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Editorial

The set of four essays on Wesleyan approaches to identity in this issue were first presented at the Postgraduate Interdisciplinary Colloquium, held at Asbury Theological Seminary on October 26, 2009. The papers were presented by Asbury doctoral students and professors on a theme that is becoming of increasing importance in our multicultural, complex world. As director of postgraduate studies, Kima Pachuau noted in his introductory remarks, “Christian identity is one of those subjects that needs to be approached from a cross-disciplinary approach. Since the problem stems from complex cultural patterns, it needs to be commented on using multiple disciplinary approaches in concert. That is what these four presentations represent.”

Biblical studies, theology, and missiology doctoral students attended the event and made rich contributions to the discussion times after each presentation. The importance of—and the problems with—an interdisciplinary approach to the study of an important topic such as identity made itself felt in the very first paper presented by Ruth Anne Reese (biblical studies) and Steve Ybarrola (anthropology). The authors themselves noted some of the challenges in their first endnote to the text: “[We] found the collaborative process for this paper both enjoyable and challenging. While there was broad agreement on most of the points presented, there were certain areas where the authors ‘agreed to disagree.’”

In their paper, Racial and Ethnic Identity: Social Scientific and Biblical Perspectives in Dialogue, Reese and Ybarrola begin by laying out current understandings of the roles ethnicity and race play in current identity discourse and then go on to compare that with the New Testament witness to the same. The results are a fascinating account of what can happen when social science and biblical revelation are used to illumine each other.

Wendy Peterson makes the point in her paper, An Aboriginal Missiology of Identity Reclamation: Towards Revitalization for Canada’s Indigenous Peoples through Healing of Identity, that it is precisely because we don’t take into account the theological understanding of the imago Dei that we fail to actually achieve the reconciliation with native people’s we so often talk about achieving. And she raises the important point as to who should accept the blame for this misunderstanding, mission workers or Aboriginals themselves for not declaring it.
Chris Keisling and Kima Pachuau interface mission, theology, and psychology “in an exploration of what hinders and what enables conciliatory existence.” Their essay, *Identity Formation for Conciliatory Existence: How We Perceive the Other*, tackles this crucial task and suggests that despite our fallenness, we do have the potential of being remade such that we can begin to accomplish the work of reconciliation.

Finally, Jim Boetcher in *Our Personal Core Identity: A Wesleyan Perspective*, argues that Wesley had an approach to identity formation that is more valid today than ever. To show this current validity he draws on three scientific papers that provide us with some empirical answers to the way human beings are formed. He stresses the importance of having a well-defined core identity so that our many role identities can be built upon that.

These four essays are not the last word on Christian identity and its formation. But they all provide a Wesleyan theological word on the subject that adds to our understanding of this most current of topics.

— Terry C. Muck
JIM BOETCHER

Our Personal Core Identity: A Wesleyan Perspective

Abstract
Humans have many relational identities that vary with changes in relationships such as being a mother or a daughter, but one's core identity remains independent of these social roles. This paper explores human personal core identity theologically by drawing on Methodism as it existed under the leadership of John Wesley, and scientifically by using three cutting edge scientific research projects: The Human Family Tree and The Human Genome Project present empirical evidence that all humans are genetically related and only one race exists - the human race. Discovering Ardi: Changing Our Understanding of Human Origins shows that humans did not evolve from apes. Wesley's theology is used, first, to develop a reference baseline for further comparative research on identity. Second, Wesley provides a means to analyze core identity and develop a theological solution allowing recognition and reclamation of one's true personal core identity. Wesley believed that all of humanity is called to be a habitation of God, as the saints of God and partakers of the inheritance that belongs to the saints. He believed that God intended that our common ancestry would foster love, binding us together as a race, and thus contribute to the solution for racism and war. With a solid understanding of one's core personal identity, one can better fulfill their many role identities because each relational identity rests firmly upon the bedrock of one's personal core identity.

Key Words: Identity, relationship, personal, Wesley, genome, Ardi.

Jim Boetcher, Hilo, Hawaii, is a second-year doctoral student in Systematic Theology at Asbury Theological Seminary and the London School of Theology.
On a clear night about 30 centuries ago, a king of a small nation that would reach its zenith in the next generation looked up into the night sky, ablaze with stars, and poetically asked a question, in essence, that had echoed down to him through many generations, an echo still heard today: “Who am I?” To his people he was The King, and he represented them all, female and male alike. Today, he represents us as we ponder his question.

I shall often use plural personal pronouns such as *we* and *our* in this paper. Unless otherwise stated, these pronouns refer to either the entire human race, or the entire Christian community.

This paper will explore, from the perspective of Christian, “Wesleyan Methodism,” one answer to this question. That there are many answers is evidenced by the perennial quest humans have always had for identity. Indeed, the breadth and scope of this subject, coupled with varying degrees of specialization necessitated by the huge expansion of knowledge in our era, more than justifies its use as the theme for this colloquium. Therefore, I will limit consideration to *our personal core identity*.

I will draw heavily upon two sources in providing an answer to this question. First, the primary theological source is “Wesleyan Methodism” - or Methodism as it existed “under the leadership of John Wesley” and found in his writings, in contradistinction to “Calvinistic Methodists, or from Methodists like Grimshaw of Haworth or Venn of Huddersfield who remained within the Church of England,” or of the current understandings that have been developed in the churches that have descended from Wesleyan Methodism. Bowmer uses the term in this sense, in his fine book on *The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper in Early Methodism*.

I have chosen to theologically address the question of identity from the perspective of Wesleyan Methodism in order to establish a baseline, or reference point, for further comparative research. It is well known that as Methodism developed there were continual branching splits giving rise to many new holiness movements, particularly among the more Pentecostal Methodists. There were also occasional unions among the various splintered groups. In the course of the more than two centuries following Wesley’s death, his views were, and are, continually being contextualized, modified, reinterpreted, refined, and redefined. By providing a baseline presentation of the primal views of Wesleyan Methodism concerning our core personal identity,
interpretive comparison could be made with the various current understandings on this subject among the churches whose roots reach back to Wesleyan Methodism, and perhaps even allow comparison with non-Wesleyan churches.

Second, I have made use of up-to-the-minute scientific information provided by *The Human Family Tree*, a new television special released on August 30, 2009, by the National Geographic Society and IBM Co., and by *Ardi*, the earliest human ancestor ever found, whose name is also the title of a television presentation concerning this discovery, first shown on October 11, 2009, by the Discovery Channel. I will show how these new and exciting discoveries relate to, and shed light upon our own personal core identity.

Every adult carries many identities, but by this statement one usually means that every person plays many roles such as father or son, brother or sister, carpenter, professor, or truck driver. These roles are relational identities. There are many other types of relational identities, including ethnic and cultural identities. Being Basque, for instance, would be meaningless if no other cultural or ethnic identity existed. I want to primarily examine our core, personal identity that defines who we are but does not change with changes in our relation to others in society in general. However, I will show that character, our moral identity, does have a profound influence on our core identity.

I will show that Wesley, who died nearly seventy years before Darwin published his first book on evolution, clearly rejected the idea that humanity was made in the image of the beasts of the field. On the surface, Wesley’s statement would seemingly rule out accepting any kind of Christian evolutionary thinking, yet today theistic evolution is accepted by many in several Christian denominations, including some members of the churches that arose out of Wesleyan Methodism.

To begin, I will define personal identity. Then I will discuss who we are in relation to society, first, from the perspective of Wesleyan Methodism, then from a secular, scientific viewpoint. This discussion will be followed by a look at our core personal identity, presented in three parts: the basic component of identity, the meaning of oneness in identity, and reflection on what has gone wrong with our original identity. Finally, I will examine how our true identity can be restored, followed by concluding remarks.

**Personal Identity**

The phrase, personal identity, is necessarily a special relational term that contrasts personal with everything else that exists in all of creation, including the Creator. The etymology of the word *identity*, dating back to 1570, derives from Middle French, *identité*, then from Late Latin *identitatis*, *identitas*, and probably from the Latin word *identidem*, meaning repeatedly, a contraction of *idem et idem*, literally meaning same and same.
• Briefly, *identity* includes the idea of having the quality or condition of being the same as something else.

• *Identity* denotes a sameness of essential or generic character in different instances, or oneness.

• Finally, *identity* can also refer to the distinguishing character or personality of an individual, or individuality.

**Who am I, step one: cutting edge science**

Christian and non-Christian alike readily recognize that they are members of the human race, but what does this statement really mean? What, and how much, do any of us have in common with all of the rest of humanity? Are we all related, somehow?

Of course, many Christians will cite the book of Genesis, chapters one and two, to show that we all came from a single pair of humans who were, in turn, created by God, and therefore conclude that we are all related. Wesley took this position, as indicated by his comments on Genesis 1:26, and Acts 17:26, respectively.

That man was made male and female, and blessed with fruitfulness. He created him male and female, Adam and Eve: Adam first out of earth, and Eve out of his side. God made but one male and one female, that all the nations of men might know themselves to be made of one blood, descendants, from one common stock, and might thereby be induced to love one another. God having made them capable of transmitting the nature they had received, said to them, *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.*

In Wesley’s comments on Genesis 1:26, he observes why he thinks that God created humanity from one pair: so that humanity “might thereby be induced to love one another.” Wesley, expositing on Acts 17:26, noted that

*He hath made of one blood the whole nation of men* - By this expression the apostle showed them in the most unaffected manner, that though he was a Jew, he was not enslaved to any narrow views, but looked on all mankind as his brethren: *having determined the times* - That it is God who gave men the earth to inhabit.  

The idea that humanity descended from one pair is evident throughout Wesley’s writings, and he took this position as a matter of fact. See, for instance, sermon 62, “The End of Christ’s Coming,” where he writes of how “the Son of God was manifested to our first parents in paradise.” If the idea that humanity descended from one human pair could be proven to the world, and if we would then reconsider the meaning of our common identity, could this new information lead to a more peaceful society?
What does science think about some kind of common origin for humanity? Some of the most exciting discoveries of the twenty-first century are being produced by National Geographic and IBM’s now four-year-old Genographic Project. Although this project is scheduled to be completed by the end of next year, preliminary results have been released through a National Geographic two-hour television special presentation called The Human Family Tree.

The Genographic Project identified and examined more than 200 genetic DNA markers found in hundreds of thousands of people living across the globe. It was discovered that all humans living today actually are the descendants of one, specific human pair that the program’s leaders have named “Scientific Adam” and “Scientific Eve.” These scientists determined that Scientific Adam lived about 60,000 years ago and Scientific Eve perhaps 150,000 years ago.

The Human Family Tree showed the results of “deep ancestry tracing” for 250 people chosen at random from only one street in truly cosmopolitan Queens, NY, by comparing DNA markers found in the Queens sampling with data thus far produced by The Genographic Project. Here is their amazing conclusion:

Regardless of race, nationality or religion, all of us can trace our ancient origin back to the cradle of humanity, East Africa.

One result from The Human Family Tree project that was even startling for the two Queens volunteers involved, showed that a man with a very black complexion and a man with a very white complexion had a common ancestry in northern Europe only 10,000 years ago, as confirmed by examining the genetic markers in their DNA.

The results of this study to date are nothing short of astounding. First, if, from a secular, empirical, viewpoint we all descended from one pair, then we are all genetically related to each other. Second, it was shown that the genetic makeup of all people living today is more than 99.9% identical. That means less than one-tenth of one per cent of our DNA accounts for all the visible differences between us. That means that there is very little difference, if any, between races. That means there is only one race, the human race, but many cultures such as Black, Hispanic, Asian, Basque, White, Southern, Northern, Eastern or Western; and each grouping contains many subcultures.

That means, from a secular, empirical viewpoint, that we are all brothers and sisters sharing in a common humanity, and living in a common society that has evolved into many different cultures. We are all the same in that we are all human. That means that the bedrock of our identity is built on the fact that we are all members of the human race; we are human, we all share the
same blood, and are therefore related by blood. That also means that, as a member of the human race, and therefore of society, I may need to re-examine responsibly my own identity and how I view people, especially people who may look different than me.

**Who am I, step two: Christ and society**

Wesley understood and taught that Christianity is a social religion. Indeed, he said,

> When I say [that Christianity] is essentially a social religion, I mean not only that it cannot subsist so well, but that it cannot subsist at all without society, without living and conversing with other [people].

In other words, from the standpoint of a vibrantly alive Christianity Wesley said that we need each other if we are to survive and thrive. In this same sermon Wesley recognizes that each person does require some alone time for prayer and rest, but rest must not consume all of one’s time, for that “would be to destroy, not advance, true religion.” It is exclusively within the crucible of society that we Christians grow into our full, God ordained and guided, human identity in order to become what God intends us to be. Why is this so?

Wesley preached that rather than commanding us not to have anything to do with unbelievers or wicked people, God said that without such people “we cannot be Christians at all.” It is through our interaction with the ungodly that we bring to bear the “the full exertion of every temper,” and “the complete exercise of poverty of spirit, of mourning, and of every other disposition” that Jesus proclaimed in the beatitudes. As Wesley speaks of meekness, he reminds us that:

> Instead of demanding ‘an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth’ [a Christian] doth ‘not resist evil,’ but causes us rather, when smitten ‘on the right cheek, to turn the other also;’ [exercising] mercifulness whereby ‘we love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them which despitefully use us’ Now all these, it is clear, could have no being were we to have no commerce with any but real Christians [emphasis mine].

Looking again at Wesley’s words, I have emphasized expressions that graphically depict our core relationship with society: **we love, bless, do good, and pray for them.**

From the perspective of Wesleyan Methodism the characteristics of loving, blessing, doing good, and praying for society are integral to our core personal identity and are also attributes of our character. Our identity is who we are; our character is what we are. The problem we Christians face is how to forge a character that is congruent with our identity. Identity can be unknown,
disguised, hidden, lost or found, damaged, disgraced, repaired, or honored. Character is that set of features which distinguishes the one from the many, and is therefore hidden only with great difficulty, and then not usually for long.

There is a relationship between character and identity. My pastor, mentor and best friend, Rev. Percy Gutteridge, shared this sequence that relates character and identity with regard to sowing and reaping: A thought, a desire, an act, a habit, a character, a destiny; at the end of life, our character will reflect our identity, at the beginning our identity can commence the forging of our character within the crucible of society. This forging is accomplished in a crucible where it is society itself who provides the necessary heat - heat that is generated by friction - that brings about the personal transformation within us, as intended by God. That is why I agree with Wesley that knowing our own true core personal identity will help us to better understand why, how and what we are intended to become.

**Who am I, step three: our core personal identity**

I said that identity denotes a sameness of essential or generic character in different instances - oneness. What might be, or perhaps is intended by God to be, the single, most essential, generic characteristic defining humanity from the perspective of Wesleyan Methodism? I submit that the noun love best answers this question. In three parts, I will show that love is the most basic component of our core personal identity; second, that we are love; and third, that something terrible has happened to our original core personal identity.

