

## **A QUESTIONABLE CREATION?**

### **Introduction.**

'What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has already been, in the ages before us.'<sup>1</sup>

The intuitive truth of the above Scripture stalks Christianity as a constant challenge; how, in the light of it, can the Christian claim 'So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!' <sup>2</sup> Attempts to resolve the apparent contradiction usually depend on making some distinction between the physical and the spiritual. The writer of Ecclesiastes is right, it is argued, there is nothing new in the physical or 'natural' world; the seasons are as predictable and repetitive as the human tendency to sin. It is only in the spiritual world that everything will be made new. The 'new creation' which Paul writes about, will not be found *under the sun* for it can only exist *in the Son*.<sup>3</sup> Such a solution, however, has more in common with Greek philosophy than with the Christian gospel. One alternative, avoiding platonic dualism, is to consign the new creation to the eschaton – all things are being made new, including the things under the sun, – just not yet. Christians must simply live and wait in hope, drawn on by a foretaste of what is to come. This problem with this approach is that it can be seen as a denial of the repeated claims of the gospel that the kingdom of God, the ultimate new creation, is both at hand, and not-yet. There is a third possibility. God is making all things new under the sun, but humanity is unable to recognise what he is doing without his help. The vision which is granted to us by faith is repeatedly blinded by the certainties of our preconceptions. We see only what expect, or believe it is possible, to see. The ability to recognize a truly new creation under the sun, rather than a pre-defined re-working of the existing one, is dependent on there being some means of seeing other than as we do.

Using Wesley as a model, this paper analyses one aspect of the work of Bauckham and Hart in order to explore how prevenient grace might function

as a questioning paradigm for seeing that which is totally other. The teaching of Christ and the example of the gospels appear to suggest that prevenient grace acts to provoke in us those questions which disturb our preconceptions sufficiently to allow us a glimpse of what God is doing in our midst.

Methodism's traditional theological curiosity, as demonstrated by its willingness to repeatedly question what the work of the gospel means socially, politically, ecclesiastically and personally, has, I contend, made it uniquely placed to provoke the whole Church into once more questioning those dogmas and suppositions which either deliberately, or inadvertently, act to inhibit perception of, or full participation in, God's new creation. It has learned that a willingness to live with such questions and not settle for historical answers, whilst working for and within the kingdom, is what actively encourages and develops within us an openness to the means of grace. Methodism's effectiveness as agent provocateur for the new creation is thus, ultimately, dependent on its willingness and ability to question its own existence.

### **The not-so-new creation.**

The term 'new creation' is used by Wesley in both a personal and a cosmological sense. The individual believer who is born again is a 'new creation' as is the new heaven and new earth promised in the book of Revelation.<sup>4</sup> Wesley understood 'new creation' to mean a renewal of things to their pre-fallen state. For example, the new creation which results from being 'in Christ' he describes as 'the renewal of the soul "in the image of God wherein it was created."<sup>5</sup> Similarly;

All unprejudiced persons may see with their eyes, that He is already renewing the face of the earth: And we have strong reason to hope that the work he hath begun, he will carry on unto the day of the Lord Jesus' <sup>6</sup>
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The heart of Christianity for Wesley, is 'the renewal of creation and the creatures through the renewal in humanity of the image of God'.<sup>7</sup> This poses the question of how we can appreciate or apprehend that renewal given that there 'is no way to reason back from what humanity is now to what we were originally created to be.'<sup>8</sup> According to Runyon, Wesley

believed it possible to recover a sense of God's original purpose in creation. This purpose, he held, was sufficient to allow for at least a partial recognition of the image of God in which humanity is, by grace, being renewed. But can even a complete 'renewal' such as Wesley envisioned, really be the same as the 'new creation' promised in the Scripture or does it fall short of the promise of gospel ?

