

OXFORDnotes

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articles

Search for unity means, but the single figure within all its many meanings. History teaches that history is not more interesting than generally for those who know the influence of a more philosophical than that of a more practical nature. It is not, however, as a question of epistemology and method, as exemplified in the correspondence with Mary Scamell, President of the Institute, in the early 1980s. It is not, however, as a question of epistemology and method, as exemplified in the correspondence with Mary Scamell, President of the Institute, in the early 1980s. It is not, however, as a question of epistemology and method, as exemplified in the correspondence with Mary Scamell, President of the Institute, in the early 1980s. The results are generally of high quality.

EIGHTH OXFORD INSTITUTE OF METHODIST THEOLOGICAL STUDIES *Closing Reflections* M. Douglas Meeks

Not many in the Institute, I surmise, know about my former career as a ballet dancer. As you have seen me walk gracefully across the quad, perhaps you have seen something of my glory days when I danced a *pas de deux* with Dame Margot Fonteyn. But, alas, I can see by the incredulous looks on your faces that I am not going to be able to fool you with my wishful thinking.

It might indeed have been wishful thinking when we convened in Oxford a fortnight ago with the question whether there is or could be a consensus on what Methodists and Wesleyans throughout the world should teach: 1) within the church's generation of the generations 2) and to the world. Could we find unity on the questions once posed by our predecessors in the faith: What to teach? How to teach? What to do? I think it safe to say that no one came with an overdose of sanguinity that there would be an overwhelmingly positive answer. But just because I have never been on a ballet stage does not mean I don't have a deep aspiration to dance. I believe that even those among us who came convinced that in principle no consensus could be found still aspire that we Methodists dance in step. It is certain that all of us will leave with a renewed sense of the difficulties of the dance.

Not being practiced in the English art of understatement, I would nevertheless risk the observation that in this Institute we have been somewhat contentious. There has been a healthy

hermeneutic of suspicion about "unity" and "consensus." We are suspicious about these words, for we know that they are political words. Masters, rulers, governors, politicians always want unity. In modern discourse about unity we have learned to ask almost reflexively, *Cui bono?* Unity for whose good? We may not have a positive consensus about what to teach, but we have a strong shared sense of real and potential domination. We have been keen to remind each other of the various dominations that our particular histories and our particular social loca-

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comments

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During the period between the last Oxford Institute (July 27-August 6, 1987) and the next, which will be held at Somerville College, Oxford, in the summer of 1992, OXFORDnotes will again be serving as an organ to enhance the work of Methodist scholarship. From now through 1990 we shall be especially interested in publishing short articles and notices dealing with the themes of the 1987 Institute. To that end we hope that the Working Groups will continue to request research and writing from their members which can be printed here. Beginning in 1990 we shall be looking for preparatory papers for the next Institute, whose theme will have been announced. Of course, as in the past, the Editor, Richard P. Heitzenrater, will welcome brief articles, reviews, and announcements of general interest to Methodist scholars.

In this issue appear the final reports of two Working Groups of the Eighth Institute and the "Closing Reflections" at the Institute.

M. Douglas Meeks
Co-Chairperson
Oxford Institute

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tions uncover. To say it positively, we are a people who do not want to be dominated and who are even ready to fight against domination as we see it.

We have spoken fairly often about being a Methodist "family." But the family members don't want a quick consensus and an easy unity. Who will define the consensus? We have heard several different answers to that question: Certainly not the older and larger churches of the family who are perceived to have lost some of the distinctive aspects of the Wesleyan tradition and to have become lifeless, nonevangelical, too little concerned about personal conversion and sanctification. Certainly not the accommodated members of the family who are not aware of their social location and of the structural conditions of the world societies that make and maintain the poverty of the poor. Certainly not the forgetful members of the family who no longer struggle to remember Wesley and Wesley's appropriation of the Tradition. And so our debate has moved: sometimes at a snail's pace, quite often with consternation, occasionally with anger, but, in it all, as a family discussion around the *only* table which in these times is likely to keep the family together at all. At times we were not explicitly aware of what was keeping us in conversation except the sense that if we stopped talking we would betray ourselves. The final report must be: no earth shaking consensus, no false sense of unity on the question of Methodist doctrine. Gone is any sense of overwhelming theological self-confidence which led a theologian of the last generation to lecture, it is reported, in the following way: "Jesus said, and rightly so." So there seems to be an ever so slight consensus: Methodist teaching should be freed from domination, beginning with the teachers.

And yet we know that something about our Methodist identity contributes to our eagerness for something more, "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We know that our peculiar Methodist memories proffer something crucial for us as we call upon the Spirit's gifts for "building up the body of Christ until all can attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature personhood" (Eph. 4:3).

