it is far from unknown. A considerable number of writers, theologians, mystics and pastors have noted the importance of play and its relationship with the sacred, but few have systematically explored it, despite frequently describing it as significant. Maximus the Confessor observed that we deserve to be looked upon as a children's game played by God.<sup>6</sup> The great scholastic theologian Thomas Aquinas argued that just as play is important for the body after it is tired from physical working so too play is needed for the soul that requires rest and relaxation from the even harder work of prayer. Thus play is to be commended. Aquinas followed one of his heroes, Aristotle, in searching for a balance in life and so, while he saw certain forms of play as sinful (when senseless, hurtful, or excessive), he also thought that a *lack* of play and laughter was sinful. He developed the theme by observing an even closer connection in that just as play gives pleasure the contemplation of wisdom gives the very greatest pleasure, and therefore is a form of play. His highest designation of God was, unusually but helpfully, of God as 'Chief Friend.' He nonetheless did not explore the metaphor in terms of humanity doing what friends do—play—with God. That was, apparently, a step too far.<sup>7</sup>

For the Dominican mystic Meister Eckhardt the playing of Wisdom with the Lord at creation is an indication of an eternal, Trinitarian play of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup> Theresa of Lisieux expressed a modest desire to participate in the play of God by being a toy, a little ball for the infant Christ.<sup>9</sup> Romano Guardini defended both the 'uselessness' and the profundity of play and worship in his study of liturgy as play.<sup>10</sup> Hugo Rahner, in a rare and detailed exposition, explored the Christian life entirely in terms of a playfulness that arises from the freedom of a God who plays. 'Mere seriousness,' he argued, does not get down to the roots of things. There is a *sacred secret* in play which is the hope for another form of life. All play arises from the human longing for the vision of the divine.<sup>11</sup>

The reality, however, is that the church's tradition has more commonly taken a negative view of play. Among the Fathers, for

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<sup>6</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, 262a (PG 91, 1409CD)

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, II-II, Qn. 168.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Bulson, *Believe What You Read* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006), 132.

<sup>9</sup> Theresa of Lisieux, *Autobiography of a Saint*, trans. Ronald Knox (London: Collins, 1973), 171.

<sup>10</sup> Sourced at [http://fdlc.org/Liturgy\\_Resources/Guardini/Chapter1.htm](http://fdlc.org/Liturgy_Resources/Guardini/Chapter1.htm)

<sup>11</sup> Hugo Rahner, *Man at Play* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 65.

example, Ambrose of Milan frequently quoted the Lord Jesus as saying 'woe to you who laugh, for you shall weep' (Luke 6:25) and told his people that all games should be avoided. The great preacher and Archbishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom, wrote,

This world is not a theatre, in which we can laugh; and we are not assembled together in order to burst into peals of laughter, but to weep for our sins. But some of you still want to say: 'I would prefer God to give me the chance to go on laughing and joking.' Is there anything more childish than thinking this way? It is not God who gives us the chance to play, but the devil.<sup>12</sup>

In short, the Christian focus has tended to fall upon service and work rather than play, and upon activity in general (rather than rest). As the well-known saying puts it, 'the devil finds work for idle hands.' But playfulness, delight, and joy *ought* to characterize the nature of the Christian and his or her relationship with God. While there is every reason to affirm and maintain concepts such as ministry, service, obedience, sacrifice, duty, work, and responsibility it is unhelpful, in our perceptions of our lives and relationships, to *substitute* them for those dimensions of life and relationship that are central to the future life of the eschaton. In seeking to describe the future life, the Christian tradition consistently turns to the metaphors of play, music, and dance.

But it is difficult for many people to take seriously the significance of this eschatological play for the believer's present relationship with God. Consequently, there is a tendency to downplay the playfulness of the kingdom. This occurs in various ways. It can happen when the Christian life in the present is characterised solely in terms of service, sacrifice, obedience and faithful ministry, without sufficient reference to joy, celebration, pleasure, or play. When that happens, it can be extremely hard for Christians to accept that the disciplines that they have focused on are not the ultimate goal/form of life. There can also be a downplaying of the playfulness of the kingdom when the purpose of Christ's return is understood primarily in terms of judgment, or when there is an emphasis upon eternal life as simply being the absence of sin and suffering.

These are, of course, usually unconscious errors that are simply the result of stressing one aspect of the Christian life more than

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<sup>12</sup> Chrysostom, *Commentary on Matthew*, Homily 6, cited in Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Play* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 98.

another, often influenced by other factors, such as those cultural mores that stress work more than play and authority more than relationships. Service, sacrifice, and ministry are critically important Christian ways in which Christians express their faith in God and live out the life of the kingdom but in biblical imagery the *final* state of life for the believer is not characterized in terms of work, ministry, service, or sacrifice but in terms of joy, gladness, laughter, and play.

Indeed, the common designation ‘the kingdom,’ by which, in short-hand fashion Christians identify the reign of God, the Lordship of Christ and the presence of the Spirit both present and future could easily be replaced by ‘the party.’ This would point much more clearly towards the play, joy, and laughter that are an essential, central, part of the future life that Christians are called to live in the present. It is very important, therefore, to help Christians understand and express their new life in Christ in terms of intimate, joyful, playful relationship with him as well as in terms of obedient service and sacrifice. The latter may initially appear to be nobler and more worthy of encouragement, but the former expresses even more radically the amazing grace of God. And it is not only the world that needs to see these qualities expressed; the believer does as well, because without the joy, play, and laughter of intimate relationship, obedient service and sacrifice easily become formal obligations or legal responsibilities rather than joyful sharing. Consequently, God becomes more a distant Master to be obeyed than a close Friend to be loved.

The Lordship of Christ, the revelation of the sovereignty of God and the exercise of justice are rightly seen as important to an understanding of the return of Christ but these occur precisely in order to institute an on-going state of eternal playfulness, joy, and communion with God. For many people it is more difficult to imagine the King of kings or the Judge of All playing around and having a laugh. The former imagery seems more appropriate and respectful than the latter.

The notion of eternal playfulness can also be removed from its central place when there is an emphasis upon eternal life as being an eternal ‘rest’ that simply involves the removal of sin and suffering and relief from earthly labour. The well-known passage in the Revelation of John says that at the time of the new heaven and new earth, ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ (Rev 21:4) This is an important part of Christian hope, and a promise that believers frequently hold to very dearly. But the

absence of pain and suffering needs to be complemented with an understanding of a presence of God that is more than an absence, or a passive, static 'rest', or a quiet, earnest, serious relationship. In fact, the notion of 'communion with God' should be positively expressed in terms of glorious, joyful, engagement. Indeed, it is a 'rest' that should probably be seen as *starting off with a dance*, as Hippolytus of Rome might well have suggested. He described Christ as the 'lead dancer in the mystical round,' with the church as 'his bride who dances along.'<sup>13</sup> This is not exactly the common picture - derived from stained-glass images - of the attitude of the ancient Fathers of the church, but the early liturgies described by Justin Martyr and Hippolytus describe joyful circle dances representing communion with God. For Gregory of Nazianzus dance was the 'nimble gesture of one who walks before God,'<sup>14</sup> and for Ambrose there was 'the glorious dance of the wise.'<sup>15</sup> R. Gagne describes the early church as seeing dance as one of the 'heavenly joys and part of the adoration of the divinity by the angels and by the saved.'<sup>16</sup> This dance might well then be *followed by nothing other than cosmic play*. Martin Luther said that at the end people would 'play with heaven and earth, the sun and all the creatures' and all creatures would play with God - 'they shall have their fun, love and joy, and shall laugh with thee and thou with them.'<sup>17</sup>

### III. Play as Communion

One of the reasons that play is the finest expression of joy in the Lord is that it is playing *together* - it is communion, sharing, mutual pleasure, the fulfilment of human desire. Indeed, all play arises from human longing for the community and joy that are truly found only in God. Importantly, the mutuality of play and dance implies that God also takes pleasure in this dynamic relationship and this is, theologically speaking, connected with the dynamic relationship of the Triune God. Play and dance are a reflection of the inter-relationship of Father, Son and Spirit. The term *perichoresis* (from

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<sup>13</sup> M. Daniels, *The Dance in Christianity: A History of Religious Dance through the Ages* (New York: Paulist, 1981), 36.

<sup>14</sup> Gregory Nazienzen, *Orations*, V. 35 (PG 35, 7090).

<sup>15</sup> Ambrose, *Epistilae* 58, 7-8, (PL 16, 1179f).

<sup>16</sup> R. Gagne, T. Kane, T. and R. Ver Eecke, *Dance in Christian Worship* (Washington: Pastoral, 1948), 36.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Moltmann, 36-37.

*chore* - dance and *peri* - about) has been used for this relationship at least since John of Damascus and it refers to the way in which the three persons live in communion (mutual indwelling, interpenetration) without merging, although precisely what that implies for the attributes and the transfer of properties of the persons is debatable. The metaphor of dance does however say much about the intimacy and the closeness of each of the persons in the life of the other. Play and dance imply a participatory understanding of the Trinity such that people join in the life of God. This is both significant for people and important for God.

#### IV. Play and Suffering

But what about suffering? How can we have a playful attitude when there is so much suffering? While imprisoned by the Nazis in Tegel prison in 1944 Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote a letter to Renate and Eberhard Bethge reflecting on the way one ought to live in the midst of the most difficult times one could imagine. Could one possibly enjoy music, play games or enjoy oneself in the face of evil? Bonhoeffer thought that this was only possible for some people. ‘Who is there, for instance, in our times, who can devote himself with an easy mind to music, friendship, games, or happiness? Surely not the “ethical” man, but only the Christian.’<sup>18</sup>

Only the Christian! When evil looms large then play, music and friendship become absurd for those who see these things as the means to happiness, but the Christian has a very different view. For Bonhoeffer, play, music and friendship are not *the means* to happiness; rather they are *the result* of a relationship with God. And repression, imprisonment and war are not factors that can prevent the Christian - but only the Christian - from engaging in play or music because the Christian attitude is not based on mere physical circumstances. In such a situation one’s own strength becomes irrelevant, and *the essential task* is to learn to trust in being in God’s hands. Once one has done that, then it becomes possible to live!

Of course, given the dire circumstances, Bonhoeffer is careful to nuance his position. He distinguishes genuine Christian happiness from false bravado, and he does not avoid the moral responsibilities for action that the war brought. But he repudiates the view that

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<sup>18</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 193.

people are happy as a result of play and is insistent that friendship, play, music and happiness all emerge from an attitude of trust in God.

## **V. Playing Together**

The implication of this understanding of the eternal, playful divine-human relationship is that the church is to re-present the playful life of the future kingdom in the present through all circumstances. The responsibility of the church to be a model or microcosm of the kingdom means being the joyful people of God in the present. We are to bring this future joyful life into reality in the present. We are to 'play it' this way *as though* the kingdom was present, because in and through the church and the working of the Spirit *it can* be real and present. While ministry, service and sacrifice are part and parcel of life in the present because the end of the present age has not yet come about, the truest expression of the life of the kingdom is not found so much in successful work or achievements in ministry as in the grace-filled expressions of joy, love, laughter, and play that break into the present world and which ought to permeate Christian lives. These moments of joy are not merely moments of relief; they are anticipations of eternal life. They are the kingdom present. To really live out the kingdom means entering a completely new world of communion with God in joy and happiness.

Too often it seems that the present Christian life is about grace deferred. That is, the present life is a time to be endured rather than enjoyed as we await the glorious, future kingdom of God. The present era is, indeed, a time that mixes joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, tragedy and triumph and we do await the final revelation of Christ in his glory, but this certainty of a future hope has implications for our understanding of the present time, for the kingdom is present as well as future and the glory of God is revealed all around us at this very moment.

So often this life is interpreted as a time of work and achievement that precedes a future rest, but it is important to question whether this life is primarily about achievement and things done. The moments of this life which abide in eternity are found in the moments of grace and faith, joy and love rather than in moments of glory due to one's own achievements and efforts. As much as this world is a *preparation* for the next it is also *present demonstration* of that life of play, dance, music, joy, and rejoicing. The biblical

images of life in the eternal kingdom of God are not ones that stress or glorify human achievement, instead they focus on child-like play and joy; and we are able to experience a foretaste of the future eschatological life as we share in this playful joy in the present.

This is famously expressed in the Westminster Shorter Catechism which asks, 'What is the chief end of man?' and answers, 'Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.' The enjoyment of God is not something only for the future, but for the present as well. This is expressed in the way that King David danced and played before the Lord (2 Sam. 6:12-16), an act that appeared to be irreverent to others but not to the Lord. When rebuked David insisted upon celebrating and being 'undignified' in this way. Since at least the sixth century this has been expressed in Christian art in terms of a resurrection dance. More recently the idea has been picked up by massed, public resurrection dances. On Easter Sunday in 2010, 300 young people from Faith Church in Budapest took part in an enthusiastic resurrection dance in Victory Square and, apart from it becoming a YouTube hit, the next year Christians in 65 cities did the same. This kind of joyful, playful dance which is an expression of life with God ought to be characteristic of the life of the believer. Life is misunderstood if it is only seen in terms of *working for God*, it is important to learn to *play with God* as well. Obedience and duty, sacrifice, service and self-giving need to be complemented with play and pleasure, joy and appreciation. In so doing the emphasis shifts from *service of God* to *relationship with God*.

An emphasis on this kind of spiritual life will, of course, appear either absurd or idealistic to those who are fixed within a framework of work and ministry. While nothing said here should be taken as minimising the importance of ministry, justice, sacrifice, or suffering for Christ, nonetheless these are not the ends toward which the kingdom is moving. In regard to this, Jurgen Moltmann speaks, quite strikingly, of the 'the liberation of life.'<sup>19</sup> Hitherto life has been subject to both sin itself and to the work of overcoming the effects of sin, injustice, pain and suffering, but through Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit life is eventually liberated, sin is overcome and life is released into joyful play. This means that the present life of the church will not only necessarily involve labour, ministry and sacrifice but also ought to be seen as involving clear anticipations of the future life of joy, for in Christ, life is liberated into joyfulness and playfulness. This playfulness is not to be found

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<sup>19</sup> Moltmann, 35

so much in specific, playful activities that are engaged in from time to time, as much as in an *attitude* of mind that produces a playful approach to the whole of life. Those who have this ability to find the playful dimension in all aspects of life find it enriched. To be able to find the creative, playful dimension of work, friendships, family relationships, community service and so forth is a real blessing but in this way, God's kingdom can break into the world at any time. Tragedy, pain, and trauma are not overcome in this world by *eliminating* them (that is for the future kingdom where there will be no more pain or suffering) but by finding God and divine joy *in the midst* of them. There is no place in life where Christ is not present and playful.

