

among us, points to a horizon beyond Conjunctive faith which is truly *Universal*. Trying to describe the marks of the "genuine Christian," Wesley's characterization aptly expresses the shape of Universalizing faith, the last stage our research can identify:

Above all, remembering that God is love, [the Christian] is conformed to the same likeness. [The Christian] is full of love to [the] neighbor: of universal love, not confined to our sect or party, not restrained to those who agree with [us] in opinions, or in outward modes of worship, or to those who are allied . . . by blood, or recommended by nearness of place. . . . [T]his love resembles that of [the One] whose mercy is over all his works. It soars above all these scanty bounds, embracing neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies. . . . For the Christian loves every soul that God has made, every child of man, of whatever place or nation.<sup>12</sup>

### Notes

1. See Jim Fowler and Sam Keen, *Life-Maps* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1978); James W. Fowler, with Robin Lovin et al., *Trajectories in Faith: Five Life Studies* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980); and James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981); published in German by Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983.
2. For biographical background on Wesley, I rely primarily on Martin Schmidt, *John Wesley: A Theological Biography*, 3 vols., trans. Norman Goldhawk (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962, 1972, 1973); and Stanley Ayling, *John Wesley* (Cleveland, New York: William Collins, Publishers, 1979). Robert L. Moore's *John Wesley and Authority: A Psychological Perspective* (AAR Dissertation Series 29: Scholars' Press, 1979) marshals a considerable amount of biographical materials useful for my purposes here. Where I have drawn explicitly on the latter I indicate it in footnotes. Where I quote either Schmidt or Ayling, or where they may disagree, I also provide a footnote. In matters of biographical interpretation where the two former sources agree, I generally do not cite a specific footnote.
3. Moore, p. 42 (quoting from Wesley's *Journal*, 3:34ff.).
4. Moore, p. 42.
5. Moore, pp. 44-45. (Quoting from G. Elsie Harrison, *Son to Susanna* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1938), 1:44.
6. Ayling, p. 20.
7. Schmidt, vol. 1, p. 67.
8. *The Reverend Mr. John Wesley's Journal from The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), vol. 1, p. 98, para. 2.
9. *Wesley's Journal*, p. 99.
10. Moore, p. 45, quoting V. H. H. Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley* (London: Edward Arnold, 1961), p. 54.
11. Schmidt, vol. 1, pp. 240-41.
12. Wesley, *A Plain Account of Genuine Christianity*, sec. I., para. 5. Quoted in Albert Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 184.

## Wesleyan Spirituality and Faith Development

### Working Group Paper

#### Introduction

The working group on Wesleyan Spirituality and Faith Development represented a new focus of studies in the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies. Others are better able than we to trace why, in 1981-82, planners decided that the Institute could well afford to include a dialogue between John Wesley's theology and praxis of growth in grace, and some twentieth-century perspectives on faith and human development. As we pursued this dialogue we had a growing sense of its importance: importance as an approach to the study of Wesley's *theology in action*, and therefore crucial for our historical understanding of him and his movement; importance as a contribution to the contemporary and future efforts of the church to shape methods of sponsorship, which can discerningly midwife the work of the Holy Spirit in the transformation of lives towards holiness and happiness.

#### Elements of Wesleyan Spirituality

Spirituality concerns the Way, the Walk, and the Goal of Christian discipleship. It considers the direction of our course, the manner of our journey, its temper and discipline. It refers to our attitude to the world and to other people, and the end, the *summum bonum*, variously described as the vision of God, perfection, deification, entire sanctification, heaven, the kingdom of God.

Spirituality in English usage in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries meant the "clergy," or sometimes "clerical property." The themes of *theologia spiritualis* would be described as "Holy Living and Holy Dying" or the "Practice of Piety," to name influential treatises, or simply "Godliness," or "Walking with God." The French wrote of "La Vie Spirituelle," though, at first perjoratively, to condemn the eccentricities of Madame Guyon or Molinos. Later the adjective became respectable. It presupposes that "there is a spirit in man," a faculty of human nature, which is able to transcend mortal responsibilities, utilitarian concerns, rational functions, and pursue ends beyond those of earthly existence—physical pleasure, getting and spending. This faculty controls and animates the whole.

