



# OXFORDnotes

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## working groups

### REPORT ON WORKING GROUP V Methodist Evangelism and Doctrine

By David Lowes Watson, Co-Convener

#### I. From Keble to Somerville

The agenda for the Evangelism Working Group was in large measure a continuation of the work begun at the Seventh Oxford Institute in 1982. The objectives of the group on that occasion were twofold: (1) To define the important issues facing world evangelism; (2) To determine whether there might be a distinctively Methodist contribution to be made to world evangelism.

In 1982, even more than in 1987, evangelism was a highly polemical field; so much so, that major ecumenical and denominational agencies of the world church were reluctant to confront the issues directly. This is best illustrated by the fact that as recently as 1980 there had been two major world conferences on evangelism, held within a month of each other and in the same sector of the planet. In the May of that year, the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches had met at Melbourne, Australia; and in June, the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization had sponsored a Consultation at Pattaya in Thailand. While there was appropriate mutual representation at the two gatherings, it was an inescapable fact that the conciliar and evangelical constituencies of the world church had chosen to meet separately to dis-

uss their respective evangelistic agendas.

The Seventh Oxford Institute was thus a timely opportunity to bring together, in a common denominational context, some of these divergent perspectives; and to a remarkable degree, this was accomplished at Keble College.<sup>1</sup> It was impossible, however, to avoid the polemics of the field. Indeed, it would have been dishonest to do so. Accordingly, there was vigorous disagreement over priorities, and even over rudimentary definitions, as the group experienced first-hand the depth of feeling which makes it so difficult to consider evangelism with objective theological criteria.

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## comments

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This issue of *OXFORDnotes* is composed mostly of the report from Working Group V, "Methodist Evangelism and Doctrine." The next issue will contain the last of the reports from working groups. We also have included in this issue our usual feature from Rex Matthews on recent and forthcoming resources in Wesley and Methodist studies. And you will also find herein the continuation of abstracts of papers from last year's meeting of the Wesleyan Studies group at the annual session of the American Academy of Religion.

We are always hopeful that members of the Institute will want to share with us some of the recent theological work that is going on in their part of the world. We would be happy to consider publishing abstracts of papers that have been presented in various places.

Ed.

(Watson, cont. from page 1)

The polemics proved to be highly constructive, however, and the work of the group at the Eighth Institute demonstrated not only the extent to which evangelism had developed in the intervening five years as a viable area of theological discourse, but also the degree to which Wesleyan theology is a rich taproot for further such development. Moreover, while the major issues were not resolved by any means, there was a clear consensus at Somerville College that there should be open, collegial discussion, and that theological reflection on evangelism, no less than other areas of ministry and mission, requires a climate of mutual trust. There are few other contexts, if any, where this could have taken place in such depth, and it was generally felt that the work of the group was an important contribution to the theology and practice of world evangelism, to say nothing of world Methodism.

The membership of the group had much to do with this. There was a good balance of evangelists and theologians, and a substantial representation from the Third World. Together, they engendered a high level of presentation and discussion. In addition, there were three very profitable sessions with other working groups, at which evangelism papers received detailed and positive critique.

The contribution by William Abraham was the subject of a discussion with Group I (Biblical Criticism); the chapter from Robert E. Cushman's forthcoming book was the focus of a session with Group II (Wesley Studies); and a draft of the Mission Statement being prepared for General Conference in 1988 was reviewed and discussed with Group VI (Theology and Doctrine). In each instance, as in the working sessions as a whole, the necessity of a close relationship between evangelism and theological studies was strikingly self-evident.

This had been an important compass heading from the 1982 Institute. In 1987, the course was firmly set.

## II. Areas of Discussion

The group had four main areas of discussion. Under the heading of Doctrine, we focused on the

essential teachings of the Christian message, and how we are to define the content of the evangel in faithfulness to the Christian tradition. In the area of Theology, we asked to what extent the theological method of scripture, tradition, reason and experience provides the evangelist with appropriate form and power to be a messenger of the good news. In the area of History and Context, where we looked especially to our Third World participants for leadership, we considered how to communicate our message to the world with contextual integrity, and thus keep the gospel truly incarnational. Under Strategy, we asked how we can correlate sociological and anthropological criteria with those of doctrine and theology so that the implementation of our evangelism might be faithful to the content of the gospel.

And with respect to all of these areas, we asked what is the particular contribution of Methodist teaching and practice.

The following reports are not summaries of the papers presented to the group, but selected points of interest which they raised for our discussion.