**Part 1: The basic component of identity**

Christianity teaches that under the Old and New Covenants God has made but one law, the law of love. Under the Old Covenant humanity was to love God with all their heart, soul and mind, and their neighbor as themselves. Under the New Covenant we are to love God with all our heart, soul and mind, and our neighbor as Christ loved us. Wesley understood that the law may have changed in degree with the change in covenants, but not in principle. The law of love is supreme. Since the creation of humanity unto this very day we have had only one commandment to obey: the law of love. Why does God consistently maintain a single focus on love for God and neighbor?

Christians well remember who their neighbor is through the parable of the Good Samaritan. Wesley commented on this parable, and his words are well worth the space in this article.

*Let us go and do likewise, regarding every [person] as our neighbour who needs our assistance. Let us renounce that bigotry and party zeal which would contract our hearts into an insensibility for all the human race, but a small number whose*
sentiments and practices are so much our own, that our love to them is but self love reflected. With an honest openness of mind let us always remember that kindred between man and man, and cultivate that happy instinct whereby, in the original constitution of our nature, God has strongly bound us to each other.\textsuperscript{35}

In his sermon entitled, \textit{The Duty of Reproving our Neighbour}, Wesley says, in language that could not possibly be plainer, that “the persons intended by ‘our neighbour’ are every child of man, everyone that breathes the vital air, all that have souls to be saved.”\textsuperscript{36}

Through these, and many similar statements, Wesley, without doubt or equivocation teaches that the entire human race is one family, and that it is through the same love binding the family together that “God has strongly bound us [humanity] to each other.”\textsuperscript{37} To think otherwise, Wesley says, is to engage in bigotry and factional zeal that diminishes who we are, and thus damages our very identity. I think it is for these reasons that Wesley wrote, in Christian love:

> I look upon all [of human society] as my parish: thus far I mean, that in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work which I know God has called me to. And sure I am that his blessing attends it.\textsuperscript{38}

\textit{Part 2: We are love - oneness in identity, and more cutting-edge science}

In his sermon, \textit{The Image of God,}\textsuperscript{39} Wesley begins with the authorized text of Genesis 1:27: \textit{So God created [humanity] in his own image}. Speaking of our first parents before their Fall, Wesley plainly declares that “man was what God is, Love,”\textsuperscript{40} that is, as love is God’s very nature and integral with his identity, so love is intended to be our very nature and integral with our identity. Wesley was intimately familiar with the Greek text of I John 4:8 - \textit{He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love},\textsuperscript{41} so love is to be our very nature. To paraphrase Wesley’s overall message in light of I John: as God is love and loves us, so we are love and thus love - or should love - God and each other. Although humanity is created in the image of God, mankind does not become God. Rather, Wesley teaches, God is the source of love; mankind is a vessel for “the love of God [to be] shed abroad in their hearts, with love to every child of [humanity].”\textsuperscript{42}
Although Wesley died in 1791, before Darwin\textsuperscript{43} and Wallace\textsuperscript{44} were even born, 1809 and 1823, respectively, the men who simultaneously and independently published similar theories of natural selection and evolution in 1859, Wesley did address some of the concepts of evolution. Ever a voracious reader, Wesley was undoubtedly aware of current, pre-Darwinian, evolutionary thinking. Ancients such as Xenophanes, 500 B.C., and Aristotle, 350 B.C., had developed several theories concerning the evolution of life. It was Aristotle who first advanced a system of classification for the animal kingdom.\textsuperscript{45} Without doubt, Wesley was also familiar with some of the famous men of his day who contributed to various aspects of evolutionary thinking, including John Ray - 1686, Carolus Linnaeus - 1735, Count De Buffon - 1749, and Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis - 1751.\textsuperscript{46}

In 1782, Wesley published a paper entitled, \textit{Remarks on the Count De Buffon's "Natural History"},\textsuperscript{47} wherein he vehemently disagreed with the Count, particularly with Count Buffon's “theory of generation” concerning how life arose upon the earth. It was the French naturalist Comte de Buffon who had “developed the modern definition of a species.”\textsuperscript{48} In his monumental work,\textsuperscript{49} Buffon discussed the similarities between, and possible common ancestry of, apes and humans, and he developed concepts quite similar to the uniformitarianism developed by Charles Lyell forty years later.\textsuperscript{50}

In his sermon, \textit{The Image of God}, Wesley wrote that he was “ashamed to say” that some of his fellow compatriots eagerly maintain that they were not made in the image of the living God, but of the beasts that perish; who heartily contend that it was not the divine but the brutal likeness in which they were created, and earnestly assert ‘that they themselves are beasts’ in a more literal sense than ever Solomon meant it. These consequently reject with scorn the account God has given of [humanity], and affirm it to be contrary to reason.\textsuperscript{51}

My intent here is not to raise and discuss the issue of evolution versus creationism,\textsuperscript{52} but only to state clearly Wesley’s position on this issue as definitive for a Wesleyan Methodism perspective, particularly with respect to human identity, and contrast Wesley’s position with the other two main viewpoints.\textsuperscript{53} I recognize that some Christians springing from a Wesleyan heritage may take an opposing viewpoint, and in fact, the majority of people today generally support some aspect of the evolutionary side, particularly those in the field of biology.

Many Christians today, including some whose beliefs have root in Wesleyan Methodism, adhere to the idea of theistic evolution, which is more of a stance, rather than a theory, that accepts the idea of developmental creation; that is, humanity developed “from a previous state or form, but that this process was under God’s guidance.”\textsuperscript{54}
The Roman Catholic Church has accepted the principles of theistic evolution by allowing for the possibility that man’s body developed from previous biological forms, under God’s guidance, but it insists on the special creation of his soul. Pope Pius XII [who was pope from 1939 until his death in 1958] declared that “the teaching authority of the Church does not forbid that, in conformity with the present state of human sciences and sacred theology, research and discussions, take place with regard to the doctrine of evolution, in as far as it inquires into the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter - but the Catholic faith obliges us to hold that souls are immediately created by God,” Pius XII, Humani Generis 36. So whether the human body was specially created or developed, we are required to hold as a matter of Catholic faith that the human soul is specially created; it did not evolve, and it is not inherited from our parents, as our bodies are. [Emphasis is Catholic writer’s.]55

While the Church permits belief in either special creation or developmental creation on certain questions, it in no circumstances permits belief in atheistic evolution.56

Thus, the Roman Catholic Church, as well as numbers of non-Catholic Christians, including those with Wesleyan Methodism roots, accepts either creationism or theistic evolution. In fact, theistic evolution is sometimes called Christian evolution in order to distinguish it from atheistic evolution - a theory that makes the claim that life developed solely due to random, natural forces.57 The main criticism that atheistic evolutionists make against theistic evolution is that it depends upon a supernatural creator, a position beyond scientific, theoretical consideration. Thus, the question raised is whether there is a difference between the physical and spiritual origins of human life.

Frank Collins, a medical doctor who directed the Human Genome Project,58 is one scientist who turned from atheism to a Christian belief in God that includes the acceptance of theistic evolution. He attributes his conversion to a number of factors. In the testimony he published online, he said that the writings of C. S. Lewis, coupled with his study of human DNA, and “ultimately, a [Barthian] leap of faith,” led to his conversion. Collins’s testimonial conclusions are interesting and pertinent to this discussion.59

As a believer, I see DNA, the information molecule of all living things, as God’s language, and the elegance and complexity of our own bodies and the rest of nature as a reflection of God’s plan.
I have found there is a wonderful harmony in the complementary truths of science and faith. The God of the Bible is also the God of the genome. God can be found in the cathedral or in the laboratory. By investigating God’s majestic and awesome creation, science can actually be a means of worship.

Nevertheless, Wesley was unambiguous on this issue. Wesley’s perspective is that we did not spiritually or bodily descend from lower animals, but that God truly did create humanity in his, God’s, own image exactly as the biblical account relates. Today, Wesley would be numbered among those believing in creationism.

I think this point touches upon one of the key aspects of, and current controversy over, human personal identity. It is one thing to say that my heritage - the status, the identity that I acquire through birth - is from the lower animals. It is quite another to say that my heritage comes directly from God. These two positions, namely that of Wesleyan Methodism and the evolutionists of Wesley’s day, are mutually exclusive, and both positions generate significant ramifications concerning our identity. Theistic evolution has been developed as a possible way to bridge this heretofore unbridgeable chasm. Indeed, Collins says that “40% of working scientists” today claim to be believers, in part, because of this very bridge.

Today, science no longer claims that humanity descended from apes. Rather, the claim today is that both humans and apes descended from a common, hominid ancestor. On October 1, 2009, the National Geographic Society announced that, after fifteen years of research on fossils found in Ethiopia, they have found “the oldest fossil skeleton of a human ancestor.” These fossils are thought to be about one million years older than “Lucy,” who was previously, at an estimated 3.2 million years old, the earliest human biped ever found.

The discovery of the new skeleton, of the species Ardipithecus ramidus, or “Ardi,” puts to rest the notion, popular since Darwin’s time, that a chimpanzee-like missing link, resembling something between humans and today’s apes, would eventually be found at the root of the human family tree. Indeed, the new evidence suggests that the study of chimpanzee anatomy and behavior - long used to infer the nature of the earliest human ancestors - is largely irrelevant to understanding our beginnings.

Wesley would certainly be in agreement with the conclusion that modern apes are irrelevant in trying to understand our origin. On October 11, 2009, The Discovery Channel aired a two-hour special, Discovering Ardi: Changing Our Understanding of Human Origins. Ardi is now considered “the last common
ancestor of humans and living apes,”66 and “the oldest skeleton from our (hominid) branch of the primate family tree.”67

I note for the record, that these finds do not repudiate the current theories of evolution, they merely modify scientific understanding. The theory of evolution, itself, is constantly evolving, as demonstrated by the impact of the discoveries cited here. Indeed, this flood of twenty-first century discoveries reveals, more than ever, that strong echo from the past concerning the intense interest that we humans have in our origins and identity.

Wesley made two further observations concerning our first parents, as recorded in the opening chapters of the book of Genesis. He understood that the first human pair were given clear minds with the capacity for perfect justice that saw things as they really are, perfect wills that were governed by the love of God, and perfect freedom to make their own choices; and the result was that the pair lived in perfect happiness.68

Thus far, what conclusions can be drawn about our identity? First, we are all members of the human race, and we are all related to each other by blood; we are family in the truest sense of the word. Second, humanity did not descend bodily from apes, a scientific fact that can be of tremendous significance in trying to bridge the chasm between creationists and evolutionists. Third, from the perspective of Wesleyan Methodism, at the core of our original nature we are love, because we were created in the image of God. Therefore, by blood, by descent, and by human nature we are all “bound together,” as Wesley would say.69

Wesley’s idea of being “bound together” contains the kernel, the essence, of what oneness means. In the eyes of Wesleyan Methodism, as human beings part of our core identity with respect to oneness is that originally our human nature was created in the image of God; in addition to our blood kinship, our common nature of love unites us, or was intended to unite us, making us one people. Speaking on behalf of all humanity, our true identity comes with a perfect mind governed by a nature of perfect love, living in perfect freedom. And yet, in the real world, we can readily recognize that something is drastically wrong with all of us.

Part 3: What happened to our God-given identity??!!

According to a Wesleyan Methodism perspective, when we enter this world our actual nature already exists, but is hidden. If so, what does it look like? And how might we see it? By the time we reach the age of speech, usually around the age of two, this nature begins to be revealed as we learn to articulate our first words, words such as, “No!” and “Mine!” At age two this is considered “cute.” At age four it is annoying. At age fourteen this attitude can constitute willful sin.
It becomes readily apparent that some drastic catastrophe has befallen the perfect human nature that Wesley described. The result of this catastrophe is that our understanding of our own, true identity becomes blurred, indistinct, and perhaps even lost, as we develop a counterfeit identity that expresses itself in a manner contrary to God and humanity. In this section, I want to focus on our counterfeit identity, and in the next section on our true, God-given identity.

This well-known catastrophe is commonly referred to as the Fall of humanity. In his sermon titled, On the Fall of Man, Wesley describes the results of the Fall.

Adam, in whom all mankind were then contained, freely preferred evil to good. He chose to do his own will rather than the will of his Creator. He ‘was not deceived’, but knowingly and deliberately rebelled against his Father and his King. In that moment he lost the moral image of God, and, in part, the natural [image of God]. He commenced unholy, foolish, and unhappy. And ‘in Adam all died.’ He entitled all his posterity to error, guilt, sorrow, fear; pain, diseases, and death.70

In other words, Wesley said that as a result of the Fall our first parents became totally depraved, and they passed this depraved nature on to all of their descendents. Wesley taught that total depravity referred to “the entire depravation of the whole human nature, of every [person] born into the world, in every faculty of his [or her] soul,” as demonstrated by humanity’s love of “idolatry, of pride, self-will, and love of the world.”71 In other words, sin had invaded and contaminated every aspect, every part of human nature. Wesley also recognized that the image of God in humanity was disabled - but not annihilated - by sin,72 for he said there were “remains of the image of God” in all of humanity.73 He saw the Fall as the cause of a disease for which Christ is the only therapeutic cure.74

Wesley is now describing what I have called humanity’s counterfeit identity. Wesley wrote that without the application of the gospel cure “we bear the image of the Devil”75 in our depravity, and it is the Devil who robs us of our true identity by supplying us with a counterfeit identity. Our counterfeit identity is constructed of self and selfishness, pride and prejudice, and many of the other marks of the evil one. Wesley has many things to say about a question that he raises: “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”76

Who am I, step Four: our true identity restored

As I have shown, Wesley’s understanding was that the Fall caused the image of God to be disabled, or disfigured, but not annihilated in humanity. Wesley looked at sin as a disease of the soul,77 and salvation as “θεραπεία ψυχῆς,”
or therapy for the soul or psyche, which is “God’s method of healing a soul which is thus diseased.” In the hymns written by the Wesley brothers the phrase “sin-sick soul” can be found at least nine times. I have chosen verse one from Hymn 386 as a representative example:

Saviour of the sin-sick soul,  
Give me faith to make me whole!  
Finish thy great work of grace!  
Cut it short in righteousness.

In contrast to Dutch Orthodox Calvinism’s predestinarian viewpoint that salvation provides for a limited atonement and is not, therefore, intended to benefit the damned, Wesley was adamant that salvation is intended for all people. Indeed, Wesley fervently preached that

the great end of religion is to renew our [the whole human race] hearts in the image of God, to repair that total loss of righteousness and true holiness which we sustained by the sin of our first parent. Ye know that all religion which does not answer this end, all that stops short of this, the renewal of our soul in the image of God, after the likeness of him that created it, is no other than a poor farce and a mere mockery of God, to the destruction of our own soul.

From the perspective of Wesleyan Methodism, the saddest part of our sad situation is that we often do not even realize what has happened to us, nor do we remember who we were because we are often mesmerized by trinkets, gadgets, and self. Wesley believed that “till we are sensible of our disease it admits of no cure.” Thus, in order to bring healing for this disease, Wesley believed that it was absolutely essential for the evangelist to first bring her or his listeners to repentance so that the cure of justification and sanctification might be experienced. His definition of repentance is quite illuminating. In addition to the idea of changing one’s mind, repentance also includes gaining knowledge about one’s self, “of [one’s] sinfulness, guilt, and helplessness.”