In French, the word *spiritualite* means "liveliness." This also gives a clue. To put it colloquially, our spirituality is "what makes us tick." It is the whole variety of ideas, attitudes, intuitions that shape and inspire our living.

Thus understood there are two consequences:

(1) The term does not *ipso facto* define what is good. There are evil and erroneous spiritualities from which we need to be delivered. Hitler was a spiritual being; National Socialism a misbegotten spiritual movement.

(2) Our spirituality may not be what we think it is. We may pay lip service to certain forms and ideals, but our real, if unconscious, inspiration lies elsewhere. Our Christian progress may consist in being weaned away from false spiritualities and from self-deception as to the sources of our hidden life.

We, as Christians, believe that our beings may be animated by the Holy Spirit, the very life of God himself bestowed and released through Jesus Christ, his crucifixion and resurrection.

Christian spirituality needs for its elucidation and assessment the interplay of psychology, historical criticism, and theology.

When we turn to Wesley we may, through the use of all these disciplines, discern the following characteristics of his spirituality, stated in fairly nontechnical terms.

(1) His spirituality aims at a right relation to God and to persons. This is true throughout his whole life, though there were struggles to attain it, and some fluctuations afterwards.

(2) It was a synthesis of mystical and prophetic piety—to use the distinction of Friedrich Heiler. There was an ardent desire for God and for union with him, though this was never for an absorption into God which denied his own individuality or his need of other people. There was a strong sense of social responsibility, of social joys, and of the need for men and women to be changed and society reformed. This coexisted in Wesley with opposition to revolution and a strong belief that good Christians conform to the existing order.

(3) The poor constituted a particular obligation, because Wesley was both a compassionate Christian, and one who lived by the Bible. He demonstrated a special quality of identification with the poor, and authentically manifested Jesus the Christ's concern for the dignity and redemption of the "little ones." While it may be anachronistic to speak of Wesley as "de-classing" himself, his identification with the poor is captured in this phrase.

(4) There is a requirement for human response to God's freely-given divine grace, and a call to human partnership and responsibility both in personal salvation and social transformation. The invitation of grace to "walk as Christ walked" leads to the imperative of "spreading scriptural holiness across the land."

(5) Wesley calls for a constant dependence on the means of grace. He adopted the classification of these into the "Instituted"—prayer; searching the scriptures (by reading, hearing, and meditation); the Lord's Supper—and the provisional, e.g., Christian conference (bands, classes, societies).

(6) Wesleyan spirituality envisions growth in grace and towards perfect love. There are stages in this growth, along with relapses and the possibility of being in more than one stage at once. The "dark night of the soul" was alien to Wesley as a theme in his theology, though not in his life. Wesley believed and taught that God intended progress and gave assurance to the believer by "the witness of our own

spirit" into which one could reason oneself by a syllogism, and "the witness of the Holy Spirit of adoption." Wesley believed perfection to be attainable in this life, though there are degrees of it, and there is always a tension between the "now" and the "not yet." In awareness of this the perfection may consist.

(7) Real holiness leads to true happiness, and both happiness and holiness found expression in Wesleyan hymnody. Wesley always insisted that the people called Methodists "sing with the spirit and with the understanding also," and the hymnody functioned as a major vehicle for the communication of Wesleyan theology. This is especially true of the eucharistic reality of Christ's presence in the Sacrament, the remembrance of Christ's sacrificial death for us, and the rejoicing that flows from both.

(8) Wesleyan spirituality is ecumenical. It is "pure Scriptural Christianity"; it follows the discipline and practice of the undivided church; and it avails itself of aids from every branch of Christendom and regards as its rightful partners all those who have sought holiness of life in the way of Christ.

### *An Approach to Wesleyan Spirituality and Faith Development*

In documents circulated before the Institute we shaped a strategy that called for approaching Wesleyan spirituality from three directions:

(1) The study of Wesley's own life, with its distinctive pattern in the struggle for saving and sanctifying faith.

(2) A consideration of Wesley's various teachings and metaphors for illumining the drama of salvation and growth in grace.

(3) An examination of the concrete methods and contexts Wesley evolved for encouragement, education, and accountability in the nurture of growth in grace. In addition, we determined to make an initial foray into twentieth-century psychosocial studies of faith development, with an eye to bringing these contemporary perspectives into a mutually constructive and critical encounter with Wesley's theology and praxis.