### "Consensus and Reception," G.R. Evans

Reminding us that Wesley wrestled with the question of doctrinal authority throughout his ministry, Gillian Evans gave us the context of this debate, as old as Protestantism itself. If the magisterium of the church is not inherently authoritative, then by what authority is true doctrine to be measured?

During the Reformation, it was Melancthon who gave the fullest answer to this question, combining the ultimate test of Scripture with the three-fold Vincentian criteria of time, place and unanimity. But the nub of Reformation teaching on authority lay in the notion of reception by the company of the faithful. Melancthon talked of the church as people collectively embracing the gospel; and the Thirty-Nine Articles urged that the Creeds should be thoroughly received and believed—a "warm hug of faith."

In recent ecumenical discussions, the authority of doctrine has once again come to center on its reception by the living community of the church—an authority of involvement rather than imposition. The

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## books


**RECENT AND FORTHCOMING RESOURCES  
IN WESLEY & METHODIST STUDIES**

*Compiled by Rex D. Matthews*

The most recent volume to appear from Abingdon Press in the new critical edition of *The Works of John Wesley* is Volume 18: *Journal and Diaries I (1735-1738)*, edited by W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Abingdon, 1988; cloth, \$49.95). Volume 9, *The Methodist Societies, I: History, Nature, and Design*, edited by Rupert E. Davies, is scheduled for publication in April, 1989 (cloth, \$49.95). As reported in our last column, Abingdon anticipates the publication of one new volume in this series each year for the next several years.

Abingdon has now acquired all the existing stock of the volumes originally published in this series by Oxford University Press. No copies remain of Volume 7: *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*, edited by Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver A. Beckerlegge with James Dale. The following volumes are now available from Abingdon: Volume 11, *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion and Certain Related Open Letters*, edited by Gerald R. Cragg (cloth, \$49.95); Volume 25: *Letters I, 1721-1739*, edited by Frank Baker (cloth, \$49.95); and Volume 26: *Letters II, 1740-1755*, edited by Frank Baker (cloth, \$49.95).

The new Kingswood Books imprint of Abingdon Press has just published its first volume, *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley*, Volume 1, edited by S T Kimbrough, Jr., and Oliver A. Beckerlegge (paper, \$15.95). Forthcoming under the Kingswood Books imprint are the following: Robert E. Cushman, *John Wesley's Experimental Divinity: Studies in Methodist Doctrinal Standards* (November, 1988; paper, \$14.95); W. Stephen Gunter, *The Limits of 'Love Divine': John Wesley's Response to Antinomianism and Enthusiasm* (January, 1989, paper, \$15.95); and Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Mirror and*

*Memory: Reflections on Early Methodism* (March, 1989; paper, \$12.95). The major papers and addresses from the 1987 Oxford Institute, now being edited by M. Douglas Meeks, will be published in the Kingswood Books series in the summer of 1989.

Abingdon has also released *The Yoke of Obedience: The Meaning of Ordination in United Methodism* by Dennis Campbell (paper, \$6.95). T. E. Dowley, *Through Wesley's England* (paper, \$6.95), is a delightful little pictorial guide for Methodist pilgrims.

Epworth Press has published *John Wesley: Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by John Stacey with an Introduction by Frank Baker (paper, \$17.95). Also new from Epworth is *Milton for the Methodists: Emphasized Extracts from "Paradise Lost", selected, edited and annotated by John Wesley with an Introduction by Frank Baker* (paper, \$10.50). Two significant reprints from Epworth are Bernard L. Manning, *The Hymns of Watts and Wesley* (paper, \$9.95), and Frank Baker, *Charles Wesley's Verse* (paper, \$8.95). A revised and updated edition of Rupert E. Davies, *What Methodists Believe*, is now available from Epworth (paper, \$6.95). All these Epworth Press titles may be ordered in the U.S. through Fortress Press.

The most recent publications of the Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan Publishing House include Robert L. Wilson and Steve Harper, *Faith and Form: A Unity of Theology and Polity in The United Methodist Tradition* (paper, \$10.95), and James I. Warren, Jr., *O for a Thousand Tongues: The History, Nature, and Influence of Music in the Methodist Tradition* (cloth, \$17.95). Mentioned as forthcoming in our previous column and now available from Francis Asbury Press are Thomas C. Oden, *Doctrinal Standards in the Wesleyan Tradition* (cloth, \$15.95), and John Lawson, *The Wesley Hymns As A Guide to Scriptural Teaching* (cloth, \$14.95).