Looking at each other across the Lord's Table, no one of us has been free from the burden of the questions, Will our children have faith? and Will our faith have children? For better or for worse each of us has been burdened with specific responsibilities for the generation of the generations in the household of God. How can we pass

on our faithing and hoping in a world that so convincingly contradicts our faith and hope? Do we have anything distinctively Methodist to say when our brothers and sisters in the world church ask us to testify in a world where truths are defined by the awesome power of the accumulation of wealth, of manipulable information and technology, and of weapons of unimaginable destructiveness? Will we as Methodists answer at all when the world asks for alternatives to its dominative ways to justice and peace?

Perhaps we are too nervous about our Methodist family. My sense is that we have done best in those moments when we have been less concerned about one branch of Methodism dominating another and more focused on the world, which, as our Lord warned, hates us, and yet which God loves with God's whole being. In a few unguarded moments we have thought out of God's passion for the world and have suddenly, faced with the seeming impossibilities of our mission to the world, surprised ourselves that perhaps we do need each other after all.

Would it be wrong to say that in our family what Wesley held together tenuously and at a modicum has fallen apart? We are most separated on the starting point or principal emphasis for teaching as Methodists. Risking oversimplification, I would say that the three primary starting points or emphases most represented in the Institute have been 1) tradition, 2) personal conversion, and 3) the experience of the poor. John Wesley held these together. No one would say perfectly, and yet we would all say that our fascination with Wesley has something to do with his mediation of all three. But our frustrations over our differences about how to put these three elements together are so great some of us have wanted to desist from even saying the name Wesley for awhile.

Albert Outler's keynote was a mixture of sober realism about Methodist dissensus, on the one hand, and hopeful ways of working at consensus, on the other. Professor Outler, per usual, did not mince his words: The Lombard syndrome of Euroamerican theology is at an end. The great epistemological and technological dreams of Western progress are, if still terribly powerful, showing their impotency, except for destruction, and yet are so disturbing our slumber that we cannot yet dream the coming age. The more realistic we are about the bankruptcy of our accommodation to the modern Western traditions, the more the "modest share of doctrinal treasure" we bear from Wesley becomes crucial. This is a

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working groups

REPORT ON WORKING GROUP IV *Methodist Economic and Social Teachings and the Challenge of Liberation Theology*

By J. Philip Wogaman, Co-Convenor

The terms of reference of Working Group IV required it to plunge into the heart of the most controversial theological and social issues confronting the contemporary church. The fact that the twenty-five members of this group were drawn from very diverse backgrounds and possessed sharply contrasting views contributed to the authenticity of its conversations. No effort was made to stifle the free expression of differences—indeed, the group was committed to disciplines of interaction assuring every participant ample opportunity to be heard. But frank discussion was also accompanied by mutual respect and a sense that all of us must learn from one another in the life of the church.

The group met fifteen times for a total of about 25 hours. At almost all of these sessions it considered a prepared paper and one or more formal responses (except for two group members who experienced linguistic problems, each member participated either through preparation of one of these papers or as a respondent). The papers included methodological analysis of liberation theology, consideration of the relevance of major themes drawn from the Wesleyan tradition to issues posed by liberation theology, exploration of economic issues, examination of political questions including questions of revolution and violence, and consideration of the role and responsibilities of the churches and of the World Methodist Council. While the group spent much time in discussing these topics, it could not conclude that it had explored them with sufficient thoroughness. Again and again it experienced the frustrations of incompleteness.

The group did not attempt to develop a formal report, but it did take time to list, on the one hand, key points of consensus or "substantial agreement" and, on the other hand, key points of difference or disagreement. No votes were taken; nor was there time to explore agreements and disagreements in sufficient depth to do justice to the views of participants (which often were ex-

pressed with great sophistication). Bearing such limitations in mind, the following listing of points of substantial agreement and disagreement may prove suggestive for further discussions of this kind while also stimulating the research of individual scholars.

Key Points of Substantial Agreement

Given the diversity of the group, the big surprise was that there was any agreement at all! Yet almost all members of the group were prepared to subscribe to the following points:

1. Wesley's understanding of the *ordo salutis*—justification and sanctification—has some relevance (to the questions this group has considered).

2. Wesley's usefulness is, however, limited (in considering such questions).

3. The problems in the world, which urgently require action, are (systematically) interrelated.

4. Theological method today is in flux; we represent differences and proceed differently but agree that the issue of method is central. For example, participants agree that "social location" affects theological reflection substantially, although there is disagreement as to the way this occurs or as to the extent of its influence upon our theological thinking.

5. The answer to poverty is not simply personal, e.g., a matter of personal conversion. Poverty is structural and must be addressed structurally.

6. The most important test of the adequacy of an economic system, from a Christian standpoint, is its effect upon the poor.