Moltmann insists that the idea of restoration does fall short of what is written and promised in the Scriptures. Humanity, as he points out, 'will not merely be restored as the image of God but will also be glorified' (Romans 8:30)<sup>9</sup> The notion of 'new creation' in justification as restoration is, he suggests, an age-old mythological scheme which reduces the 'new creation' to something that is only a 'a new thing' for sinning and perverted man: it cannot be new in itself. From a determinedly Christological perspective, he suggests instead that 'Justification is not the adoption of man's lost origin, but the anticipation of his new future. This is not only new for perverted man; it is new in itself.'<sup>10</sup> He therefore argues against the idea of new creation as a renewal of man's original condition in the image of God, insisting instead that it is the beginning of something which is decisively and creatively new.<sup>11</sup> He extends the principle of this argument to include the whole of the cosmos.

If Moltmann is correct in his interpretation of the 'new creation' then we are faced with a familiar problem, (albeit in a different context) of how to perceive or speak of that which we can have had no experience or apprehension of. For as that which is totally 'new' the new creation may have nothing in common with the old. Being able to discern, even a glimpse of God's original purpose for creation, cannot be trusted to assist us in apprehending any part of his new creation.

Bauckham and Hart answer that

'When we speak of the new creation we do so using language, appealing to pictures and states of affairs, drawn from this old order, the world as we know, and as we are used to talking about it. The reason for this is straightforward enough: we don't actually have any other language to use!<sup>12</sup>

They suggest that eschatological statements should be understood, above all, as imaginative products.<sup>13</sup> In particular, they advocate the practice of 'imagining otherwise' in such a way that all that is construed as real and possible and which would normally be taken for granted is fundamentally disturbed. Statements concerning the new creation must, they

insist, function in other ways than as straightforward descriptions or factual references.<sup>14</sup> The idea of imagining otherwise has obvious merits, not least its implicit assumption that it is both necessary and possible to do so. It is however an incomplete and somewhat dangerous solution to the problem of how to speak of that which we, seemingly, cannot know.

### **Imagining the New Creation**

The danger in Bauckham's and Hart's approach can be illustrated by using a small fragment of Wesley's sermon on the new creation:

'It has been already observed, that the calm, placid air will be no more disturbed by storms and tempests. There will be no more meteors, with their horrid glare, affrighting the poor children of men. May we not add, (though at first it may sound like a paradox,) that there will be no more rain?... Consequently, there will be no clouds or fogs; but one bright, refulgent day. Much less will there be any poisonous damps, or pestilential blasts.' <i>A New Creation</i> <sup>15</sup>
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Wesley's image of the new creation is dependent on his understanding and evaluation of the merits of the existing creation. Although he has succeeded in imagining 'otherwise', he has not managed to do so without bias. Whilst he provides a strained but plausible scriptural justification for imagining other than rain, it would seem that there will be no more meteors simply because he considers them 'horrid' and 'frightful'. Even if Wesley had intended his statements to function other than as simply descriptive, they would still have conveyed the same degree of personal opinion or bias. This is the danger in this approach, that in 'imagining otherwise' we merely succeed in renaming as the 'new creation' our own deep seated, often idealistic, preconceptions of what God would consider good. A contemporary of Wesley's, born and raised in the Sudan, may well have imagined that in the new creation, rain will fall at God's bequest at least once every day! If the new creation is to be recognisable as the work of God, rather than as a figment of human imagination, it must surely be recognisably other than the product of all too human, culturally/religiously determined preconceptions. For this to be the case there would need to be some means of regulating or processing imagination of the 'other' in such a way as to filter out or prohibit human bias. The problem is not dissimilar to the question of how to ensure that Scripture and doctrine are 'rightly' interpreted.

Lindbeck<sup>16</sup> and Gunton<sup>17</sup> have both, in their own way, argued that one of the primary functions of doctrine is to regulate the boundaries of theological speculation of what it is and is not possible to say. Historically, the Vincentian canon limited the potential for

deviant interpretations by defining doctrine as ‘That which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all.’<sup>18</sup>. The Reformation later accorded Scripture with the same authority previously invested in doctrine and tradition. It would seem reasonable therefore to question whether or not scripture, and/or doctrine can serve as the sieve that is needed to filter out personal bias from the product of creative imagination.