Discipleship Resources has published Paul W. Chilcote, *Wesley Speaks on Christian Vocation* (paper, \$6.95); Mack B. Stokes, *Scriptural Holiness for United Methodist Christians* (paper, \$3.95); and a Spanish translation of David Watson's *Accountable Discipleship* under the title *Discipulos Responsables*:

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(Matthews, cont. from page 5)

*Desarrollar Grupos de Discipulado Cristiano en la Iglesia Local* (paper, \$5.75).

Leonard Hulley reports the publication of two of his books in South Africa. *Wesley: A Plain Man for Plain People* (paper, \$4.00 U.S.) is available from: Local Preacher's Department, The Methodist Church of South Africa, P.O. Box 47, Westville 3630, South Africa. *To Be and To Do: Exploring Wesley's Thought on Ethical Behavior* (cloth, \$11.25 U.S. + \$1.75 surface mail) is available from: The University of South Africa, Pretoria 0001, South Africa.

Hendrickson Publishers has just released a revised edition of Donald Dayton's *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage* (paper, \$9.95). New from Christliches Verlagshaus GmbH in Stuttgart, West Germany, is Thomas Lessmann, *Rolle und Bedeutung des Heiligen Geistes in der Theologie John Wesleys* (paper, price not known).

Finally, a request directed to all members of the Oxford Institute, but in particular to those outside the U.S. — please send word of significant publications which should be included in this column to: Rex D. Matthews, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, GA 30322 U.S.A.

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(Watson, cont. from page 2)

implications for evangelism are clear. When the people of God faithfully receive the gospel in active koinonia, it becomes a word of power for the world.

### **"Orthodoxy, Paradox, and Experimental Divinity," Robert E. Cushman**

The same point was made in this chapter from the forthcoming Kingswood volume by Robert E. Cushman, *John Wesley's Experimental Divinity*. It is a mistake to infer from sermons such as "Catholic Spirit" that Wesley was indifferent to right doctrine; but nor did he press for orthodoxy as mere assent. Like Gillian Evans, Cushman cited Melancthon's concern for reception of the tradition, a "blessed belief" that goes beyond assent, and reminded us of the distinction which the sixteenth century Reformation made between "belief" and "faith" in precisely this regard.

With the sure-footedness of one who knows the way, Cushman took us through some of Wesley's most important writings, and in particular the two pivotal doctrines of "justification by faith and, consequentially, holiness of life, or sanctification — and in that order only." To the extent that the gospel invites persons to a "thorough change and renovation of mind and heart, and the leading of a new and holy life," these doctrines must be the taproot of our evangelism — and justification its cutting edge.

### **"Justification by Faith and Wesley's Evangelistic Message," David Lowes Watson**

This was the premise of the paper by David Lowes Watson, which likewise had a Wesleyan focus. The issue he raised was how Wesley had viewed the doctrine evangelistically, and what this had to say for our evangelism today. Drawing on the pristine documents of the English Reformation, Watson showed how Wesley was concerned at an early date in his evangelical ministry not to confuse the experience of justification with its doctrinal content. While the condition of justification is faith and faith alone, the substance of the doctrine is the atoning merits of Jesus Christ.

The implications for evangelism, Watson suggested, are profound. If we proclaim faith in Christ as our message of good news, we misunderstand the gospel and risk the pitfall of the Reformation, namely the anthropocentrism always latent in a doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith. We must take care not to proclaim our response to the gospel in place of the gospel. Our righteousness is Christ, and Christ alone.

### **"Law and Grace: A Wesleyan Approach to Evangelism," Robert G. Tuttle, Jr.**

Turning to theological reflection, Robert Tuttle gave us an insightful paper on the tenets of Wesley's *ordo salutis* from an evangelistic perspective. Defining original sin as a "propensity to disobedience," he outlined the ways in which God's grace works in the life of a sinner — prevenient, justifying and sanctifying. In Wesley's evangelism, these were kept in an

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# organizations



AAR Abstracts (cont. from *OXFORDnotes*, II.2)

**"The Myth of Aldersgate: The Subversion of Wesleyan Theology," Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., Bakersfield, CA.**

The recitation of the Aldersgate legend serves as a paradigm for a particular view of the Christian life. But this paradigm is a distortion of Methodism's origins and makes possible the elimination of all that was characteristic of Wesleyan Methodism. We must attend first to the myth as a distortion of history. Wesley himself makes clear that Aldersgate does not meet the definition of conversion which he had appropriated from Böhler in 1738. In subsequent editions of this first extract of the *Journal* Wesley disputes his own account of his state prior to Aldersgate. The result is that the *Journal* which is the only possible basis of the legend itself undermines the legend. In the course of the next fifty years Wesley had several opportunities to provide histories of the Methodist movement. Not only is Aldersgate never mentioned in these texts (or any others written by Wesley) but Wesley emphasizes a different origin and paradigm—what has since come to be known as the Holy Club.