# DARWIN AND THEOLOGY

**Thomas A. Noble**

*This article was delivered as a lecture at the University of Queensland on Wednesday, 24 July, 2013. It argues that despite the campaign of the 'new atheists', Darwin's thought does not lead to atheism and cannot decide the philosophical issue of the existence of God one way or the other. While Darwinism can be assimilated into the natural theology of Deism, it does not really touch classical Christian belief in the Triune God. It is shown that Darwin's thought is logically compatible with the doctrine of creation ex nihilo, and that this was understood by a host of evangelical scientists and theologians in the nineteenth century. Darwinism was used in the propaganda war launched by Huxley and Spencer and grass-roots fundamentalism accepted their idea that it was contrary to Christian faith. Though there is no genuine theological problem associated with the acceptance of Darwinism, theological conflicts remain in the doctrines of humanity and the Fall, including the question of the existence of evil. Continuing advances in theology can continue to benefit from insights from the human sciences.*

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'Darwin and Theology' seems to be a hot topic owing, no doubt, to the truly magnificent publicity given to this subject by the so-called 'new atheists.'<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Daniel C. Dennett, the late Christopher Hitchens, and others like them, 'God' is high on the current agenda, and we theologians cannot do other than express our gratitude to them! The title 'Darwin and Theology' was chosen for me perhaps because I had edited a book in 2009 (along with R.J. Berry, Professor Emeritus of Genetics in the University of London) to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *The Origin of the Species*. Four chapters of this book were written by theologians and four chapters by scientists, but one of the scientists was the Rev. Prof. David Wilkinson of Durham University, a theologian who also has a doctorate in astronomy.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A newspaper item shortly before this lecture was delivered advertised a debate in August, 2013, between Prof Lawrence Krauss of the 'Global Atheist Convention' and the Christian philosopher and apologist, Dr William Lane Craig who was visiting Australia.

<sup>2</sup> R.J. Berry and T.A. Noble, eds., *Darwin, Creation and the Fall: Theological Challenges* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2009).

The approach I shall take to this topic is that of the theologian. David Wilkinson, and also Alister McGrath, now of King's College, London, have the advantage over most of us that they hold doctoral degrees in both science and theology. Most of us however suffer from the gap between 'the two cultures' famously noted by C.P. Snow.<sup>3</sup> Even within the field of theology or divinity, my specialisation is not in Apologetics or Philosophy of Religion but in Christian Dogmatics, the exploration of Christian faith and doctrine from the inside. However at least now we no longer need to apologize in the academy for holding a specific position, since it is now generally recognised that not one of us is neutral. One of the great myths of the era of modernity has been that the greatest experts on religion are those who claim to believe nothing. But the myth of neutrality has been exploded. We all believe something, and we all believe *in* something, whether that be the God of the Christians or some other god, or in the ultimate value of human life. That too is a belief. We all have a position. The passion and commitment with which Richard Dawkins and others have pursued what might be called their atheist 'crusade' are surely proof enough of that.

So, as a theologian, let me begin by explaining what I mean in the title of the lecture by the word 'theology.' Presumably we do not have to specify that it is the thought of *Charles* Darwin we are concerned with, one of the very greatest scientists of the modern era, surely to be ranked with Newton and Einstein for the influence he has had on our thinking. But we do have to clarify and explain what we mean here by 'theology'. And to begin with, we need to distinguish 'theology' from 'religious studies'. Both are equally valid intellectual pursuits, but it is muddled thinking to confuse them. Religious Studies is the study of 'religion', and religion is a *human* phenomenon. In that academic discipline we study what *human* beings have written in ancient scriptures and in modern writings of faith: we study religious institutions as *human* institutions: we study

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<sup>3</sup> The author left science behind at grammar school, specializing in the Arts, particularly History, and then later, in Divinity, particularly Christian Dogmatics. It is true that I studied under T.F. Torrance, the Edinburgh theologian who perhaps devoted more attention than any other to the methodologies of natural science and what he insisted was 'Theological Science.' However, I approach this topic here as a theologian without any credentials of my own in science, and most of us suffer from the same disadvantage in this inter-disciplinary area, namely that our expertise is one-sided.

religious practices which are *human* practices, and religious traditions which are *human* traditions. Religious Studies is therefore one of the social or *human* sciences: it may include sociology of religion, history of religion, and psychology of religion. We may also study religious ideas and they too are *human* ideas: such study may be done as philosophy of religion or it may be done as part of history, the history of thought. And we may engage in any of those areas of study without being personally committed to any of the doctrines, practices, ideas or traditions we are investigating.

But of course, we will have our own beliefs and commitments. No one is neutral. We cannot be human without having some practices, traditions, and ideas and without participating in some institutions which have some kind of credal or ethical basis. And therefore it is not only valid academic research to study the religious or ethical or philosophical commitments of others. It is also valid academic research to think critically about one's own religious, ethical and philosophical commitments. That is a valid academic pursuit whatever one's commitments – whether we are Muslim, Buddhist, Secular Humanist, or Christian. The only requirement is that, while none of us is neutral and we are each inevitably committed to some position, if we are to pursue the study of our own belief system in an academically acceptable way, it must be done with critical, indeed with self-critical, thinking.

That is how we should understand the discipline of Christian theology within the academic world.<sup>4</sup> However, it is worth noting that while other academic disciplines in the curriculum today had their birth within the academic institution of the university, it was the ancient discipline of Christian theology which gave birth to the institution of the university. It was Christian theology which conveyed ancient philosophy to the modern world - Plato and Aristotle and the greatest thinkers of ancient Greece. And Christian theology itself has been pursued as a disciplined study by some of the greatest luminaries of Western thought – Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Schleiermacher and Barth. Additionally, some of the greatest philosophers - Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard, to name only four - have done their thinking within the tradition of Christian civilization.

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<sup>4</sup> For introductions to Christian Theology (as distinct from Religious Studies) by major academics, see Daniel Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); David Ford, *Theology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 1999); Colin Gunton, *The Christian Faith* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); and Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Crossroad, 2004).

Of course, today, we must take into account a wider range of thinkers and of civilizations, but the point is that it was this Christian, Western civilization which eventually gave birth to the institution of the university where free research may be pursued and where (within certain limits) all may argue for their varied position and be treated with respect. I say 'within certain limits' since those who advocate disrespect and even persecution of others, such as racists, are generally not given that freedom. But there of course, lies the catch-22: how academic tolerance is to draw limits without becoming intolerant and the advocacy of a particular world-view, whether that be a Christian world-view or one which belongs to Secular Humanism.

So in addressing 'Darwin and Theology', we are thinking of the two thousand year-old discipline of Christian theology. Further, it is 'classical' Christian theology we have in mind, namely what C.S. Lewis called 'Mere Christianity'. This is the Christianity of the Christian Scriptures as interpreted by the creeds, particularly the Nicene Creed, to which the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions are committed along with the tradition of the Protestant Reformation represented today by the broad and global Evangelical tradition. All of these major traditions of the Church are committed to belief in the Triune God, to the Incarnation, the true deity and true humanity of Jesus Christ, his death for our sins, his rising again, his sending of the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel to all nations and the hope of his coming kingdom and of the new heavens and the new earth. Certain strands of what is misleadingly called 'liberal theology' cannot be included in that Nicene faith, but we are concerned here with what we may call *classical* theology, represented in the Roman, Eastern Orthodox and Reformation or Evangelical traditions of the Church catholic.

In addressing 'Darwin and Theology' therefore, the focus of the lecture is on *the implications of the thought of Darwin and his successors for Christian theology*. We will not therefore be examining the contemporary sciences of biology or geology or palaeontology, genetics or any other area of science as it has been shaped by the thought of Darwin. Indeed I do not have the expertise to do that. Rather, as a theologian, what I propose to examine is the implications for Christian theology of what we call the 'theory of evolution' broadly considered, as it has been articulated by Darwin and his successors.

## I. Darwin and Belief in God

Let us begin then with the widest question: Darwin and belief in God. Has the theory of evolution as articulated by Darwin and his successors invalidated belief in God? Has Darwin demolished Christianity? Has religion been outmoded and destroyed by Darwin's science and indeed by modern science as a whole? Undoubtedly there are some who think so, notably the new atheists, Dawkins, Dennett, Hitchens and others, and indeed, there is a widespread popular impression that that is so. Undoubtedly many people from the Victorians down to the present day stopped believing in the existence of 'God' because they came or have come to think, or at least, they have been persuaded to think, that modern science – Darwin in particular – has ruled out belief in what they call 'the supernatural' and in particular, belief in 'God.'

But we need to examine this word, 'God'. What do we mean by this three-letter word? And in particular, does everyone who uses the word mean the same thing? We are not concerned at this point with *reference*: we are not asking whether there is a real Being in existence to which this word refers. Rather, we are talking about *meaning*. What *meaning* do we attribute to this word? What is the *idea* of God, the *concept* of God which we employ when we use the word? We need to ask that, because we do not all mean the same thing.

It will help to clarify the point if we begin by asking specifically: what did Darwin mean by 'God'?<sup>5</sup> What was his concept of God? And right away of course we must take note that Darwin belonged to a family of Unitarians. His redoubtable grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, a doctor in Lichfield, and his father, a doctor in Shrewsbury, were Unitarians, as was his mother's family, the famous family of Wedgwood potters. Charles was a grandson of Josiah Wedgwood and married his cousin, Emma Wedgwood, whose sincere faith caused her husband some heartache.

Unitarianism was an outgrowth of Deism which in the eighteenth century, as a consequence of the so-called 'Enlightenment' – the thought of Newton, Locke, Hume and Kant – had become the belief-system of many who were counted as part of the institutional Christian church. But it was not *classical* Christianity. It tended to at least ignore or deny outright the doctrine of the Trinity, the deity of

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<sup>5</sup> See William Phipps, *Darwin's Religious Odyssey* (Harrisburg: Trinity International, 2002).

Christ, and the atonement, and it had little or no place for the Holy Spirit. It was in fact another gospel, another belief system. With the Enlightenment, great value was placed on those elements of 'religion' that were thought to be common notions across the world's religions and cultures: that there was one supreme deity, that to be religious was a matter of morality, that human wrong-doing can be dealt with by sincere repentance, and that future rewards and punishments will be based on merit. People of the Enlightenment claimed that these were universal truths. All 'reasonable' people could agree on those points, and of course the bit about rewards and punishments helped to keep the lower orders in their place! But the distinctive features of Christianity - the Trinity, the deity of Christ and the atonement - were at best marginalized or even totally discounted. Belief in the Supreme Being was largely an intellectual conviction based on cosmology. The reasonable men of the Enlightenment (using the word 'men' intentionally) believed that there was a Supreme Being because the existence and order of the universe seemed to demand it, and because it was socially and politically useful.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the Deist belief system was beginning to sag. It was somewhat fortified by Kant, but in England it was the writings of William Paley, the Archdeacon of Carlisle, which were more influential. Paley prolonged the influence of the Enlightenment belief in the Supreme Being who was required as an explanation for the order of the cosmos. His famous analogy of the watch found on a heath helped to prolong the concept of the universe as a great machine - the popular view in the age of Newton. The teleological argument or 'argument from design', and not the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, was the foundation of the belief of educated people that there must be a Supreme Being. But their belief system was therefore *not* the *classical* Christian faith: it was Deism.

At the same time it is worth noting that the leading evangelical thinkers of the day accepted 'natural theology' as a supplement to a biblically-based faith. In Scotland we may note the great Thomas Chalmers, mathematician and outstanding preacher, social reformer and founding father of the Free Kirk, and Hugh Miller, editor, poet, essayist, stonemason, geologist and palaeontologist. In America, Edward Hitchcock, geologist-theologian, and Benjamin Silliman, Professor of Chemistry and Natural History at Yale, were also

working at the issues of relating their faith to contemporary science.<sup>6</sup> For this whole generation of scientists who also held to classical Christian faith and doctrine, the generation preceding Darwin, the idea of a 'young earth' created in six days according to Archbishop Ussher's seventeenth-century calculations had long since been rejected. To read Genesis 1 as referring to seven literal twenty-four-hour days was no more acceptable to them than it had been to St Augustine.

Even though Darwin considered becoming a clergyman after he abandoned his medical studies in Edinburgh and became a student at Cambridge, and even though, once married, he settled down as the squire of Down House in Kent, that delightful family house which is well worth a visit, and even though he attended the parish church at first and supported the rector in his charity work, it appears that Darwin never shared in the classical Christian faith of these leading evangelicals. His belief-system was not a trust *in* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but was rather a Deistic belief *that* there must be a Supreme Being. Phil Dowe tells us that as a student at Cambridge, Darwin had to read Paley and was impressed by his argument,<sup>7</sup> and belief in the god of Deism seems to have been Darwin's faith until his voyage in the *Beagle* sowed the seeds of doubt. The 'god' who was merely a philosophical explanation for the existence and design of the universe was beginning to totter in his temple like Dagon of old.

But what really challenged Darwin's deistic faith was the problem of suffering. Darrel Falk of Point Loma Nazarene University argues that it was the problem of suffering rather than Darwin's scientific thinking which led to his loss of faith, such as it was.<sup>8</sup> There was first of all his own suffering with the mysterious illness which repeatedly laid him low throughout his adult life after his five-year voyage on the *Beagle*. But much more devastating was the death of his ten-year old child, Annie. And when it came to the origin of the species and the ascent of humanity, it was not the explanatory power of the theory of evolution which challenged his faith so much as the cruelty and suffering which he saw in creation – famously, the Ichneumonidae feeding within the bodies of live caterpillars. It has

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<sup>6</sup> For each of these, see David N. Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987), 1-27.

<sup>7</sup> Phil Dowe, *Galileo, Darwin, and Hawking: The Interplay of Science, Reason and Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 109, 113.

<sup>8</sup> Darrel R. Falk, 'Theological Challenges Faced by Darwin,' in Berry and Noble, eds., 75-85.

also been suggested that Darwin was part of a widespread Victorian reaction against the teaching that God would condemn to an eternal hell every person who had not come to conscious faith in Christ.