Again it is helpful to use Wesley as a model. He notes that he was certainly aware of, and influenced by the Vincentian Canon as Hunter<sup>19</sup> has pointed out. The canon not only provided Wesley a means of determining which doctrines were essential but also a sure means of reliably interpreting scripture. In his journal, for example, Wesley wrote ‘*it was not long before providence brought me to those who showed me a sure rule of interpreting scripture, viz., “Consensus veritum: quod ab omnibus, quod ubique, quod semper creditum.”*’<sup>20</sup> Wesley’s use of Scripture has been sufficiently well researched and publicised that it should need no further exposition here.<sup>21</sup>

Wesley evidently did make every effort to constrain his thoughts and imaginings according to what he knew of both doctrine and Scripture. He admits as much in his introduction to his sermon on the new creation, writing :

As this is a point of mere revelation, beyond the reach of all our natural faculties, we cannot penetrate far into it, nor form any adequate conception of it. But it may be an encouragement to those who have, in any degree, tasted of the powers of the world to come, to go as far as they can go; interpreting scripture by scripture, according to the analogy of faith.<sup>22</sup>

If therefore, Wesley may be taken as a typical case, it would appear that Scripture and doctrine are unable to regulate the output of creative imagination sufficiently to ensure that it remains free of cultural or religious bias. But perhaps regulating or filtering the product of creative imagining is not necessary; God has, after all, provided us with a ‘foretaste’ of the new creation. Is it possible to imagine that which is totally ‘new’ by using as a guide, the ‘foretaste’ detailed in Scripture, witnessed in nature, and experienced in the life of the believer?

### **A Foretaste of the Heavenly Kingdom**

The problem with using foretaste as a guide to creative imagining is best illustrated by the gospel narrative of the reception and ministry of Christ. The people of Israel had been given

a foretaste of the kingdom of God. The prophecies concerning the Messiah were not only known, they were believed in. The Messiah was expected, the people were waiting for him, as is evident by the number of pretenders to the title around the time of Christ. The Messiah, when he came, was not unknown or unexpected, he was unrecognised. Similarly, it can be argued, the kingdom of God when it was inaugurated by Christ, was not invisible, merely unrecognisable. The foretaste had provided no safeguard against misinterpretation and misapprehension. The people were so convinced that they knew what to expect that they were unable to conceive of any alternative. They were blinded by their certainty and incapable of apprehending the presence of God in their midst – without God’s help.

There is no reason to suppose that the various Christian imaginative interpretations of the foretaste that has been received in Christ are any more accurate than those made by the Israelites prior to the incarnation. The strength of belief in the early Church in the imminent return of Christ should suffice as an example of fallibility.

It would seem therefore that even if creative imagination is preconditioned with the images and experiences of the foretaste that has been given to us in Christ, it is still not possible to avoid the ‘certainties’ engendered by our religious and cultural bias which can blind us to the truth. This should not completely surprise us, for, as Gunton so adroitly notes:

‘Part of the point of eschatology is that it warns us that certain central questions are not patient of solution this side of the end. We are part of a culture that seeks to bring in the kingdom, or some kind of kingdom, by human activity, and it is a recurring feature of the over realised secular eschatology of the day that we are so prone to seek to solve that which is beyond immediate solution.’<sup>23</sup>

### **A question of grace ?**

We return therefore to the original problem of how to perceive or speak of that which we can have had no experience or apprehension of. In spite of the seeming failure of the approach outlined earlier, it is the contention of this paper that it is possible to do so, and that Wesley’s theology of grace can be used to explain how. There is another, God given way, of being able to see that which is totally other or ‘new’ to us. We begin by recognising that the question is one which Wesley wrestled with, albeit in a different context. Wesley was concerned to discover whether or not it was possible for fallen man to have any knowledge or apprehension of God, and if so, by what means for reason alone was insufficient.