Philosophers have long known that we often think more highly of ourselves than reality would admit, and it is for this reason that Wesley thought it was a great mistake to have people who are “wholly unawakened, [and] unconvinced of sin,” begin spiritual exercises while in a state of self-delusion. Therefore, he thought it imperative that every seeker of salvation who begins their journey should “pray that you may be fully discovered to yourself, that you may know yourself as also you are known,” for to do otherwise would not result in genuine salvation. He continued,

When once you are possessed of this genuine conviction, all your idols will lose their charms. And you will wonder how
you could so long lean upon those broken reeds which had so often sunk under you. 87

Wesley thought that it was almost needless to remark how conducive this is to the attainment of all other knowledge; or, in other words, how conducive it is to the improvement of the understanding. An erroneous opinion of ourselves naturally leads us into numberless errors; whereas to those who know their own folly (beside the natural advantage of it) the Lord of nature ‘giveth the spirit of wisdom, and enlightens the eyes of their understanding, after the likeness in which they were created’ 88

And this knowledge of their disease, whereby they are more and more cleansed from one part of it, pride and vanity, disposes them to embrace with a willing mind the second thing implied in ‘circumcision of heart’ - that faith which alone is able to make them whole, which is the one medicine given under heaven to heal their sickness. 89

This examination of Wesley’s thinking on the importance of knowing one’s self may explain why he delivered, at great cost to himself, what was to be his final sermon at St. Mary’s, at Oxford. 90 Although he was a highly respected Oxford don who had been asked to preach regularly at the university, his listeners took great offense at his words because he tried to lay out the “plain truth” concerning their spiritual poverty without using “nice and philosophical speculation,” or “perplexed and intricate reasonings.” 91 I am convinced that he said the hard things found in this message out of a heart of love for his audience, and because he thought this message provided the only possible means needed to awaken in them their need for the grand cure to be bestowed upon them by Christ, himself. 92

What stopped the Oxford audience from accepting Wesley’s plea for their souls? Wesley, himself, at the beginning of his sermon identified the cause as pride, and he thought that the self-awareness that they should gain from his sermon would bring them cleansing from “pride and vanity,” thus enabling “them to embrace. that faith which alone is able to make them whole,” and which is the only remedy “under heaven to heal their sickness.” 93 In his mind, pride led the Oxford dons to feel insulted by his message. This kind of preaching had often worked for the common people, and worked well, but academia was a different matter.

Wesley understood that the means of the grand cure for the full restoration of our true identity was taught in what he called the two grand, fundamental doctrines of Christianity,

the doctrine of justification, and that of the new birth: the former relating to that great work which God does for us, in
 forgiving our sins; the latter to the great work which God does
in us, in renewing our fallen nature.  

Wesley defined the new birth as 
that great change which God works in the soul when he brings
it into life; when he raises it from the death of sin to the life of
righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by
the almighty Spirit of God when it is ‘created anew in Christ
Jesus’, when it is ‘renewed after the image of God’, ‘in
righteousness and true holiness’, when the love of the world
is changed into the love of God, pride into humility, passion
into meekness; hatred, envy, malice, into a sincere, tender,
disinterested love for all mankind. In a word, it is that change
whereby the ‘earthly, sensual, devilish’ mind is turned into
the mind which was in Christ’ This is the nature of the new birth.
So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.  

Thus, Wesley understood that the path of repentance and self-awareness,
justification, and new birth is the one and only way of salvation and the
restoration of our true identity. Outler states that Wesley’s sermon entitled,
“The Scripture Way of Salvation,” ably showed the relationship between
saving faith and sanctifying faith and was the best summation of the way of
salvation “in the entire sermon corpus.”

Conclusions
From the perspective of Wesleyan Methodism, when our true God given
core personal identity has been restored, we become “an habitation of God
through his Spirit,” and saints of the Most High God who are “partakers of
the inheritance of the saints in light.” To answer the question posed by
king David, we are the saints in whom God inhabits. This is our true, core
personal identity, and the foundation for all the other role or relational identities
that we carry. Each of us may wear many relational hats, but at the end of the
day we hang them all on the same hat-rack of our true, core personal identity.

I believe Wesley has clearly delineated the means, the only means, whereby
we can rid ourselves of our counterfeit identity and claim the inheritance that
accompanies our true core personal identity. It is through repentance, and the
self-awareness that is part and parcel of repentance, that we are enabled and
motivated to recognize and shed our counterfeit identity and thus begin the
journey to reclaim our true core personal identity.

Our search for identity is the quintessential question, and quest, of the
ages. The milestones in science that I have cited can have huge ramifications
for humanity’s search for identity because these discoveries can contribute to
the reduction of following false trails. The year 2009 marks the hundred and
fiftieth anniversary of the publication of the theory of evolution, a theory
that, among other things, proposes that we study the animal kingdom in order to find our own roots. The theory of evolution has been a long-standing bone of serious contention between creationists and atheistic evolutionists. It is a fact of considerable importance to any evangelist that the concept of theistic evolution not only can, but actually has been used to bridge the chasm between atheism and Christianity. Francis Collins is but one scientist who has passed over this bridge. Collins entered the realm of science as an atheist and has emerged as a Christian.

First, the idea of studying animals in order to understand human origins has not changed. What has changed is the idea that humans descended from apes, and this is no small thing. Considering that this long-standing belief remains so objectionable to creationists, perhaps the discovery of Ardi and the results of the Human Family Tree study can contribute to building a bridge of understanding between creationists and evolutionists. I note that while the idea that humans were created by God remains unpopular with some evolutionists, Christianity has made an impact upon the scientists involved in the The Genographic Project because they have chosen to name the single pair, from whom they say all humans have sprung, Scientific Adam and Scientific Eve.

Although I have known about the discovery of Ardi for perhaps only two months, this new, exciting understanding has had great impact on me as I consider the potential these discoveries present for world peace and the promotion of the kingdom of God. As opportunity presents itself, I can share this new information in a way that can be of comfort to others who also are in a quest for their identity.

Second, empirical evidence has been discovered that fosters the idea that there is really only one race, the human race, which is expressed in many different cultures and subcultures. From a theological viewpoint, why would God allow so many different cultures to arise, considering how divisive cultural and ethnic distinctions can become? From my reading of Wesley, I understand that it is only within the confines of society that a Christian can reach her or his full human God-given potential. Friction generated by society is the catalyst that produces the saints of God, and it is as saints that we find our true core personal identity and purpose.

Wesley saw that God is bigger than any one human being’s understanding can comprehend, and perhaps the multi-cultural approach is the best way for us, collectively, to understand God. For instance, my ethnically white, North American understanding of God has been immeasurably enriched by considering the viewpoint of my black, African Christian sisters’ and brothers’ understanding of God. My rugged individualistic, American perspective of God has been drawn much closer to God as I absorb the family concept of the Triune God as seen by collectivistic Christians of the Mediterranean and the East.
When two men who differed in skin color found out that they came from a common ancestor only ten thousand years ago they were shocked. One can only wonder how this new knowledge has affected the manner in which they view one another, now that they have had several months to digest this new thought. If people are willing, this new information can become a bridge of common understanding that could potentially bring huge rewards such as a reduction of racial tension, war and strife in our common society. These discoveries certainly add new meaning to old questions: Am I my brother’s keeper, and who exactly is my brother?

What will we do with this new information? These discoveries have caused me to re-examine my own view of myself and of people who may look different than me. I can see that we often fail to see the image of God either in ourselves or in each other. We erroneously think of our cultural differences as racial differences. We misinterpret small genetic differences, such as skin tone, that amount to less than one-tenth of one percent of our total genome, as racial differences. Yet, from the perspective of Wesleyan Methodism, these mistakes can be corrected as we progress along Wesley’s ordo salutis by truly understanding that these differences are only cultural differences, because there is only one human race in existence on this earth.

The next time I fill out a form that asks for my race, I will choose other and write in human. If enough people do this perhaps the authors of these forms will provide choices of cultures rather than so-called races. I note that in my Asbury Theological Seminary profile I am asked to answer a question called “Ethnic,” and the choice available to me is “white.” Middlesex University, in London, England, asks for “Ethnicity,” and the available choice for me is “Caucasian.” I can see that some progress is being made in recognizing that there is only one racial identity that we can choose - the human race.

Most of all, it has been my own personal experience, as a Christian springing from a Wesleyan heritage, that exchanging my counterfeit identity for my true identity, and realizing who I am, where I have come from, and where I am headed has brought an inner peace that equals the pearl of great price in value. With a firm and sure understanding of my core personal identity, I can better fulfill all of my many role identities. I can now be whole in my composite identity that includes my many relational identities, where each relational identity rests firmly upon the bedrock of my core personal identity.
Endnotes


2 In the realm of the social sciences alone, there are many ways to consider identity, such as philosophical, religious, political, national, cultural, gender and even sexual orientation identity.


4 John C. Bowmer, The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper in Early Methodism (Dacre Press: Westminster, 1951). Bowmer said “the term ‘Wesleyan Methodism’ seems to have been used, in its later connotation, from about 1822 onwards, when The Methodist Magazine became The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine,” thus changing its primitive meaning of “Methodism under the leadership of John Wesley” to include “other ‘Methodists’ which either broke away or sprang up of independent origin” (p. ix). However, “before the Methodist Union in 1932 ‘Wesleyan Methodism’ was used almost exclusively to distinguish the parent body from ‘Primitive Methodism’ and ‘United Methodism,’ the other two parties to the Union” (p. ix, footnote 2).

A. B. Hyde also uses the term “Wesleyan Methodism” in this same sense as a chapter heading when referring to early leaders of the Methodist movement who were under the direct guidance of John Wesley, Methodism: Tracing the Rise and Progress of That Wonderful Religious Movement, Which, Like the Gulf Stream, Has Given Warmth To Wide Waters and Verdure To Many Lands; and Giving An Account of Its Various Influences and Institutions of Today (Willey & Co: Greenfield, MA, 1887), chapter 16, pp. 211-219.


6 Any good dictionary can supply this information. I have used the American Heritage Dictionary.


8 Ibid.

9 John Wesley, Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament (New York: Lane & Scott, 1850), Acts 17:26, p. 325; emphasis is Wesley’s, to indicate biblical text.

10 Wesley, 2:478.


12 National Geographic Society and IBM Co., The Human Family Tree, a television special aired on the National Geographic cable channel on 8/30/2009.

13 Ibid. It is interesting to note that these names, given by the project scientists, allude to the biblical pair while yet clearly indicating a “scientific” difference.

14 Ibid. My point is not to discuss possible objections to this scientific data, such as how a pair living perhaps 90,000 years apart could be the ancestors of all of today’s humanity, but to use, and draw conclusions from, the empirical data. In any case, the researchers, themselves, did not seem to have a problem with this point.

15 Deep ancestry research traces genetic markers found in today’s human DNA back in terms of tens of thousands of years.


17 National Geographic Society and IBM Co., The Human Family Tree.

18 That there is only one race is certainly not a new idea. The father of India, Mohandas Gandhi, said, “There is only one race - the human race,” <http://www.communicate.co.uk/ne/nindo/page9.pt.html>, accessed on 10/30/2009. This quote was repeated by Yves Coppens, the palaeoanthropologist who discovered the fossil named Lucy that is referenced later in this paper, <http://www.thuram.org/index.php?idioma=in&seccion=there_is_only_one_race:_the_human_race>, accessed on 10/30/2009.

19 For a detailed discussion of human blood types please see this University of Arizona website: <http://www.biology.arizona.edu/Human_Bio/problem_sets/blood_types/Intro.html>, accessed 10/15/2009. The Website for The Human Family Tree project also supplies considerable detail about blood types and DNA markers.

20 During the colloquium discussion interchange (10/26/2009) held after the presentation of this paper, one student observed that although oppression may be removed, there is still a great need to deal with the trauma left by oppression.

21 All references to “Wesley” are to John Wesley unless otherwise indicated.

22 Wesley, Ser. 24, Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount: Discourse the Fourth, 1:533-534.

23 Wesley, 1:534.

24 Wesley, 1:536.

25 Wesley, 1:536, emphasis mine.

26 Shared in private conversation with Rev. P. H. P. Gutteridge, 1909-1998. Rev. Gutteridge may have gotten this idea from Emerson, who had all but the word desire.

27 It is an empirical, scientific fact that friction produces enough heat, such as that produced by the subduction of the Pacific tectonic plate under the North American plate, to create volcanic lava flows found, for instance, in the Cascade Range of America. Likewise, society can create tremendous heat that is sometimes felt in the form of war. The well known story of Corrie ten Boom is a beautiful illustration of how God builds Christian character through the extreme stress of war; see <http://www.corrietenboom.com/index_en.html>, accessed 11/20/2009, for more information.
Wesley, 1:480. Wesley emphatically said, one must first “know thyself!” so that one may press onward to the Kingdom of Heaven, Sermon 21: Sermon on the Mount, I. This is an oft repeated theme of Wesley’s.

Space precludes further discussion of character, but for more information on this subject from the Wesleyan perspective please see Wesley, The Character of a Methodist, 9:32-46, The Principles of a Methodist, 9:47-66.

Here, the Old Covenant is simply an equivalent way of referring to the Old Testament of the Bible, including the old Mosaic Covenant, based on human performance or works; The New Covenant refers to the New Testament that was established by Christ and is based on love. I have used the word covenant, rather than testament, to emphasize Wesley’s understanding that humanity is in a binding relationship with God. I realize that the Old Testament contains more than one “covenant.” My point is only to contrast the main difference between these two covenants, agreements, or testaments, as indicated by my use of italics in this paragraph.


Wesley devoted an entire sermon to this subject, Sermon 144, The Love of God, 4:331-345.

John 13:34-35, 15:12. Concerning loving God the law has not changed under the New Covenant, but in loving our neighbor the New Covenant raises the degree of love required, for we are now to love our neighbor as Christ loved us rather than simply love others as we love ourselves. This is why John writes in I John 2:7-8: “I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning…. A new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you.” Thus, the command to love our neighbor has not changed in principle but has changed in degree.

Luke 10:29-37

John Wesley, Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament (New York: Lane & Scott, 1850), Luke 10:37, p. 169; emphasis is Wesley’s, to indicate biblical text.

Wesley, Ser. 65, The Duty of Reproving our Neighbour, 2:514.


Wesley, Ser. 141, 4:292-303.

Ibid., 4:294.

Wesley was intimately familiar with the Greek text of I John 4:8 - ὃ μὴ ἀγαπῶν οὐκ ἔχει τῶν θεῶν. ὃτι ὃ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἔστιν (He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love). In this text, the first occurrence of love, ἀγαπῶν, is a verb; the second occurrence, ἀγάπη, is a noun.