This difference in origin and paradigm is also a fundamental difference in the construal of the Christian life. For "Aldersgatism" Christianity is primarily individual; for Wesley it is necessarily social. For "Aldersgatism," religious experience consists of highly charged moments; for Wesley it is life history. For "Aldersgatism," conversion signifies assurance of salvation after death; for Wesley it is the beginning of present salvation. In short, the Aldersgate myth functions to systematically dismantle Wesleyan theology and to erect in its place a contrary view of the Christian life.

**"Wesley, Women and the Word," Thor Hall, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga.**

One of the most promising contemporary perspectives for interpreting John Wesley's type of

spirituality was proposed in 1974 by Thorvald Källstad of Sweden (*John Wesley and the Bible: A Psychological Study*). Utilizing Hjalmar Sundén's "role theory" and Leon Festinger's "cognitive dissonance theory" at times supplemented with George Kelley's "personal constructs theory," Richard Lazarus' theory of personality conflicts and coping processes, and Kurt Levin's "field theory of intellectual locomotion," Källstad has succeeded in making sense of the many dissonant notes in Wesley's spiritual development from 1725 to 1739.

Fundamental at every critical point in this development, Källstad shows, was Wesley's adoption on certain biblical models of faith and action. Important also, and at the same critical points, Källstad demonstrates, was Wesley's relationship to certain women (Sarah Kirkham and Mary Pendarves early, Sophy Hopkey in Georgia, and Esther Hopson upon his return to England).

In the paper we shall reexamine Källstad's analysis of Wesley's inner conflicts and seek especially to expand Wesley's relationship to women—always, throughout his life problematic. The reason lies partly in Wesley's concept of Christian spirituality (a mixture of Anglican moralism and Moravian pietism), partly in his traditionalist understanding of human sexuality, and partly in his self-image as radical disciple and evangelical prophet.

Against the background of this analysis we shall carry the story through Wesley's unhappy love affair with Grace Murray and his tragically mistaken marriage to Molly Vazeille, demonstrating that in the light of Wesley's mindset at the time, these developments were almost inevitable.

**"Holiness and Early Pentecostal Teachings on Sexuality," Nancy A. Hardesty, Atlanta, GA.**

Around the turn of the twentieth century a number of issues regarding sexuality agitated Holiness and early Pentecostal circles.

Marital purity became a watchword among the more fanatical "come-outers" who taught that married couples should abstain from sexual relations entirely except for procreation. Although this idea was

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often coupled with other teachings that historians labeled “fanatical” such as baptism with fire and faith healing, the concept of marital purity was similar to the “White Life” to which Methodist laywoman Frances Willard encouraged members of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union.

Although marital purity would seem an obvious form of birth control, preachers also inveighed against all forms of contraception. Couples who sought to limit their families were told that they were willfully sinning against God’s command to “be fruitful and multiply,” killing the unborn, refusing to accept God’s will in their lives, and committing high treason against their country by depriving it of Anglo-Saxon souls.

The literature is also replete with diatribes against masturbation and prostitution (“Social Purity”) as well as warnings about the sexual evils of dancing, the theater, and even the circus. Holiness and early Pentecostal people obviously lived in what they considered to be a very sexually charged world. Yet their biblical and theological defenses against sexual expression appear traditional and cultural rather than integrally related to their beliefs in sanctification or baptism by the Holy Spirit.

This paper will explore the issues of sexuality which arise in this literature, setting them within the contexts of both Holiness spirituality and secular society.

**“Culture and Concupiscence: The Changing Definition of Sanctity in the Holiness Movement, 1885-1920,”** Paul M. Bassett, Nazarene Theological Seminary.

Whatever their differences, the new denominations of the American Holiness Movement in the period 1885-1920 held two things in common: firm commitment to a variation on John Wesley’s idea of Christian perfection which they called “second blessing holiness,” and boldly declared, strictly enforced behavioral rules which they called “standards.”