Reason, he believed, functioned in three distinguishable ways :

'by simple apprehension, by judgment, and by discourse. Simple apprehension is barely conceiving a thing in the mind; the first and most simple act of the understanding. judgment is the determining that the things before conceived either agree with or differ from each other. Discourse, strictly speaking, is the motion or progress of the mind from one judgment to another.<sup>24</sup>

He greatly valued what it could contribute to religion, but was nonetheless clear in his own mind about what reason could not do. Reason could assist in the processes of both judgment and discourse but, he maintained, we can only know and apprehend what we experience by our senses. Wesley did not agree with the possibility of an innate idea of God and, although he deemed that indirect knowledge of God could be inferred from God's creation via the senses, he was certain that direct knowledge of God could not be. The physical senses, he believed, were incapable of experiencing the spiritual realm as the ideas of faith differed *toto genere* from those generated by and experienced in the physical world. Wesley nonetheless refused to accept that direct knowledge of God was impossible. He resolved this particular part of the problem by postulating the existence of 'spiritual senses' to sense spiritual realities. Yet even with such senses, God could not be known unless God willed it to be so for the spiritual senses only operate after the spiritual being is born into new life in Christ:

'Before he is born of God, he has, in a spiritual sense, eyes and sees not; a thick impenetrable veil lies upon them; he has ears, but hears not; he is utterly deaf to what he is most of all concerned to hear. His other spiritual senses are all locked up: He is in the same condition as if he had them not. Hence he has no knowledge of God; no intercourse with him; he is not at all acquainted with him. He has no true knowledge of the things of God, either of spiritual or eternal things; therefore, though he is a living man, he is a dead Christian.<sup>25</sup>

The problem was reduced to how could humanities spiritual senses be awakened – his solution was – only by grace.

Throughout his teaching Wesley rightly distinguished between prevenient, convincing, justifying, and sanctifying grace<sup>26</sup>, but it is unlikely that he intended them to be as rigorously delineated as earlier analyses of his work have made them seem. Some of Wesley's works, it is true, do appear to suggest that Wesley thought of salvation as being a linear progression of discrete logical transitions from one state of grace to another. More recently, scholars have demonstrated that it is inappropriate to cast Wesley in the same mould as those Reformed Scholars for whom the elements of soteriology could be categorized and

organized under the rubric of the *'ordo salutis'* Wesley's soteriology, they argue, can more accurately be described as a 'way of salvation' rather than an 'order of salvation'. It is far more likely, particularly in the light of his later descriptions, that Wesley envisioned the nature of salvation as a gradual process concomitant with responsible growth in grace and holiness, i.e. as

'intertwined facets of an overarching purpose – our gradual recovery of the holiness that God has always intended for us.'<sup>27</sup>(Maddox 1994, 158)

As such, there is no reason to suppose that the work of prevenient grace is ever completed prior to complete sanctification. There is however, every reason for supposing that it is not.

Wesley describes the role of preventing grace in the context of salvation as being :

all the drawings of the Father; the desires after God, which, if we yield to them, increase more and more;  
all that light wherewith the Son of God "enlighteneth everyone that cometh into the world;" showing every man "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God;"  
all the convictions which his Spirit, from time to time, works in every child of man; although, it is true, the generality of men stifle them as soon as possible, and after a while forget, or at least deny, that they ever had them at all.<sup>28</sup>

Regrettably, in spite of the 'alls' listed above, the role of prevenient grace in Wesley's understanding of salvation has traditionally been reduced to being the 'first stage' in the awakening of the spiritual senses. This is undoubtedly a consequence of the same presuppositions which led to his theology of salvation being inappropriately categorized as one of a progressive 'order'. The simple fact is, as Lawson noted

'Wesley was not one of those to whom a vivid sense of the end of the world is at hand was an important part of his religion.'<sup>29</sup>

As such, the progressive and ultimately eschatological dimension of salvation naturally received far less attention than the more pressing and immediate concern of how to awaken the spiritual senses of those dead to God.

