

17. Hobsbawm, p. 140.
18. Hobsbawm, pp. 190-91.
19. Hobsbawm, p. 190.
20. See José Miguez Bonino, "Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification from a Liberationist Perspective," in *Sanctification and Liberation*, p. 57.
21. Miguez Bonino, p. 59.
22. Miguez Bonino, p. 55.
23. *Manifiesto a la Nación* (Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia, 1970), pp. 10, 12.
24. *The Works of John Wesley* (London: Wesleyan-Methodist Book-Room, 1872; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 7:229.
25. *Sermons*, 1:116.
26. *Sermons*, 1:117.
27. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la Liberación* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1972), p. 198.
28. *Manifiesto a la Nación*, p. 10.
29. *Works*, 7:373.
30. *Works*, 6:509.
31. *Works*, 6:359.
32. *Works*, 6:509; 6:274-75.
33. *Works*, 5:56.
34. *Sermons*, 2:234.
35. *Works*, 7:235.
36. *Sermons*, 1:284-85.
37. *Works*, 8:279.
38. *Sermons*, 2:239-40.
39. *Letters*, 5:345.
40. *Works*, 11:444; *Sermons*, 2:358.
41. *Works*, 6:509.
42. *Works*, 6:511, 513.
43. Gutiérrez, *Teología de la Liberación*, p. 199.
44. *Works*, 8:329.

Salvation, Justice, and the Theological Task

Working Group Paper

We believe that those who stand in the Methodist traditions have a crucial responsibility to the present moment in world history. Through the brutal sufferings of the majority of humankind, God is calling us to reexamine our heritage to determine the resources that can speak to this situation. Within our group we have heard that Wesley is already being discovered in Latin America, Africa, and elsewhere as a significant resource for the life and mission of the church. The cries of the poor arising from all corners of the globe have opened our eyes to the special place which the marginalized and disenfranchised occupy both in the Bible and in the Wesleyan revival of the eighteenth century.

Nineteenth-century Methodism, we can argue, changed from a "religion of the poor" to a "religion for the poor." Twentieth-century affluent Methodism is challenged to reappraise this situation by being open to and challenged by both the Scriptures' demand for justice and what the oppressed have to teach us about the need for changes in the world socio-economic systems. Do the poor not call into question theology as we have understood and practiced it thus far? Do they not call for repentance and conversion, for a "new Aldersgate?"

We agree that the Scriptures are the criterion by which we discern the coming of God's kingdom, and the values that structure our discipleship in response to the poor and oppressed.

Not only the Scriptures but also the Eucharist challenges us. If the Eucharistic meal is really a celebration of God and

humanity in the Christ of the poor, it critiques the justice of the relationships of all who share in this celebration—rich and poor. In this sense, some of us interpret the Eucharist as a justice meal. Participating in the Eucharist, are we not required to be active in the breaking in of the kingdom? Are we not here invited by the Scriptures to follow Christ into the depths of human suffering among the wretched of the earth?

For many the new situation implies a new starting point: discipleship precedes theory, so that Christian thought grows out of experience in a new way. A number of us consider philosophical analysis important for theology. We need warrants for the claims we make. But philosophies also need reevaluation in the new context.

We hope that out of this process of reflection at Oxford will come a continuing program of action and reflection. We need to develop a clearer understanding in several areas, in view of the above shift in the way in which we need to do theology, and would invite all who are willing to engage in such a research commitment to join us.

(1) *A new starting point for theology? Contextual analysis.*

Wesley and Wesleyan thought forms cannot be imposed on the contemporary situation either in the world or the church, important as the Wesleyan contribution is. This would be to make the reappropriation of Wesley a new orthodoxy, and would be untrue to Wesley's own method. Nevertheless we find in Wesley some warrant for a theological method that can begin with an analysis of the concrete situation where persons find themselves, which names the demons in that situation, and which then brings to bear the healing power of the gospel. The chief difference between Wesley's time and our own is that Wesley generally analyzed the context within which his hearers found themselves in theological terms. It must be added, however, that he also employed "empirical" analyses to make his case (see many of his occasional essays and the treatise on original sin). In keeping with Wesley, contextual analysis is an appropriate first step in Christian thought.

(2) *Variety of contexts.*

We have discovered, however, that we are rooted in a variety of contexts: the Third World, where issues of economic exploitation and poverty demand first priority; the Black church; the feminist struggle; and other contexts of people fighting for their rights in their own or their adopted land; and secularized western cultures, largely indifferent to, if not openly hostile toward, their own Christian roots and Christian forms of life and thought. Others come from affluent cultures that have often co-opted Christianity for purposes of civil religion and made too easy an identification between their national political, economic, and military policies, and biblical faith. We discover in these same affluent, nominally Christian cultures the unmistakable signs of the breakdown of meaning and purpose for large segments of the population. Many find their affluence vapid and empty, or do not participate in the fruits of the system. To these contexts is added the church contexts within which we all work: from quasi-establishment status to small minorities within indifferent or hostile environments, or environments where non-Christian religions are dominant.