So, to sum up these points, Darwin was never an orthodox Christian with a firm grasp of the gospel and a 'sure trust *in Christ*': rather he was a Deist who believed *that* God existed largely on the basis of the design argument. Secondly his loss of faith was merely loss of intellectual assent to the existence of a god who was a mere demiurge. And thirdly, his loss of faith was because of the serious offences against perfection in the design – the problem of suffering which Darwin felt so keenly.

The fourth point to make before we leave this section is that Darwin's loss of faith in the Deistic demiurge did not result in atheism. Unlike Dawkins and company, Darwin did not draw the conclusion that the Theory of Evolution constituted a proof that God did not exist. He ended up not in atheism, but in a confused agnosticism. He wrote:

My judgment often *fluctuates*...In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying God. I think that generally (and more and more as I grow older) *but not always*, that an agnostic would be the more correct description of my state of mind.<sup>9</sup>

But Darwin certainly did not think that evolution and belief in God were incompatible.<sup>10</sup> And although Dawkins and company have been dubbed 'the new atheists', in fact of course, as the analysis of Alister McGrath,<sup>11</sup> Terry Eagleton,<sup>12</sup> and others has shown, their arguments for atheism fail in logic and show a lamentable ignorance of philosophy. One of the latest devastating critiques has come in Conor Cunningham's book, *Darwin's Pious Idea*.<sup>13</sup> The truth is that neither biology nor any other science can lead logically to any conclusion one way or the other on the question of the existence of God. Only rhetoric and the blowing up of biology into a metaphysic can lead them there, a line of thought which cannot withstand

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Alister McGrath, *Dawkins' God: Genes, Memes and the Meaning of Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 76.

<sup>10</sup> Dowe, 126.

<sup>11</sup> McGrath, *Dawkins' God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); *The Dawkins Delusion* (London: SPCK, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Reason, Faith and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Conor Cunningham, *Darwin's Pious Idea: Why Ultra-Darwinists and Creationists Both Get It Wrong* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

philosophical scrutiny.<sup>14</sup> The natural sciences can neither prove nor disprove the existence of ‘God’.

## II. Darwin and the Doctrine of Creation

Having looked at Darwin and belief in God, we move on to our second topic, Darwin and the doctrine of creation.

### a. *Creation out of Nothing*

Here the first thing we must do is clarify just exactly what the Christian doctrine of creation is. We find it of course in the words of the Nicene Creed: ‘We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.’ That last phrase is very important; it echoes Col. 1:16, and it encapsulates the doctrine that God created the universe *ex nihilo*. Let us be clear that that does not mean that he created the universe out of something called ‘nothing’, but that he did not create the universe *out of anything*. This deliberately paradoxical statement is not intended to be an explanation, but a denial ruling out the idea that either visible matter or invisible spirit pre-existed the universe. God alone is eternal.

*Creatio ex nihilo* is not stated explicitly in Genesis 1 nor elsewhere in Holy Scripture. There is a text in II Maccabees 7:8 which seems to state creation *ex nihilo*, and it also seems to be the implication of Paul’s reference in Romans 4:17 to the God ‘who calls into existence things that do not exist (*to mē onta hōs onta*)’ (NRSV). David Wilkinson sees it as implied in John 1:1, Col. 1:15 and Heb. 1:3.<sup>15</sup> But early Christian theologians, such as the second-century apologist Justin Martyr, accepted the Platonist idea that the Creator created the universe out of pre-existing matter. It was Justin’s younger contemporaries, Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, and Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, who first articulated the doctrine of

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<sup>14</sup> See Alister McGrath’s differentiation between ‘Darwinism’ as a scientific theory, and ‘Darwinism’ as a ‘meta-narrative’ or worldview offering a total vision of reality in his *Surprised by Meaning: Science, Faith, and How We Make Sense of Things* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 74f.

<sup>15</sup> David Wilkinson, ‘Worshipping the Creator God: the Christian Doctrine of Creation,’ in Berry and Noble, 15-29, cf. p. 23

creation *ex nihilo* as a doctrine of the Church.<sup>16</sup> And in later centuries it was to become crucial in the articulation of the doctrine of the Trinity in that it broke up the continuous hierarchy of being from various levels of divinity down to humanity which characterized late Hellenistic religion. The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* meant that there was what Kierkegaard later called ‘the infinite qualitative distance’ between Creator and creation. The Triune God was on one side of the ontological gulf as Creator and all created reality – spirits as well as the material – was on the other side of the gulf as the created order.

If that is the Christian doctrine of creation, then it is immediately evident that there is no logical conflict whatsoever between that and a theory of the evolution of the species. The evolution of the species as a biological thesis assumes that the universe already exists: it is not in itself a theory about the origin of the universe. The Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* is not a scientific theory at all, but a doctrine of the faith. It is therefore on a different level of understanding. It has nothing to do with the origin of particular species, nor is it even a scientific theory about how the universe came into existence. Rather it is a statement of faith that the God of Israel, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is alone the Eternal God. It is a statement of Christian monotheism. If there is a conflict, it lies elsewhere.

### ***b. Evangelical Scientists and Theologians***

But before we turn to those areas of apparent conflict, it is worth reflecting briefly on the positive reception Darwin’s theory was given by those of his contemporaries who held to classical Christianity, both scientists and theologians. For them, there was clearly no conflict between Darwin’s theory of the evolution of the species and the Christian doctrine of creation. Some scientists criticized or rejected Darwin’s views on scientific grounds. One may cite the great physicist, Lord Kelvin of the author’s own original *alma mater*, the University of Glasgow, reckoned to be the pre-eminent scientist of his day, who calculated that there had not been enough time for the evolution of the species which Darwin proposed.<sup>17</sup> This perhaps represented a general suspicion among physicists that biology was

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<sup>16</sup> See Gerhard May, *Creatio ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of ‘Creation out of Nothing’ in Early Christian Thought* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> Dowe, 124.

not really an exact science at all. Then Louis Agassiz, the Swiss professor at Harvard, whose geological and palaeontological studies had established the occurrence of the Ice Age, strongly defended the fixity of the species.<sup>18</sup> But in contrast with these and other scientists, there were numerous evangelical Christians who embraced Darwin's theory, both scientists and theologians.

Asa Gray, the Harvard professor of botany, who argued that Darwinism was compatible with the argument from design, was an evangelical who corresponded with Darwin and became his foremost champion in America.<sup>19</sup> George Frederick Wright, the New England Puritan Congregationalist, both theologian and geologist, saw parallels between Darwinism and Calvinism. James Dwight Dana, professor at Yale and America's foremost geologist, another evangelical, saw that there was no conflict between Darwin's theory of evolution and Christian faith in the Creator.<sup>20</sup> Professor Arnold Henry Guyot of Princeton never accepted the specific Darwinian idea of natural selection, but he did come to accept evolution within the framework of Hugh Miller's harmonising of the 'book of Nature' and the 'book of Scripture' by interpreting the seven days of Genesis chapter 1 as geological ages.<sup>21</sup> Sir John William Dawson, president of McGill University for over fifty years, was another evangelical who had hesitations about evolution since he thought it contrary to the notion of design, but also eventually came to accept it.

When we turn from the scientists who were evangelicals to the evangelical theologians, the story is the same, and the succession at Presbyterian Princeton is particularly interesting. Charles Hodge, who became a professor at Princeton Seminary as early as 1822, reluctantly accepted evolution and natural selection, but opposed the rejection of design which he saw as inherent in Darwinism. James McCosh, president of the College of New Jersey (later named 'Princeton University') was a Scot who stood in the tradition of Chalmers and Hugh Miller. Before he immigrated to America, he was appointed a professor at the newly established Queen's College in Belfast, and there he threw himself into 'the '59 revival' and conducted Bible classes for mill workers. He saw Darwin's theory as compatible with design, as did A.A. Hodge, Charles Hodge's son and successor as professor at Princeton Seminary. Most committed of all

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<sup>18</sup> Livingstone, 52, 57-60.

<sup>19</sup> Dowe, 127-131.

<sup>20</sup> Livingstone, 57-77.

<sup>21</sup> Livingstone, 78.

to the theory of evolution was none other than the younger Hodge's successor, B.B. Warfield, the conservative Calvinist and champion of biblical inerrancy who was to have such an influence on the conservative wing of twentieth-century evangelicalism. He described himself as 'Darwinian of the purest order,' and although he wanted to insist on the hand of God immanent in the whole development of the species, he said that he would 'raise no question as to the compatibility of the Darwinian form of the hypothesis of evolution with Christianity.'<sup>22</sup> Within the Wesleyan tradition, William Burt Pope of Didsbury College, Manchester, awarded a DD by the University of Edinburgh, similarly adopted the theory of evolution, while holding that it had not provided an explanation of the emergence of life or the emergence of intelligence.<sup>23</sup> Finally among this group we must mention James Orr of the Free Church College in Glasgow, who must be reckoned along with his fellow-Scot, P.T. Forsyth, as the foremost evangelical theologian in the British Empire. In his publications at the end of the century, when Darwin's theories were in eclipse and other views of evolution were on the table, Orr did not doubt that evolution of the species had occurred, but objected to any anti-teleological version.

In this section then, under the heading 'Darwin and the Doctrine of Creation', we have argued that logically there is no contradiction between the theory of the evolution of the species and the Christian doctrine of creation, and we have noted the array of Christian theologians and scientists in Darwin's day who saw the two as compatible. Why then the apparent conflict? Where did the idea come from that Darwin's thought was in conflict with Christian faith? We can begin to explore that question as we move into our next section on 'Darwin and Darwinism'.

### **III. Darwin and Darwinism**

The notion of a fundamental conflict between the theory of evolution and Christian faith was launched into the public domain by the infamous meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Oxford in 1860, the year following the publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. There were a number of speakers, but among them were the Bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce

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<sup>22</sup> Quotations taken from Livingstone, 115.

<sup>23</sup> Livingstone, 135.

(son of the great abolitionist), and Thomas Henry Huxley, later to be dubbed 'Darwin's bulldog'. Darwin himself, a semi-invalid, detested appearing in public and remained at his country seat down in Kent. There is some doubt about what actually was said, but it was alleged by some that Bishop Wilberforce foolishly attempted some humour, ridiculing Huxley by asking whether he was descended from an ape on his father's side or on his mother's. Whatever the truth of that, he apparently left the meeting confident that he had triumphed, having been told that Huxley had been largely inaudible. What was important therefore was not so much who triumphed at the meeting, but the later public perception of who had been triumphant at the meeting. And that question brings us to the role of Huxley and what can be justly described as his propaganda.

### **a. Huxley and Spencer**

Huxley was the leading figure in a remarkable movement among Victorian scientists which turned away from the mechanistic view of the universe popular in the previous century towards a view of nature strongly shaped by the Romantic movement. He was deeply influenced by the writing of Goethe, saying that for him 'living nature is not a mechanism but a poem.' He personalized and feminized the concept of nature as 'Dame Nature' and was the leading figure in what can justly be described as a new religion of science. The word 'scientist' was only invented in 1834 and scientists developed in the mid-century a new professionalism and what may be described as an effective pressure group to promote science. In an age when theology and the classics still dominated the universities, the aim was to gain for science a place in the sun.

Nine scientists led by Huxley formed the X-Club (as it was called) in 1864 to promote what has been called 'Victorian scientific naturalism'. It was (in the words of Colin Russell), 'a concerted attempt to replace conventional religion [which was thought to deal with supernaturalism] by a world-view that involves nature and nature only.'<sup>24</sup> They had a twofold strategy, according to Russell, first to discredit the Church, and secondly to imitate the Church by promoting what to all intents and purposes was a new religion. The Church was attacked by the development of what has become known as the 'conflict thesis' – the historical claim that science and

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<sup>24</sup> Colin Russell, *Cross-currents: Interaction between Science and Faith* (Leicester: IVP, 1985), 192.

'religion' had always been in conflict. As Russell puts it, 'Three centuries of alliance between Christianity and science were quickly forgotten and a new mythology engineered...A whole new literature emerged as 'history' was re-written.'<sup>25</sup> Among the most influential of these works of propaganda were books by two Americans, J.W. Draper's *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*, published in 1875, and A.D. White's *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, published in 1895. Although worthless as history, these works and numerous smaller publications were enormously successful propaganda, shaping the popular perception which lasts down to the present day of a fundamental conflict between outmoded 'religion' and modern science. But in Peter Harrison's words, 'The myth of a perennial conflict between science and religion is one to which no historian of science would subscribe.'<sup>26</sup>

The second part of the strategy, imitating the Church, was similarly a public relations exercise. Huxley spoke of a 'new Reformation', he preached lay sermons on scientific subjects, and spoke of his colleagues as 'the church scientific' and of himself as its 'bishop'. Mass meetings were held and, at popular lectures by Huxley and his associate, John Tyndall, hymns were sung to creation. Sunday Lecture Societies were formed on the model of Sunday Schools. Even the architecture of the new Natural History Museum in London, built between 1873 and 1881 has been called 'Nature's Cathedral.'<sup>27</sup> Science had become a new religion. All of this was one of the key developments contributing to the rise of what became known in the twentieth century as Secular Humanism.

A second key figure in the development of the conflict was Herbert Spencer. Briefly, Spencer was a member of the X-Club (the only one who was not a Fellow of the Royal Society). He was the one who coined the slogan 'the survival of the fittest' and who developed 'Darwinism' into a metaphysic. The 'social Darwinism' which resulted largely from Spencer has been blamed for the pervading racism around the turn of the twentieth century, a poisonous stream which was to feed into the cesspit of Nazi mythology.

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<sup>25</sup> Russell, 193.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Harrison, 'Christianity and the Rise of Western Science,' *Case 32* (2012): 18. See also Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and *The Fall of Man and the Foundation of Science* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> See Russell, 189-192.

## **b. Fundamentalism**

It was in reaction to all that, particularly perhaps Huxley's propaganda, that the movement known as 'Fundamentalism' developed. From 1912, a series of pamphlets were published entitled *The Fundamentals*, and it was from them that the word 'fundamentalism' was coined. But we must correct the careless mistake of thinking that all the authors who contributed to those pamphlets were themselves 'fundamentalists' in the later meaning of the word. B.B. Warfield of Princeton and James Orr of Glasgow who contributed chapters were among the leading theologians of their day and they accepted the theory of evolution. So it was not the pamphlets themselves that were the problem. The problem was the grass-roots movement which developed later, particularly in America, which rejected the theory of evolution lock, stock, and barrel because they thought it was in conflict with the Christian faith. They were the ones who took their name from these pamphlets written to defend the 'fundamentals' of the faith.