Prior to engaging in the study of these various topic areas, however, we realized that in the study of Wesleyan spirituality we had, in the group of twenty-three who had assembled in Oxford, a rich range of diverse (and similar) experiences of formation in the Wesleyan tradition. Therefore, for two of our early sessions we took the time for each participant to introduce her/himself and to share something of the ways the Wesleyan tradition had formed or marked our pathways into Christian faith. Some in the group remarked that at points the "testimony" approached the quality of a love feast. Certainly we, each one, felt enriched and informed by this sharing. The beginnings of understanding acquired in this time of introductions served us well as we soon came to points of difference and struggle over matters of great importance.

Our method of joint inquiry into the four major areas of our concern combined reports and presentations by members of our own group with several presentations from persons from other working groups in the Institute who have special expertise in some of our topics. A brief accounting will give a sense and sample of our ways of proceeding:

(1) *On Wesley's Praxis of the Nurture of Growth in Grace*: We were fortunate to have with us Tom Albin, of Cambridge University and a student of Gordon Rupp, whose computer studies of some five hundred members of early Methodist Societies (1740-1790) gave us fresh access to the character and religious experience of Wesley's early followers. Albin stressed the importance for understanding Wesley's doctrine of perfection, of studying those whom Wesley himself took to have been well on the way toward sanctification. He shared his finding that *lay* ministry, by means of band and class and written testimony, had been a catalytic factor in the rebirth of a majority of those he studied. Albin's dissertation will be extremely rich for this working group as well as for others. Paul Chilcote, a member of our group, is pursuing doctoral studies at Duke Divinity School with Frank Baker. Chilcote's topic of research is the role and influence of women in the Methodist movement in England from 1739-1830. He supplemented Albin's report at important points, and we expect that his work will be of critical importance for further

work on spirituality, as well as for Wesley studies and the group on Salvation and Justice.

Durwood Foster of our group presented a detailed review of David Michael Henderson's 1980 dissertation entitled *John Wesley's Instructional Groups*. A careful study of the Wesleyan bands, societies, and classes, Henderson's study correlates Wesley's theology of salvation and his principles and methods of nurture. This valuable resource was augmented by our hearing David Watson's rich account of the antecedents of Wesley's group approach and his illuminating understanding of the ways in which bands, classes, and societies actually worked. His dissertation, *The Origins and Significance of the Early Methodist Class Meetings* (Duke, 1978), is critical for our further work.

Our various examinations of the pattern of Wesley on nurture confirmed the following:

- (a) Wesleyan spirituality assumes and gives tangible shape to the ecclesia—the congregation—as the fundamental context for conversion and growth in grace.
  - (b) Wesley's use of groups intentionally began with behavioral conversion. Like the catechumenate of the early church, the *classes* were evolved to help people, who intended to "live lives in Christ and flee the wrath to come" to begin the praxis of Christian living and mission. In the societies the crucial work of instruction was carried out through sermon and hymn as well as straightforward teaching. The bands served the function of forming the affections and aiding in the deep, convictional alignment of the will with the Divine will and truth as disclosed in Christ.
  - (c) Wesley's commitment to provide care for *each* member of the societies, to mark their growth in grace, and to sustain them with structures of accountability, points to the crucial dimensions of any faithful contemporary approach to spiritual nurture.
- (2) *On Wesley's Theology of Salvation*: By way of review and clarification, three members of our group opened up our way into Wesley's teaching about what we in this Institute have called the *ordo salutis*. In quite distinct but complementary ways Gordon Wakefield and Rob Staples led us into Wesley's

teachings in this regard. We were impressed by the power of some of Wesley's images to arrest and hold us:

- (a) His account of the three "states" indicating the primary orientation and grounding of our lives: "Natural Man," "Legal Man," "Evangelical Man." (Some of us noted similarities in these conceptions to Søren Kierkegaard's distinctions between the aesthetic, the ethical, and religious "stages of life's way.")
  - (b) Wesley's use of the developmental metaphor in his talk of "babes in Christ," "young men," and "fathers."
  - (c) We felt challenged by the richness of trying to combine the Wesleyan conception of stages and orientation of life with the developmental metaphor, while at the same time relating both these to the grand drama of the work of grace in the lives of those born of Christ: Conviction-Repentance; Justification-Rebirth; Sanctification-Perfection. Rex Matthews provided us with a comprehensive chart mapping the relations of these teachings in Wesley in an exceedingly rich way, drawing on the work of Harald Lindström and Colin Williams, as well as the original sources.
- (3) *On Wesley's Life and Spiritual Growth*: Several windows into the life and growth in grace of John Wesley were shared in the course of our work together. These perspectives, each illuminative in important ways, reminded us that in Wesley we are dealing with an extremely complex figure. His century with its sensibilities and styles, its institutions and economics, its horizons of reason and experience, is in many ways alien to our own. Moreover, although Wesley's life may well be the best documented of any major reformer or founder, the self-presentation underlying much of that documentation has to be evaluated carefully as a source for biographical study. The various secondary studies of Wesley present problems of critical interpretation not entirely dissimilar to the synoptic problem in New Testament studies.
- Chastened by these awarenesses, we nonetheless benefited from Robert Tuttle's sharing of his interpretation of Wesley's struggle for saving faith, which focuses especially on Wesley's immersion in the writings of certain Roman Catholic reformation mystics. Especially in the years 1725 to

1735, Tuttle argued, the essential lines of Wesley's spiritual stirrings and those of the Holy Club, were inspired in significant part by these Catholic mystics. Later, as Tuttle pointed out, Wesley would break with their teachings of "the dark night of the soul." And when he abridged ten of these mystical texts for the Christian Library, he rewrote the parts dealing with the dark night of the soul, substituting for them accounts of "Faith as the Evidence of Things Unseen." Wesley also replaced the mystics' goal of union with God with the sturdy theme of "perfection" as the goal of Christian life. Tuttle's thesis supplements important previous work in Orthodox, Anglican, Continental pietist, and Puritan sources for Wesley's teaching on the *ordo salutis*.

In his plenary address James Fowler employed the theory of faith development, for which he has been a principal researcher, as an interpretative framework for the study of Wesley's pilgrimage in faith. In this presentation he attempted simultaneously to introduce faith development theory and a fresh look at Wesley's life. For Fowler, Wesley's pattern of growth in faith was marked by an early domination of his personality organization by a powerful *superego* (which included the religious ideals and aspirations of his parents). The years 1725-1738, Fowler argued, marked the time when Wesley met the limits of his *superego*-dominated orientation to deal with the adult issues of conviction, authority, vocation, and intimacy—intimacy with God and other humans. Aldersgate—understood as a period beginning with failure and disgrace in Georgia and ending with his invitation to field preach in 1739—is to be seen as the time in which Wesley found his limits, helplessness, and needs, and became radically open to God's grace.

Following the discussion of issues raised by Fowler's paper, Mary Elizabeth Moore gave a précis of Robert L. Moore's *John Wesley and Authority* (1980). This psychoanalytic study offers penetrating light on certain dynamics of Wesley's personhood and faith. In it Wesley is portrayed as adopting a passive-aggressive approach to the exercise of authority. By attributing all initiative to God, Wesley was able to exercise rarely questioned authority over the early Methodist movement and its members. Our group felt that

Moore tends to overtrust psychological analysis and to give too little attention to the social and cultural contexts of Wesley. Despite Moore's effort to avoid reductionism, we judged that he failed to grant Wesley's theological grounding its own full measure of integrity.

Colin Archer of our group responded to Moore by asking us to acknowledge directly the pathological dimensions of Wesley's personality. He sees the "handicaps" of Wesley as a point of contact with a theology of the Cross, and an important link with vulnerabilities such as poverty and powerlessness in the contemporary dispossessed, which forms the basis of an essential interlocking with the liberation theologies.