7. Any approach to the problem of violence must begin with the recognition that violence is more than physical violence.

8. The distribution of goods is not the only question in assessing economic systems; the democratic participation of the people is also crucial. Power that affects the people must be accountable to the people.

9. The forms of human oppression broadly referred to as "classism," "racism," and "sexism" are sufficiently distinct that none of these three can simply be reduced to the others.

10. It is important for people to address concrete issues in the political arena where possible. For example, U.S. Christians should seek to influence U.S. policy on the defense budget, withdrawal of U.S. support to the Nicaraguan "Contras," welfare policy, etc. What is possible in one political setting may not be in another.

Key Points of Difference

The fact that there were sharp differences of viewpoint with the group should occasion no surprise, and a thorough cataloging of the issues discussed throughout the Institute would no doubt make this a much longer list. Still, further discussion might reveal greater consensus on some questions with the progressive removal of simple misunderstanding of positions. In any event, these are the differences actually listed by the group:

1. The starting point of theology (e.g., what are the most promising theological entry points for considering the topics posed by the group's terms of reference, what are the ultimate sources of theological authority, who should do the theologizing, etc.?).

2. The intellectual framework of theological thinking (the group included, among others, articulate representatives of process theology, liberation theology—in Latin American, African, black, and feminist modes, and a more Barthian approach).

3. The question whether capitalism is reformable—and, if so, to what extent.

4. The question whether injustice today must be addressed through reform or through revolution (which distinction is *not*, however, identical with that of non-violence and violence, in the group's estimation—that is, there can be violent and non-violent actions for reform and violent and non-violent revolutions).

5. The definition of violence and the forms in which it is expressed.

6. The proper use of the Bible.

7. Various doctrinal issues—including sin, perfection, God, etc.—and their relevance to the issues at hand.

8. The use of power.

9. The proper Christian attitude toward the rich.

10. The definition of poverty.

11. The ways in which classism, racism, and sexism are interrelated.

12. The extent to which social location influences theological thought and the ways in which this influence occurs.

13. The extent to which a Marxist social analysis is legitimate and useful in understanding social, economic, and political problems and their interrelationships.

Further Reflections

Some of the most interesting discussion occur-

red when the group paused to consider particular situations—such as South Africa, Brazil, Appalachia, England, the situation of women, etc. Some of that discussion occurred in joint sessions with other working groups. That lent concreteness to the discussion while also helping the group understand the intellectual views of those whose Christian vocation is expressed in those settings. Members of the group would generally agree that the attempt by the Oxford Theological Institute to broaden its inclusiveness makes a serious intellectual contribution to the theological enterprise at that point. "Social location" is not *everything*, of course; if it were, there would be little point in engaging in theological discussion, for people could not understand, let alone accept, the views of those whose social situations were very different from their own. But, at the same time, serious theological work cannot proceed in an ahistorical vacuum. The working group did not arrive at consensus about how the universal and the historical are to be related in theological reflection, but clearly the endeavor to think theologically about concrete historical circumstances is an important starting point—and one often neglected in theological work.

Some within the group were almost prepared to dismiss Wesleyan theology out of hand as irretrievably individualistic, while others found a basis for recovering a robust Wesleyan social doctrine with profoundly revolutionary implications. Most of the group, upon reflection, were at least inclined to treat further exploration of the social implications of Wesleyan thought as important insofar as this is necessary to broaden the theological discussion of fundamental issues within the churches for whom the Wesleyan tradition is central.

Plainly there is need to continue the process of discussion initiated by the group at Oxford. It remains unclear how that should occur, although group members expressed a desire to correspond and possibly even to engage in some joint projects leading toward publication. Looking ahead toward the next Oxford Institute, could there be a serious exploration of world poverty and the common Christian responsibility to understand it theologically and address it practically? Might it not contribute to the Wesleyan theological enterprise for us to develop a creative design that would include sufficient exposure to carefully chosen concrete situations, opportunity to explore alternative models of factual analysis honestly and thoroughly, and opportunity for wrestling with theological implications? Perhaps such a design

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RECENT AND FORTHCOMING RESOURCES IN
WESLEY & METHODIST STUDIES

Compiled by Rex D. Matthews

The most recent volume to appear in the new critical edition of *The Works of John Wesley* (begun by Oxford University Press as "The Oxford Edition of the Works of John Wesley," 1975-1983; continued by Abingdon Press as "The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley," 1984-) is Volume 4, *Sermons IV, 115-151* (November, 1987; cloth, \$49.95). Volume 18 of the series, *Journal I (1735-39)*, edited by W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, is scheduled by Abingdon for publication in April, 1988 (cloth, \$49.95 tentative).