There are two things to note about the rise of these 'fundamentalists'. The first is the irony that they had swallowed Huxley's propaganda. The leading evangelical thinkers of the day had accepted that there was no conflict between Darwin's theory and the Christian doctrine of creation. But these ordinary believers, Christian people largely without much education, thought that there was, and in accepting that idea, they were in fact swallowing the propaganda. They were duped by the conflict thesis of Huxley, Draper and White and dozens of other books and pamphlets of the day. Accepting the myth that 'religion' (as they called it) and 'science' were in conflict, they took up the fight to defend the Christian faith. We do not need to recount here the farce of the Scopes trial in rural Tennessee, the merciless mockery of H.L. Mencken, and the later revival of fundamentalism with *The Genesis Flood*, published in 1961 by Henry Morris and John C. Whitcomb. Whitcomb and Morris persuaded many to move from 'old-earth' creationism to 'young-earth' creationism, leading eventually to the Institute for Creation Research and to the advent of 'creationism' with its claims to be scientific.<sup>28</sup>

The second thing to notice about the rise of fundamentalism was that, while there was in fact no conflict between the theory of evolution and the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, what disturbed these

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<sup>28</sup> See Karl W. Giberson, *Saving Darwin* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 122-144.

sincere Christians was their perception of a conflict between the theory of evolution and their interpretation of chapter 1 of Genesis. So it was not actually a matter of the Church's *doctrine* of creation: it was really a matter of hermeneutics. How do we read Genesis 1? It is true that up to the time of Bishop Ussher in the seventeenth century, there were those who read that magnificent passage of ancient priestly writing in a simplistic way which led them to think that they could date the creation of the world to 23 October, 4404 BC. But that naive interpretation of the passage had been rejected by the Christian Fathers. In reference to Christians who are ignorant of cosmology – the earth and stars, the plants and animals – Augustine wrote:

Now it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics...The shame is not so much that an ignorant individual is derided, but that people outside the household of faith think that our sacred writers held such opinions.<sup>29</sup>

Where does that bring us then? If Darwin's thought is not in conflict with the Christian doctrine of God, and does not even logically conflict with the Deist concept of God and a teleological view of the world; if it is not in conflict with the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* nor with Genesis 1 once we have an appropriate hermeneutical approach to that great passage; where then is the conflict? Is there any conflict at all between the thought of Darwin and Christian theology?

Two Christian doctrines may be mentioned which may seem to be in conflict with Darwin's thought. The first is the doctrine of humanity. Does the evolution of the human race from the common stock of animal evolution not conflict with the Christian doctrine of humanity made in the image of God? That may be true if we assume the traditional and largely Platonist view of the human being as essentially an eternal soul dwelling in a disposable mortal body. That dualistic view of the human being comes right into the thought of modern philosophy with the similar Cartesian dualism of mind and body, *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, a dualism characterized by Gilbert Ryle as 'the ghost in the machine.' In the first place, it could be said that that dualistic view may not be in conflict with Darwin

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<sup>29</sup> Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis* 1.19, quoted in Cunningham, 297. On the interpretation of Genesis 1-3, see Richard S. Hess, 'God and Origins: Interpreting the Early Chapters of Genesis,' in Berry and Noble, 86-98.

since it obviously holds that the body is somewhat incidental. It follows from that that there may be no reason to reject the evolution of the human body since that would not affect the part that really matters – the eternal soul.

But equally, if we take the more biblical view particularly of the Old Testament, that the human being is a psychosomatic unity, even if that is slightly modified in the New Testament, then we will arguably be closer to Darwin. We can say that God fashioned the human body out of the dust of the ground – mud, if you like – doing so by means of the evolution of the species, and then chose to breathe the breath of life into these creatures so that they became living souls, reflecting now the image of God. That compatibility with Darwinian science will be further strengthened if, instead of conceiving of the soul in a Hellenistic or Hindu way, we adopt the ‘non-reductive physicalism’ proposed by the philosopher Nancey Murphy.<sup>30</sup> Instead of devoting space to that issue therefore, we will turn instead to another area where there might appear to be a conflict.

#### **IV. Darwin and the Problem of Evil**

Perhaps ‘conflict’ is not the right word, but the area where there appears to be a mystery to be considered is in the matter of the problem of evil. *Unde malum?* Whence evil? That is an ancient debate in the Christian church at least since the young Augustine was attracted to a sect with origins in Persian religion, the Manicheans. They believed that the world was a battle ground between two ultimate, eternal powers or principles or gods, Good and Evil and in this cosmic dualism, humankind was the battle ground. We were either controlled by the ultimate god of the Good or the ultimate god of Evil. It was against this determinism that Augustine reacted, finding a different perspective in Platonism, that

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<sup>30</sup> See Nancey Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006). ‘My central thesis first is that we are our bodies – there is no additional metaphysical element such as a mind or soul or spirit. But second this ‘physicalist position need not deny that we are intelligent, moral, and spiritual. We are, at our best, complex physical organisms, imbued with the legacy of thousands of years of culture and, most importantly, blown with the Breath of God’s Spirit; we are *Spirited bodies*.’ Murphy, ix.

evil had no ultimate existence, but was to be considered metaphysically as *privatio boni*, the privation or absence of good. But once the mature Augustine had become a bishop, he had to wrestle against another heresy, Pelagianism, the view that humanity was morally capable of such virtue as to heal the breach with God and win its own salvation. It was against this doctrine, that he developed his version of the already established doctrine of the Fall.

The Greek Fathers had invented that term, *to ptoma*, the Fall, to refer to the narrative in Genesis 3. They taught, following Paul in chapter 5 of Romans, that as a consequence of the breaking of the relationship between humankind and their Creator – the Source of their life – humanity had become subject to death, or at least, that humanity had disqualified itself for the gift of immortality. Augustine developed the notion of *concupiscentia*, self-centred desire. This was his interpretation of Paul's phrase in Romans 8, the *phronema sarkos*, which the NRSV translates as 'the mind set on the flesh', and which we might interpret as 'the mind set on human goals and values', the self-centred mind-set. Our share in the corporate guilt of Adam's sin was washed away at baptism, according to Augustine, but our inheritance of the sinful condition remained in us as long as we lived in this fallen body.

This doctrine of original sin, despite some aspects of Augustine's formulation which we may find unacceptable, has been claimed to be the most realistic picture of the human condition imaginable. Humanity may be godlike (as Christians and Secular Humanists might agree) – created in the image of God, we would say – but there is a deep flaw in us which not only means that none of us is sinless or perfect, but which makes ordinary human beings capable of the most appalling and foul crimes. This is horribly true, both on a mass scale in the Holocaust and under Stalin, or in the private and personal scale of the abuse of little children even within the family which ought to be protecting them. Iniquity appears to be endemic in human society and results, as we have recently found out in the UK, in deceit and corruption in politics (the scandal of MPs' expenses) and in banking (the Libor scandal), in the press (the phone hacking scandal) and in the police (the apparent cover-up over the deaths in the Hillsborough football stadium), in the entertainment industry (Jimmy Saville and others) and in the National Health Service (the scandal of appalling standards of neglect leading to at least 1,300 needless deaths). It has been said that no doctrine of the Christian faith is more obviously

demonstrated by the evidence before our eyes than the doctrine of original sin.

But the ancient problem for Christian theology is this: given the doctrine of creation, that everything which exists comes from the hand of God and that it was ‘very good’ (Gen. 1:31), how can there be evil in the world? The Christian response to the problem historically has been the doctrine of the Fall. But it is very important to see that the doctrine of the Fall was never an *explanation* for ‘the mystery of iniquity’, but made some clarifications essential to Christian theology. First, it denied that God was the source of evil. It denied the monism which is part of some religious metaphysical thought - that the God who created the world was a mixture of good and evil. Secondly it denied dualism, the view of Manichaeism and other Persian religions, that there were two ultimate principles or gods, one good and one evil. It also denied that there was something inherently evil in matter (the position of the Gnostics). It was not humanity’s flesh which had corrupted the human spirit; it was the spirit – intentional free choice – which had led to the corruption of the flesh. In other words, the doctrine of the Fall is not an explanation for the existence of evil in the world, but the assertion that the metaphysically consistent explanations, monism and dualism, were unacceptable. Christian faith is in the one God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Creator of all that is, but who is Holy Love, ‘the Father of light without shadow of turning.’

The conundrum of the existence of evil is then a conundrum as old as the Christian faith and indeed, as the book of Job witnesses, of the faith of ancient Israel before it. The historic Christian response is the doctrine of the Fall – *not* an explanation of evil, but the deliberately paradoxical assertion that the answer does not lie in the eternal or uncreated realm, but within creation itself. Once we reject monism and dualism, this paradoxical story is the only option we have left.

The question then posed by Darwin’s thought to Christian theology is this: what implications does the theory of the evolution of the species have for the Christian doctrine of the Fall? The story told by the theory of evolution seems to conflict with the notion of the Fall as an event, but can Christian theology dispense with the view that the Fall was an event within time? To say (as some theologians said before Darwin) that God created the world simultaneously good and fallen as an environment which would train his human creatures and produce character capable of resisting evil is no answer at all. For it still leaves God as the source of evil.

Christian faith cannot accept the notion of evil in the *uncreated* realm, in the very nature and character of God. But if evil has its origin within the *created* realm, then it has its origin within time, for time as we know it is a dimension of God's created universe. God the Father Almighty is the Creator of all things visible *and invisible*, and that includes time. N.P Williams put the point succinctly in his Bampton Lectures of 1924. 'It is impossible to lift the Fall out of the time series without falling either into Manichaeism or unmoral monism...The Fall, whatever else it may have been, must have been an event in time.'<sup>31</sup> That is a view immeasurably strengthened after Einstein, when we can no longer look at time and space (as Aristotle and Newton did) as the eternal absolute 'receptacle' within which the universe exists. Time and space are rather relativized as the co-ordinates we use to measure the universe, and no more pre-exist the universe than the lines of longitude and latitude pre-exist the globe. To reject monism or dualism therefore in the doctrine of God, Christian theology requires a doctrine of the Fall *within* the created order, *within* the creation and therefore *within* time – that is to say, an integral part of Christian theology is a temporal Fall, the Fall as an event.

To that point, it appears that we have an unanswerable theological argument and a clear theological conclusion here. Christian theology requires the doctrine of the Fall as an event in time. That does not require however that this event is accessible to historical inquiry, nor does it require that we have to take a naively literal view of the early chapters of Genesis. Denis Alexander, the biochemist who is director of the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion and Fellow of St Edmund's College, Cambridge, suggests a range of five options in the way these chapters are interpreted ranging from, at one end, the fundamentalist option of a naive literal reading to an interpretation at the other end of these chapters as purely myth expressing eternal truths. The option which appears to be theologically most appropriate is that these chapters are (as he expresses it) 'a mythological representation of a historical reality.'<sup>32</sup> We would have to add however that the event of the Fall is inaccessible to secular historical inquiry and is known only as the Old Testament (particularly Genesis) is interpreted in the light of what Christians hold to be the definitive revelation of God in Jesus

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<sup>31</sup> N.P. Williams, *Ideas of the Fall and Original Sin* (London: Longmans, 1927), xxxiii.

<sup>32</sup> Denis Alexander, *Creation and Evolution: Do We Have to Choose?* (Oxford and Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch, 2008), 254-6.

Christ. Also, in place of the slippery language of ‘myth’, Barth’s language of ‘saga’ may be preferable in order to reject the implication that the story is totally and purely fictional.

Given then the theological necessity of the doctrine of the Fall as an event within time, the problem is that there is no clear explanation of how that is to be related to Darwin’s story of upward progress. It is tempting to speculate and come up with a resolution of this apparent conflict, but perhaps it is best at present to note this apparent conflict as an area for further thought.

Three tentative suggestions for further thought appear in *Darwin, Creation and the Fall*. R.J. Berry floats the suggestion (shared with the prominent evangelical Anglican, the late John Stott) that God selected from the race of *homo sapiens*, some Neolithic farmers with whom he entered into relationship thus constituting them in the ‘image of God’. Humankind we know today is thus not merely *homo sapiens* but that group, selected to be *homo divinus*.<sup>33</sup> The second proposal presented by A.N.S. Lane is that we should develop a more Irenaean understanding of the Fall. Others have advocated that of course, notably the late John Hick, but Lane criticizes their tendency to overemphasize the difference between Irenaeus and Augustine, and to read their own theology into Irenaeus. Lane suggests that the Patristic terminology of ‘Fall’ is inappropriate and that it should be thought of rather as a premature attempt to grasp moral responsibility which led to banishment from the special environment of Eden into a world which was ‘good’, but not by any means free from suffering or struggle, the world described by the natural sciences. The consequence of that was a failure to attain to the immortality which was God’s intention.<sup>34</sup> My own proposal is that we view the beginning (‘protology’) from an eschatological perspective.<sup>35</sup> Bearing in mind the regeneration of the created order which will come after the *parousia* at the end of ‘this present evil age’, we should see the Fall as that cosmic catastrophe which initiated ‘this present evil age’ but which is not accessible to natural human investigation. Since history and science must methodologically assume that the present conditions have always existed and will always exist, the ‘Fall’ into sin and death is therefore not accessible to these disciplines of natural human thought. It is

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<sup>33</sup> See R.J. Berry, ‘Did Darwin Dethrone Humankind,’ in Berry and Noble, 30-74.

<sup>34</sup> A.N.S. Lane, ‘Irenaeus on the Fall and Original Sin,’ in Berry and Noble, 130-148.

<sup>35</sup> T.A. Noble, ‘Original Sin and the Fall: Definitions and a Proposal,’ in Berry and Noble, 99-129.

only accessible as the necessary corollary of the revelation centred in the redemption and recreation achieved in the death and resurrection of the Son of God. Already he is risen, but the full inauguration of the kingdom is ‘not yet.’

## **Conclusion**

To summarize in conclusion: we have addressed the question, ‘what are the implications of Darwinian science for Christian theology?’ We noted that, despite the campaign of the ‘new atheists’, Darwin’s thought does not lead to atheism. It has been used to argue for agnosticism, but cannot actually decide the philosophical issue of the existence of God one way or the other. It can indeed be assimilated into the natural theology of Deism, but does not really touch classical Christian belief in the Triune God. It is logically compatible with the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, and that was understood by a host of evangelical scientists and theologians right from the start of the controversy. Darwinism was used in the propaganda war launched by Huxley and Spencer and grass-roots fundamentalism swallowed their idea that it was contrary to Christian faith. That resulted in problems for the Christian church in its mission to the Western world, but not in genuine theological problems. Theological conflicts may appear in two remaining areas, the doctrine of humanity and the doctrine of the Fall, including the question of the existence of evil. But these are areas where continuing advance in theology can benefit from the insights from biology and indeed from all of the human sciences.