Wesley, Ser. 129, Heavenly Treasure in Earthen Vessels, 4:164.


The Jackson edition of Wesley’s Works contains eight general references that Wesley makes to Aristotle, showing that Wesley was familiar with Aristotle’s writings.

This website provides a brief history of evolutionary thinking before Darwin, accessed 11/15/2009.


About 1749. This website provides a brief history of evolutionary thinking before Darwin, accessed 10/1/2009.

Buffon published the first volumes of his encyclopedia in 1749; the final volumes were published in 1804, nearly sixteen years after his death.<http://www.english.upenn.edu/Projects/knarf/Buffon/buffon.html>

Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, 1707-1788, wrote *Histoire Naturelle*, an encyclopedia of 44 volumes, wherein he said the earth was much older than 6,000 years, <http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/history/buffon2.html>, accessed on 11/15/2009.


A discussion of “evolution and creationism” would certainly be a worthy subject for a doctoral dissertation.

I.e., Wesley’s belief in creationism vs. atheistic creationism or theistic creationism, as will be shown.

This Roman Catholic website is sealed with the Nihil Obstat (Bernadeane Carr, STL, Censor Librorum, August 10, 2004), and Imprimatur (Robert H. Brom, Bishop of San Diego, August 10, 2004).


The government coordinated *Human Genome Project* was a 13-year-long study that was completed in 2003. The goals of this project included identifying all of the genes in human DNA and determining the chemical base pair sequences so that this information can be made available to the private sector for further study. <http://www.ornl.gov/sci/techresources/Human_Genome/home.shtml>, accessed 11/1/2009.


Exploration of the relationship between creationism and theistic evolution could produce many fine papers. Indeed, each position is a viable and potential subject in its own right.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Wesley, 4:293-295.

John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (New York: Lane & Scott, 1850), Luke 10:37, p. 169. Wesley said that it is the common ancestry in which we all share that binds humanity together.


Wesley raises this specific question in Sermon 9, *The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption*, 1:259. He is quoting Romans 7:24.


The ‘Five Points’ of Calvinism are remembered by the acronym, TULIP: Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, and the Perseverance of the saints.

Wesley, Sermon 106, *On Faith*: And whosoever in every nation believes thus far the Apostle declares is ‘accepted of him,’ 3:497


Wesley, Sermon 14, *The Repentance of Believers*.

Wesley, Sermon 79: *On Dissipation*, 3:123.

Ibid.


Ibid.


Wesley, Sermon 4, *Scriptural Christianity*, 1:159-180. This sermon was delivered on August 24, 1744.

Ibid. Outler points out that Wesley never regretted preaching this sermon, and he cites Wesley's journal entry, dated Friday, August 24, 1781 - nearly forty years after the event: “I am now clear of the blood of these men. I have fully delivered my own soul,” 1:115.


Outler, “An Introductory Comment” to Sermon 43, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, 2:154. Due to space limitations I will simply refer the reader to this sermon for more information on Wesley’s understanding of the way of Salvation.


The term ordo salutis, the way of salvation, is used frequently by Outler in his various introductions to individual sermons written by Wesley. This term describes the “successive stages from repentance to experienced holiness” (Albert Outler, 1:165, footnote 61).

Cf. Matthew 13:46, KJV.
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CHRIS KIESLING AND LALSANGKIMA PACHUAU

Identity Formation for Conciliatory Existence: How We Perceive the Other

Abstract

In this article we interface mission, theology and psychology in an exploration of what hinders and what enables conciliatory existence. Whereas common approaches to reconciliation focus on redressing past wrongs, we propose identity formation that would prevent such wrongs. We consider how people integrate elements of their social context into a social identity that influences how they perceive “the other.”

Understanding this to be divine action that transforms psychological processes, we draw from all three disciplines to understand the dynamics of how we come to see the other.

Biblical theology provides penetrating narratives into the nature of fallen humanity and its proclivity toward self-aggrandizement and strife. Psychosocial analysis recognizes that the processes of socialization so necessary to promote belonging and identity formation, are also quite capable of turning others into objects of scorn and hatred. Yet, both theology and psychology, posit that despite however distorted human nature may be, it has the potential of being re-created. We locate the work of reconciliation as beginning with the being and action of God on behalf of humanity and demonstrated powerfully in the transformation of the apostles in the book of Acts.

Key words: reconciliation, identity, prejudice, missiology, koinonia

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Asbury Seminary, where both the authors of this paper teach, is located in a small Kentucky town. On one occasion, I (Chris) phoned one of our students about an academic matter and asked at the onset of the conversation how he and his family were faring. “Great,” said the student, “my son is outside with a number of other children and I just realized that there are seven nations playing in my backyard.” Not only was I struck by the glad tidings in his voice at finding such a rich place of communal living for his seminary work, I thought there was something of an eschatological vision in his salient statement.

We are theologians with specializations in missiology (Kima) and in developmental psychology (Chris). These disciplines, global events, and our own radically different life experiences, have brought us to consider how people integrate elements of their social context into a social identity that influences how they perceive “the other.” Kima grew up Mizo, his family went through civil war and military atrocities in the northeast part of India. Chris grew up in West Texas, often referred to then as the “bible belt” of American Christianity. Our lives have been touched differently through the years by growing ethnic, racial, national, religious and sexual diversity. Yet, despite the different sociological contexts of our origins, we share a concern that is felt most everywhere. Diversity has rarely produced a global sandbox of contented play among the peoples of the world; but rather has fomented conflicts that in many cases have threatened the annihilation of people groups. While we acknowledge that human community has come a long way in the process of globalizing worldviews, it is the “proximate other” who remains the most difficult to deal with (Smith 1985, 5). One can easily romanticize people of distant lands or dismiss those who do not challenge our sense of identity. However, the reality seems to be that closer interactions created by technology and required in the global economy have just as often brought more tension than alleviated it. At the core of the issue is “being other” and dealing with “the other.” Indeed, the tendency to rank the other (ethnic or cultural group) often leads to a perception of the self as either superior or inferior, which in turn produces prejudicial attitudes, and more often than not, identity-based tensions and conflicts.

I (Kima) have explored the relational aspects of identity formation in relation to the theology of reconciliation in some of my earlier works (Pachuau 2007 and 2009). Reconciliation is historically talked about as righting the
Reconciliation comes first from God who gives us the ministry of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:18). Based on God’s reconciling work in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are endowed with the ministry of reconciliation between and among peoples. However, whereas the most common approach to reconciliation is focused on redressing past wrongs and retrospectively restoring relations, this approach seems limited. A comprehensive Christian ministry of reconciliation must move beyond only addressing the wrongs of the past, and should also seek to prevent such wrongs from happening. Therefore, functionally speaking, an important goal of the Christian ministry of reconciliation is to form an identity for a conciliatory existence. Ephesians 2:11-22 provides a clear explanation of how God’s work in Christ reconciles differing peoples (Jews and Gentiles) by “putting to death the hostility” (Eph. 2:13-14) between conflicting peoples, and by forming a new identity (“new creation” II Cor. 5:18) in us to witness to His reconciling works.

So, in this paper we interface mission, theology and psychology in an exploration of what hinders and what enables conciliatory existence. We marvel in the work of the Holy Spirit to cleanse the perceptual schemata by which we view the “other.” Understanding this to be divine action that transforms psychological processes, we draw from all three disciplines to understand the dynamics of how we come to see the other. We begin with a look at Creation in the design of a Trinitarian God, contending that the first chapter of Genesis offers remarkable insight into the nature of God, the nature of humanity, and the expected moral relations that we are privileged to have toward Him and toward one another. We set this in contrast with the portrait of humanity that immediately follows after humanity decides on a course of treason.

Creation and the Fall

The narrative presented to us in Genesis 1 is that the Trinitarian godhead, in apparent dialogue with one other, creates human beings in His own image, a likeness of his own “community of divinity.” So God brings forth “man” – a generic term that the passage makes explicit is inclusive of both male and female, to reflect His divine community. Both male and female are charged by Yahweh to care for creation and to multiply upon the earth. It is their complementariness and their capacity to create life that reflects the divine image, the difference within the oneness of the Godhead. The ontological nature of the Trinity, suggests Plantinga, is that no part of the godhead can be defined apart from the mutual interiority of the other (Volf, 1996). Hence, being created in the image of God situates the other as partner in the completion of the self. (Anderson, 2001). Hence, it is in the relational nature of human beings (individual as well as social or group relations), that the
Trinitarian image can be seen. As Trinitarian theology forms our understanding of personhood, so can it shape our conceptions of conciliatory existence with others. Recognizing the image of God in others and their essentiality for the shaping of our own identity (i.e., accepting that we are being completed by them) is foundational for conciliatory existence.

Hence, Adam perceives Eve as one like unto himself, perfectly suitable for companionship. With her, his own personhood will now be defined and so will hers be defined in relation to him. In fact, the freedom that Adam and Eve each possess will be exercised in its full impact on the other, on creation, within themselves and on their relation to God (Anderson, 2001). In Creation, male and female stand together in solidarity and co-humanity before their Creator. Both mutually receive the blessing of God and the divine charge to procreate. Both are given the privilege of serving as co-regents over the earth, exercising a shared dominion over all other living things in the created order (Joy, 2000). In all of the creative acts of God in this opening chapter of Genesis, it is only humans that are addressed by God, indicating that they are uniquely made for relationship with him and with one another, created as persons free to act and to make choices. In the very nature of the Triune God, that is, in the dialectics of the oneness and difference of the three Persons, we can begin to think of how human community is created to be one amidst cultural and gender differences. It is in the presence of another that we learn our common identity. However, important in any consideration of conciliatory existence is the balance between a person’s or a group’s needs for individuality and independence and the necessity of subordinating one’s uniqueness in order to find common ground and belongingness. Too much identity assertiveness comes at the expense of mutuality, too much accommodation comes at the expense of psychological subordination. An important starting point for conciliatory existence is then to recognize the common divine image within each of us, but to recognize that in this divine image is unity within diversity.

As the narrative unfolds however, both the man and the woman exercise their individual freedom in an attempt to gain moral autonomy - the knowledge of good and evil. The consequences are devastating, God is usurped and the joy of seeing the other as companion - one made like me for oneness - vanishes. When God moves to evoke confession from the man, in fear and shame, Adam responds with blame and accusation. Eve is now seen as threatening and becomes scapegoated. Adam does not call her by name, but points the finger at her and at God saying, “the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” (Gen 3:12). Ray Anderson (2001) notes that the very structure of humanity is now shattered for “No longer is human personhood in the form of co-humanity the criteria for moral responsibility (p. 209).”
This rift between Adam and Eve becomes further shredded with the next generation; the murder of Able at the hands of his brother Cain. Miroslav Volf (1996) described processes that accompany our exclusions of others, among which are: abandonment, dominance, and elimination. By the third chapter of Genesis, these three consequently follow after humanity’s act of treason. Adam goes silent and seems to abandon Eve when the tempting serpent begins his deceit. Differentiation between the man and the woman turns to dominance as the consequence of the fall is described – “your desire shall be for your husband and he will rule over you.” And now, the complete elimination of one’s own brother occurs in an act of murder. The far-reaching consequences of how humanity’s rebellion against God so quickly filters into how we see and regard those closest to us is staggering. Our failure to see the image of God in ourselves and others often leaves us vulnerable, seeking our security and significance in our own efforts to find an alternate anchor for our identity, a task that often comes at the expense of others.

John Steinbeck (1952), in his novel, *East of Eden*, yields insight to the prototypic nature of the Cain and Able narrative. Cain, he suggests, is representative of all of us, who in our fallen state and for whatever reason, fail to find a sense of being ultimately accepted. When the non-acceptance runs deep, one’s identity can become fashioned by insecurity and rejection, which then becomes projected outward. At a pivotal point in the novel, Steinbeck has one of his characters muse about the Cain and Able story:

> I think this is the best-known story in the world because it is everybody’s story. I think it is the symbol of the human soul. I’m feeling my way now – don’t jump on me if I’m not clear. The greatest terror a child can have is that he is not loved, and rejection is the hell he fears. I think everyone in the world to a large or small extent has felt rejection. And with rejection comes anger, and with anger some kind of crime in revenge for the rejection, and with the crime guilt [and shame] – and there is the story of mankind. . .it is all there – the start, the beginning. One child, refused the love he craves, kicks the cat and hides the secret guilt; and another steals so that the money will make him loved; and a third conquers the world – and always the guilt and revenge and more guilt. Therefore I think this old and terrible story is important because it is a chart of the soul (p.268-269).

The summons for Cain, as it is regarded in Steinbeck’s novel, is to not allow his non-acceptance, forged from perceptions of his standing relative to his brother, to become definitive of his destiny - “sin is crouching at the door; it’s desire is for you, but you mayest master it.” The pivotal word in the Steinbeck novel is the discovery of this Hebrew word, *timshel*, translated in
the novel as “mayest.” Whereas some translations have God say “Thou shalt master it” and others “Do thou” master, the translation of timshel as “Thou mayest” makes all the difference.

Now, there are many millions in their sects and churches who feel the order, ‘Do thou’ and throw their weight into obedience. And there are millions more who feel predestination in ‘Thou Shalt.’ Nothing they may do can interfere with what will be. But ‘Thou mayest!’ Why, that makes a man great, that gives him stature with the gods, for in his weakness and his death and his murder of his brother he has still the great choice. He can choose his course and fight it through and win (301-302).

For Steinbeck then, this is every one’s story and everyone’s dilemma: How does one overcome the natural and easy vengefulness of the human spirit that arises from the proximal other?

God approaches Cain with a question that emerges from the presupposition of brotherhood or what Anderson (2001) has called “co-humanity” (209) – “Where is your brother Able?” Cain’s response evidences the same abandonment of concern for the other that had been exemplified by his father’s turn from Eve - “I do not know, am I my brother’s keeper?”

Yet, despite being devoured, God is not through with rebellious humanity, or even with murderous Cain. In a remarkable act of grace, God becomes a moral advocate for Cain. Rather than banishing him from the human social order or allowing reciprocal vengeance to escalate between the subsequent families, God places a mark on Cain permitting him to live within the human community without fear of retaliation, (Anderson, 2001, 209). Even in these early Biblical narratives, Yahweh acts as moral advocate, initiating measures toward conciliatory existence.