Originally, the standards served primarily as ways to express concern over frivolity, ostentation, and misuse and abuse of time, energy, and material

resources. However, by the eve of World War I, such standards as the prohibition against dancing, the theater, and immodest apparel fell under a new rationale: they were deemed bulwarks against sexual impurity and immorality.

In fact, the new rationale arose from a radical change in the understanding of original sin. Under the influence of several profound changes in American culture in that era, among them the general liberalizing of male-female relationships outside of the home and workplace—a phenomenon of which Americans were exceptionally self-conscious—holiness people increasingly spoke of original sin in terms of concupiscence, though they did not forget the older emphasis of “self-will.” Lust replaced anger as the paradigmatic expression of original sin. A new fanatical restraint in language and behavior in matters sexual became the “norming norm” for sanctity, replacing the earlier “norming norm” of pride (which was much more difficult to define and thus evangelistically more problematic).

The proposed paper will describe and analyze this shift in theological and cultural terms. Holiness sermons and the popular holiness press, read against the background of the deep changes in American culture in that period, will serve as the principle source of research materials.

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(Watson, cont. from page 4)

ideal theological balance between law and grace. His message did not impose a Pelagianism nor yet invite an antinomianism. For Wesley, grace fulfilled the law.

Yet therein lies a danger. To the extent that law is integral to the gospel no less than grace, there is always the risk of a new legalism. To avoid this, our evangelism must be clearly perceived as a work of the Holy Spirit, with a focus on free grace as opposed to free will. We must proclaim a Christ-centered gospel, and a Christ-centered discipleship of obedience. But both must be Spirit-filled; for both are a work of grace.

**“Faith-Sharing is God’s Idea,” H. Eddie Fox**

This paper was a chapter from a book co-authored with George Morris, *Faith Sharing: Dynamic Christian Witness by Invitation* (Discipleship Resources). The title identifies the important theological insight which comprised its central thesis, namely we should share our faith. By grounding the motive for evangelism in the nature of God—a seeking God, a self-disclosing God—Fox showed us how this impels us to reach out to a human race caught in the midst of awesome global evil and desperately in need of reconciliation with its Creator. The evangelist is thus relieved of the burden of having to rationalize the sharing of faith.

This is an important ground rule, because evangelism is ultimately a mysterious and gracious divine activity in our lives. We will never motivate people with reasons for evangelism. But when we open ourselves to an evangelizing God, we find ourselves compelled to reach out with the gospel, even when there appears to be no good reason to do so. The form and the power of our evangelism must always be vested in our relationship with God.

**“Laos: The Relationship of the Ministries of the People of God,” The Report of the Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England, May 1987; Respondent: Dennis M. Campbell**

Dennis Campbell identified the central issue of this important statement as that of leadership in the congregation, and the nature of the ordained ministry in particular. In his view, the document pointed to two reasons for ordained ministry: the need for right teaching; and the need for appropriate representation of the community of faith, especially in linking congregations to the church at large.

The primary question, therefore, is how these roles can relate to the ministry of the *laos* in such a way as to avoid on the one hand an anti-clericalism, and on the other a professionalizing of lay orders. Campbell perceived two particular strengths of the document in addressing this question: its recognition that the Holy Spirit helps to identify the gifts of the *laos* for ministry; and its emphasis on the penultimate role of the church in the fulfilment of the Reign of

God.

In subsequent discussion, Gillian Evans, one of the architects of the report, explained that the concern of the Faith and Order Commission had been to identify the pastoral role as one of being with rather than over the congregation. It was agreed that this too was a strength of the document.

**“The Mission of The United Methodist Church,” Draft of a Report to General Conference 1988, Respondent: Michael Jackson**

This draft of the Mission Statement for the 1988 General Conference in St. Louis was the subject of a joint session with the Working Group on Theology and Doctrine. Michael Jackson began the discussion with a detailed response to the document, affirming its underlying emphasis on grace as the dynamic of the *missio Dei*. He also praised the document’s survey of Methodism’s reforming social work, and its confessional call for the church to assume missional priorities among the poor and sinned-against in the world of today. “Contemporary mission challenge is for every Christian community, with eyes freshly opened, to learn what Jesus Christ is doing and what our responsibility in his mission is.”

While agreeing in general with the theological rationale of the document, “a world transformed by grace,” Jackson called for a stronger statement on the role of the church in this mission of Christ, and missional strategy in particular. Response from Tom Langford, one of the chief writers of the report, stimulated further plenary discussion in this very fruitful joint session.