It is my contention that prevenient grace continues to play a pivotal role in the life of the believer after the gift of faith has been received and the spiritual senses have been awoken. Faith, far from being that which marks the end of this searching after God is, in part, an invitation to the believer to participate more fully in a deliberate, conscious questioning and searching after God. That Wesley also considered this to be the case cannot be discounted. It is faith he suggests which makes possible '*enlightened reason*', wherewith the believer shall "explore even the deep things of God;" God himself "revealing them to you by his Spirit."<sup>30</sup> Although this understanding of prevenient grace was developed more fully

primarily in regard to the state of the souls of those who have not had the opportunity of hearing the Gospel, it seems likely that Wesley considered prevenient grace to be more than just the initial prompting of God. Maddox concludes as much, noting that Wesley had ‘raised the possibility that Prevenient grace might involve more than simply strengthening our human faculties and testifying to us through creation; it might also provide actual overtures to our spiritual senses.’<sup>31</sup>

The contribution which reason makes to resolving the problem of how we can know God is in its ability to induce a worthy response to these overtures, to the continual provocation to search out the things of God; But where does this provocation come from to search and to question if not from God, by grace – prevenient grace? Eschatology and the promise implicit in scripture concerning the new creation means, as Moltmann and others have argued, that God is continually ahead of us.<sup>32</sup> That he is constantly drawing us to him and to the fulfillment of this promise by instilling in us the need to search him out still further, using the new faculties which we have been gifted by faith.

Jenkins, for example, writes -

I experience faith as a gift and as a question. The very nature of the gift requires that I face the question. If it is truly a gift of the Giver, a real response to a true God, then the questioning will enable the deeper receiving of the gift and a deepening knowing of the Giver.<sup>33</sup>

Believer’s questioning, apart from in an apologetic context, has all too often been portrayed as the antithesis to faith, the harbinger of doubt and uncertainty. As a means of progressing knowledge it has been decried as the tool of the scientist or the humanist, something wielded by doubters and sceptics not believers. As such, the possibility that questions might be given to us by God and that they might, accordingly, be a means of assurance rather than doubt, has tended to be ignored. There exists, however, one indisputable qualification for a questioning paradigm of prevenient grace, namely that it can be found in the teaching and preaching of Jesus.

It has been suggested that Jesus was not recognised by the people of Israel primarily as a consequence of their preconceived ideas of who the Messiah would be and what he would do. It is all the more noteworthy therefore that Jesus did not attempt to shatter these preconceptions by simply declaring either himself, or the kingdom. They were shattered

only when the individual was enabled to see differently as a result of the riddles and questions which Jesus posed to them. Jesus seldom provided 'answers' or 'meaning' to those who asked for it, instead he made considerable use of parables. According to Hauck, 'the parables were designed to make explicitly intellectual concepts easier to understand by means of concrete illustrations from familiar fields.'<sup>34</sup> In their original preaching context, Hauck insists, the parables which Jesus told would have been directly apprehensible to the listener and would have needed no interpretation<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, he recognises that the understanding of parables 'presupposes listeners who are willing to accompany the speaker in His thinking and who are capable of grasping the similarity between image and reality.'<sup>36</sup>

It is this 'similarity' between image and reality that lies at the heart of the questioning paradigm and its power to transform. Evans suggests that through the parables of Jesus, 'insight and understanding of existence proceed from movements of the imagination which take shape in fresh combinations of words whereby they can convey more than they ordinarily do.'<sup>37</sup> Creative imagining – but free of bias as it is provoked and defined by God. Parables of this type are in one sense similar to Koans. These are carefully designed nonsensical riddles which force the individual to think at a tangent - or not at all - so that once a solution is found, there is no paradox to resolve.<sup>38</sup> The tangential or imaginative thinking which parables engender can induce a shift of perception which makes visible and comprehensible that which was formerly invisible and incomprehensible. Other parables can be likened to those optical illusions which appear at first glance to be one thing, but which on reflection may be seen to be something entirely different. The parables of Jesus, pose questions which can only be resolved when God intervenes to induce the shift in perception which enables us to see what he would have us see. It is precisely for this reason however, that it has been argued that Jesus would not have used parables in this way.