But if there is precaution and challenge for those who feel what they have to offer is unacceptable, there is equal precaution to be made to those whose identity allows them to feel favored. Such was the case with Israel. What missiologists often refer to as “the scandal of particularity,” i.e., the calling of a particular person or nation by God is a biblical teaching that often upsets modern readers. God calls Israel to be his people, his chosen ones (Deut. 7:6) – an identity intended to serve as a witness to the rest, becomes far less than conciliatory. Reading the history of the formation of Israel as God’s people in the Bible, missiologists relate the tension between God’s call for his people to be a “people for other” and the people’s propensity toward a self-centered view of their call. Among the “false ideas around the doctrine of election,” Lesslie Newbigin named “the idea that election is election to privileged status before God” as the first and most obvious one (Newbigin 1989, 84). In the story of Israel in the Old Testament, “there is an ambivalent attitude toward other nations,” says David Bosch. Positive attitude toward other nations can
be pieced together from the Old Testament as recipients of God’s salvation as promised in Abraham to be a blessing, while the nations are also presented negatively as Israel’s political enemies or rivals. Such ambivalence and the strong Israel-centeredness of the Old Testament led Bosch to conclude that “on the issue of mission we run into difficulties” in the Old Testament (Bosch 1992, 16–19). Studies in the past have concluded that it was “the apostasy of Israel” to understand its election as favoritism (Blauw 1962, 23) that has led to Israel-centeredness of the Old Testament. Such a self-understanding of God’s privileged people had prevented Israel from practicing its missional duty. In fact, it has clouded the missional nature of the entire Old Testament.

In a recent study on God’s mission in the Bible, Christopher Wright argued that “the whole Bible is itself a missional phenomenon” in that mission is the basis of the Bible not just that the Bible is the basis of mission (Wright 2006, 22). From that point of view (of understanding God as “the God of Mission”), Wright makes a strong case for the mission of God’s people in the Old Testament based on the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12: 1–3) which he argued “is the single most important biblical tradition within a biblical theology of mission and a missional hermeneutic of the Bible.” Yet, God’s mission of blessing all nations is mentioned scarcely outside Genesis in the OT. If the self-centeredness of Israel overshadowed this missional nature of Israel’s biblical religion, it contradicts the very purpose of election for other-centeredness (other-oriented nature) of God’s mission.

So, Cain and Able are two brothers with radically different identities—one a sheepherder, the other a tiller of the ground. Co-existence became impossible for them and ends in elimination by the one who felt disregarded. Israel, delivered, set apart and blessed to be a blessing to other nations; turns their election into favoritism and their particularization into separation and fear of defilement by the other. Neither ends in what God intended, and both have to be corrected by the intervention of God. Looking through a theological lens, it seems readily apparent, that East of Eden, humanity is hardly inclined toward conciliatory existence. Sin brings enmity; and enmity in the vertical relationship plays out in enmity within, enmity with those closest in proximity, and enmity with all of Creation. But if our premise is correct that spiritual realities operate through psychological processes, we should find evidence of similar proclivities in the psychology of identity formation. For this we turn to a consideration of Erik Erikson, highly regarded for his insights into psychosocial identity formation.

Erik H. Erikson: Prejudice as Normative Self-idealization

In 1970, Erik Erikson retired from his professorship at Harvard University and launched one final initiative that centered around what he called the
Conference on the Adult. Carol Hoare in her book, *Erikson on Adulthood* (2002), reports on the unpublished papers of Erikson that flowed from this conference. We draw heavily from this book in this section. Erikson had lived through two world wars and had begun writing about the dangers of violence in a nuclear age. Through this conference, Erikson gathered scholars in a quest to surface insight about the generative potential and developmental pinnacle of adulthood (Hoare, 2002). He recognized that ego investments across the lifespan change and he was eager to promote the ways that identity could express itself in the adult years through love and work (intimacy and generativity). Through this conference he sought to chronicle images of adulthood that would provide conceptual itineraries whereby defensiveness and protection of one's own preferred customs could be overcome and ideological commitments could be embraced in an ever expanding social world. With nuclear annihilation probable, it seemed essential to Erikson to fashion ways that would encourage a collective abandonment of prejudice, or what he termed "pseudo-speciation" (Hoare, 2002). This challenge was exacerbated in the Western world, especially in the United States, precisely because conventional identity development moves one toward a kind of autonomy that made the embrace of higher ethical and relational forms of engagement difficult (Hoare, 2002). How this occurs, and how it might be overcome, is instructive for our understanding of identity formation as conciliatory existence.

A keen observer of human behavior, Erikson recognized that prejudice originates from normative self-idealization. In other words, the natural tendency of developing individuals, longing to belong, is to hold membership in particular groups with which they identify. These groups by nature inculcate identification among members by expressing preferences, showing biases, requiring adherence to particular standards, and holding ideological positions that provide clarity to who they are (Hoare, 2002). Groups naturally move to evoke a belief in their own specialness. Erikson found this sense of self-idealization everywhere; in nations, professions, clubs, neighborhoods, races, families, politics, and in the legends that people use to narrate their identities. Hence, he sought to explain how it occurs rather naturally at various points along the lifespan.

In childhood, for example, Erikson would have us consider the moral and religious codes parents interject into their children. Even in infancy, the quid pro quo reciprocal interactions as a mother smiles and bestows "yeses" that convey desired responses establish a sort of moral nursery for the child. Rather quickly, oft repeated rituals provide familiarity for a child, who first becomes habituated to them and then develops a preference for them because of the familiar expectancy they provide for daily experience. Connected to these rituals are powerful positive and negatives imprints of what constitutes
clean, good, correct, industrious, trustworthy, and other such values (Hoare, 2002). In the West, for example, parental warnings and directives are given about what constitutes cleanliness; efficiency is epitomized as of highest value, and those who show initiative are prized for their industriousness. In the East, what is honorable in the society is what parents try to interject in their children. Children may honor or shame their parents based on the social norms set by the society, and thus, the society has much to say in the upbringing of the children. Not only do these create and sanction particular preferences in children, they also teach one to project negative identity elements that one must avoid. Indeed, Erikson realized that when the childrearing views of others are regarded as harmful or deviant, it becomes easy to label one’s neighbor as monstrous. Take for instance the practice of one tribal group who practiced thumping their babies heads to evoke a rage response necessary to insure their future as brave warriors. Such a practice in many cultures today would be regarded as abusive because the intended outcome of development is not shared.

As children become imprinted through identification and socialization toward parental ideals and preferences, so likewise, do adolescents find identity largely through group affiliations. Eager to find an ideology to be loyal to, an adolescent identifies with and begins to define themselves according to particular perspectives and a shared world view. Habits, roles, beliefs, language, fashion easily come to absolutize a particular interpretive view of the world, perpetuated by the peer group, whereby anyone different can be easily repudiated. In fact, the “out-group” often comes to provide a screen whereby the “in-group” can project elements of an identity they wish to avoid (Hoare, 2002). By so doing however, Erikson illuminates the natural human inclination to locate one’s personal devil and evil as residing not in one’s own domain but rather as existent in the domain of others (Hoare, 2002). Identity formation necessarily involves making distinctions in the adolescent years of who I am and who I am not, consolidating various identifications into a core sense of self. Once attained, realized Erikson, not only is there specific content given to the identity, but there also develops a logic to safeguard the identity once consolidated (Hoare, 2002). The quite natural, and perhaps appropriately self-protective strategy, is to exclude any inimical or foreign influences. Often, the child, now turned adolescent, has replaced external parental requirements by incorporating particular values into the domain of their own conscience. Self-idealization naturally follows, Erikson explains, whereby a person comes to be convinced that the version of humanity offered by their group and incorporated into their own sense of self is best. Group solidarity then perpetuates forbidden boundaries, often unconsciously, not only by which others are excluded, but in its most dramatic fashion, from which the “in group” inadvertently creates a sense of “manifest destiny” (Hoare, 2002). We
should mention here however, that there may be an opposite tendency in minority groups to incorporate into their psyche the derisive opinions the majority group holds of them. Unconsciously colluding with this diminished status, a person may turn negative self-assessments inward to depression and/or self-hatred or outward toward dependency or aggression. This toxic shame has to be acknowledged and validated or it will always sabotage attempts at conciliatory existence (Fowler, 1992.)

I (Chris) can think of several examples from my own life. As a junior in college I had the privilege of spending a month in Europe. In the youth hostels we were staying in I remember meeting an attractive woman about my age and wondering what it might be like to have a romantic interest in someone from another culture. My supposition was quickly squelched however when she lifted her arm and I discovered that Europeans don’t shave their armpits. At that point in my life, whatever initial attraction might have been, could not overcome the violation of inbred propriety and supposed hygiene. She remained to me nameless because I had now identified her as “strange.” Erikson likened the way humans erect fences, laws, customs and words to keep others out, to that of animals that spray the periphery of their properties with excretions to show where others best not step. With a maturing of my perception and sensibilities, the outcome may have been quite different. Similarly, not long ago I witnessed a German family verbally attack a Nigerian security officer at the airport for the lack of efficiency in getting them through customs. When habituated expectations go unmet, it is easy to repudiate that which is different and to locate the problem not in ourselves but in the other. It is not difficult to elevate these dynamics to gross atrocities. By inflating identity fears and warning of a culture’s potential demise, nations annihilate one another, securing their own identity by forcing others to relinquish theirs.

One might hope that higher levels of understanding and the gift of a secured identity would enable a different orientation toward others among adults, and this is indeed part of what Erikson hoped to help fashion. In reality however, adults seemed to become more prejudiced than less so. Part of the explanation Erikson offers revisits the effect of repetitive ritual and habituation on adults. As the world became increasingly bent toward mechanization, tool use and technology was put in the service of providing rapid and frequent mass production. With rapid mechanization and the development of technology, Erikson pointed out, intellect functions in such a way that it becomes routinized, requiring less awareness in the completion of tasks - i.e. one rarely thinks about how a tool is being used or about why one might be doing it (Hoare, 2002). Tools and technology are used for pragmatic reasons and for expediency. Furthermore to increase productivity it follows that making repetitive as many tasks and procedures as possible is
desirable, so the mind can be free of the encumbrance of having to consider
every move it makes. Hence, mindless activity become the norm. One can go
through the routine of getting ready in the morning almost mindless of the
procedure they are following; one can shop in a familiar grocery store while
thinking about other things; one can direct the mind in one direction while
multi-tasking with another activity requiring less attention. So accustomed
do we become to these conventions, that if they are interfered with, significant
agitation can occur. Consider the internal angst created when there is no hot
water, when the local grocery restructures where things are located or when the
cell phone use is interrupted. Hence, adults come to inadvertently submit
to acquired methods, defined roles and institutional norms and standards.
The result is that identity becomes vested not in ideological commitments
but in the safety of work roles in organizational life (Hoare, 2002). The
mind then no longer becomes free, vital or animated but constricts to
narrow bias and rigidity.

This reality, Erikson felt, was especially true of institutionalized religion
inasmuch as its rituals propagated patterned prejudices against those who
saw the world differently. Although Erikson sought to avoid detracting from
the potential generative power of religion for the good, he also recognized
that narrowly patterned behavior and thought easily deteriorated into isms:
ritualism, moralism, ceremonialism, legalism, perfectionism, authoritarianism,
absolutism and dogmatism (Hoare, 2002). All of which contribute to the
thwarting of peaceful coexistence. Prejudice in a time of technology may be
especially treacherous because harm, or even elimination of another, can be
inflicted by one who is largely visibly removed from the conflict.

Hence, Erikson mapped the developmental relations between a child’s
eyarly imprinting and later adult biases. On the one hand, he recognized the
need for “sponsoring collectives” whereby a person might find identity in
affiliation with groups (Hoare, 2002), and he noted the importance of groups
to espouse cohesive views. On the other hand, he recognized that adults
become enmeshed in over-adjustment to work roles, resistant to encounter
and challenge. He especially hoped to help us see how religion, when focused
on scrupulous ritual, could serve to diminish conscience rather than to form it.

However, though Erikson felt adults would grow increasingly resistant to
transcendence, he also held out hope that if people could gain a comprehension
of their unconscious accumulated biases, and if they gained a deep sense of
empathy, they might be enabled to move beyond their ego-primary identity,
their sanctioning of reciprocity as the highest form of justice, and live into
more inclusive identities. Erikson’s term for what was needed was “insight”
- a listening with the heart both to how others are positioned in life and to
one’s own inner voice that compelled an enacting of truth for which one was
willing to live or die (Hoare, 2002). Through insight, one could do for others
what would aid their growth, regardless of whether reciprocity was guaranteed.

Erikson recognized that developing such an awareness could create significant dissonance, but he regarded as critical developing the capacity of perspective taking as antidotal to overcoming the natural assumption of ethnic, class, religious, or historical superiority. The needed awareness was that culture existed both inside a person's perceptual apparatus by which they view the world; and externally in the ideational modes of thought and behavioral norms held by others (Hoare, 2002). Erikson noted for example, how the historical reality of American being an independent nation, emerging as an ever expanding frontier, embeds within notional ideas of freedom and the idealization of newness into our collective psyches (Hoare).

Interestingly, Erikson believed what we call conciliatory existence in this work could be fostered not so much via a system of thought, as much as it would be discovered experientially through responsible love and care. Mutuality and leeway – i.e. the capacity to give freedom to others to be themselves, while yet engaging in shared participation with a minimum level of defensiveness, would best be attained through the accrual of virtues gained through the stages of life, virtues that would finally endow one with wisdom (Hoare, 2002). Wisdom entailed ego integrity that emerges from sustained mutual intimacy, generative care for others, and an adherence to principles and convictions. Wisdom in its fullness would exemplifies a generosity of being that flows from the cultivation of the interdependent self, missed by those who could never relinquish the needs of the self to share in cooperative living and the honoring of commitments. Wisdom showed others the way to be and the way to act, thereby insuring a fund of trust and hope for future generations.

Integration, critique and concluding thoughts

Biblical theology provides penetrating narratives into the nature of fallen humanity and its proclivity toward self-aggrandizement and strife. Psychosocial analysis recognizes that the processes of socialization so necessary to promote belonging and identity formation are also quite capable of turning others into objects of scorn and hatred. Yet, both theology and psychology posit that despite however distorted human nature may be, it has the potential of being re-created. In Steinbeck this possibility opens by positing that any human being may master those negative identity fragments that seek to become definitive of identity. As Wesleyan theologians, we affirm the emphasis on destiny that is not fated, but we claim that the capacities to make moral choices for good are themselves an enablement of grace. Just as Yahweh becomes the moral advocate that provides a way for Cain to co-exist and be returned to humanity without retaliation, so do we locate the work of reconciliation as beginning with the being and action of God on behalf of humanity. God's reconciling work with the human is the restoration of that
relation with God and the relationship between and among humans in the way it was meant to be. Trinitarian theology provides us with a fundamentally transformative and pedagogical dialectic that can be set in opposition to current sociological pressures that by default typically become definitional for personhood (Groome, 1980).

With Erikson we affirm that identity is inherently psychosocial and deeply influenced by familial and societal contexts. We began this paper with theological reflections affirming a view of personhood that reflects being created in the image of a Trinitarian being. Akin to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, any one of us can only be explained by the web of relationships in which we find our being (Kinlaw, 2005). As Dennis Kinlaw observes in his reflection of Jesus’ relationship with the Father, “none of us are self-originating, none of us are self-sustaining, none of us are self-explanatory, and none of us are self-fulfilling.”