**“The Gospel and Eschatology,” William J. Abraham**

This paper presented by Billy Abraham brought our theological reflections to what many see as the most important evangelistic agenda of today: the re-appropriation of eschatology as the central theme of our message of good news. Noting that this has been the subject of significant work by scholars such as Norman Perrin and Mortimer Arias, he demonstrated that it is fertile ground for a broad range of inter-disciplinary dialogue. In re-appropriating es-



chatology, however, the evangelist must be faithful to Scripture; and thus the presentation of the paper to a joint session with working group on biblical criticism.

Opting for a synthesis of future eschatology (Schweitzer) and realized eschatology (Dodds), Abraham led us through the important scriptural referents for an inaugurated eschatology, the dawning of the Kingdom of God, arguing that evangelism must draw its fundamental content and inspiration from the early church, where this message of hope was first honed and articulated. The paper evoked positive response from both groups and, significantly, from the full range of theological perspectives which they represented.

**“Missionary Heritage of the Cuban Churches; Despite everything ... I am still a Protestant,” Israel Batista Guerra**

All of which made our reflections on history and context very timely. For the first of these presentations, Israel Batista Guerra of Cuba was introduced by Dow Kirkpatrick, one of the founders of the Institute, who has worked in recent years as a reverse missionary to raise the consciousness of the North American church to issues of discipleship in Latin America.

Batista did not beat about the bush. “Being a Protestant in a revolutionary situation has meant experiencing a crisis of meaning [and] a crisis of mission.” Is it possible to be Christian in a socialist society? And how do we evangelize in a context where Protestants are in the minority?

He proceeded to raise two fundamental issues for evangelism. First, he suggested, many Protestant evangelists have an exaggerated fear of syncretism, as a result of which the positive enculturation of the gospel in a different socio-economic context is often impeded, not by a concern to be faithful to the gospel, but rather by an implicit desire to retain its Western capitalist framework. Second, he argued, evangelism is still dominated by the Western concept of success. Unless converts are won, and church memberships increased, evangelists feel that they have failed. Yet the history of much missional work has been that of

consistent minority status, waiting for the word to bear fruit—as in Cuba today. We must be free to respond to God’s Spirit, in whichever way God’s Spirit leads us.

**“Sanctification in Contextual Evangelism,”  
Finau Tu’uholoaki**

Finau Tu’uholoaki illustrated the need for contextual expectancy in our evangelism with this eloquent theological reflection on a traditional Fijian ceremony, where guests are presented and received by the village chief. During the ceremony, there is an expression on the one hand of a bounty of harvest from the sea, and on the other of a calmness of life under the authority of the chief. In this dialectical affirmation, the whole village finds its identity.

Relating the words of the ceremony to the eschatological language of the New Testament, Finau explained that the gospel does not have to challenge this age-long Fijian tradition. On the contrary, it affirms it, both in an expectancy of God’s goodness, and in a life which consists of a mutual “giving up.” The people give themselves to the authority of the chief; and the chief takes on the role of servant to the people. Contextual sensitivity to such dimensions of the gospel already present in a culture can result in a mutual evangelization. The indigenous culture is seen with the richness of new gospel insights, which in turn reveal new truths in the gospel for the evangelist.

**“Ethics and Emptiness; The Challenge of Doing  
Theology in a Buddhist Context,” Roald E. Kristiansen**

Interfaith dialogue is another context for mutual evangelization, as cogently demonstrated in this paper by Roald Kristiansen. Noting that Buddhist ethics have often been criticized for the absence of any norm by which to advocate social justice, he suggested that the doctrines of karma and bodhisattva (acts of the will in quest of enlightenment) nonetheless provide a crucial link between ethics and religion. Ethical acts, according to these doctrines, decrease negative karma, and thereby foster true enlightenment—which is also religious awakening.



This makes a connection which is not always explicit in Christian thought, namely the linking of salvation with ethical behavior. When further correlated with Christian concern for justice, the ethics become social as well as personal, and have weighty implications for our evangelism. For when salvation is thus inextricably linked with personal and social ethics, we perforce proclaim the obligations of the gospel no less than its benefits.