Rex Matthews, in a carefully argued and documented study, helped us understand the ways in which reason and reasoning played central roles in Wesley's re-imagining of faith during the critical years between 1725 and 1738. Matthews' study of "Reason, Faith and Experience" in Wesley is a foretaste of his Harvard doctoral dissertation, now in progress. This study carefully demonstrates Wesley's consistent reliance upon the concepts of reason, which he derived from the eighteenth-century Oxford Aristotelian logical tradition, particularly Henry Aldrich's *Artis Logicae Compendium* (1691). Wesley, who taught logic at Lincoln College for six years, later translated, abridged, and published Aldrich's work as his own *Compendium of Logic* (1750). Matthews shows that Wesley's understanding of faith evolved from an initial approach to faith as rational assent to the propositions of doctrinal truths. In a second phase he understood faith as grounded in rational conviction of the credibility of the proposer of such truth. In a third phase, under the influence of the Moravians and the guidance of Peter Böhler, Wesley was brought to an understanding of faith as direct spiritual vision in Christ. This position may draw upon the thought of John Norris and Nicholas Malebranch, but it finds expression most directly in the language of Hebrews 11:1—Faith as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Although Wesley never abandoned the language of faith as a rational assent, Matthews argues, it was his new understanding of

faith as "divine evidence or conviction" which allowed him at Aldersgate to reappropriate the language of faith as "a sure trust and confidence" of salvation, found in the *Book of Common Prayer* and *Homilies* of the Church of England as truly his own language. After identifying the relationship between these three "languages of faith" in Wesley, Matthews' paper culminates in an account of how reason is regrounded for Wesley in the personal experience of rebirth brought about by God's gift of faith, and so is enabled to play its proper role in the guidance and governance of the spiritual life.

(4) *Faith Development Theory*: In addition to the plenary paper on Wesley's development of faith, James Fowler presented, in rather more detail, the background and leading assumptions of the research and theory of faith development. The presentation of his generic characterization of faith, with its sequence of structural stages brought to the surface a number of persistent issues for our group.

For some, both on Wesleyan and biblical theological grounds, Fowler's use of the term "faith" to describe the human capacity for commitment and shaping a meaningful world is incompatible with Christian understanding of faith as the gift of God's grace and as an overturning of any claims to human self-sufficiency. Some of these objected to a psychological approach which fails to grant the priority of scripture, revelation, and the work of the Spirit in any proper speaking of faith. Fowler answered that he sees the stage theory of faith as primarily a contribution to theological anthropology. He reminded the group, however, that the doctrine of prevenient grace in Wesley contends that the idea of human beings in the natural or fallen state is really a theoretical construct. Already, by virtue of God's universal prevenient grace, conscience is awakened and reason is able, however dimly, to discriminate right from wrong. Fowler observed that the stage theory in its present formulation (see Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 1981) does not fully enough acknowledge its grounding in the conviction of God's sovereignty, nor does it explicitly develop its doctrine of prevenient grace.

From his own work on human development studies, Donald Joy pressed the group toward the effort to find

linkages and overlays between stage theories of the kind Fowler has offered and Wesley's various ways of speaking of the conversion, which grace works by faith as depicted in the *ordo salutis*.

### *Major Learnings and Issues*

It seems to us that one of the powerful points of common meeting between Wesley's teaching about the way of salvation and the emergent theory of faith development centers on the images that each offers of possibilities for the transformation of human life in the direction of wholeness. Each is concerned with the whole person—body, mind, and spirit. Each characterizes a sequence of ways in which the self is related to God, the neighbor, and the world. By virtue of the visions of excellence which each offers, they both have the effect of critiquing present modes of life with their centers of value and images of power. Each perspective takes seriously what is personal and unique in human lives, but each intends to view a person's becoming firmly in its social and corporate context.

Some important differences between these perspectives, however, have emerged in our discussions. Wesley's doctrine on the way of salvation begins clearly with the assumption of a human fall from a state of originally created perfection. Correlated with a radical understanding of human sinfulness in Wesley is an equally radical doctrine of divine grace and initiative. Thus the aptness of the characterization of Wesley's thought as holding together the twin emphases of "pessimism of nature" and "optimism of grace." The universally and freely available prevenient grace of God renders the "natural man" a fiction in Wesley's thought. Wesley's teaching about the way of salvation represents a sequence of events in the spiritual life through which reason is regrounded and the will and the affections are recentered. This dynamic process moves under the power of God's grace in the direction of perfecting a love *in us* that is increasingly like the love of God *for us*.