(3) *The unity of our contexts.*

Notwithstanding the diversity of contexts in which we find ourselves, we also recognize common elements in all our contemporary human contexts: racism, militarism, sexism, environmental deterioration, nuclear holocaust. Moreover, as useful as distinctions between the First, Second, and Third Worlds may be for analysis, we cannot afford to divide up the world too neatly. An answer, for example, which appears to provide existential meaning to persons in the First World but leaves untouched the needs of persons in the Third World is not a Christian answer. Each of us, therefore, regardless of the variety of our individual contexts noted in point two above, will undertake reflection and action in terms of a larger context, as required by the "global village" in which we all find ourselves. Worldwide issues that have not been solved but rather exacerbated by all existing economic systems, such as ecology and energy, bind us together in a

more universal concrete context. And likewise all our critiques will be subsumed under the critique exercised by the "already—but not yet" of the kingdom of God.

(4) *The individual and the social.*

The organic relation in Wesleyan thought of the individual and social dimensions of the Christian faith has proved to be an important insight for us. Methodism was born at a time when the individual was emerging as significant in political, social, and economic life; and Methodism flourished in the nineteenth century, when individualism was the dominant trend. This inevitably affected the ways in which conversion and faith were understood. We have since become aware of the real limitations of individualism, not only in terms of the critique from Scripture but in terms of the injustices which it has legitimated. We must deepen our appreciation of Wesley's understanding of the relation between the individual and the social. In Wesley there are undeniable individual and personal emphases. Genuine salvation for him involves participation in the love of God for the individual, consciously experienced in justification. But this love experienced personally has as its goal nothing less than the creation of just human communities and the reconciliation and renewal of all creation. Wesley testified that as we love God and are loved by God, our hearts are inevitably opened up to all persons. The creative love, which transforms the person and the social context, affects both the perspective from which we see the world through the eyes of Jesus and the demand for changes in our own lives and in the life of the world. Thus sanctification as a process seeks that holiness, which is the renewal of all things in the image of the Creator and the eschatological fulfillment of the Creator's purpose (a conviction transmitted to Wesley from his patristic sources).

In his eighteenth-century location, however, Wesley cannot be expected to have seen the structural interrelationships in the society that his theology addressed. His converts were able to change from passive victims into active agents in society, but they were not able to analyze critically the interwoven character of the systems in which they existed.

The concept of a "network" may show us how to link the individual and social dimensions of salvation. Wesley saw creation as a whole, all the parts being interrelated and interdependent, and in their multiplicity contributing to a unity which praises its Maker. The fall of humanity has fundamentally affected this unity and interrelationship, for the disobedience of humanity has, according to Wesley, affected the whole of creation. Although his analysis of the forms of bondage included such evils as unemployment, slavery and war—as well as the economic motivations which lie behind them—his solutions were not by today's standards sufficiently radical. He did not understand that men and women cannot be released from these bonds simply by appealing to the hearts and consciences of Christians.

Although his condemnations of slavery were consistent and thorough (cf. *Works*, vol. 11, 59-29; *Letters*, vol. 8, 265-66), he did not make sufficiently clear the demonic character of the other institutions of his day, nor did he call Christians to radical transformation of other structures. Wesley was no political revolutionary, and believed that disruptions and revolutions were more likely to serve the devil than God, although by 1784 he was reconciled to the independence of the colonies and could urge "our brethren in America" to "stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free" (*Letters*, vol. 7, 239).

Today we see that individual and piecemeal approaches are not enough. Whole interrelated networks must be radically questioned and transformed if people are to be released from injustice. But the problem remains: Where do we attack the networks? What is our point of entry? Where do we take hold to effect change? Simply to preach at a social order only raises the ire of those who have a stake in the status quo; although it may enable some to claim to be making a prophetic witness, in itself it does not change anything.

Latin American colleagues teach us that an important first step to which the church may contribute effectively is that of "consciousness raising." As a part of our theological task we seek to make persons and societies aware of the contradictions between the intention of God for his creation and the

present reality. Jesus' announcement of the kingdom of God points to an everchanging vision and calls for the transformation of relationships in this age in the light of the age to come. Every democracy (which all of our societies, east and west, north and south claim to be) depends on an informed citizenry. Our first responsibility, therefore, may be to provide information from a biblical and Wesleyan perspective about the tensions between things as they are and things as they should be under God. The purpose of this "conscientization" is to bring persons not just to an awareness of the facts but also to an acceptance of their responsibilities for effective action. The nature of this action must be dictated by the possibilities in a specific context. Always the primary responsibility is to God's justice and to God's ways of making things right. Therefore our methods are constantly to be criticized in the light of our responsibilities. We need to show the same openness as Wesley, allowing our practice to be revised in the light of experience, keeping always uppermost the ultimate context of the universal holiness of the kingdom. As Wesley wrote, "God 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; that he will never intermit this blessed work of his Spirit, until he has fulfilled all his promises, until he hath put a period to sin, and misery, and infirmity and death, and re-established universal holiness and happiness, and caused all the inhabitants of the earth to sing together, 'Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!' " (*Works*, vol. 7, 288).