**"The Evangelism of Jamaican Methodism; Historical Method and Message," Althea D. Spencer-Miller**

This historical overview of evangelism in Jamaica by Althea Spencer-Miller was a fascinating account of lay witness, often in a context of slavery, and primarily through the format of class meetings. The early freedom of these spontaneous gatherings, however, was subsequently impeded by the institutionalizing of the church, when classes or congregations requested pastoral support and consolidation. Worship then tended to become formal, and faith cerebral, leading over the years to a dualistic life in the church, and a sharp delineation between the theology prescribed by the ecclesial hierarchy and the private beliefs of the people which gave them their inner strength.

The result in recent years has been the proliferation of charismatic Christianity centered on Pentecostal denominations. And while the church continues to engage in much needed social and educational ministry, it does not touch the black pathos. "The fullness of incarnational theology, once achieved, has dissipated."

**"Motives of Mission in Methodism in Singapore and Malaysia from 1885 to 1985," Theodore R. Doraisamy**

A similar trend in Singapore was noted by Bishop Doraisamy, whose presentation focused on recent church history. Noting that church membership had doubled between 1971 and 1981, but the number of para-church organizations, usually of a conservative nature, had quadrupled from 33 to 125 during the same decade, the bishop drew some important in-

ferences for evangelistic strategy.

In his view, these para-church organizations have had a very positive effect on the life and work of the church, because they have spurred local congregations to send their own missionaries to other parts of the country. Moreover, churches which have engaged in such missional activity have usually framed policy statements, advocating a holistic view of mission in which the personal and social dimensions of the gospel receive equal emphasis.

It has been the experience of these churches that the sending of missionaries has always had a positive effect on their own health—a point which was developed further by George Hunter in the context of North America.

**"Where are Our People, and What are they Doing There?" George G. Hunter III**

With well-documented statistical data, Hunter suggested that there is a clear correspondence between membership growth or decline and the number of missionaries which churches have in the field. In a listing of ratios between missionaries and per capita church membership for thirty North American denominations, United Methodism ranked 27th. The ten denominations with the lowest ratios, including United Methodism, all showed membership decline.

The other major argument of Hunter's paper focused on the reasons for the decline of membership in The United Methodist Church. In 1900 there were 27 churches for every 10,000 Americans. In 1985, the number had dropped to 12. Noting that this corresponded with the decline in major North American Protestant churches during the same period, Hunter argued that deployment of human resources and the strategic placing of congregations greatly affects the growth or decline of churches. Responding to demographic changes is therefore an essential component of effective evangelistic strategy.

**"Youth Evangelism in Village Methodism," Terence Spencer**

Reinforcing George Hunter's concern, this paper by Terry Spencer presented the challenge of reaching young people with the gospel in a context where

there had already been serious membership decline. In the North of England village where he pastored, “our daunting task was to revive those flagging causes and to quickly incorporate new Christians into the chapels before time ran out for the older members and no one was left to carry on the Methodist witness.”

The Methodist manse served as a rallying point, where young people were invited to come into a more “neutral zone” than the church itself. And once this happened, genuine pastoral needs began to emerge. The weekly meetings proved to be a sort of halfway house: a door for some who eventually joined the church; and a means of helping those beyond the church. Moreover, there was a parallel with the early Methodist class meeting, as the leaders of these gatherings at the Manse used the opportunity to provide spiritual nurture and instruction in the faith – to which those who attended were much more amenable than they had been on church premises.

#### **“The Cursillo/Walk to Emmaus Movement; A Case Study,” Ronald K. Crandall**

This case study was likewise an example of spiritual questing beyond the confines of the institutional church. Tracing the origins of the “Cursillo de Cristiandad” (Short Course in Christianity) back to lay renewal on the island of Majorca during the Spanish Civil War, Ronald Crandall described how Cursillo spread to the United States, and how, in 1981, it was agreed that the movement would also be sponsored by The Upper Room, with the title, *Walk to Emmaus*. There are now more than a hundred Emmaus Communities.

The center of the movement is a 72-hour weekend, during which participants are carefully and intentionally nurtured through a spiritual encounter with God, a friendship with Christ, an experience of Christian community, and an apostolic commission for the world. It is not for beginners in the faith. Those who take part do so by invitation and sponsorship, and are drawn from persons already active in their congregations. Emmaus is thus a strategy for the renewal of evangelists, and an empowering of persons for leadership in the ministry and mission of the church.

### **III. A Suggestion for the 1992 Institute**

A feature of the 1982 Institute unique to the evangelism group was a dialogue with local congregations and communities as part of our theological reflection. This was repeated at the 1987 Institute. On the Friday afternoon of the first week, the group made a visit to the town of Swindon, some thirty miles from Oxford, where we were graciously hosted by the staff of some very innovative urban ministry and mission. It was a highly instructive afternoon, denominationally and ecumenically. We experienced a genuine Christian communion as clergy and laity shared with us how they endeavor to make the gospel “plain truth for plain people” through a meaningful presence in the community.