'The man who chooses to talk consistently in parables must surely recognise that in doing so he is putting himself and the truth at risk, and if he lives to see what is done with his parables he is likely to find himself from time to time expostulating : 'Clumsy oaf! That is not what I said or meant at all'.<sup>39</sup>

The message which Jesus bore, it is argued, was far too important for him to risk it being

misunderstood. Such arguments are refuted by the fact that Jesus told his disciples that he deliberately used this form of speech to veil or disguise his message from those who did not have ears to hear.<sup>40</sup>

The justification for a questioning paradigm of prevenient grace is the way in which it is used throughout the gospels, in particular, on the road to Caesarea Philippi. The new creation is made possible in Christ, there can therefore be no more important soteriological question than that which Jesus poses to his disciples 'and you, who do you say that I am.'<sup>41</sup> God invites the question and is the only one who can both be, and provide the answer to it, as Jesus makes evident by his response to Peters confession. "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven<sup>42</sup>. That this grace continues may be inferred from the way in which Jesus continues to teach the disciples using parables even after the confession at Caesarea Philippi. They are thus enabled to participate in the work of the 'new creation' through their subsequent proclamation of the gospel.

### **Methodism as agent provocateur**

Methodism has traditionally actively encouraged the processes of deductive and inductive reasoning coupled with theological inquiry. In his '*Appeal to Men of Reason*', for example, Wesley wrote:-

'We therefore not only allow, but earnestly exhort, all who seek after true religion, to use all the reason which God hath given them, in searching out the things of God.'<sup>43</sup>

This searching is not advanced as an intellectual puzzle, it is recommended for one reason only – that God might be at work in us, transforming our perception of the world and revealing his kingdom, in order that we might actively participate in it. It is in this that we see and appreciate the association that Wesley makes with prevenient grace and natural conscience. Preventing grace prompts the questions 'what does it mean "to do justly, and to love mercy", and 'what does God require of us? Whilst natural conscience may lead some people to do good, prevenient grace provokes the question of whether or not what is

already being done is good – in all matters, social, political, personal and ecclesiological. It is for this reason that Christians have consistently been led to challenge and query what others have considered ‘normal’ or ‘good’. Their inquiries encourage them to see the world differently and to recognise what God has done, and what remains undone and hence participate. For this reason they have been willing to highlight and work to correct what they perceives to be an injustice, often long before others have been able to recognise it as such.

Methodism’s emphasis on prevenient grace and its belief in itself as a work of God has made it particularly well suited to act in this regard as agent provocateur for the new creation. The question of whether or not the social, economic, even political concern which is undoubtedly present in the Wesleyan tradition is intrinsic to the evangelical renewal, or only a significant, but after all, peripheral side effect of its evangelistic drive,<sup>44</sup> is a question concerning how the process of salvation is recognised in the Wesleyan tradition. It is to be hoped that, in the light of the questioning paradigm which this paper has advocated, such issues can be recognised as not only intrinsic to, but a continuing, an inescapable consequence of the processes of evangelisation and salvation gifted by God in grace. The process of salvation requires the continual provocation of prevenient grace to enlighten us to the saving needs of the world around us. The existing creation functions as God’s parable.

But as with all grace – the prompting can be ignored, the drawings of God left unheeded, the questions left unasked, and hence the work of God left undone. The danger is always that we will be content with the current vision that we have of ourselves and the world. The things that we are reluctant to see change, we tend not to want to question too closely. The things that we suspect would disturb us too much if we investigate, we prefer not to be curious about. The question which this paper ultimately poses therefore is – is Methodism a questionable creation?

Notes.

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<sup>1</sup> Eccl 1: 9-10

<sup>2</sup> 2Cor 5:17

<sup>3</sup> This would appear to be Wesley's stance, consider for example Col:3:3 'For ye are dead — To the things on earth And your real, spiritual life is hid from the world, and laid up in God, with Christ — Who hath merited, promised, prepared it for us, and gives us the earnest and foretaste of it in our hearts.'