# **BOERSMA, THE ATONEMENT, AND THE HOSPITABLE GOD**

**Gregory Young**

*This article is published posthumously in honour of the late author, a gifted student at Houghton College, New York, who died prematurely in February 2013. It considers attempts to develop a doctrine of the atonement that avoid the misconception of God as an arbitrary, wrathful monarch. Drawing upon the work of Hans Boersma it moves toward an affirmation of God as a hospitable God, and argues that the absence of pneumatology in Boersma's work calls for a more thoroughly Trinitarian model. Despite the violence of the world, the hospitable God draws near to sinners and receives them as prodigal children.*

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## **Introduction**

The theologian is burdened with proclaiming the perennial truths of God to the contemporary situation.<sup>1</sup> This demands a relentless self-criticism that discerns the spirits of theological discourse, inquiring whether theologians are speaking life into our world of death and decay or merely recycling platitudes. At times Christian motifs fail to convey anything significant; now more than ever, the symbol of the cross is appalling, confusing, and almost certainly not one of hope.<sup>2</sup> This has led some to retreat from the historic Church confessions, either to reframe the content for modern moral sensibilities or to discard the need for the symbolic crucifix entirely. While this exemplifies a necessary willingness to eradicate tertiary matters of tradition if they threaten to corrupt the eternal message of Christianity, we must ask whether it is premature. With this caveat, I proceed.

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<sup>1</sup> 'A theological system is supposed to satisfy two basic needs: the statement of the truth of the Christian message and the interpretation of this truth for every new generation.' Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 1: 3.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Boersma, 'Eschatological Justice and the Cross: Violence and Penal Substitution,' *Theology Today* 60 (2003): 199.

## **I. The Problem of the Atonement**

The problem of the atonement is a loaded and complex one, one which has puzzled Christian thinkers for centuries. It seems unnecessary at best and grotesque at worst. While its most appalling elements certainly deserve treatment, its necessity provides a good starting ground for conversation. Why do we need atonement?

Within this question is a more fundamental one - what does atonement indicate and involve? Atonement, literally 'at-one-ment,' means reconciliation between two parties. In this sense, its legal connotations become apparent. A punitive measure is overridden or resolved by the offending party's amendment of its wrongdoing. The debt, having been paid, no longer hangs over the head of the debtor.

In Christianity, however, we are debtors who lack the means to pay our debts.<sup>3</sup> We owe God, the creator of life, recompense for squandering the life he created us to live. This debt is both abstract and concrete, and nevertheless remains insurmountable. Abstractly, sin separates us from God, causing unbearable alienation. Negatively, it is the despair that robs life of its ultimacy; positively, it is a torturous execution that paradoxically forces life to continue whilst securing its termination.

According to Christian doctrine, this is the root of our problems, and what must be atoned for. Lamentably, zealots today describe sin as a particular action that transgresses a moral code. Interestingly enough, this code usually resembles the legal infrastructure of a given religious community. In seeking the eternality of the Christian promise, they lose it in the flux of becoming, elevating their form of life to the realm of divine ordination. The often belligerently exclusive community this attitude fosters can lead to animosity and pride, even resulting in violence.

This strays tragically, however, from the Christian understanding of sin. Sin is not just an immoral action, but a failure to be like God with our very being.<sup>4</sup> We are born uncertain of our origin and apprehensive of our destination. 'Existence,' Nietzsche states in an early essay, 'basically is – a never to be completed imperfect tense.'<sup>5</sup> Two parts constitute an imperfect tense, a gerund and a past

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<sup>3</sup> Eberhard Jungel, *Theological Essays II* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000), 176.

<sup>4</sup> 'Sin is not acts of negation against God, but a position before Him.' Cf. Soren Kierkegaard, 'The Sickness unto Death,' Religion Online, <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=2067&C=1866> (accessed April 28, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub Co, 1980), 9.

participle, which combine to make an action preserved in the past ongoing. So life continues, seemingly without end, yet it has no evident meaning or overarching purpose.

Faced with this, we want to find meaning, but are many times unsuccessful. This creates a deep-seated rage, one that has historically found catharsis through violent acts of military aggression, interpersonal abuse, and self-deprecation. Fundamentally, this rage is a rebellion against God. Psalm 139:7 describes God as inescapable: the Psalmist despairs, 'Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?'<sup>6</sup> This is essentially the human predicament, that we cannot, even in the crux of total abandonment, release ourselves from the impending condemnation of the eternal judge. Unsure of where we came from, we are furious that all attempts to locate meaning surrender to the ebb and flow of life. God, the creator of our lives, then becomes the object of our rage.

Modern atheism offers no substantial contention here. Whether or not God is materially absent is the domain of philosophic speculation; that God is hermeneutically lost in subjectivity looms over all attempts to live meaningfully. The primordial rage of our own lives makes futile our attempts to create a meaningful world picture, such as the Christian God once provided. Atheism thus opposes Christianity with a privative challenge rather than a nugatory one. As Eberhard Jüngel declares, 'Faith cannot speak of God's presence, without conceiving at the same time God's absence, just as it has never been certain of God's presence without experiencing his hiddenness.'<sup>7</sup> The mere existence of a being, particularly if God's being remained unaffected by God's death, offers no illumination to the shadows of life.<sup>8</sup> Here theology lives on the blood of interdisciplinary dialogue.

## **II. Sacrifice and Atonement**

Understanding the human dimension of sin with apophatic methodology requires a thorough consideration of the anthropological human. Mark Heim, delineating the Girardian

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<sup>6</sup> Psalm 139: 7, New Revised Standard Version.

<sup>7</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, *God as Mystery of the World* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 55.

<sup>8</sup> Hegel termed this 'speculative Good Friday,' describing the death of God as an intellectual event rather than an event in God's very being. Cf. Jüngel, 64-102.

school of thought, says that ‘reconciliation in the blood of the innocent’ is the foundation of both religion and culture.<sup>9</sup> The rage we cannot escape needs a target, and is tragically dissatisfied with all but innocence. This action numbs the inner chaos, distracting the murderers momentarily. After the brief euphoria, the cycle continues, and vengeance must be exacted on a victim. It seems that this is irreducibly human.<sup>10</sup>

This essay will not undertake an exposition of Girard’s theory of atonement considering the copious literature available that offers more insight than this author can. Gleaning from such literature has brought me to the conclusion that, though compelling, this theory fails to get at the heart of the matter. ‘Girard’s solution,’ as William Placher criticizes, ‘lies mostly in a realization.’<sup>11</sup> Realizing the grip of sin, though an indispensable step toward reconciliation, is not definitive in itself. If sin is, as we established, a failure to be like God with our very being, something much more decisive must occur. One need not be a moral teacher to expose the problem of a divided will or disruptive desires.

The apostle Paul describes this conundrum with memorable depth: ‘I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate...Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.’<sup>12</sup> People, Christian and non-Christian, alike can relate to this division. We possess a dividedness of our very person, unable to will what we truly will. Recognizing this requires a moment of sober clarity; changing it requires something capable of affective transfiguration.

The only one capable of changing this state, according to Christian doctrine, is God, and this was accomplished when Jesus Christ died on the cross. He did die as a sacrifice, but not one locked in the mechanisms of primitive sacrificial ritual. For Girardian thought, Christ is a type of sacrifice which acts as the inevitable role of victim in the theatre of human sin. Death here allows the murderers a chance to escape their cycle of blame and exposes it for what it is. It functions as an object of collective sacrifice.

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<sup>9</sup> Mark Heim, ‘Christ’s Death to End Sacrifice: Visible Victim,’ *Christian Century* (March 2001): 20.

<sup>10</sup> René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* (Leominster, Herefordshire: Orbis Books, 2001), 87.

<sup>11</sup> William Placher, ‘How Does Jesus Save?’ *Christian Century* 126: 11 (June 2009): 25.

<sup>12</sup> Romans 7: 15, 20, NRSV.

This type of sacrifice, however, remains just that, an object; detached from the actual guilt and sin of its murderers, it accomplishes an esoteric morality, but with universal claim. Though in this view the life of Christ is a morally superior one, even one that bears divine endorsement and conquers the threshold of sin, it remains only the life of Christ. This emphasizes the key tension between this understanding of Christ's sacrifice and traditional theories.

For the sacrifice of Christ to be meaningful, it must not only *expose* the power of sin, but *substitute* for its deathly grip. It is not what he requires us to do, but 'what he *has done for us* in our place.'<sup>13</sup> This differs from a mythological fabrication of the human plight, such as the one implicitly formulated in Girard, because it declares that God became human and took our place. It declares that we must not only see the one who bears our death, but confess that our sin leads us to that death. Only in this can we be freed from it, when God dies the death we cannot. Because we were never whole, we could never die a death capable of making salvation possible.<sup>14</sup>

It should come as no surprise that such a conception of sacrifice falls hard on modern ears. Unlike the archaic understanding of sacrifice which Girard thoughtfully describes, now sacrifices are a sort of begrudging gift. Platitudes of this sort abound; marriages require 'sacrifice,' just as all ethical imperatives. Sacrifice no longer identifies with its victim, now that humanity just offers intangible sacrifices to itself.<sup>15</sup> A sacrifice of this type, even from God, would only liberate the moral dimension of creaturely life from evil propensities. It would yield no salvation or eternal reconciliation.

For Christ's death to truly defeat sin, as the earliest model of atonement maintained, sacrifice must have a deeper relation with those it involves. It must not just be the life and death of one man, even the God-man, if this life is to be isolated from those who bring it to its end. Thankfully, the Christian faith declares that the 'life of Christ shares itself in a singularly unique way with the rest of humanity.'<sup>16</sup> It shares with our inability to be like God, or to live the life God has called us to live. Because God is whole, in our inability to be like God we are divided and broken, just as the earlier analysis of human will demonstrated. This is why, simply put, 'to sacrifice is

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<sup>13</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, *Theological Essays II* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Publishers, 2000), 149.

<sup>14</sup> Jüngel, *Theological Essays II*, 157, 181.

<sup>15</sup> Jüngel, *Theological Essays II*, 165.

<sup>16</sup> Jüngel, *Theological Essays II*, 171.

to make a confession. To sacrifice is to admit to a conflict within one's own being.<sup>17</sup>

Again, just admitting this conflict would not accomplish anything. This is why the death of Christ is more than just an example or model; it is a sacrament in which the believer participates, yielding a tangible effect.<sup>18</sup> In beholding Christ, we see not just the victim of an overflow of competitive tensions, but the bearer of sin. As noted earlier, we are debtors that lack the means to pay our debts. In seeing the death of Christ, we see that the weight of our sin ends, and must end, in death. This is why the sacrificial victim cannot be a detached object. Those making the sacrifice see themselves in the victim's fate.<sup>19</sup>

The biblical story makes this a painful reality. Many times the Church talks about Christ's death as if it were some abstract reality, locked in a scandalous murder of a primitive society over two millennia ago. Certainly, the historical facticity of Christ's death remains an important part of academic discourse, though much of this has become a rhetorical jousting match between the inheritors of the quest for the historical Jesus, such as Brad Ehrman and the Jesus Seminar, and literalist readings of Scripture. This talk quickly becomes a subterfuge, an abstraction eschewing that Christ died for us. He died for us because it was our sin that killed him. The sacrifice was not some sort of altruistic gift in a divine love story; he bore the sin of the world because we transferred it onto him in murdering the Son of God.<sup>20</sup> In other words, Christ's death for us bears ontological significance before it discloses itself to historical scrutiny.

In Christ's death, God damns God's own Son. This shows not a distorted relationship in God's being, but quite the opposite. God, in perfect love, sent the Son to bear our sins so that we could have freedom from their dominion over our lives. It is not Christ in his fullness that God rejects, but Christ in his lowliness bearing the sins of the world. God rejects him because he is too holy to tolerate sin, to holy to tolerate the corruption of his perfection. Unholy as sin renders us, we are unable to bridge this gap.<sup>21</sup>

In the sacrament of sacrifice, we admit that we cannot be like God. We see our failure to be holy, our failure to escape the grip of

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<sup>17</sup> Jüngel, *Theological Essays II*, 172.

<sup>18</sup> Jüngel, *Theological Essays II*, 168.

<sup>19</sup> Jüngel, *Theological Essays II*, 176-177.

<sup>20</sup> Gerhard Forde, *Christian Dogmatics, Volume 2*, 89.

<sup>21</sup> Forde, 91.

sin, and turn to Christ. If we accept the gift of the atoning death he experienced in our place, he then reconciles us with God. Contrary to popular opinion, it is not God who needs reconciliation, but us. We lost the sinless life that makes everything whole. By restoring this, Christ allows us to be saved. Just as he was resurrected from the dead, so we can be resurrected from the deathly grip of sin. And this is cause for celebration.<sup>22</sup>

Many attitudes toward this divine substitution are not so celebratory, however. The idea of God sending his Son to bear the sins of the world creates a very violent image, one unbecoming to many moral sensibilities. It strikes hearers as offensive or morally debased, not something that should still support a central doctrine of a thriving religion.<sup>23</sup> It seems to encourage child abuse, giving absolute reign to the father of a household. This is a very serious claim, and deserves equally serious consideration.

Many theological traditions have shied away from the violent implications of their claims. Though only radical sects would explicitly condone the use of violence to support their theory, we see historically how the Church has mobilized itself in heartless military ventures. Obviously, the Inquisitions come immediately to mind. The Calvinist tradition also has blood on its hands, with both the political endeavors of Jean Calvin and the religious wars involved with the Reformation.<sup>24</sup>

However, this is quite a simplistic dismissal of Christianity. Many are quick to condemn religion because of its historically insistent provocation of violence, but this is really an unfair treatment. Religion answers a very particular passion of the human condition, one that seeks to find ultimate meaning and tangible answers to the big questions. Irreligious, atheistic States have provoked an equally horrific amount of violence, as one can see in a survey of the last century's history.