Abingdon Press is still in the process making arrangements to purchase from Oxford University Press the remaining inventory of the volumes in this series which were originally published by Oxford, as well as the reprint rights to these volumes: Volume 7, *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*, edited by Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver O. Beckerlegge with James Dale (Oxford, 1983); Volume 11, *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion and Certain Related Open Letters*, edited by Gerald R. Cragg (Oxford, 1975); Volume 25, *Letters I, 1721-1739*, edited by Frank Baker (Oxford, 1980); and Volume 26, *Letters II, 1740-1755*, edited by Frank Baker (Oxford, 1982). There are no remaining copies of Volume 7, and the possibility of a reprint is being considered. Only a limited number of copies of Volume 11 remain, but there is a significant number of copies of both Volume 25 and Volume 26. No date has yet been set for the availability of these volumes nor has their price been determined, but official announcement of their release by Abingdon can be anticipated in the near future.

Further, as was reported in the last issue of *OXFORDnotes*, Abingdon has made a firm commitment to the publication of the following additional volumes in the series: Volumes 5 & 6, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*; Volume 8, *Prayers Private & Public* (which will include *The Sunday Service*); Volume 9, *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design*; Volume 10, *The Methodist Societies: The Conference* (which will include all the annual *Minutes*

and *The Large Minutes*); and Volume 12, *Theological Treatises*. Although no date has yet been set for the appearance of any of these volumes, the commitment to their publication was reaffirmed at the Oxford Institute last summer by Robert K. Feaster and Ronald P. Patterson of Abingdon Press, to whom our sincere thanks are due for their personal commitment to and support of this project. We now have the prospect of the availability in the relatively near future of 15 of the 34 volumes which are projected for this series, and reason to hope that the entire series will eventually be completed.

The Francis Asbury Press, an imprint of Zondervan Publishing House, has announced a number of new publications. Donald Dayton's study of *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (1987; paper, \$19.95), traces the development of modern Pentecostalism from its roots in the Wesleyan and Methodist traditions and in the 19th-century American holiness movement. G. Roger Schoenhals has edited *Wesley's Notes on the Bible* (1987; cloth, \$27.95), a one-volume condensation of *Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament* and *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*. Forthcoming from Francis Asbury Press are Thomas C. Oden, *Doctrinal Standards in the Wesleyan Tradition* (February, 1988; cloth, \$15.95); John Lawson, *The Wesleyan Hymns as a Guide to Scriptural Teaching* (March, 1988; cloth, \$14.95); and a reprint of John Deschner's *Wesley's Christology* (March, 1988; paper, \$11.95).

Good News has published James Heidinger (ed.), *Basic United Methodist Beliefs: An Evangelical View* (1986; paper, \$4.95), a collection of essays which sets out the views of the Good News organization about the Wesleyan roots of United Methodism, along with convictions about where the church should be heading. Also from Good News is Jerry L. Walls, *The Problem of Pluralism: Recovering United Methodist Identity* (1986; paper, \$9.95), which offers a critical assessment of pluralism as "a theological principle which has guided the denomination since 1972" and argues that the principle of pluralism has generated more problems than it has solved. Walls' work has more recently been reprinted by Bristol Books, a new imprint originating at Asbury Theological Seminary.

Three new publications from Abingdon Press join the ongoing discussion about the present condition and future direction of Methodism. *A Bishop Speaks His Mind: A Candid View of United Methodism* (1987; paper, \$9.95) is precisely what it claims to be: a candid assessment by Bishop

Earl G. Hunt of the major problems which he sees as besetting the contemporary church, along with his agenda for a revitalized Methodism. In *Facts and Possibilities: An Agenda for The United Methodist Church* (1987; hardcover, \$10.95), Douglas W. Johnson and Alan K. Waltz attempt to trace the roots of Methodism's decline and offer suggestions for its renewal. George G. Hunter, III, sets out six "megastrategies" for church growth and relates them to the Wesleyan heritage in *To Spread the Power: Church Growth in the Wesleyan Spirit* (1987; paper, \$9.95).

Oxford University Press has published *The Journal of John Wesley: A Selection*, edited by Elizabeth Jay of Westminster College, Oxford (1987; paper, \$9.95). The University Press of America has issued a reprint of V.H.H. Green's biography *John Wesley* (1987; paper, \$9.95). Peter Lang Publishing has released David I. Naglee's discussion *From Font to Faith: John Wesley on Infant Baptism and the Nurture of Children* (1987; hardcover, \$35.00), which provides a sensitive and sensible discussion of this much controverted complex of issues in Wesley's theology. And Scarecrow Press has published *John and Charles Wesley: A Bibliography (ATLA Bibliography Series, 22)*, by Betty M. Jarboe (1987; hard cover, \$39.50).