(5) *Spirituality and social transformation.*

We have learned from the Black church in the United States that the task of liberation entails the combination of concrete social action with deep spiritual commitment. It is the power of the Spirit that sustains when human spirits grow weak and would flag in their zeal. Therefore, it is vitally important that all our efforts be undergirded by a deep conviction of divine sovereignty and a spiritual practice consistent with divine transcendence and human need.

(6) *Solidarity.*

The Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient grace enables us to recognize the presence of Christ's judging and liberating spirit not only in the church and traditionally Christian enterprises, but in other movements. This allows us to enter into solidarity with persons and movements with whom we may not agree in every respect but in whom we recognize the activity of the God we know in Jesus Christ. Solidarity implies commitment to change the system and not mere pronouncements. Yet to be discussed are the limits, if any, of this solidarity.

(7) *Holiness and intellectual challenges.*

We bring to intellectual dialogue the commitment to extend the wholeness and justice, which we have discovered in the gospel, to all aspects of human existence. This is part of our discipleship as theologians. But we need also to become aware of the ways that theology relates to or is informed by other forms of inquiry. For example, in the Latin American situation some theologians have found Marxist socio-economic analyses useful. However, there needs to be a continuing critical analysis of the relationship between Christianity and Marxism, for any system of socio-economic analysis that reduces theology to social ethics should be regarded with suspicion.

What has been presented so far is necessarily brief and inconclusive. To sharpen the edge of our theological task, we raise the following questions, which emerged in our discussions and helped shape our continuing agenda:

- (1) Can we find a hermeneutic that connects:
 - a. our reading of Wesley's texts;
 - b. Wesley's reading of traditional texts;
 - c. a socio-analytical reading of his context and our context?
- (2) What are the similarities and differences in our various ways of doing biblical exegesis and relating our exegesis and our theology? In the midst of our differences is there a shared Wesleyan hermeneutic?

- (3) What is the essential relation between systematic theology and ethics? How can we avoid the danger of collapsing theology into ethics? Is this a particular danger for a liberation theology?
- (4) Much of our criticism has centered on the present economic order. For many of us the "option for the poor" means opting for some form of socialism. Are there values in capitalism which should be incorporated into any new economic order? What are the givens in any economic order which have to be taken into consideration by those seeking change?
- (5) What is the role of Marxist social analysis in our critical theology? Is it possible to separate Marxism as an analytical tool from Marxist ideology? Are there other tools of analysis?
- (6) Is poverty a critical factor for doing theology in every context? How do we relate the poor to the Wesleyan quadrilateral: Scriptures, tradition, reason, and experience? In what ways do the Scriptures require specific attention to the poor?
- (7) How can we balance psychological-existential themes with social themes of liberation? What is the bridge between the personal and the social? Are there particular insights offered by Black theology and feminist theology?
- (8) How are traditional theological categories, such as prevenient grace, justification, and the kingdom of God, related to salvation in a liberationist perspective?
- (9) What is an adequate Christian concept of justice? How is justice related to truth, equality, and freedom? Can analytical philosophies, challenged by liberationist concerns, contribute to clearer definitions and understanding?
- (10) Is violence ever a legitimate Christian option in the struggle for justice and freedom?

Ecclesial Location and Ecumenical Vocation

Geoffrey Wainwright

I. Schism and Pluralism

When, in the teaching of fundamental theology, I come to the church and tradition, I begin, tongue-in-cheek, with a rapid sketch of ecclesiastical history. It shows how, in the fifth century, the non-Chalcedonians split from the hitherto undivided church. Then the Byzantine East broke away in 1054. The unreformed Roman Catholics were left behind in the sixteenth century, while the continental Protestants had the misfortune of being foreigners. In the eighteenth century, even the Church of England refused Wesley's mission, so that finally only Methodists remained in the body of Christ. At this point in the recital, general laughter occurs. Closer inspection of the emotions released reveals that English Methodist students usually experience a little *Schadenfreude* at seeing the tables turned in this way, but they retain after all a certain guilt at the responsibility of their forebears in the separation from the Church of England, and while being forced by historical circumstances to reject the ecclesiological model ironically employed in the sketch, they cannot quite be content with an alternative understanding that renders all divisions innocuous. On the other hand, Roman Catholic students are sometimes shamed into awareness that their instinctively Cyprianic view is not entirely satisfactory either, when it takes all schism to be schism *from* the church and rejects the "other party" into an ecclesiological void. Anglican students are caught in the middle, marooned on their bridge. In contrast to the English, American students of