While these accusations are certainly warranted, Christians have a defense to offer. The Calvinist tradition, from which I have drawn significantly in explaining this defense of the atonement, is very clear on the matter of violence. While its adherents may have failed to heed its direction, it only allows violence within very particular moral boundaries. In punishing the Son, God is not falling sway to

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<sup>22</sup> Jüngel, *Theological Essays II*, 181-183.

<sup>23</sup> Mark Heim, 'Why Does Jesus' Death Matter?: Christ Crucified,' *Christian Century* (March 2001): 13.

<sup>24</sup> Richard Mauw, 'Violence, Abuse, and the Reformed Understanding of the Atonement,' *Theology Matters* (Summer 1997): 7.

frivolous passions, but is sacrificing himself in the only way that can save the sins of humanity. In partaking of the sacramental nature of this, believers participate in this event as it happened eternally. This is distinct from imitating its potentially violent themes outside or inside of the church walls.<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, there is a tension between the apparent violence of traditional theories and the inclusivity of Christ's death. If violence always marginalizes its victims, how can we claim that the atonement of Christ is a truly universal action?<sup>26</sup> Because when Christ died, so did the sin of all sinners. In this, the violence that God took upon himself opened up the possibility of freedom to all who believe.<sup>27</sup> The boundaries imposed by divine wisdom, the threat of sin, and love of Christ play a role which requires a sort of violence to accomplish its task.

Perhaps this is not a bad thing. Though every act of coercion is an act of violence, not every act of violence is morally reprehensible.<sup>28</sup> Violence will persist. It is the nature of our world and human society. Until the testimony of history unanimously suggests otherwise, there is no reason to doubt this. Within the confines of moral boundaries, violence serves to prevent extraneous acts of violence. Its definitive nature can also be seen in our discussion of the atonement.

While at first the idea of Christ acting as a substitute for our sins seems unnecessary, this must be addressed carefully. Certainly, some traditional ways of understanding it were even more violent in their treatment of the text than the skewed story they retold. However, making sense of this theory does not mean discarding it entirely, suggesting that Christ is an example or a way to recognise the origins of human society. Though not the first theory of atonement, it has for whatever reason withstood the test of time, and there is good reason to believe it will continue to do so.

### **III. Hospitality and the Atonement**

The legal element of substitutionary atonement, though fundamental, is not the only facet of the relationship between God

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<sup>25</sup> Mauw, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Hans Boersma, 'Penal Substitution and the Possibility of Unconditional Hospitality,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 57.1 (2004): 81.

<sup>27</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, 'On the Doctrine of Justification,' *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (March 1999): 40.

<sup>28</sup> Boersma, 'Penal Substitution', 85.

and humanity. The total openness we spoke of earlier needs to be balanced by the reality of boundaries in which we act violently or show hospitality. Hospitality in this sense is openness on our part, an openness to a future of living in the forgiveness made possible by the atonement. Though Christ was resurrected and opens up to us the possibility of lives that are free from the power of death, our life still exists within a horizon. The paradoxical role of a horizon, which both grounds and limits existence, allows us to thrive in the lives we have been given, conditions and all.<sup>29</sup>

The horizontal expanse of hospitality does not preclude its eternal height, but is inextricable with it, argues Hans Boersma.<sup>30</sup> We can receive and embody hospitality only after it has been extended to us by God in acts of divine hospitality. The act from which Boersma takes his theological impetus is Christ's atoning act on the cross. It is where the divine and human horizons meet, a symbol etymologically faithful to its derivative 'crux.' His integrative, thoughtful account deserves consideration.

As Boersma clearly notes, most attempts to describe divine hospitality can pose insurmountable discrepancies between the love of the God who welcomes home the prodigal son and the violent ways this unfolds in history. The very notion of hospitality suffers serious incredulity by the modern mind. While the West could once affirm, 'the tie between the host and stranger, what is kinder?'<sup>31</sup> it now accuses its own socio-political structures as irreducibly inhospitable. To demonstrate this skepticism, he draws on the compelling philosophies of Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas.<sup>32</sup>

His account is internally consistent, and it would trespass beyond the scope of this article to trace it in extensive detail. One insight from each thinker is beneficial, however, to frame the rest of the discussion. From Derrida, we can consider the challenge that all of our hospitality suffers from incurable 'hospitable narcissism.' My guest is always welcome to enjoy *my* home, partake of *my* luxuries, and owe *me* gratitude. Even if unintentionally, this locks the recipient into a gift exchange where she cannot truly accept the gift

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<sup>29</sup> Boersma, 'Penal Substitution', 94.

<sup>30</sup> Hans Boersma, 'Theology as Queen of Hospitality,' *Evangelical Quarterly* 79, no. 4 (2007): 291-310.

<sup>31</sup> Aeschylus, *The Oresteia* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Classics, 1984), 208.

<sup>32</sup> Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition*, annotated edition ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 25-38.

unless she returns the favor. Derrida's solution is to make hospitality so indeterminate and render the self so porous that one should welcome even the devil into the home.<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps this is excessively destructive; abolition is not the only response to predisposed evils. If 'politics, understood as the epitome of what people do with and make out of the world, becomes fate,'<sup>34</sup> then it seems the Western appraisal of the autonomous self is preclusive of any truly selfless reception of the other. In despair, Derrida essentially suggests that we destroy ('deconstruct') the conception of self. What if, rather, we accept fate's gift and allow the potentially narcissistic self-love to pour over into love of the other, allowing humanity's relational character to be fulfilled?

Levinas also despairs over the boundaries that prevent a true breaking through from one to another. Because the metaphysical tradition made becoming subservient to being, and infinity a mere piece of totality, selfhood is static and unchangeable, indifferent to the particularity of the other. The being of knowledge then becomes a self-destructive concept: 'The concept [of knowledge] has nothing static about it; it aspires to riches beyond the frontiers...[T]he problem of the being of the infinite depends upon the reconciliation...between the dynamism of the infinite and the fullness of actuality.'<sup>35</sup> Knowledge, then, for both Levinas and Jüngel, is an 'interruption' of our being.<sup>36</sup> In a theological essay, Jüngel annexes this claim into Christological territory, declaring that the death of Christ '*interrupts* the unholy person's sickness unto death.'<sup>37</sup> It is clear that the laments of Levinas and Derrida both shape and anticipate the possibility of hospitality, whether divine or public.

With these pertinent caveats, Boersma then continues to explain the divine face of hospitality. As a Reformed theologian, the problem of 'limited hospitality' or 'limited atonement' in the thought of John Calvin demands his immediate attention. The Reformed tradition has undergone unrelenting criticism for obscuring the divine love of

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<sup>33</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 34.

<sup>34</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, *God as Mystery of the World* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 52.

<sup>35</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 58.

<sup>36</sup> Jonathan Case, 'The Death of Jesus and the Truth of the Triune God in Wolfhart Pannenberg and Eberhard Jüngel,' *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 9 (2004): 7, <http://www2.luthersem.edu/ctrf/JCTR/#Volume%209>.

<sup>37</sup> Jüngel, *Theological Essays II*, 172.

God to affirm the violent expressions of God's sovereignty. Boersma forges a balanced path forward, standing in contention with the violence of uncritical Calvinism whilst proposing the necessity for limited hospitality in a finite world.

Boersma proceeds with serious sensitivity toward this tension. He admits, 'it would be difficult to worship a God who would engage in violence at whim.'<sup>38</sup> What he goes on to criticize is not the violence of God's hospitality, but the misconceived whimsicality of it. In Christ, God confronts sin scandalously to our particular historicity. 'To expect that in such historical circumstances God could correct evil in consistently nonviolent ways is to underestimate the persistence and power of evil.'<sup>39</sup> This leads to Calvin's connecting his understanding of election with the atoning salvation of Christ. God elects from eternity, regardless of human merit. Discursive clarity of this notion is sparse; this does not just mean that God elected people *before* they were born, for that is still describing eternity in temporal categories. The very being of the elect has always been known by God, with their temporal genesis notwithstanding.

According to Boersma, Calvin maintains this 'precisely because of his desire to uphold God's hospitality.'<sup>40</sup> His success in this regard remains a matter of inquiry. Instead of treating violence constructively, he ascribes it to mystery, at once the truest point of departure and the greatest subterfuge for all theologians. This 'hidden will' throws into opacity the love of God, with sovereignty remaining the only justification. Boersma concludes, 'Calvin obscures the hospitality of God in Christ. The hidden will takes precedence over the revealed will. Violence trumps hospitality.'<sup>41</sup> The violence that prevails here is not the necessary violence of our spatio-temporal existence, but an arbitrary violence that dilutes the purity of divine hospitality.<sup>42</sup>

So, Boersma provides cause for this 'necessary' violence. He explains, 'giving universal, unconditional affirmation would mean that God would let human violence run amok.'<sup>43</sup> The necessity of election is prefigured, he contends, in the covenantal history between YHWH and the Israelites. The election is hospitable; it does

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<sup>38</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 54.

<sup>39</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 53.

<sup>40</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 55.

<sup>41</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 61.

<sup>42</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 72.

<sup>43</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 84.

not demand the submission of the Israelites, but rather thrives on mutual love and hospitality. This remains a position of election because of hospitality's peculiar place in the continuum of violence and acceptance. While unnecessary violence undermines hospitality, so does the refusal to ever be hospitable. As Boersma declares, 'For hospitality to flourish, the host somehow needs to embody the desire for fellowship. When election is made dependent on human merit, the divine quest for fellowship loses its hospitable character.'<sup>44</sup> Thus, the covenantal election of the Israelites serves as both a temporal prefiguring for the cruciform embodiment of hospitality and a reminder that divine hospitality initiates human response.

The former concerns the next section of Boersma's treatment. On the cross, Christ bears the tension of divine hospitality and human finitude. One dimension of this finitude is that of language. As many disciplines including theology, phenomenology, and hermeneutics have recently made an axiom, language itself is metaphorical. Our signifiers always already carry their being in a matrix of referential associations, consigning them all to indirect communication. Boersma mentions this mainly to note that while atonement discourse is inevitably metaphorical, that does not make the language a relegation to vague symbols. He contends that emptying these symbols of content is just as much a violation of their depth as reductionistic generalizations.<sup>45</sup>

This allows him to begin an exposition of the three traditional atonement theories from which he hopes to glean the truth and sift the evil in a synthetic reappropriation. First, he examines the moral exemplar theory, began by Peter Abelard and recently reified in the work of René Girard. Again, the scope of this essay does not allow for a substantive exposition of Girard. Boersma does make one criticism to which I hope to return, however. He implores Girard to devote 'more emphatic and consistent attention to the role of the Spirit.'<sup>46</sup> I am not convinced he follows his own advice.

He then proceeds to the substitutionary theory of atonement. Navigating through the murky streams of violence and wrath conjured by this theory, he hopes to honor 'the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the climax of divine hospitality.'<sup>47</sup> To escape the excessively violent overtones of both the Anselmian and

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<sup>44</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 83.

<sup>45</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 108.

<sup>46</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 150.

<sup>47</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 154.

Calvinist articulations of this theory, he turns to its historical expressions with a critical lens. His indictment is threefold: the Western treatments of this doctrine have been 'juridicizing, individualizing, and de-historicizing.'<sup>48</sup> The Church has juridicized the symbol by proclaiming it to be primarily a legal transaction; Christ broke the curse of the Law because humanity could not bear its curse. This has been done in strictly individualist language; it is not the nation of Israel that failed, but each individual person. In making that claim, the atonement is de-historicized; the Law is a sort of a-temporal, or perhaps pan-temporal entity that alienates individuals before, during, and after Christ from salvation.<sup>49</sup>

Though flawed, this is not irredeemable in Boersma's eyes. He draws on the Pauline passage in Galatians 3:6-14 to find a hermeneutical key for undoing these assumptions rather than perpetuating them. In Christ, God breaks the economy of exchange with unadulterated hospitality. The representative nature of Christ is not so much that he died instead of us, but that the collective humanity was represented in his death. This 'representation' is not via example as for Abelard, but a re-presencing which makes all present in the death. Because this meets us in our human condition, it calls not for absolute hospitality on our part, but a conditional hospitality which proceeds from the divine theatre. As Boersma states, 'the resurrection mandate of pure hospitality needs to be tempered, therefore, by the wisdom of conditional hospitality.'<sup>50</sup>

Lastly, he turns to the *Christus Victor* theme, mainly as rearticulated by Gustaf Aulén. With nuance, he suggests that this theory explains not the mechanism for the atonement, but the climactic achievement of the cross. The cross, contrary to much conceptualization, stands not as an event removed from the life of Christ, but is rather the fulfillment of his moral, spiritual, and physical overcoming of evil throughout the entirety of the incarnation. The Word made flesh speaks life over death with triumphant finality, relinquishing the deceptive grip of the evil one.

This thematically concludes Boersma's understanding of the 'cruciform face of hospitality.' Deriving as an impetus both the Irenaean notion of 'recapitulation' and N.T. Wright's idea of 'reconstitution,' he sees the three predominant theories as complementary in proclaiming the threefold office of Christ. The

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<sup>48</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 169.

<sup>49</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 173.

<sup>50</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 178.

moral exemplar theory depicts Christ as prophet, reinforcing the covenantal demands of love, justice, and peace. The substitutionary model affirms Christ as priest, entering the holy of holies as representative of all sinners. Finally, the *Christus victor* understanding proclaims Christ as King, conquering death and ruling over all creation.<sup>51</sup>

To remain consistent with his theory, Boersma understands that this glorious image is insufficient; to leave Christ hanging on the cross would be to de-historicize the event. So, he proceeds to the continual, relational domain of hospitality. He begins with a memorable claim for both ecclesiology and Christology, 'the Church, in a real sense, is the presence of Christ in the world.'<sup>52</sup> In other words, it is the milieu of divine hospitality on earth. To say it is the embodiment 'on earth,' is not a spatial localization as much as a qualification. The Church cannot escape the limitations of expressing divine hospitality to a world of brokenness and finitude. It 'cannot escape the tension between hospitality and the violence that exists in all of human life.'<sup>53</sup> What it *can* do, however, is to invoke the resurrection life as a center of forgiveness and reconciliation.

This includes ministry to people both inside the church walls, such as in liturgical confessions, baptismal invitation, and Eucharistic participation, and outside the church walls as agents of reconciliation. In this, divine hospitality is embodied. While the Church cannot transcend its own limitations, true 'hospitality reaches outside the boundaries of the community.'<sup>54</sup> This is our glorious hope, that hospitality is possible not because we can flee from violence, but because God, the truly undeconstructable, escapes the power differentials of a violent world, reconciling it to Godself. As a body of believers, we can participate in this divine activity in the way of furthering this reconciliation as well as joining Christ in his sufferings, as Paul suggests.