KINGSWOOD BOOKS
An Imprint of Abingdon Press

Abingdon Press is pleased to announce the expansion of the Kingswood Books publishing program. Begun on a trial basis in 1984, Kingswood Books is now being established as a specialized imprint within the Abingdon Press academic publishing program and will be devoted exclusively to the publication of scholarly works in all areas of Wesleyan and Methodist studies: history, theology, ethics, social issues, biography, etc.

The Kingswood Books imprint honors John Wesley's lifelong commitment to "reason, knowledge, and wisdom in general," which found concrete expression in his establishment of the Kingwood School, near Bristol, England, in 1741. The goal of the Kingswood School was, in Wesley's words, "to train up children in every branch of useful learning." That the experiment was not entirely successful did not diminish Wesley's conviction about the importance of uniting "the pair so long

divided—knowledge and vital piety." That same conviction informs the Kingswood Books publishing program.

Rex D. Matthews, Academic Books Editor of Abingdon Press, will serve as the Director. An Editorial Advisory Board has been appointed to assist in determining the general policy for the Kingswood Books imprint and in selecting individual projects for publication. In addition, an international panel of Editorial Consultants is being named to insure a comprehensive and inclusive scope for the program.

The costs of commercial book publication have soared in recent years, with a corresponding increase in retail book prices. Academic books, which necessarily appeal to a much smaller market than do "bestsellers," have been particularly vulnerable to such price increases. And specialized academic studies, such as those envisioned for the Kingswood Books imprint, have been especially affected.

To cut publication costs, Kingswood Books will use recent developments in the computer technology of "desktop publishing," including electronic manuscript processing and laser printing of camera-ready final copy. This will enable us to publish scholarly works in Wesleyan and Methodist studies in print runs of 1,000 to 2,000 copies with fully acceptable print quality, to reprint those works as sales demand, and to hold retail prices to reasonable levels.

To date, two volumes have been published under the Kingswood Books imprint:

Rethinking Methodist History, Russell E. Richey and Kenneth E. Rowe, eds. (1985; paper, \$17.95). This volume contains twenty-three papers which were presented at the Bicentennial Historical Consultation held at Drew University in April, 1983.

Wesleyan Theology Today, Theodore Runyon, ed. (1985; paper, \$19.95). This volume contains forty-six papers which were presented at the Bicentennial Theological Consultation held at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, in August, 1983.

Beginning in 1988, approximately four additional titles per year are scheduled to be published under the Kingswood Books imprint. Included are:

The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley, Vol. 1, S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., and Oliver A. Beck-erlegge, eds. (March, 1988; 300 pages, cloth, \$21.95).

John Wesley's "Experimental Divinity": Studies in Methodist Doctrinal Standards, by Robert E. Cushman (April, 1988; paper; price not set).

Memory and Mirror: Reflections on Early Methodism, by Richard P. Heitzenrater (April, 1988; paper; price not set).

With the establishment of the Kingswood Books imprint, Abingdon Press reaffirms its commitment to the publication of academic books of the highest quality. The Kingswood Books publishing program will provide Abingdon Press with an additional way in which to fulfill its mandate "to publish for the mind of the church."

Requests for additional information about the Kingswood Books publishing program, questions about computer hardware and software compatibility, and proposals for publication under the Kingswood Books imprint should be directed to: Dr. Rex D. Matthews, Director of Kingswood Books, Abingdon Press, 2495 Lawrenceville Highway, Decatur, GA 30033.

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could be constructed for the next Institute as a whole, with different working groups challenged to contribute biblically, historically, etc.

In any design for the next Oxford Institute, ample provision should be made for working groups. Conceivably the planning committee may wish to "fine tune" the organization at this point. But Working Group 4 would not have wanted to have its overall time cut back very much—and most of the group found the working group experience, as a whole, a very positive one.

It was a great privilege to serve as co-convenor. And I take this opportunity to thank the participants again for the seriousness and openness with which they undertook the task.

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point one could have hoped to find more consensus on than we evidently did. If Methodism is to survive the turn of the century, we shall.

Professor Outler did a masterful job of showing how our three questions, What to teach?, How to teach? and What to do? are interwoven with each other in Wesley's way of doing theology. It is certainly not an Outlerian way of putting it, but he almost said that in Wesley God talk and God walk are inextricably connected. For Wesley, God talk is not abstract speculation on God's essence but rather living and walking in the Spirit. Theology as life in the Holy Spirit is an ordering of one's way of being in the world out of the energies of God's grace; it is "living toward the end of being fully sacralized." A perdurable *sensus fidelium* is created by God's preventively present grace.