Faith development theory, at first examination, would seem to offer significant contrasts to Wesley's way of

salvation. It offers no fully developed doctrine of sin. Nor does it fully give account of the pole of divine grace in the process which it depicts. It does begin, however, with the conviction of the sovereignty of God as creator, ruler, and redeemer. It is grounded in the belief that human beings are created for partnership with God—whether we know it and acknowledge it or not. The stages attempt to provide formal—that is to say, empty of specific content—descriptions of ways of being in faith. It is important to note, however, that each stage describes a way of situating the self in relation to the neighbor, and to that which has God-value and God-power for us. A transition from one faith stage to another, therefore, means a regrounding of self-understanding, of our orientation to God and neighbor, and of our patterns of action in the world. Each new stage brings a deidolization: a dethroning of the images of God or the ultimate held in the previous stage. With each new stage, a kind of decentering from self also occurs: This means an expanded capacity for taking the perspectives of others; it means a widened and deepened appreciation for the potential of all being in God's economy.

Wesley's way of salvation is more explicit about the transformation that God's grace works in our wills and affections. His doctrine preserves a useful fluidity regarding the phases of this transformation. Faith development theory gives greater attention to transformation in our modes of knowing and valuing, and attempts to specify differentiated stages in this process.

A fruitful area of overlap between the two perspectives may lie in the different ways in which each envisions a widening and regrounding of reason.

Wesley's way of salvation offers a powerful reminder that in God's grace persons described by any of the stages of faith development theory may need to undergo conviction, repentance, and conversion (or *metanoia*), and by virtue of this become the recipients of God's graciously given salvation. And faith development theory enables us to understand that conversion, justification, and rebirth at different stages of faith may involve quite different conflicts and dynamics, therefore requiring different methods from

those who would minister and give nurture to those in transition in faith.

In order to take this dialogue between Wesleyan spirituality and faith development theory further, future praxis and research will need to come to terms with the following issues:

(a) *The reconciliation of two kinds of perspectives on the self in community in relation to God:* One which starts from scripture and a theology centered in God's act in Christ, made contemporary with us through the work of the Holy Spirit in word, sacrament, and *koinonia*; the other which starts from empirical and phenomenological perspectives on human faith and fairly attempts to understand the human potential for, and vocation to, full humanity in partnership with God. Wesley's doctrine of prevenient grace, his understanding of reason before and after rebirth, and his own empirical and phenomenological interests in transforming experience, make him a far more helpful theological partner for faith development theory than most other reformation protestant theologies. Correspondingly, the "grace transforming nature" pattern common to Wesley and faith development theory together make them a strong informing perspective for the praxis of Christian nurture, spiritual direction, evangelism, preaching, and the care of souls.

(b) *The clarification of relationships and distinctions between faith stage change and conversion, rebirth and sanctification:* Repentance, rebirth, and justification literally may be approached as qualitatively different experiences by persons at different faith stages. Bonhoeffer's call for approaches to discipleship that take seriously a certain kind of "coming of age" should warn us against evangelism and education which take adolescent conversion and commitment as their dominant model—as important as that is.

(c) *The questioning and liberation from those forms of Wesleyan theology which view justification as the release from the neurotic guilt that results from an excessively harsh childhood conscience:* This has been and may continue for many to be the central dynamic in conviction and justification for many heirs of Wesley. But the *contents*, if not the structure itself, of the superego are changing in our time. Our doctrines of sin and

salvation need to concern themselves equally with narcissism, complacency, anomie, and meaninglessness as besetting conditions of sin to which the call for conviction and repentance, justification and sanctification are addressed. A certain kind of narcotism and numbness in face of the grinding inequalities and brutal realities of our contemporary society may be the sins for which we most need forgiveness and rebirth.

(d) *The struggle, in praxis and theological-ethical reflection, to claim and explicate images of human excellence and full responsiveness to God and the neighbor, without boxing into new legalisms the specific contents or forms for the direction of God's work with us: We need strong Christian images of the human vocation that are clear about our calling—our proper entelechy—but which preserve open-ended anticipation regarding the uniqueness of pattern and style resulting from the synergy of divine and human love worked in us by our ongoing response to God's grace.*

(e) *Experimentation and praxis research on contemporary equivalents of early Methodism's bands, classes, and societies: The interlocking structure of behavioral, instructional, and affectional-volitional formation and accountability in Wesley's model are indispensable for any spirituality that will sustain sanctifying faith and faithful mission.*

(f) *Research and praxis investigation of Wesley's use of scripture—in personal prayer, in theological determinations, and in the contexts of the classes and bands: A man of one book, a people of one book—In both belief and practice, in method and execution, we are sore in need of ways to enable persons to reenter what Karl Barth once called "the strange new world of the Bible," and to let it make in us the transforming linkages between the world it opens up and our own frenetic worlds.*