We also find meaningful the conceptual itinerary and directives Erikson suggests to move us to aspects that transcend autonomous identity. We share the importance of gaining insight into ourselves and others that comes from deep intuition and the jettisoning of defensive posturing. We find resonance with Erikson’s assertion that offering sustained care to others may be more beneficial than rational argument in moving one toward new perceptions of the other (1 Cor 13). Similarly, we recognize the immense value of empathizing in such a way that multiple perspectives are entered into and taken into account in conflictual situations (Acts 9), and we affirm that the accrual of particular virtues through resolution of developmental tasks lends itself to relational betterment. Yet, consonant with our critique of Steinbeck, we find Erikson overly optimistic that human beings have within themselves and others the capacity to re-orient the heart away from self-interest. Our theology compels us to believe that if conciliatory existence is to be realized, it will not be found in acts that originate with us or by us, but from our receptivity to the Word and Spirit that flows from the missional heart of God.

As a relational being, the human person constructs his/her identity-consciousness in interaction with the other. Between the “sameness” and the “difference” seen in the other, one forms ideas of who and what he/she is. This is in sharp contradistinction to constructing identity through processes aimed at individuation or autonomy. A healthy acceptance of the other as other and the otherness of the other is key in opening space in the self for the other. Such an acceptance comes, as indicated earlier, in recognizing the essentiality of the other in the very formation of the self. In his popular study, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks wrote “identity divides” (Sacks 2003,10). But a healthy acceptance of one’s identity in relation to the other leads to unity. Therefore, we can say that identity also unites (Pachuau 2009, 54). In this sense, identity not only unites those who share the common identity, but
also those who are of different identities. Such a healthy sense of identity built on Trinitarian theological understanding and expressed in the creation of “co-humanity” in the image of the Triune God is key to ministering God’s reconciliation.

Christian theology of mission originates in the mission of the Triune God. The mutual interiority among the three persons is also expressed in exteriority, so to speak, of the divine self-donation and self-sending in the person of the Son and in the person of the Spirit. As Miroslav Volf so aptly articulates, the self-donation of Christ becomes the construct for conciliatory identity by positing the opening of space within ourselves to receive the other (Volf 1996). It is the person and work of Christ that becomes the basis of God’s reconciliation (II Cor. 5) and the reconciliation between peoples (Eph. 2: 11-22). But if there is conciliatory existence patterned in the self-donation of Christ that breaks the walls of hostility, so is there conciliatory existence patterned in the life of the Spirit. Being created in the image of God and being restored by God in Christ in the power of the Spirit, we are called to live such a conciliatory existence.

In a wonderful devotional commentary on the book of Acts, titled *Mastery*, E. Stanley Jones (1955) points out that if the way of salvation and kingdom living offered in Jesus had simply been proclamation, and not incarnation, we would only have words. We needed demonstration, so we could see the life of God lived out among us; and we have it offered in the person of Jesus. However, this is not all that is needed, argues Jones. Just as we needed the incarnation of the Divine Person in order to understand God, so do we need the Divine Order enfleshed so that we can grasp the Kingdom of God. The book of Acts, suggests Jones, offers a portrait of the Holy Spirit upon the framework of human living in such a way that we are given a demonstration of the Divine Order, “the Kingdom in cameo” (Jones, 1955, vii), a portrait of humans living in conciliatory existence with each other and towards those they encounter.

Consider the formational and missional center of the book of Acts. The early chapters record the event of Pentecost, usually celebrated as the birth of the church. Jones (1955) points out however that the Greek word for church (“ecclesia”) does not appear in the early chapters of Acts. The reality that does appear is the fellowship or (“koinonia”). This koinonia, constituted by people from virtually every nation, and mysteriously endowed by the Spirit for witness, exemplifies the mobility and freedom of sacrificial commitment to birth unlimited demonstrations of conciliatory existence. The constitution of the koinonia itself is a witness to the overcoming of linguistic, cultural, and religious barriers through the power of the Spirit. But not only was this true with the in-group, it was also manifested toward those in the out-group. Jones focuses on the astonishing witness of Peter, standing with the other
Spirit-filled followers of Christ, facing the men “whose hands were still red with the blood of their Master. (Jones, 114). Luke records the speech in Acts 2:29; 3:17 – “Brethren, I may say to you confidently . And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance as did your rulers.” Magnanimous in his address, calling the murderers of Jesus “brethren;” and reminiscent of their Master’s word from the cross “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do;” the disciples appear to have caught the mind and heart of their master. Gone, says Jones, was the spirit of wanting to call down fire from heaven on those who wouldn’t receive them; gone was the drawing of the sword to cut off the right ears; they were now doing and actualizing what the Master had told them – “Love your enemies.” (Jones, 114). The result among those Peter was confronting was equally astonishing. Dumbfounded and their conscience pricked, they were cut to heart and asked in what was now a kindred spirit - “Brethren, what shall we do?”

Using the title of his book, Jones (1955) proceeds to chronicle the structure and collective life that emerged, in part, a fellowship made out of former enemies:

- overcoming of privilege based on blood or social standing
- abolishing of the inferior status of women
- conciliation between youth and age
- mastery over social and race distinctions
- healing of inner conflict and cleansing of the subconscious
- relinquishment of negative, ingrown and critical attitudes
- reformation of trying to change the world and others first
- humility replacing always having to be right

It would be naive and overly-simplistic to assume that any one approach to conciliatory existence can be prescribed. Ethnic identity alone and the complex histories that accompany people groups makes absolutizing any approach to conciliatory existence problematic. The balance between individuality or identity assertion and connectedness or psychological subordination for the sake of the other will no doubt differ depending on the social landscape of a given situation. Yet, for those who regard their being as flowing from the image of a Trinitarian God, who follow the crucified and risen Christ, and who seek to walk by His spirit, can only be astounded by the conciliatory acts of this God. Perhaps none is so profound as that which is enacted each time the communion cup is passed and the words are re-presented once again, “on the very night in which Jesus was betrayed, he took the bread ...and he took the cup.” These were the elements that would become sacramental as the breaking of his own body and the pouring out of his own blood would soon make efficacious. Yet, at this moment, when invoking them must have brought him to a place of remarkable personal vulnerability, he offers them even to the one he knows will betray him. If Christ can offer his own broken body and spilled
out blood to his betrayer, how far might his followers go in their offers of conciliatory existence?

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WENDY PETERSON

*An Aboriginal Missiology of Identity Reclamation: Towards Revitalization for Canada’s Indigenous Peoples through Healing of Identity*

**Abstract**

This essay concerns the failure by Canada’s Indigenous people to fully apprehend and embrace the Christian doctrine of *imago Dei*. The concern is founded upon the negative self-perception and perceived inferiority of Aboriginal peoples as less-than the Caucasian majority. Is this a failure of transmission on the part of missionaries, or is it a failure of reception on the part of Aboriginals? The premise is that both the theology of mission and the practice of mission with Aboriginal people must take into account the issue of self-perception and the problem of identity formation. The question is asked, Is there a missiology which will affirm the Creator’s love for diversity—for the particularity of his creation—that will better serve Canada’s Aboriginal peoples? Understandings of the Self and Identity are investigated from the disciplines of Sociology and Anthropology. A preliminary missiological discussion highlights the main features of a proposed Aboriginal theology of Mission.

**Key words:** Aboriginal, Indigenous, reclamation, revitalization, identity, postmodern, *imago Dei.*

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Caucasian missionaries plus Christian and Traditional First Nations men and women gathered to discuss Indigenous issues in a Winnipeg, Manitoba, church. As we sat in a talking circle, I sensed the proverbial elephant in the room. Baffled by this unnamed reality, I turned to my Christian friend seated next to me—a physically beautiful Cree woman working on a Master’s degree. I asked her, “When you are all alone, and you look into a mirror, what do you see?” Her response shocked and saddened me. “I see a no-good dirty Indian.” Other First Nations men and women echoed her statement. They had absorbed as their personal identity a racist slur commonly voiced by Euro-Canadians. Later in the week I watched a documentary about an Aboriginal man newly released from prison. Anxious to return home, he explained, “On the reserve I don’t have to be ashamed of being Indian.”

What is the cause of this failure by Canada’s Indigenous people to fully apprehend and embrace the Christian doctrine of *imago Dei*? Is it a failure of transmission on the part of missionaries, or is it a failure of reception on the part of Aboriginals? This distorted and damaged self-image has informed my understanding of a characteristic of far too many Christian Aboriginals. Surely, any theology of mission and the practice of mission with Aboriginal people must take into account the issue of self-perception and the problem of identity formation.

Admittedly, in a Freudian/Jungian world where psychology and psychiatry are the avenues normally associated with healing dysfunctional identity issues, a biblical theology of mission seems strangely out of place. However, in this paper I will argue that a biblically-based model of mission must address the destruction of identity regardless of its source. Whether it is a product left in the wake of flawed missions and colonial impositions, and therefore a failure of transmission; or, a failure in apprehension because the message of the dominant culture has been projected more loudly, the consequence remains. Overcoming perceived inferiority is a necessity for First Nations, Inuit and Métis in order to grow healthy mature disciples of Jesus.

**Methodology**

The task for this paper is primarily to discover the answer to one question, posed in two different ways: Is there a better way to do mission? Is there a missiology which will affirm the Creator’s love for diversity—for the
particularity of his creation—that will better serve Canada’s Aboriginal peoples? In the process of discovering that answer, other questions will be introduced and explored. This study will present definitions and insights on self, identity and related terms from the disciplines of sociology and anthropology. It will turn to the area of theology of mission to seek a solution. The goal is to propose the elements of a potential new model of mission. The comprehensive development of that model will remain a task for the future.

Definitions and Terminology

Aboriginal Categories

The necessity of explaining terminology related to Canada’s Indigenous peoples is the first task. Although Indian is still an official term (thanks to The Indian Act of 1876 which governs Indigenous/Government relationships), it has been rejected by many for primarily two reasons. First, Aboriginals point out that it is a misnomer resulting from a navigational presupposition by one Christopher Columbus who was in actuality lost. Second, it has become a pejorative term in the majority culture. Consequently, Aboriginal is a self-descriptor of many Indigenous peoples. There are three separate Aboriginal categories: First Nations refers to those who have been labeled Indian. Inuit is the collective and correct name for those labeled Eskimo, as Eskimo is also a pejorative word meaning “raw meat eater” The third term is Métis. The Métis are what I refer to as the human by-product of the fur trade when inter-marriage occurred between fur traders (and later, settlers) and Aboriginals. We were legally known by the British as “Half-breeds” who fit neither in the treaties nor in white communities.¹ The Métis nation is now an official category. It remains to be noted that increasingly First Nations self-identify by what would formerly be called a tribal name, such as Cree, Ojibway, Blackfoot, Mohawk, etcetera. A final term is native/Native. In Canada, Native is reserved most frequently as a referent for Aboriginal people. The terms Indigenous, Aboriginal and Native will be used interchangeably.

Reclamation and Revitalization

Reclamation is applied both to recovering and to reclaiming aspects of culture lost through colonization. The reasons are myriad, but include laws against practicing or transmitting cultural practices, Euro-based and enforced residential educational institutes, and Christian conversion which required rejection of Native culture. In this paper the focus of reclamation is revitalization of faith through healed identity. The study of revitalization crosses boundaries between disciplines. It may be approached through varied lenses such as the disciplines of psychology, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, theology, missiology, as a subject for historiography, etcetera.
Rynkiewich defines revitalization through the lens of anthropology as “the process of infusing new life or vitality.” Snyder expands on this, noting “A common aspect of all revitalization movements is their connection to the spiritual dimension of life. In fact, outside the West such movements often are responses to colonialism or to the paternalism sometimes associated with Christian missions.” With all due respect to Dr. Snyder, the raison d’être of North American revitalization movements within the West parallels his conclusion. Revitalization may apply to an individual as well as a community, involving the sacred and the secular. Matthews provides the scale at the individual level, for “personal restoration includes abandoning an old life and adopting a new life that brings knowledge, healing, liberation, purity, salvation, or forgiveness [expressing] itself in ritual rejuvenation.”

**Culture, Identity and Ethnicity**

Culture is defined by Robbins as “The system of meanings about the nature of experience that are shared by a people and passed on from one generation to another.” For the purpose of this paper, this definition is inadequate since the Aboriginal context covers a vast geographic territory and encompasses dozens of distinct people groups who experience their Aboriginal categorization and ethnicity as a consequence of colonization. Culture must be used in its broadest sense and rooted in indigeneity. Thus, Wallace’s definition best suits the subject at hand: “Culture then is the transgenerational learning of all those categories of behavior that contribute to human adaptation.” Wallace further acknowledges “some aspects of the culture of a particular community may in fact be maladaptive.” Both the adaptive and maladaptive inform the collective Self. Pachuau weds elements of culture, identity and ethnicity by stating “The general understanding of what constitutes ethnic groups in recent years does not limit it to primordial identity, but also includes identities formed around beliefs, ideals, or other socially constructed axes. Whether identity is conceived as ‘given’ or as ‘constructed’, it is a relational entity.” Identity is developed more fully below. Ethnicity and its related terms, despite its importance, will be relegated to a minor role for the purpose of this study. Definitions will be limited to that of ethnie as provided by Hutchinson and Smith interacting with Richard Schermerhorn: “a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among some of its members.”

**Identity from Sociology: the Self**

Are Canadian Aboriginal cultural values more akin to postmodernity than modernity given that the people have never bought into the package that is modernity? I will explore this through an article written by sociologist
Dennis Hiebert. “Toward a Post-Modern Christian Concept of Self” offers some perspective on the Self and thus on self-identity. Hiebert isolates three tenets of the postmodern Self: “a post-mechanistic indeterminism; a post-rational subjectivism; and a post-individualistic cultural determinism.” This Self holds community as a high value. So much so that “Truth is defined by and for the community, and all knowledge occurs within some community of discourse.” Due to the extraordinary significance placed on external views of Self, “Self-image replaces self-concept in postmodern discourse on self. Perhaps the most salient feature of the postmodern self is its relationality.” The ‘I’ and the ‘Me’ reflect subjective (internal) and objective (external) points of view, both contributing to Self-esteem. In fact, although this may seem extreme in child-indulgent North American family constructs, Hiebert contends “there are no individuals, only members of communities.”

Not to belabor this category of identity, it remains to be noted that Hiebert summarizes the characteristics of this Self as: constructed (in contrast to objective), decentred, unbounded, multiple (as in multiple selves), images (in contrast to essences), relational, and metaphorized as a part in a clock.

The application to formulating a new missiology is in the recognition that the concept of the Indigenous self is community oriented, places a high value on relationships as opposed to production, and accesses knowledge through community discourse which is predominantly narrative. The Aboriginal worldview is in opposition to mechanistic determinism, rational objectivism, or individualistic cultural determinism. While rejecting these elements of modernity, the Indigenous Self and the collective-Indigenous-Self are frequently damaged through cultural maladaptation and distorted through Western Christianity’s “civilizing” agenda, in the process of physical dislocation and dispossession of land; and through disrespecting, devaluing, demoralizing and demonizing Indigenous culture.