Professor Outler's criticism of theology as a speculative compend has been repeated many times in different ways the last ten days. We've almost reached a consensus: We're all wary of universals, but, again, for different reasons. Professor Walsh reminded us of Wesley's saying, "I look upon all the world as my parish." A member of one of the interdisciplinary groups related that as a youth growing up in a colonial context he learned of Wesley's world parish while simultaneously learning by heart, "Rule, Britannia, Rule." Bishop Tutu once remarked, "When the white missionaries came to Southern Africa, we had the land and they had the Bible. They said, 'Let us pray.' When we opened our eyes, they had the land and we had the Bible." Whose universal are we talking about?

The Bible doesn't speak about very many universals. When it speaks in all-inclusive terms, it usually speaks in negations. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." That is a universal. But it is not a universal with which you can dominate anyone else. The Bible also claims universally that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has died for the whole world. That, too, is a universal, but it is a universal based on God's suffering of death. It is not a universal with which you can dominate anyone else.

Is all the world our parish? Well, it depends on what we mean by "parish." The word comes from *para-oikos* and originally means the one who lives beyond the household. *Paraoikoi* are strangers, the homeless. According to 1 Peter the *paraoikoi* are those who have been systematically excluded from the household: the household of Israel or the household of Caesar. The ancient word *economy* (*oikos + nomos*) means the law or management of

the household. Until the eighteenth century, economy had fundamentally to do with livelihood, with access to the household. To use economic language in connection with God and salvation has become strange to our ears because since Adam Smith, and especially since the most important American "theologian," Andrew Carnegie, it has been construed a logical mistake to speak God and economy together. But the biblical traditions are full of economy and of economic metaphors referring to God. The early church spoke of God's history of righteousness with the creation of God's "economy" and the Triune Community's dealings with the world as the "economic" Trinity. The history of redemption is God's attempt to make a home for all of creation and for all of God's people. The "olk-paronyms" (economy, ecology and ecumene) are about household or home; they are about 1) whether people will find access to livelihood, 2) whether nature will find a home in which it can survive, 3) whether the peoples of the world will find the world mutually habitable in peace.

How should we define household and home? If we follow the biblical poetic images, 1) home is where everyone always knows your name, 2) home is where you can always expect to be confronted, forgiven, put under obligation, 3) home is where there is always a place for you at the table, and 4) home is where you can always count on what is on the table being shared. According to the biblical narratives, God has gone and will go to all lengths in order to create home for God's creatures. According to Philippians 2, this includes God's becoming the "Economist," a household slave (*doulos*, the ancient meaning of "economist"), in order to create an open household. The parish is present where God the Economist is present.

Is the world our parish? The western traditions of imperialism and domination have been glad to view the whole world as their parish. Caesar's household divided the whole world up into parishes, but parish no longer meant the strangers on the outside but those who were within the closed residential, economic, and political circles of a society. One implied question of this Institute has been whether John Wesley broke the hegemony of the Western "parish." John Walsh argued eloquently that Wesley's life in the spirit made him at home with the poor, even to the point of contracting skin diseases from their beds and stomach disorders from their tables, and this not out of a derived social strategy but because God was at work among the poor building the household in which God will graciously give us all

home. "Unless God builds the house our labor is in vain."

For some years now, Albert Outler has been pointing to Wesley's recovery of the Eastern early theologians. Some have remained reluctant for fear of journeying to the arcane. But to return with Wesley to the early theologians is to find a revolutionary view of economy which will quickly take us back to our origins in the household of Israel. It will remind us that our ancient memory of Yahweh begins, "Once we were slaves." There is nothing before that; anything that begins before this memory is nonhistorical, speculative, and ripe for ideological use. Once we were slaves in the household, the economy, of Pharaoh, and Yahweh graciously made a new household of freedom for us. Retrieving the theology of the early theologians thus means that we also retrieve critically their life in the economy of God and ask what implications that would have for our life in the economy of God. Clement, Chrysostom, Basil, Ambrose, and even Augustine will remind us again and again of the Torah, the new economy, the new household rules, the new economic lifestyle which God has graciously given us and which our Wesleyan understanding of justification will not allow us to set aside, however much the world we live in calls it folly. For starters we can refer to: charge no interest to the poor, return a cloak taken in surety before the cold of the night sets in, leave a portion of your harvest and accumulated wealth so that no one will be shut out of the household and this not as a matter of voluntary charity but in recognition that God has given the poor a claim on what is necessary for livelihood and life abundant and if you do not give what is superfluous to our livelihood, you are, *coram Deo*, a thief, resist making private what should not be made private, namely, that accumulation of wealth that gives individuals and organizations power to control the lives and future of others. In the free market societies of the West and the state market societies of the East, these household rules are viewed as quaint and ludicrous, not to speak of dangerous. Because Wesley's life in the Spirit is full of these perspectives on God's economy, we devotees of modern economic instruments consider him silly. Unless, of course, we have some questions about the modern promises of salvation through economy.