The political dimension of social life is also included in this process. Turning to the political sphere, Boersma hopes to dismantle the church and state binary. Hospitality is not embodied privately in the endeavors of the Church and publicly in attempts to establish justice; rather, the Church, 'with its public proclamation of the

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<sup>51</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 181-201.

<sup>52</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 206.

<sup>53</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 208.

<sup>54</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 210.

gospel, is the primary space where we witness the *public* face of hospitality.<sup>55</sup> The Church must reach outside its own boundaries in pursuing justice as a common aim. These words should arouse suspicion in the critical reader, due to the ghastly history of Calvin's theocratic naivety. To this, Boersma again extends his own insight; in parochial focus on the legal element of justice, we saw in Calvin the dangerous propensity to 'juridicize, individualize, and de-historicize' the needs of a given geo-political situation.<sup>56</sup>

This is also a continuum. The danger of monopolising the Church's reign is countered by the equally demonic tendency to oppose injustice with violence. This latter vision can be seen in liberation theologies. Boersma accuses both of ignoring that 'secular' government can be a positive counteraction to violence and injustice. While punishment can be abusive, and this certainly should not be omitted, it can also be restorative. The way to maintain this tension is seen as Christ bearing the crux of evil itself, conceptualized in the aforementioned atonement models and embodied in the life of the Church.<sup>57</sup>

Boersma's work is innovative, careful, and deserves an ongoing place in the continual conversation. My own reading of him has shaped greatly my reflection on the matter, and to him I am greatly indebted. That notwithstanding, part of reading seriously is reading critically. My 'hermeneutic of suspicion' remains unsatisfied on two main points of contention. Firstly, as a Reformed thinker, I am self-consciously attuned to the megalomaniacal history and tendencies of Reformed theology. There is reason to suspect that despite Boersma's consistent transference of absolute power unto God, he is still conducting an epistemic power-play. Secondly, I recall to the reader Boersma's desire that Girard dedicate more space to the role of the Holy Spirit. I turn that same criticism onto Boersma's work, finding it pneumatologically destitute.

Boersma meritoriously declines the self-deprecating implications of Derridean hospitality. To remove all boundaries and rely on a truly indeterminate hospitality deadens its mutual character. In fear of marginalizing the recipient, the host spends all of herself, leaving nothing left to give. Though sympathetic, this eschews real hospitality. In giving, there is the humble hope of reception, and in receiving, there is the mutual joy of transformation. Certainly, an

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<sup>55</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 238, italics added for emphasis.

<sup>56</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 239.

<sup>57</sup> Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 254-255.

indispensable tenet of the Christian faith is the courage to 'lose one's life in order to find it,' but even this has its place. To embrace a Derridean faith would be to bleed out while ascending Golgotha, before the cross is even put into place.

Observations of a similar tone require Boersma to place the power somewhere. He locates unconditional love and absolute power in the Godhead, with the humble hope that the Church will embody it despite finite means and evils. However, one article reveals startling notions as to his conception of theological hospitality. This piece, entitled 'Theology as Queen of Hospitality,' sustains an allusion comparing the discipline of theology to the tattered protagonist of *Babette's Feast*. In this film, Babette is forced out of a life of prestige as a renowned chef and into refuge in an austere Danish community. When she wins a lucrative prize in the lottery, she spends every last cent repaying her guests with a lavish feast.

Boersma compares this to the deposition of theology since Galileo's famous remark, to which the title of the article alludes.<sup>58</sup> He declares, 'the last thing theology should do is acquiesce in her dethronement as queen...[T]here seems to me no greater role, therefore, than that of a discipline that draws people into the truth, the goodness, and the beauty of divine Love.'<sup>59</sup> But how can it reclaim its throne without violent means? Boersma vaguely explains that this reclamation of power is extrinsic to the natural order, done from a place of humility that ushers its guests to truth without viewing them as inferior.<sup>60</sup>

However, I fear Boersma forgets his own repeated advice. To suggest that theology should reassume the place of epistemic power is to de-historicize our situation. As my professor once boldly suggested, 'to be a theologian after the holocaust is to be one who *dares* to speak of God.'<sup>61</sup> Theology is not only interdisciplinary; it sits at the mercy of other disciplines. In less melodramatic tones, it takes its impetus from the advancements and structures of philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, the natural sciences, and the

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<sup>58</sup> In a letter, Galileo calls theology 'the queen of all the sciences.' Cf. Galileo Galilei, 'Modern History Sourcebook,' Fordham University, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/galileo-tuscany.asp> (accessed August 10, 2012).

<sup>59</sup> Hans Boersma, 'Theology as Queen of Hospitality,' *Evangelical Quarterly* 79, no. 4 (2007): 305.

<sup>60</sup> Boersma, 'Theology as Queen of Hospitality': 305.

<sup>61</sup> Jonathan Case, Lecture, Houghton College, 1 April, 2011.

like. It cannot lead people to the truth without proclaiming the 'Word in the words' of our own discursive realities.

Perhaps Boersma would disagree with nothing I have asserted. The treatment, however, is so vague that the reader is left with no methodological locus on how to locate divine truth without unnecessary tension or authoritarianism. Also, the notion of reclaiming power denies culpability. While some critics generalize the crimes of theology into untrue extrapolations, it remains true nevertheless that the theology of Galileo's time implanted the seeds of colonialism, imperialism, and other violations of hospitality. Instead of reclaiming power, what if our power as theologian is precisely in powerlessness? Truly, 'God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.'<sup>62</sup> This does not forego the need for critical, relentless thinking; rather it mandates it! In 'proclaiming the Crucified One,' we join in his powerlessness, embodying the hospitality that paradoxically surrenders itself to the violence of the world whilst overcoming by its genesis with divine hospitality. Theology would be prideful to reassert its authority in a post-modern world; I therefore reiterate my first statement that theology must reside in the unbearable tension of seeking eternal truths and resurrecting their meaning to the contemporary situation.

The way of doing so hopefully is the same path out of further obscurity in Boersma's thought. His opus is startlingly binitarian. Not only does this betray the Trinitarian relationality of God in the history of Christian thought, it particularly transgresses the modern situation, where Christian discourse discloses itself in an increasingly Trinitarian fashion. His text begs the question, 'what is the pneumatological dimension of the atonement?' Indeed, it is implicit in his ecclesiological configuration, but it remains almost strictly Christological.

If the Spirit only occupies a numinous, mediating role in the life of the Church, Boersma has once again relegated the Spirit to a subordinationist ontological position. This heresy has enjoyed distinct ancient and modern articulations. For our age, post-Hegelian theology has made the Spirit hardly more than a Kantian necessary concept in consummating the divine self-disclosure. This makes the Holy Spirit nothing more than a divine intermediary, as well as displaces the Spirit to a formal concept over the real revelation of God.

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<sup>62</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:25, NRSV.

In the gospel narratives, we see the Holy Spirit glorified in Trinitarian union. In the vein of Wolfhart Pannenberg, I suggest that we see the immanent rule of the Father (Creator) declared over creation, carried out through the submission of the Son (Redeemer) and sustained by the creative graces and capacities of the Holy Spirit (Sustainer). The motif of creation interests both Boersma and me in conceiving of the atonement. For Boersma, Christ redeems, restores, and ‘recapitulates’ creation by once again establishing the lordship of God. This is done through all the activities of his threefold office.

While this is an appropriate Christological statement, it ignores a glorious spiritual truth of Scripture. In Christ, we are not just a re-creation, but ‘there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!’<sup>63</sup> The Holy Spirit enables the resurrection life, ushering in life, love, and joy eternal. Thus, a pneumatological focus dismantles the epistemic power-play potential in Boersma’s thought. As Jesus declares, ‘And this is eternal life, that they may *know* you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.’<sup>64</sup> Eternal life here is not a continuation of finite life *after* time, which would once again speak of eternity in temporal categories, but the Holy Spirit declaring the victory of the New Creation despite the persistence of the Old. The Holy Spirit welcomes us into the hospitable graces of the Godhead, lavishing us with gifts that transcend power differentials by their inability to be returned.<sup>65</sup>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the doctrine of the atonement compels the theological situation with urgency. Its role in the misconception of God as an arbitrary, wrathful monarch demands revision. Thinkers like Hans Boersma are admirable here in the careful attempt to ‘reappropriate’ the doctrine without discarding it entirely, such as Delores Williams’s infamous remark at a ‘Reimagining’ conference implies.<sup>66</sup> Ultimately, what lies at stake is the ability to affirm God as a hospitable God. With a carefully Trinitarian model that takes seriously human sin without overshadowing the moral and

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<sup>63</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17, NRSV.

<sup>64</sup> John 17:3, NRSV, italics added for emphasis.

<sup>65</sup> Jesus admonishes this way of giving in Luke 14: 7-14.

<sup>66</sup> She reportedly remarked, ‘I don’t think we need a theory of atonement at all. I don’t think we need folks hanging on crosses and blood dripping and weird stuff.’

sovereign aspects of Christ with legality, a path can be continually forged to declare that despite the violence of the world, a hospitable God comes closer to us than we know ourselves, accepting us as prodigal children.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Hammond, Geordan. *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. pp. xv + 237.

This significant publication provides us with a detailed scholarly account of a period of John Wesley's life and ministry that has too often suffered from being seen as a mere precursor to his real work. Wesley's time in Georgia through the brief two years of 1736-37 has usually been described as marked by personal and professional failure and as something of a spiritual wasteland. This suits the evangelical narrative of the religious seeker who must first reach the bottom of the barrel before finding the 'glorious liberty' entailed in the new birth (in Wesley's case at Aldersgate Street, London on 24 May 1738). It is certainly not that the established narrative is without compelling historical evidence; the problem is that historians have sometimes found it difficult to see the Georgia sojourn on its own terms, divorced from later developments.

Geordan Hammond's landmark study prevents a convincing case that Wesley's time in Georgia was not a failure or a mere prelude to greater things; rather it provided an opportunity for Wesley to apply the disciplines and practices of primitive Christianity that had fascinated him since his days as a student at Oxford. There in the American wilderness he was given the opportunity to apply pastoral practices that would later be adapted and developed in the Methodist movement. It is not that this was not a personally turbulent time for Wesley (his failed romance with Sophia Hopkey and his unpopularity with some of his parishioners are well known) but the author chooses instead, while being fully aware of the personal dynamics, to focus primarily on the theological foundations of Wesley's work and on providing a detailed examination of his ministry praxis.

This is the first full length treatment of the influence of the so-called 'Usager' Non-Jurors on Wesley's liturgical and sacramental practice.<sup>1</sup> As such it will be of great interest not only to historians but

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<sup>1</sup> The 'Non-Jurors' were those Anglican clergy who refused to sign the Oath of Allegiance to William (1689-1702) and Mary (1689-94) because of their support for the deposed Stuart monarchy. Non-Jurists had a fascination for the practices of the early church and sought to re-establish many of them in the Church of England. The 'Usagers' were a party of Non-Jurors who were committed to the 'use' of (1) Mixing water with the Eucharistic wine (2) a prayer of oblation over the elements understood as a representative sacrifice (3) a prayer of blessing over the Eucharistic elements and (4) prayer for the faithful dead during the Eucharist.

also to liturgists and sacramental theologians. One of the great strengths of the book is that it draws upon primary sources on the colony of Georgia that Wesley biographers have neglected and that are helpful in shedding new light on Wesley's time there. These include *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia* and the diaries and journals of trustees of the colony such as John Perceval, first Earl of Egmont and William Stephens, trustee of the colony during Wesley's last months there. The author is careful not to rely solely on Wesley's published journals recognising that these are constructed accounts designed for public consumption. Though Henry Rack described the Georgia journals as 'a selective and slanted account,'<sup>2</sup> Hammond nonetheless concludes after crosschecking Wesley's private diaries as well as the journals of Charles Wesley, Benjamin Ingham, Thomas Causton and many others, that they remain 'an accurate and reliable picture.'<sup>3</sup>

Over five chapters the author deals with Wesley's 'conception and practice of Primitive Christianity,' his religious practices on board the *Simmonds*, his relations with the Moravians and Lutheran Pietists in the colony, detailed description of his ministry practices in Georgia, and the opposition he faced in the colony including accusations that he was an 'enthusiast,' a Roman Catholic, and a divisive person. In a final concluding chapter the author argues that the ideal of 'Primitive Christianity' put into concrete practice in Georgia remained with Wesley throughout his life and had an important part in shaping the later development of Methodism. Georgia should not be seen as a lacuna in Wesley's spiritual journey but as a defining period. This is the kind of book that forces one back to one's lecture notes to revise and restate existing teaching material. It is highly commended to all students of Wesley for the fresh and original contribution it makes to our understanding of John Wesley's theological journey.

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Epworth, 2002), 113.

<sup>3</sup> Geordan Hammond, *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 11.

Murdoch, Norman H. *Christian Warfare in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe: The Salvation Army and African Liberation, 1891-1991*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015. pp. xxxi + 215.

Norman Murdoch, Emeritus Professor at the University of Cincinnati, has made a very valuable contribution to Salvation Army history bringing with him a unique insider/outsider perspective. As a son of Salvation Army parents, and a graduate of Asbury College and Asbury Seminary, who worked in Salvation Army urban youth work, he may be seen as an insider. However, instead of becoming an officer he chose instead a scholarly career and pursued the study of American intellectual history with a special focus on the Salvation Army in the nineteenth century. This provided him with an outsider's objectivity that has meant that he has avoided sanitised or triumphalist accounts of the Army's history. He has produced many important historical studies on the Army (including *The Origins of the Salvation Army*, 1994) and, given his Alzheimer's disease, *Christian Warfare in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe* is likely to be his last book.