Identity from Anthropology

“Social anthropology,” states Eriksen, “deals with processes between people and since identity has conventionally been held to exist inside each individual, the study of personal identity was for a long time neglected by anthropologists.” He adds, “When we talk of identity in social anthropology, we refer to social identity, not to the depths of the individual mind—although A.P. Cohen has argued the need to understand just that.” Anthony F.C. Wallace defines identity as “any image, or set of images, either conscious or unconscious, which individuals have of themselves. [It] may be recognized introspectively as an internal ‘visual’ or ‘verbal’ representation, but it is observed in others as an external assertion in words, deeds, or gesture which is assumed to reflect in some way an internal representation.”

One’s Total Identity consists of all impressions and images of self; these
may be contradictory, inconsistent, and vague; and may be held in subsets which are “mutually interrelated in a complex pattern of conflicts and alliances.” While these subsets are potentially myriad, the primary Identity Divisions consist of Real Identity (what the individual deems to be the true self); Ideal Identity (what the individual wishes to be true, but realizes is not or not necessarily true); Feared Identity (what the individual may not believe is true, and would not want to be true of him or herself); and, Claimed Identity (what the individual would like others to believe is true).

Identity from a Flawed Missiology

David Bird began his paper to the NAITTS Fifth Symposium on Native North American Theology and Mission by addressing his former dysfunctional self-identity:

It was in March of 1990 when I fully committed myself to following Christ and embarked on a journey of faith that is now the foundation for all that I believe and all I do within the community I serve. I was 23 years old at the time and very much the product of my generation and culture. Culture did not solely consist of the traditional ways of the Cree or Saulteaux. It was largely defined by the dysfunction of a native family and a community dealing with a legacy of missionaries, Indian agents, two world wars, segregation, residential schools, the Indian Act, the reserve system, abuse, and a whole lot of other factors. Fear, superstition, abuse, poverty, and feelings of inadequacy were friends of mine, as with anyone growing up in a First Nations family in Southern Saskatchewan. I became heavily involved in a Full Gospel/Pentecostal ministry in downtown Regina. One year into my walk, I became the Associate Pastor and have been in the ministry in some form ever since. I brought all my dysfunction to that first ministry, but dysfunction was welcomed with open arms. Fear, superstition, abuse, and feelings of inadequacy were talked about frequently .... People were either preaching about dysfunction, testifying about it and/or leading the ministry from its perverse and hidden influence ... So, I belonged to a dysfunctional church practicing a dysfunctional faith that was led by dysfunctional people, who were only slightly less dysfunctional than many First Nations people.

Notwithstanding the good intentions of colonial and modern missions, Bosch presents his assessment of the negative aspects. He helps us to comprehend the dysfunction of which Bird speaks:

The problem was that the advocates of mission were blind to their own ethnocentrism. They confused their middle-class
ideals and values with the tenets of Christianity. Their views about morality, respectability, order, efficiency, individualism, professionalism, work and technological progress, having been baptized long before, were without compunction exported to the ends of the earth.23

The history of missions to Indigenous people is well documented elsewhere.24 For the purposes of this paper, I will reference only the establishment of Residential Schools in which Aboriginal children were frequently abused. The abuse included forceful removal from family; loss of transgenerational communication of language, culture and parenting skills; as well as physical and sexual abuse. Most schools were church-run. A leap forward occurred in June 2008 when Prime Minister Harper stood in the House of Commons and offered a “full apology on behalf of Canadians for the Indian Residential Schools system.” 25

Drawing the foregoing points together, this statement can now be made: the suppression of culture and the unintentional delivery of an unbiblical and falsified identity has marred and distorted the self identity of many Canadian Indigenous people. A significant proportion of Indigenous people have absorbed that identity as both their Real and Feared IDentity, and it has seeped into the remaining cracks and crevices of their Total Identity as individuals.26

Assumed here is that the negative social residue contributes to a people who implode upon themselves and their communities in anger, violence, suicide, addictions and dysfunction. The argument for reclamation of culture in order to reclaim dignity as human beings is informed and sustained by the creative act of God who made us in his image (Gen 1:26-27). The love of the Creator as affirmation of worth is indispensable to a healthy Christian identity. Missiology requires a corrective model. We must begin afresh to reimagine a missiology which reflects love of one’s neighbour as oneself.

No longer can we conceive of mission in terms of church expansion or the salvation of souls; no longer can we conceive of mission as the supporting of colonial powers; no longer can we understand missionary activity as providing the blessings of Western civilization to “under-developed” or “developing” peoples and cultures; no longer can we conceive of mission as originating from a Christianized North and moving toward a non-Christian or a religiously underdeveloped South. Mission today is much more modest much more exciting much more urgent .. Mission is dialogue. Mission today will be done in what David Bosch calls “bold humility,” modeled after mission in Christ’s way of humility and self-emptying and bold proclamation of God’s “already” and “not yet” reign.27
While agreeing with most of the above statement, I would argue that the salvation of souls is very much the church’s mission.

Identity Crisis in Scripture

Turning to theological anthropology, we find Israel’s self-identity was located in the covenantal relationship with God through the “missiological dimensions of their election—their conviction that they were a people uniquely chosen by God, yet for a purpose that reached far beyond themselves.”28 This perception has held them together as a distinct people for thousands of years despite invasions, Diasporas, persecutions and pogroms, and the Holocaust. They have refused to assimilate, as have the Aboriginal people. But both experienced identity crisis.

God’s people in exile serve as an example of identity crisis in Scripture. Although this will be a minor excursus which merits deeper consideration, the intent is to introduce the impact of the Babylonian captivity on Hebrew self-identity. Returning to Hiebert’s article, he writes, “while the Israelites suffered fragmentation, identity crisis, loss of agency, and the perceived failure of God, all were being taunted by their captors to ‘sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land.’”29

Fundamental differences exist between circumstances facing the Israelites and Indigenous people. The former were removed from their land; the latter were permanently invaded, out-populated, and technologically over-powered. Their communities were removed to new territory (usually “scrub-land”) under “Indian agents.” Often they were forced to share low-level governance with a different First Nations group on the mistaken notion that “all Indians are the same.” Their land base was/is either severely diminished or supplanted.

Similarities include the recognition of Land given to the people as a gift from Creator, and a shared understanding that Land ultimately belongs to the Creator not to individuals. If there is “ownership” it is a collective ownership that transcends an individual’s death. Although Aboriginals include formerly nomadic as well as agrarian tribes, all hold a high value of Land. For example, the Sacred Assembly of 1995 called by Elijah Harper, Cree and a former Member of Parliament, witnessed Christian and Traditionalist, urban and reserve leadership gathering around the concept of Land as a gift from Creator.30

In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the reader sees the consequences of confused identity when the people have to relearn how to be Israelites—how to belong to the Land and the God-of-the-Land again. Albeit, their selves, their religion and their descendents are forever changed through Babylonian cultural influences.31

It is my contention that the Indigenous peoples of Canada have long been experiencing an identity crisis which can be addressed meaningfully
through an affirmation of identity by the macro culture, which in a real sense would end their dislocation and place them back, belonging in the Land. Prime Minister Harper’s apology is an initial step. The church, however, is positioned theologically and morally to be actively involved in repentance, reconciliation, restoration and relationship. Sadly, this is an unlikely ideal on any meaningful scale as a materialistically oriented church culture under-values a relationally based culture. Then, perhaps, one other level of culture may be appealed to: the mission-minded segment of God’s people. Here then is where we can direct our efforts.

Identity from Missiological Affirmation of Neighbour

Having referenced Hiebert’s perspective on Self, two of his cautions require acknowledgment. The first is recognizing the present propensity to reshape/recreate/remake Self: “Popular culture has become a bustling market of makeovers, self-help, and constant reconstruction of the self.” Re-shaping mission to meet the needs created by a flawed missiology must never descend into a trendy cultural phenomenon by formulating an ephemeral missiology. It must reflect values embedded in the ancient Word.

His second caution is that “Christians must beware of attempting to appropriate and colonize the concept of the self, as it remains primarily a social construct.” This serves as a good reminder not to search out proof-texts, not to build theories of mission on impermanent and transitory human assertions; and even, by extension, not to construct theories that are one-dimensional, applicable only within narrow boundaries and even narrower conditions.

The person of Paul provides a helpful study. Paul’s encounter with the risen Lord not only shaped his life-mission, the encounter plus his mission shaped his identity: “Paul’s theology and mission do not simply relate to each other as ‘theory’ and to ‘practice’. It is not as though his mission is the practical outworking of his theology. Rather, his mission is ‘integrally related to his identity and thought’, and his theology is a missionary theology.” Paul’s identity was grounded, even pre-Damascus, on the knowledge that a moral, just, loving and faithful God created him. Furthermore, it was rooted in his identity as a member of YHWH’s chosen people abiding in the Land God had provided. Despite Roman occupation, that identity remained. His post-Damascus identity grew to embrace “the other”—the Gentile—in a previously unimaginable embrace. Mission as encompassing imago Dei is a necessary component of any missiology directed towards First Nations people. It allows, encourages, even commands God’s people to view those he created on a basis of humility, respect and acknowledgment that they too bear the very image of God. Imago Dei, then, is used here to reflect the necessity of viewing others as fellow-creations of the Creator, reflecting aspects of Himself,
as in Genesis 1 (26 & 27). This necessarily is translated into respect for each human and loving one’s neighbour as oneself (Mark 12:31).

Reclamation of Indigenous Identity: Toward a Missiology of Reclamation

Indigenous values include family, relationship, community as an extension of family, Land as a gift of Creator, storytelling, and a spirituality that encompasses and permeates all aspects of life. Richard Twiss, the Lakota co-founder (with his wife, Katherine) of Wiconi International, explains the concept of extended family:

Our vision has brought us to consider again the Lakota concept of *tiyospaye* (tea-yo-shpa-yea) “extended family.” In many First Nations cultures extended family describes notions of kinship. We are a family beyond the “nuclear family” concept. It is [a] much broader and more inclusive concept that stretches beyond “blood” relatives into the village and beyond. We hope to engage with one another in *tiyospaye* as an organizational model for Wiconi and see where we are in relationship with one another as a way to collectively fulfill our calling to make Jesus known in ways that transforms people, families and communities.35

If one’s identity is distorted or damaged, then a healthy “belonging” within a community is one step towards healing. Calvin Shrag, a philosopher, expresses this value: “‘We interact, therefore we are.’ Community is constitutive of selfhood. It fleshes out the portrait of the self by engendering a shift of focus from the self as present to itself to the self as present to, for, and with the other.”36

Another step is embracing the biblical doctrine of *imago Dei* as exegeted from Genesis 1:26-27. This is “the fundamental text” and it “pervades most theological treatments of human identity.”37 Mission as encompassing *imago Dei* is a necessary component of any missiology directed towards First Nations people. Here it is used to endorse the necessity of viewing others as created by God, knowing he created male and female to reflect aspects of himself. By extension, this is translated into respect for each human and loving one’s neighbour as oneself (Mark 12:31), whether that neighbour is a church member or a Samaritan—a potential “other” (Luke 10:29-37).

Toward a Missiology of Reclamation

Ray Aldred, who belongs to the Cree First Nation, writes: “I propose that Western theology as traditionally practiced is no longer adequate to communicate all that Christianity is and could be among the Aboriginal people of Canada. In particular the reductionist tendencies of the two dominant Western theological trends have in effect cut off Aboriginal people
In addressing the need to maintain/reclaim cultural identity, he looks to both fundamentalist theology and classical liberal theology for a model, and finds both wanting. He proposes that a model is more likely to be found in a postmodern construct that shares more of the fundamental values of indigeneity including a high value on narrative:

Fundamentalist theology with its supplanting of the Gospel story with a set of propositions carries with it several negative implications for an authentic Aboriginal Christian spirituality. First and foremost it promotes a spirituality based upon Western empiricism, which is neither "Aboriginal" nor "spiritual." Fundamentalist propositionalism with its assumption that one's own statements are the essence of eternal truth precludes any ability to change in order to account for new information or a new context. This inability to change that is inherent to fundamentalist theology effectively cuts off Aboriginal people from developing Aboriginal Christian spirituality. Ironically fundamentalism was a reaction against or an attempt at reconciling conservative Christianity with Western empiricism. As such it is a Western Christian attempt at contextualization of the Gospel. However, in failing to see its own contextualization it supposes that it is the "only" way one can practise Christianity. Thus it restricts the development of an "Indian" Christianity.

Fundamentalist theology assumes that Aboriginal people will assimilate and adopt a Western, modern, worldview. Five hundred years of history reveal that Aboriginal people are unwilling to assimilate. Aboriginal people continue to maintain their cultural identity. Many desire to live in harmony with the Creator through his Son Jesus Christ but fundamentalism with its propositional truth is not reconcilable to people maintaining their identity as Aboriginal. One must look elsewhere for a starting point that is more compatible with Aboriginal people.

Some turn to classic liberal theology for a different starting point surely there would be a place found for an Aboriginal Christian spirituality. This author believes that like fundamentalist theology, liberal theology is also inadequate to provide a holistic starting point for Aboriginal Christianity.

A classic liberal position in seeking to be all encompassing is a form of reductionism because it too seeks to assimilate all into its own position. Classic liberal theology in seeking to affirm everyone's position ends up reducing everyone's spirituality to an individualized personalized faith.
In concurring with Aldred’s assessment it necessarily implies that a new model of missions is required for finding a “home” for Aboriginal theology, it does not necessitate abandoning all that has gone before. That would be insufferably arrogant. It would imply that God had not been in the Missio Dei, in the aspirations and sacrifices of missionaries who brought the gospel to Aboriginal peoples. It does require community actively involved in examining culture and traditions with an appreciative eye to contextualize all that gives glory to God. These are the elements that I am proposing are indispensable components of a health-giving identity-affirming missiological model suited to the needs of Indigenous peoples of Canada:

1. It must be unequivocally Theocentric/Christocentric/Pneumocentric; i.e. Trinitarian. The relationship within the Triune God resonates with a people who grant high value to relationships. While community is important, so is the individual—each person is given a “face and a voice” in the sacred talking circle. This cultural expression contains echoes of the Trinitarian relationship. As to the Christocentric aspect, Norman Thomas reminds us that “Mission is Christ’s not ours.” Stanley Grenz, in commenting on the believers’ relationship with the Spirit, states “The pneumatological foundation of the ecclesial self emerges from the Pauline understanding of the role of the Spirit in believers’ lives. Paul links the prerogative of addressing God as ‘Abba’ explicitly to the presence of the indwelling Spirit, whom the apostle identifies as ‘the Spirit of God’s Son.’”

2. In valuing relationship, this missiology must be undergirded by a theological anthropology informed by imago Dei, capable of uprooting the lie that says Aboriginal people are less-than or has them set apart as “the other” This theology must explicitly incorporate loving one’s neighbour as oneself, shedding all expressions or intonations of superiority.

3. It must embrace the beauty found in Aboriginal culture, and rejoice in its reclamation for the glory of God through contextualization.