Many third and fourth world, black, and feminist theologians in this Institute have risked being strident and recalcitrant because they are convinced that Methodist theology cannot start with tradition or personal internal experience but

with the experience of those who have been structurally and systematically shut out of the household, denied access to what it takes to live and work, to have a name and story.

The developing debate of this Institute has shown that no one wants to jettison Wesley. I like the way Bishop Cannon said it on Wednesday evening, "We've got Wesley for better or worse, and we're going to keep him." But many here present want to retrieve Wesley *together* with a disciplined socio-economic analysis. Why are the poor in poverty? Why does an eight-year-old girl get shot dead by a stray bullet of the security forces in South Africa? Why must peasants in Brazil plant soybeans in their fields rather than black beans on which they have subsisted for decades and so make themselves increasingly dependent on Northern markets? Why did the United Nations Food Council meeting in Beijing last month report that despite a world awash in cheap surplus food, the number of hungry people in the world grew by 15 million from 1970 to 1980, to some 475 million, a rate of increase of 1.5 million per year? Why are Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans and Asian American in the rich household of the U.S. still systematically excluded from what it takes to live and work? What will happen to the world monetary system when it finally becomes evident that the enormous debt of the third world cannot be repaid without an horrendous repression of third-world peoples which not even the Trilateralists and International Monetary Fund have been able to dream up? Are the nuclear arsenals of the U.S. and the Soviet Union even more dangerous now that the U.S. has become the largest debtor nation in the world and the Soviet Union is becoming increasingly competitive for markets? These are questions that some in the Institute are convinced that we have to work at precisely as we work at pneumatology, sanctification, and evangelization.

Three of our plenary lecturers, Mercy Oduyoye, Jose Miquez, and Adrian Hastings, dealt with the problem of the church's teaching within a so-called "pluralist" society. Each made profound criticisms of the Enlightenment pretensions of pluralism, another universalizing tendency. Mercy Oduyoye exposed the authoritarian patriarchal and paternalistic teaching in African church and society. She looks for a liberative teaching through communal participation and partnership and finds a model in the Eucharist. A teaching which does not participate in changing the life conditions of the oppressed contributes to their oppression. "For the poor and exploited the

future does not include their present conditions; therefore no teaching will be authoritative which requires them to cooperate with such a present." Jose Miguez questioned the liberal pluralism which prevents the church from engaging in a kind of teaching which takes sides in the conflicts of the public household when it is clear that the truth of the gospel is at stake. Adrian Hastings argued that our uncritical assumption of pluralism precludes our expressing and living the true scandal of Christian particularism in the cross. The manufacturing of a universal religion is simply another form of Western imperialism. To be sure, we need to understand the plural nature of our world and our churches, but perhaps it is time that we stop expecting the buzz word "pluralism" to solve any theological problem for us.

If I am right in detecting an ever so slight consensus about Methodist teaching in our agreement as Methodists to be suspicious about universals, then it could be that we all have to inch toward the necessity of socio-economic analysis as an aspect of our life in the Spirit. There are two pretensions to universality that are emerging from the first world and spreading with impressive momentum to all parts of the world. The first is the universalist pretension that the whole world can be organized by the nature and logic of the market. We can probably all agree that there are many good things about the market. No developed country is without markets of some kind. The problem occurs when the peculiar logic of exchanging commodities is expanded to determine the distribution of social good in all spheres of distribution.

If we stick with John Wesley we shall be reminded that Israel and the Church have always known, when they can remember, that there are some things that cannot be distributed according to the logic of the market. We have always known that sex cannot be put into exchange relationships. "Bought sex is not the same" (Fred Hirsch). We have always known, when we could remember our starting point in slavery and God's gracious redemption from slavery, that you can't put the relation of parents and children or learning or healing into exchange relationship, else they be distorted. And we have always known that you cannot put even food, housing, and work exhaustively into exchange relationships without the result being that some are left out of the household, out of access to what it takes to live and work. Wesley did not engage in the kind of social analysis we have to do, but he did know and

we need to learn from him that the logic of distributing the social goods that most count for life, belonging to a community, recognition, righteousness, and grace, comes nowhere but from the love of God.

The other pretension to universality is the Neo-Hobbesian claim that in order to protect property rights we shall have to give up personal, civil, and human rights. In my country, the Iran-Contra hearings have uncovered various people who seem to be willing to sacrifice democracy for the sake of economic security. This universal claim is spreading frightfully fast all over the world and is producing a growing acceptance of the national security state.