The purpose of the visit was quite intentionally Wesleyan, and embodied a question which the evangelism group wishes to put to the Institute as a whole: To what extent is it appropriate, or even legitimate, to devote two weeks of purely academic reflection to a tradition which is so patently grounded in praxis? Is there not an incongruity about Methodists secluding themselves quite so thoroughly in the quadrangles of Oxford? As Dow Kirkpatrick observed at the 1977 Institute, we are always faced with a contextual imperative when we engage in theology – the real thing, that is.<sup>2</sup> Clearly we cannot be involved in any substantive way with the City of Oxford in the course of just two weeks. But is it authentically Methodist not to be involved at all? In light of the “method” of discipleship bequeathed to us by Wesley, is this not an unreliable way to proceed?

To be authentically Methodist – and authentically theological, many would add – should we not schedule into the Institute some intentional service to the disadvantaged of the city and the surrounding townships and villages? Quite apart from the balance this would afford between works of mercy and works of piety,<sup>3</sup> it would inform our reflections with the common sense of ordinary people.

John Walsh’s eloquent tribute to Wesley’s work with the poor makes this a pressing matter of concern.<sup>4</sup> That the theme of the 1992 Institute is likely to be “Methodism and the Poor” would seem to render

it quite imperative. The visit to Swindon was an important step in this direction, and the evangelism group commends the issue to the 1992 Steering Committee for earnest consideration.

#### IV. Acknowledgments

The presence of three persons in the group contributed in a very notable way to the depth and cordiality of our sessions. The first was our Co-Convenor, Bishop Lawi Imathiu of Kenya, the Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the World Methodist Council. His presence was episcopal in the richest sense of the word. He guided discussion; he established good manners; and at certain critical junctures, he spoke boldly and prophetically. Presenters, respondents and participants took their cues accordingly, and the sessions were truly a means of global grace.

We were also graced ecumenically by having with us two observers to the Institute: Dr. G.R. Evans, representing the Church of England; and The Rev. Michael Jackson, representing the Roman Catholic Church. At an early stage in the proceedings, they established themselves as full colleagues in our discussions. Gillian Evans not only presented a paper, but also invited us to respond to the significant Anglican Faith and Order document; and Michael Jackson provided an incisive critique of the Mission Statement for General Conference in our joint session with the theology group.

Their contributions were invaluable, not least because they stayed with the evangelism group throughout its deliberations. We are deeply indebted to them both, and our report concludes with their collegial greeting to the Institute as a whole.

#### From the Roman Catholic and Anglican Observers

We should both like to express our gratitude and appreciation for the shared experience of the Institute. We have learned and profited from it in many ways, in enriched understanding and in a deepened sense of *koinonia*.

Two things in particular have struck us. We have been privileged to join in a pooling of experiences in which the concrete and particular has again and

again been communicated in a sense of discovery of our common humanity in Christ. And again and again that has been helped by relating our experiences through discussion of ideas and in a vocabulary which we have been exploring together. The abstract and theological and the pastoral and practical have proved not alternative but complementary approaches to mutual understanding.

Most importantly, we have been conscious of sharing in an experience of the forming of the "mind of the Church." The members of the group have listened to one another with openness. There has been no sense of bargaining for position or of sacrificing a point in negotiation in order to gain another. There has been no compromise. Instead the checks and balances of growing recognition of that which is true in one another's viewpoint and that which is incomplete in our own has begun to bring us to the very consensus for which we have felt and expressed a need. Perhaps most remarkable of all in this has been the way in which each of us has brought a deep commitment to a particular vision with the wholeness of Christian truth and been able to contribute it and find it appreciated; and at the same time to carry away glimpses of the visions of others. In making our individual contributions we have perhaps been mirroring the pattern of the contributions the various confessional traditions and local churches can make within the universal Church, without loss of identity, and only with gain.

#### ENDNOTES

1. See the reports from the Evangelism Working Group in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, ed. Meeks (Abingdon, 1983), pp. 138-71.
2. "A Liberating Pastoral for the Rich," in *Sanctification & Liberation*, ed. Theodore Runyon (Abingdon, 1981), p. 219.
3. General Rules, 1743.
4. Plenary Address to the Institute, August 3rd 1987.

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