This valuable study continues the methodological approach followed in Murdoch's earlier works of viewing the history of the Salvation Army not in a 'providentialist' way (history as 'His-story') but rather by applying the discipline of history to the Army in the same way as one might for any other organisation, even if the results may be at times embarrassing for the Army. As John Coutts describes Murdoch he 'has been a critical but never a cynical observer – an independent observer and a candid friend.'<sup>4</sup>

The book examines the history of the Salvation Army's involvement in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe with a particular focus on its relationships with the white minority colonial government, the First and Second *Chimurenga* (revolutionary struggles 1896-97, 1966-79) and the World Council of Churches. In the first chapter the central claims of the book are laid out – that the Salvation Army aided and abetted the colonial process in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe, that its claim to political neutrality is unsustainable in light of its support for colonial rule and white minority governments, and that it allowed Cold War politics to influence its resistance to national movements for independence. There is a bitter irony in the observation that African

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<sup>4</sup> John Coutts, 'Norman Murdoch, Historian of the Salvation Army,' in Norman H. Murdoch, *Christian Warfare in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe: The Salvation Army and African Liberation, 1891-1991* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), xxix.

independence leaders gained their ideas of freedom from their mission-run schooling and then often found their church leaders opposing their freedom partly out of fear of Communism (pp. 5-7).

The earlier period is covered in the following four chapters with an examination of the arrival of the Army in Mashonaland (1891-95), the First Chimurenga including the 'martyrdom' of Edward T. Cass (1986-97), negotiations between William Booth and Cecil Rhodes which led to the appropriation of traditional homelands for the farm colonies that were part of Booth's *In Darkest England* scheme (1901-8), and correspondence about Rhodesia between William and Bramwell Booth (1908).

Chapter 6, 'The Salvation Army and the Rhodesian State, 1908-65,' has a focus on Salvationist schooling, with the claim that the Army's relationship with the white Rhodesian state and with other churches was 'that of a weak mission dependent on a strong colonial state's paternal largesse, and the generosity of business tycoons and philanthropic trusts' (p. 109). Chapter 7 deals with the clash between colonial, conciliar, and communist forces in the 1950s and 60s. Many churches objected to the legitimacy of Ian Smith's white minority rule in a country of 274,000 white and 6.1 million black Africans. Even though the Salvation Army's membership was 98% black (probably higher than any other denomination) its leadership hesitated to stand against Smith. Murdoch attributes this attitude to three contributing factors: 1) The Army's dependence on white government funding for its hospitals, schools, and corps 2) The politically conservative attitudes of the Army's international leaders, 'particularly Americans' and 3) the fact that the Army's Rhodesian leaders were all white (though only 2% of Army membership was white).

Chapters 8-10 (and 13) deal with the troubled relationships between the Salvation Army, the Rhodesia Council of Churches, and the World Council of Churches (WCC) over support for independence movements which led ultimately to the withdrawal of the Army from both organisations. At the centre of the dispute was the WCC's 'Program to Combat Racism' which involved financial grants to independence movements seen by most member churches as an issue of justice in solidarity with the oppressed but by more conservative members of the churches as support for Communist-backed violent armed rebellion. In 1971 the Army broke with the Rhodesian Council of Churches and in 1978, after the murder of two Salvationist women missionaries at the Usher Institute (detailed in chapters 11 and 12), suspended its membership in the WCC,

withdrawing altogether in 1981. Chapter 13 discusses the negative reaction of African Salvationists to the Army's withdrawal from the WCC. On 31 August, 1981, up to 200 marched through the streets of Harare under police protection to Army headquarters, led by the lay leader, Corps Sergeant Major Jonah Blessing Matsvetu, to protest the action and to demand a return to the WCC. One result of this was that Commissioner David Moyo broke ranks to petition General Arnold Brown on the Army's return to membership.

The 14<sup>th</sup> and final chapter sets out the conclusions of the research. The Salvation Army in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe tied itself closely with the white minority government and was slow to hand over leadership to its African constituency. During the movement for majority rule the Army's Anglo-American leaders, 'driven by Cold War anxiety,' placed their interest in defeating Communism ahead of the interests of African officers and soldiers. In spite of this, after Independence, African Salvationists were forgiving. 'As they claimed during their protests against actions taken in London, they love the international Salvation Army. This affection was grounded in appreciation for the sacrifice of talented missionary teachers, doctors and corps officers who served in Zimbabwe over many years. Many expatriates spoke for the human rights and political independence of their African brothers and sisters' (p. 187).

The documentary research of this work is exemplary and is enhanced by visits to Zimbabwe to interview surviving participants. The book is not without some problems, however. At times the author engages in rhetorical flourishes that make unsupported claims. For example on p. 45 we are told that 'For Cecil Rhodes and William Booth...a British-Christian world [would make] no distinction between what it meant to be British and what it meant to be Christian.' This may have been true for Rhodes but I doubt that it accurately represents Booth who would never have allowed that 'Britishness' could ever substitute for a sound conversion, and whose own 'empire' always took priority over the British one. Here and there are found long catenas of rhetorical questions that are somewhat leading, often go unanswered, and needed greater connection to the underlying claims from which they seemed to arise (eg pp. 171-72). Chapter 5, while an interesting description of letters between William and his son Bramwell, does little more than narrate the content of the letters making no attempt to contextualise or interpret the material (one quotation is three whole pages long, pp. 66-68). The photographs in the Australian edition are almost all of

very poor quality and could perhaps have been left out. The American edition is marginally better.

These are minor flaws and they certainly do not argue against the value and overall quality of this fine piece of historical writing. Dr. Harold Hill, adjunct lecturer in history at Booth College, edited the work, and was responsible for preparing the existing materials and presenting a final manuscript to the publisher. Without his involvement the book would not have seen the light of day. The book functions as a kind of valedictory tribute to the author with a biographical sketch from Andrew Villalon on Murdoch as ‘Colleague, Historian, and Teacher,’ a tribute to him as ‘Historian of the Salvation Army,’ by John Coutts, and a final biographical sketch from his wife Grace. The Salvation Army has been well served in this important history by one of its most candid friends.

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Wright, Stephen John. *Dogmatic Aesthetics: A Theology of Beauty in Dialogue with Robert W. Jenson*. Emerging Scholars Series. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014. pp. xviii + 263.

While we all have an instinctive appreciation for beauty, attempting to understand it theologically and philosophically (in ‘aesthetics’ - the science of beauty) is less often undertaken. In this engaging work, my former Booth College colleague, Dr. Steve Wright (who is now Lecturer in Theology at Nazarene Theological College, Manchester) dialogues with the Lutheran theologian Robert Jenson to construct a theological aesthetic. The book presents an alternative approach to that taken by Hans Urs von Balthasar who built his aesthetic theology on the rather abstract concept of the ‘analogy of being.’ Instead, Wright focuses on the great doctrines of the church - Trinity, Christ, Creation and The End as supplying ‘the architecture of a theology of beauty.’ He does this in dialogue with the Lutheran theologian Robert W. Jenson whose work is strewn with aesthetic reflections and who has insisted that the only analog between humanity and God is Jesus Christ.

The Introduction makes clear the distinction between a ‘theology of the arts’ and ‘dogmatic aesthetics.’ While there is much that is beautiful in the arts, aesthetics seeks to examine the very nature of beauty itself, not simply its various expressions. Chapter 1 shows that beauty is grounded in God’s Triune Being particularly in the way that

the unity of God and the relations between the Persons of the Godhead have a perfect proportionality. In the second chapter, God's revelation is found to be beautiful in the person of Jesus. Even the ugliness of his suffering and death carries a hidden beauty because it discloses salvation.

The focus of the third chapter is on creation, particularly the concept of creation *ex nihilo*. The church's confession that God created without the use of existing materials sets out the beauty of God's act of creation as sheer gift. God is the artist and creation is the art that God produces. This chapter's discussion of Japanese aesthetics is especially fascinating. In Japanese culture it is in the temporary nature of created things that their true beauty is to be found. The beauty of the cherry blossom, for example, lasts only in the time it takes to fall to the ground and die. This helps us to see that the decay of creation inherent in a fallen world need not argue against, but may enhance, the beauty of God's creation. The doctrine of last things is the focus of the fourth and final chapter. We often think of 'seeing God' at the consummation of all things. Here Jenson's concept of God as 'a great fugue...the rest is music' leads us to consider our future in God as something heard as well as seen. Wright's reflections on music sparkle with insights and build on his earlier interest in the sacramentality of music. God is a melody; three singers (Father, Son, and Spirit) perform the melody; all are invited to join in the song, and the multiple voices become, by grace, not a noisy din, but the sound of beauty.

This is a very impressive piece of work that provokes the reader's thinking on the beauty of God, of creation and of the end that is in store for all those captured by the beauty of Christ.

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*Wesley and Methodist Studies*, Volume 4. Toronto: Clements Academic, 2012.

This issue of *Wesley and Methodist Studies* provides a fascinating selection of essays and a kaleidoscope of snapshots from different times and places in the history of Methodism. The first essay by Joseph Wood; entitled 'William White, John Wesley and the 'Sheep without a Shepherd': Towards a New Understanding of Wesley's Ecclesiology,' situates Wesley's decision to ordain priests for the American Methodists in the contexts of related debates within Anglicanism. He argues that Wesley's decision was not as innovative

as is often claimed but rather is in continuity with debates within Anglicanism reaching back to Hooker. Wesley is best understood as a 'contemplative' pragmatist – that is, his decision was pragmatic but it was not innovative. Rather, it was informed by a tradition of discussion within Anglicanism. As such it was not a radical break with Anglicanism as is often proposed.

The second essay by Rachel Cope examines the historiography of the nineteenth century revivals with a particular focus on New York. She provides an incisive critique of the tendency to neglect the religious dimension in explanations of the causes and consequences of revivals and to instead focus on social dimension. She argues that there is a need to give greater attention to the way people – particularly women – who participated in the revivals described their own experiences.

The two next essays should be of particular interest to Australasian readers. Glen O'Brien discusses the role played by Samuel Leigh in the establishment of Methodism in New South Wales. This picks up the theme of the relationship between Methodism and Anglicanism not in terms of theology but rather the concrete realities of the relationship that emerged in the context of differing perspectives in colonial Australian Methodism. The paper also puts a spotlight on the relationship between the Wesleyan Missionary Committee and the newly established colonial churches. These relationships are also under the spotlight in Martin Daly's discussion of the involvement of John Thomas in the Tongan Civil War of 1837. This also explores the complex issues surrounding the political role of missionaries and how they should interpret the directive to submit to the king in contexts very different from Britain. It also raises question of the relationship between Christianity and culture and how this is expressed in a given socio-historical moment.

The issue of missions and politics is the focus of Norman Taggart's discussion of 'The World Council of Churches' Program to Combat Racism and the Irish Methodist Mission.' This paper discusses the challenge posed by the decision of the WCC to provide funding for humanitarian purposes to various Southern African liberation movements. The paper focuses on the context of Zimbabwe (then called Rhodesia) providing a description of the different responses by mission partners working in Zimbabwe at the time as well as debates within Ireland. The paper would have been further enriched if it had given more attention to the response of Zimbabweans to the issues.

The issues of culture, race and justice are the focus of a shorter paper by Sharon Grant on the involvement of the Methodist missionary Thomas Pennock in Jamaica in struggles and debates over slavery. The article highlights both the tensions between the missionaries as they strove to respond to the broader struggles within Jamaican society between people who were or had been enslaved and the plantation owners, that is between people of African descent and British settlers.

Cultural transformation plays a different role in Mark R. Teasdale's discussion of the ministry of William Wesley Van Orsdel in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Montana. He describes a mission that was not only focused on evangelism but also on the transformation of culture arguing that an important component of Methodist mission in the western USA involved the development of patterns of life that characterised the culture of the US East Coast.

The final paper deals with the doctrinal preaching of W.E. Sangster arguing that a greater portion of his sermons should be understood as doctrinal than is normally the case. This must be seen in relation to the practical focus of his doctrinal sermons and the doctrinal content of his practical sermons.

In summary this edition of *Wesley and Methodist Studies* provides a diverse but stimulating collection of papers that are well worth reading.

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We have not been able to review all subsequent volumes of *Wesley and Methodist Studies* but provide here an author and title list of the main articles in each volume of this excellent journal. Jointly published by the Manchester Wesley Research Centre and the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History, and edited by William Gibson and Geordan Hammond, *Wesley and Methodist Studies* has established itself as the leading journal in its field.

*Wesley and Methodist Studies*, Volume 5. Toronto: Clements Academic, 2013. pp. 189.

'So much idolized by some, and railed at by others': Towards Understanding George Whitefield – David Ceri Jones

John Wesley and Overseas Missions: Principles and Practice – Henry D. Rack

On Knowing Christ in the Flesh: Towards a Bodily Reading of the Methodist Revival – Charles Wallace

Dilemmas of the Nonconformist Conscience: Attitudes Towards War and Peace within Primitive Methodism – Michael Hughes

Martyn Lloyd-Jones and Methodist Spirituality – Ian Randall

Notes and Documents

Beyond Perfection: A Redemptive Reading of Retracted Holiness Testimony in John Walsh's Letter to Charles Wesley, 5 August 1762 – Introduced, Transcribed, and Annotated by David Stark

*Wesley and Methodist Studies*, Volume 6. Nottingham: Paternoster, 2014. pp. 229.

Articles

'Use' and 'Enjoy' in John Wesley: John Wesley's Participation within the Augustinian Tradition – John W. Wright

'Grace to All did Freely Move': Thoughts on Charles Wesley's 1741/1742 Hymns on God's Everlasting Love – J. Gregory Crofford

Thomas Jackson (1783-1873), Book Collector, Editor, and Tutor – Isabel Rivers

Charles Garrett and the Birth of the Wesleyan Central Mission Movement – Roger Standing

Notes and Documents

John Wesley's Earliest Published Defence of the Emerging Revival in Bristol – Introduced, Transcribed, and Annotated by Randy L. Maddox

Anti-Methodist Publications of the Eighteenth Century: A

Supplemental Bibliography – Clive D. Field

*Wesley and Methodist Studies*, Volume 7. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015. pp. 186.

Articles

Authority and Liberty: John Wesley's View of Medieval England – Thomas W. Smith

John Byrom and the Context of Charles Wesley's Shorthand – Timothy Underhill

Secession and Revival: Louth Free Methodist Church in the 1850s – D.W. Bebbington

The Design of Nineteenth Century Wesleyan Space: Re-reading F. J. Jobson's *Chapel and School Architecture* – Ruth Mason

Evangelical Dissenters and the Defeat of the Anglican-Methodist Unity Scheme – Andrew Atherstone

Notes and Documents

A Note on John Wesley's Visit to Herrnhut in 1738 – Kai Dose

A Zealous (but Respected) Adversary: John Lewis's Correspondence with John Wesley – Introduced, Transcribed, and Annotated by Randy L. Maddox