If we are inching toward a still distant consensus on the cruciality of socio-economic analysis for our life in the Spirit, we should at the same time be inching toward a consensus that socio-economic analysis cannot bring God's redemption (any more so than theology). It is true that only life at table with the poor is likely to cause us to break our present patterns of talking about and to God and living in God's presence. But which one of us here is ready and willing and able to live at table with the poor? None of us, without the conversion in which God by forgiving us frees us from our sin; the conversion in which God frees us from our fear of death and the self-possessiveness of life because of our fear of death. Thus have many of us in this Institute emphasized the work of the Spirit who frees us from our compulsions of our sin and guilt and our neurotic compulsions by which we try to protect ourselves from death.

Life in the Spirit with the poor might give us some solidarity with the Apostolic faith, which Outler called "an illicit faith of oppressed peoples in the Roman Empire." This in turn could give us a fresh vantage point for struggling with the Apostolic faith process. Geoffrey Wainwright made some inventive suggestions about what Methodists can both contribute and gain in this process. Life in the Spirit with the poor might at last help us to see that the Trinity is not meant to be idle speculation. Rather, the Trinity is the hermeneutic of the biblical narrative and of our reading of our present context. The Trinity should be the Christian way of naming God for the sake of Jesus Christ and for criticizing domination in the present.

The problems of the Trinity are as much alive today as at the time of Nicea, though with different forms. The Methodist family will need extraordinary patience to work through the ques-

tions of naming God in a trinitarian way, for if we let the teaching of and through the Trinity go, we shall surely succumb to one destructive definition of divine power after another. [Wesley had no idea that lay people should be protected from the Trinity; trinitarian teaching is to be found throughout the early Methodist hymnody.]

The masters and rulers have always been glad to be theists and deists if God's power can be defined so as to correspond to and justify their power. The universal pretensions to power in both West and East make use of "uncrucified," non-trinitarian, noncommunal concepts of God. God is not a radical individual who owns himself and can thus be the ground of Western possessive individualism. Neither is God an undifferentiated society that can be the ground of Eastern personless collectivity. God is a community of persons with distinct tasks but united by self-giving love. The Cappadocian doctrine of the mutual co-inherence of the divine community (*perichoresis*) is still the best thing we have going for a criticism of the racial, sexual, political, and economic oppressions of our time.

So, it seems to me, the path that lies ahead of us is the Wesleyan mediation, through the grace of the living Host who yearns for a new household, of the experience of the poor, the Spirit's conversion of our lives, and the Tradition. In what kind of household can this take place?

Let me conclude by shifting to a more sermonic mode. Things are changing in the Methodist household. That is an unmistakable learning of this Institute. In the midst of the change we should be aware that God is a strange housebuilder of a strange house. It is a resurrection household that God is struggling to build, a household in which we shall all be able to dance, without our inhibitions and our stiff joints. But God will call the tune. In the resurrection household all the household rules get changed.

So it is when the prodigal son returns from the heroin nightmare of his extreme liberal bout with unaccountable freedom, expecting to find a new lease in the conservative legalism of the old household rules. Redemption happens on the road, beyond all best thoughts of liberalism and conservatism, when the father breaks every rule of proper household management. The father rushes to embrace the foul-smelling, dirt-caked child, whereas all power-shrewd people know that he should have stayed in his wing-back chair surrounded by all the symbols of his paternal authority. He forgives the son even before the confession is completed, whereas after considerable

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(Meeks, continued from p. 11)

parental experience I have discovered that one should let children spill all of the beans for future evidence. The father orders clothes, not work clothes or casual wear, but the three-piece suit, but that should have been saved for the highest event of the year. The father calls for a ring, not his fraternity ring, but his father's own ring, but that should have been saved for the older son. The father asks for meat, not the rump roast, but filet mignon, but that should have been saved for the holiest meal of the year. The father announces a party, not your regular Saturday night soiree, but the biggest blow-out yet, but that should have been saved for the celebration of the older son's patrimony. Why all this? "For this my son was dead, and he is alive."

The story does not end happily because the older son does not go into the resurrection celebration. And those of us who are older daughters and sons know why: it is simply not fair that the household rules be changed. I can see the younger daughters and sons shedding a tear for us. But who of us, after all, is not an older daughter and son?

We Methodists stand between the old household in which each of us knows what we will inherit and are so intent upon it that we do not even question the old household rules and the new household which God is building. The invitation to dance is being given freely in the new household. The Medieval pictures of the risen Lord dancing, with his cloak extended to include all in the dance, catch the spirit of this resurrection household. Would that we let the Holy Spirit catch us up into this dance. Would that we devote our work to this new household, with its strange, frightening but utterly joyful dance. In a world which seeks everything but home the only unity and consensus worth searching for is that found in the crucified One who nevertheless dances.

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