<sup>4</sup> Consider his sermon on Revelation 21:5 entitled '*The New Creation*' The Complete Works of John Wesley, 3rd Ed, vol. 6, Sermons 40-86,322 (Oregon: Ages Software, 1996), 323

<sup>5</sup> The Complete Works of John Wesley, 3rd Ed, vol. 7, *Sermons 87-141*, (Oregon: Ages Software, 1996),354

<sup>6</sup> The Complete Works of John Wesley, 3rd Ed, vol. 6, Sermons 40-86,322 (Oregon: Ages Software, 1996), 322

<sup>7</sup> Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation John Wesley's Theology for Today*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998),8

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, 9

<sup>9</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1979) ,169

<sup>10</sup> *ibid* 170

<sup>11</sup> *ibid* 168

<sup>12</sup> Bauckham R and Trevor A Hart, "Hope Against Hope Christian Eschatology in Contemporary Context." (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1999),81

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*, 84

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 84

<sup>15</sup> The Complete Works of John Wesley, 3rd Ed, vol. 6, Sermons 40-86 (Oregon: Ages Software, 1996),326

<sup>16</sup> George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: SPCK, 1984).

<sup>17</sup> Colin Gunton, "Dogma, the Church and the Task of Theology," in *The Task of Theology Today*, Pfitzner, V & Regan, H (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999)

<sup>18</sup> Henry Bettenson, ed, *Documents of the Christian Church*, 2nd Ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986),119

<sup>19</sup> Hunter,Fredrick, *John Wesley and the Coming Comprehensive Church* (London: Epworth Press, 1968), 12

<sup>20</sup> *The Journal of the Rev John Wesley A M Vol I*, Standard Edition ed, Nehemiah Curnock (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1909),419

<sup>21</sup> Consider in particular Scott J Jones '*John Wesley's conception and use of Scripture*' (Kingswood: Nashville 1995)

<sup>22</sup> John Wesley, *The Complete Works of John Wesley*, 3rd Ed, vol. 6, Sermons 40-86 (Oregon: Ages Software, 1996),323

<sup>23</sup> Colin Gunton, "Until He Comes: Towards an Eschatology of Church," in *Called to One Hope*, Colwell, John (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000),253

<sup>24</sup>The Complete Works of John Wesley, 3rd Ed, vol. 6, Sermons 40-86 (Oregon: Ages Software, 1996), 392

<sup>25</sup> The Complete Works of John Wesley, 3rd Ed, vol. 6, Sermons 40-86 (Oregon: Ages Software, 1996),87

<sup>26</sup> The Complete Works of John Wesley, 3rd Ed, vol. 6, Sermons 40-86,322 (Oregon: Ages Software, 1996), 563

<sup>27</sup> Randy L Maddox, *Responsible Grace John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994),158

<sup>28</sup> The Complete Works of John Wesley, 3rd Ed, vol. 6, Sermons 40-86 (Oregon: Ages Software, 1996),60

<sup>29</sup> John Lawson, *Notes on Wesley's Forty-Four Sermons* (London: Epworth Press, 1955),26

<sup>30</sup> The Complete Works of John Wesley, 3rd Ed, vol. 8, *Addresses Essays and Letters* (Oregon: Ages Software, 1996),20

<sup>31</sup> Maddox, *op cit* 30

<sup>32</sup> The scope of this paper prohibits a detailed exploration of the differences between Moltmann's eschatological expectations of the 'new creation' and the realised eschatology implicit in the approach which I am advocating

<sup>33</sup> David E Jenkins, *Living with Questions* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1969), x

<sup>34</sup> Hauck Friedrich, "παράβολη," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament VolV*, Friedrich, Gerhard (Michigan: WB. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 756

<sup>35</sup> *ibid* 756

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*, 756

<sup>37</sup> CF Evans, *Parable and Dogma* (London: Athlone Press of the University of London, 1977), 14

<sup>38</sup> N Sannitt, *Science as Questioning* (Bristol: Inst of Physics, 1996), 22

<sup>39</sup> Evans, *op cit* 9

<sup>40</sup> Matthew 13:13

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<sup>41</sup> Matthew 16:15

<sup>42</sup> Matthew 16:17

<sup>43</sup> John Wesley, *The Complete Works of John Wesley*, 3rd Ed, vol. 8, *Addresses Essays and Letters* (Oregon: Ages Software, 1996),18

<sup>44</sup> Miguez Bonino, J, "Salvation as the work of the Trinity," in *Trinity Community and Power Mapping Trajectories in Wesleyan Theology*, Meeks, Douglas M (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2000),70