(g) *The shaping of a spirituality faithful to God's calling in our time to be peacemakers and makers of justice: Both Wesley's way of salvation and faith development theory envision our being citizens of the city of God, a global community of those born of God, who are restless, persistent, spending and being spent, in the human work of divine transformation toward inclusive justice and peace.*

*Some Specific Topics for Future Study*

- (1) "Wesley as *Homo Unius Libri*: How Wesley's Understanding and Use of the Bible Informs His Spirituality."
- (2) "Wesley and the Dark Night of the Soul"—Was there in Wesley, and is there in the heritage of Methodist spirituality, a tendency to avoid the "shadow" within and without—a failure to plumb the depths of ambiguity and the demonic in us?
- (3) "Wesley's Theology and Practice of Prayer."
- (4) "The Seasons of Wesley's Life"—A study of relative emphases in theology and spirituality throughout Wesley's lifetime.
- (5) "The Holy Spirit and Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality."
- (6) "The Wesleyan *Ordo Salutis* and *Stages of Faith* Calmly Considered."
- (7) "Wesley, Spirituality and the Poor"—Poverty and poverty of spirit; Wesley's spirituality as empowerment toward "declassing" and trans-class solidarity.
- (8) "*The Psychology of the Methodist Revival* Revisited: The Convictional Experiences Engendered by Wesley's Evangelism"—A review needed of Sydney G. Dimond's *The Psychology of the Methodist Revival* (1926) and assessment in light of *Stages of Faith* and James Loder's approach in *The Transforming Moment* (Harper & Row, 1981).
- (9) "Naturalism versus Justification and Sanctification"—Modern developmental theories and the Wesleyan way of salvation.
- (10) "Wesley as Text: Hermeneutics of Holiness and Suspicion"—Deeper inquiry into Wesley's biography with judicious inquiry into the principles guiding his presentation of self in the journals. (The Wesley Wesley knew; the Wesley Wesley wanted us to know; the Wesley others knew [that Wesley didn't know]; the Wesley no one [but God] knows.)
- (11) "Wesley and Universalizing Faith: The Extent and Limits of the Catholic Spirit"—Wesley's struggle to move beyond the clash of opinions of theological



dispute, his efforts to identify what is fundamental and essential in the gospel, bespeaks a theory of the relatedness (relativity) of religious approaches to truth. How does appropriation of this dimension of Wesley's work orient us in interfaith dialogue and the encounter with other spiritualities in our time?

- (12) "Toward a Political Spirituality: Resources and Limits of Wesleyan Spirituality"—Are there resources in Wesley for a political spirituality, and what are the resources and limitations of Wesley's spirituality?
- (13) "Methodist Spiritual Praxis in the Bands and Classes: the Dynamics and Possibilities of Group Spiritual Directions."
- (14) "Wesley's Spirituality as Reflected in the Biographical Traditions: A Critical and Historical Survey."
- (15) "Holiness and Happiness: Wesley's Vision of Fully Realized Humanity."

## *A Retrospect*

*Brian E. Beck*

The seventh Institute broke new ground in being more of a working conference than its predecessors since 1958. Smaller specialist groups in which much of the work was done allowed deeper engagement with particular aspects of the subject. The seventh Institute also marked a further stage in the progressive narrowing down of the meaning of the words "Methodist Theological Studies" as traditionally included in the Institute's title, from "theological studies done by Methodists" to "studies of the Methodist contribution to theology." This was a welcome development, for there is little point in Methodists from all over the world gathering for study unless they consider some aspect of their specifically Methodist contribution. The Institute also succeeded in being more representative of that world constituency, including churches not officially counted in the Methodist "family" but which have inherited and value a Wesleyan tradition. It was not always clear, however, that the different voices were equally successful in making themselves adequately heard, and there is certainly scope for improving the representative character of the Institute, if the economic and other problems can be overcome.

The theme of the Institute, "The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions," implies a question, and it is important to ask why we pose it. We cannot know what the future holds, and in predictive terms the question is unanswerable. But insofar as it lies in our hands to shape the future, we may properly ask how we may secure a place in it for our traditions, what form they might take, and whether