4. It must respect Aboriginal people’s ability to self-theologize and not demand that theologizing be overseen by the Caucasian-academy. Rather, it should employ mutuality and interdependence within the universal church.

5. It needs also include the Johannine theology of Jesus as the Sent One who sends his followers. Those Aboriginals who have already modeled this concept since the early days of European mission are not well known. Nor does the macro-cultural church know of the ones who have gone in Jesus’ name this decade to Peru, Russia, China,
Tibet, Pakistan and many other countries and have had unparalleled opportunities because they are “North American Indians.”

A final component of this new (but ancient) missiology is hope. When Elias Chacor laments the lot of the Palestinian youth, he speaks a truth that reverberates to all people who experience ostracism by a dominant society. It applies equally to Aboriginal youth: “They need someone to unite them. They need to work for common goals. They must learn that they are worthwhile and productive citizens. If they don’t gain self-respect, they will always resent the [Caucasians].”

Conclusion

This paper has posed a number of questions: What is the cause of the failure by Canada’s Aboriginals to fully apprehend and embrace the Christian doctrine of imago Dei? Is it a failure of transmission on the part of missionaries, or is it a failure of reception on the part of Indigenous people? Is there a better way to do mission? Is there a missiology which will affirm the Creator’s love for diversity—for the particularity of his creation—that will better serve Canada’s Aboriginal peoples? Are Canadian Aboriginal cultural values more akin to postmodernity than modernity given that the people have never bought into the package that is modernity?

The objective is to propose the elements of a potential new model of mission. I have argued that a model of mission is required which speaks healing into the distortion of identity left in the wake of flawed ethnocentric missions, and colonial impositions. Overcoming perceived inferiority is a necessity for First Nations, Inuit and Métis to grow healthy mature disciples of Jesus in the Indigenous communities of Canada. This paper has presented definitions and insights on identity and related terms from the disciplines of sociology, anthropology and theology. Turning to the area of missiology to seek a solution, it has suggested six elements or components of a new model. They are: a Trinitarian foundation; acknowledgement of the imago Dei in self and neighbour; reclamation of culture for God’s glory through contextualization; respecting self-theologizing; an emphasis on the Sent One sending forth; and the Christian attribute of hope. It remains for the model to be fleshed out through further study, prayer, and community discourse.

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**Endnotes**

1 I use the personal pronoun because I am officially Métis through my father, Albini Beauchemin.
3 Howard A. Snyder, “Revitalization,” *Revitalization*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Spring, 2006).
8 Ibid.
9 Lalsangkima Pachuau, “Christian Mission amidst Ethnic Pandemonium: Toward a Missional Theology of Reconciliation,” a paper distributed in Dr. Pachuau’s course entitled, Third World Christianity (the course title he is quick to point out is “inherited”), Asbury Theological Seminary, Fall, 2009),14.

11 Ray Aldred, Cree, from Ambrose University in Alberta, argues that Native people never bought into modernity and thus are positioned to function within a postmodern milieu. For example, Aboriginals place a high value on relationships and a low value on productivity. Willie Thompson offers insight when he summarizes the meaning of postmodernism as “a view of culture that is wholly skeptical towards any claims of certainty in science and society...” and notes postmodernity’s “characteristics include particularly the eclipse of the productive be the information economy.” Willie Thompson, Postmodernism and History (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 133.

12 Dennis Hiebert, “Toward a Post-Modern Christian Concept of Self,” in Didaskalia, 16, 1, (Fall 2004), 1-24. Note: Page numbers are missing from the copy of this paper which the author gave me. Dr. Hiebert is a colleague at Providence College in Otterburne, Manitoba.

13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.

17 Ibid., 60.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.


26 It is acknowledged my observations on marred identity are somewhat generalized. I concur with Dr. Rynkiewich’s assertion that in-depth study of just how Aboriginal peoples construct reality is necessary. Meanwhile, I have sought input from my community who support this conclusion. In a PowerPoint that accompanies this presentation at the Colloquium, I introduce the participants to selective faces and stories of people who have sought to reclaim their identities and are leaders in the reclamation movement.


29 Hiebert, “Toward a Post-Modern Christian Concept of Self.”


31 For a discussion on this see J. Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh, *Truth is Stranger than it Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Post-Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995).

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40 Achiel Peelman, *Christ is a Native American* (Ottawa, Ontario: Novalis-Saint Paul University, 1995), 21-23.


45 Andreas Kostenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 203. This is a major theme in Kostenberger.

RUTH ANNE REESE AND STEVEN YBARROLA

Racial and Ethnic Identity: Social Scientific and Biblical Perspectives in Dialogue

Abstract
The first part of the paper lays out our understanding of ethnicity and race in light of current research from sociology and anthropology. The paper then turns to the New Testament material, and it examines “the Jews” as one ethnic group in the first century. This material is used to demonstrate that Christians also took on the language of ethnicity. The paper raises the question, “is there a Christian identity that both supersedes and subsumes ethnic identity?” It proposes that the answer to that question is, “Yes, there is a Christian identity and ethos that supersedes ethnic identity.” And, this paper will also argue that not all ethnic or cultural markers must be given up in order to be Christian. In the early Church, there were those who argued that a new Christian must take on the marks of Jewish ethnic identity; however, Paul successfully argued that Christians formed their own ethnic identity without having to give up all the former markers of their previous ethnic identity, whether Jew or Gentile.

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When Barak Obama was elected as our first African American president last November, many Americans took this as a sign that the United States had entered into a post-racial era. Indeed, the argument goes, how else could one account for such an unprecedented outcome? There is little doubt that the United States has made great strides since the 1950s and 1960s when it comes to civil rights, but what belies the post-racial notion are the racial incidences that continue to take place which demonstrate that these issues are just behind the surface of our post-racial façade. One such incident that recently occurred was the infamous arrest of the famous African American Harvard professor, Henry Louis Gates. And not long ago the presumed anti-American sermons of the Rev. Wright, Obama’s former pastor, caught national (and international) attention, though most of the indignation and analysis did not attempt to address why an African American Christian minister might harbor such feelings toward his own country. The reactions to both cases showed that there are still deep divisions when it comes to race in America.

The problem is that we tend to view these racial incidences, and race/ethnicity in general, through the lens of our own experiences and cultural identities. The first trial of O.J. Simpson for the murder of his ex-wife and her friend is a good case in point. Polls at the time showed that a majority of whites believed he was guilty while a majority of blacks believed he was innocent. After the not guilty verdict a Gallup poll revealed that 49 percent of the whites polled felt that the verdict was wrong, compared to only 10 percent of blacks, whereas 78 percent of the blacks polled believed the not guilty verdict was correct, compared to 42 percent of whites. When I (Steve) would ask my students why they felt there was such a discrepancy in this case, most would attribute it simply to the person’s race; that is, those who were black supported Simpson because he was black, and those who were white did not. However, this simplistic answer misses a key point—many of those who are from a minority population in the United States have experienced first-hand prejudice and discrimination from the very people who are meant to uphold the laws of the land, the police. The main argument from the Simpson defense was that the blood evidence found in Simpson’s vehicle, as well as the bloody glove found near his home, were planted there by the police. Perhaps for most white Americans this seemed preposterous, but for many African Americans (as well as other minorities) this was not only plausible but probable based on their experiences with law enforcement.
The Henry Louis Gates affair also highlighted the importance of experience and perspective when it comes to interpreting the same event. A reporter for the Associated Press summed up nicely how Dr. Gates and the white police officer, Sgt. Crowley, experienced the same event differently:

Henry Louis Gates Jr. felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up as he looked across the threshold of his home at Sgt. James Crowley. Looking back at Gates, Crowley worried about making it home safely to his wife and three children. Fear was the only thing the white police officer and black scholar had in common. Soon their many differences would collide, exploding into a colossal misunderstanding.  

Given this state of affairs it is not surprising that our first African American president has asked the Justice Department to “recharge” the civil rights division, which was sorely diminished under the previous administration.

In this paper we will focus on race, ethnicity, and identity in the scriptures and in the United States, incorporating both theological and social scientific perspectives in our analysis. From the social scientific approach we will explore terminological issues, the development of the United States’ ideology of race, the different social ideologies used to interpret social reality and prescribe policy, and how the church has been affected by the broader American culture with regard to these issues. From the theological approach we will examine the issue of ethnicity/race in the New Testament, and explore evidence related to whether scripture mandates the eradication of ethnic and other cultural identities in light of our new identity in Christ.

- Terminology

Ethnicity and race are rather slippery terms that are often defined in different ways by scholars and lay people alike. The most commonly used distinction between the two is that ethnic groups are distinguished by cultural differences while races are distinguished by physical differences (e.g., skin color). However, what they have in common is a way of creating us/them social distinctions based on presumed ancestry. Hicks (1977) argues that there are three key elements to ethnicity: 1) reference to common origins, 2) a conception of distinctiveness, and 3) that ethnicity is relevant only where two or more groups of people are involved in the same social system. This last point gets at the fact that it is in social interaction with the ethnic/racial “Other” that ethnicity becomes relevant. Eriksen concurs with Hicks’ basic definition, stating,

Ethnicity is an aspect of social relationship between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction. It can thus also be defined as a social identity . . . characterised by metaphoric or fictive kinship (2002:12, 13).
The “sense of distinctiveness” in Hicks’ definition gets at the boundary process of ethnicity and race—i.e., the symbolic elements that are used to distinguish “us” from “them.” These symbolic elements can vary greatly from one context to another, and may include such things as territory, language, religion, clothing, food, physical features, or any combination of these and other elements.

Using this definition, then, we see that “race” is something that can be subsumed under the rubric of ethnicity—it is one of the possible boundary markers to distinguish one group from another. But what can also be seen is that some of these markers are more pronounced, or less changeable, than others. For example, we can learn another language, adopt a different dress, and even change our religion, but it is much more difficult to change our physical features. Thus, Horowitz (2000: 46) discusses a “continuum of cues” from the visible to the nonvisible. These include along the continuum physical features we are born with (e.g., skin color, hair texture, nose shape), postnatal physical markings (often associated with rites of passage), posture, language, dress, and religion. As we’ll see, in the context of the United States some of these markers have historically been more “meltable” than others.

Although race may be conceptually subsumed under ethnicity, for analytical purposes it is helpful to distinguish between groups and categories. A group can be understood as a population that has some level of interaction and common identity with one another. A category, on the other hand, involves taking certain characteristics (e.g., skin color) and lumping together all of those who share those characteristics, whether or not they have any contact with others from the category or identify with it. In this way we can speak of ethnic groups and racial categories, with the latter containing a large number of the former. Turning again to the United States, we have just a handful of racial categories—whites, blacks (or African Americans), Hispanics/Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans (or First Nations)—but it is clear that each of these is constituted by a wide variety of ethnic groups. In some contexts, members of different ethnic groups within a racial category might join forces to attain a common goal (e.g., access to scarce resources, fighting prejudice and discrimination), while in other contexts they would not.

**Ethnicity, Race, And the New Testament**

As indicated above, race has generally been an identity marker placed on others by outside observers and is usually based on an ideology of “difference” that is presumed to be biological in nature. Often, the main marker for identifying “race” in the West has been skin color and other physiological markers. While authors from the first century noted the skin color of some people groups, these observations seem not to have formed the same types of boundaries and barriers that they do today. Thus, to read “race” into the
New Testament is an anachronistic practice. Ethnicity, however, is generally understood as a set of identity markers that are both internal and external to a specific group and which would be affirmed by that particular group. While the two most basic ethnic markers have been descent from a common ancestor and shared location or homeland, as we indicate above other boundary markers can also form and shape cultural groupings. Although there are basic identity markers that can indicate ethnicity, it is, as discussed above, a complex concept. Sometimes a group of people may not be markedly different from those around it, but there is still a recognition of ethnic difference (Barth 1969). Everett Hughes writes that

it is an ethnic group. .because the people in it and the people out of it know that it is one; because both the ins and the outs talk, feel, and act as if it were a separate group. This is possible only if there are ways of telling who belongs to the group and who does not, and if a person learns early, deeply, and usually irrevocably to what group he belongs. If it is easy to resign from the group, it is not truly an ethnic group (quoted in Esler 2003:42).

Ethnicity was known and recognized in the ancient world of the first century. In the New Testament, there is reference to Jews, Greeks, Romans, Cyprians, Samaritans, Syrians, Scythians, and Ethiopians among others. And in the first century world there was an awareness that different groups of people associated together based on common ancestry and geographical location. The Roman empire was a collection of ethnic groups ruled by a dominant group. In the context of a multi-ethnic situation, one of the tasks of any ethnic minority is to differentiate itself from the surrounding culture(s). At the same time, adding to the complexity of ethnic identity, individuals can be part of multiple ethnic groups. As a contemporary example, we can identify Steve as both Basque and American. Both of these are ethnic identities that he self-identifies with, but he operates out of one or the other (or a combination) differently depending on the context in which he finds himself.

We can look at the Jews of the first century as one example of ethnic identity. On the one hand, Jews were an ethnic group that was scattered throughout the Roman Empire; while, on the other hand, there was also a population of Jews in Israel itself. Within Israel, Jews could have multiple identities. We find some who identify themselves as Galileans (e.g., from the region of Galilee) while others are from Jerusalem. This is an example of a “nested identity.” A person can be a member of both the larger group of Jews inhabiting Israel and a smaller group belonging to a particular city or region. When we look at the diaspora reality of the Jewish people, we can consider how outsiders recognized Jews in distinction from themselves: 1) by their observance of Torah (including circumcision, Sabbath observance, and dietary laws); and 2) by their gathering together in groups or associations
(e.g., synagogues). This describes how Jews might be recognized by those who were outside of their group. But how would they have described themselves? Jews trace their lineage back to a common set of ancestors (Abraham, Moses, and David) who were called by and walked with the only true God, the Creator and Master of the universe. And, Jews recognized a common ancestral homeland given to them by the one true God who kept covenant with them. In response, Jews lived out their obedience to Torah (e.g., the markers observable by outsiders) even when residing outside of their ancestral homeland (Buell and Hodge 2004:244-45). In addition, they identified themselves by use of a proper name (Hansen 2007:47). As a group, Jews tended to identify themselves in distinction to all others who were often lumped together under the broad term “Gentiles” (e;qnh). While Jews understood that Gentiles were composed of a variety of different ethnic groups, and thus resembled a racial category, the purpose of ethnic self-identification is to solidify the identity of one’s own group. In this matter, the Jews reflected common practice in the ancient world—the practice of locating one’s own group as distinctive against a larger grouping of “all the rest” and assuming that one’s own group was superior to others (Cosgrove 2006:273).

This one brief example from the first century demonstrates two of the key markers used in contemporary sociological and anthropological theory to identify ethnicity: namely, identification with a common ancestor and a common homeland as well as the additional marker of a group name (Jews). At the same time, those who study ethnicity recognize that the boundaries that determine the identity of the group are porous (Hansen 2007:70). In other words, to continue our example, one can become a Jew even if one is not born into the Jewish ethnicity. In this example, one would need to take on the markers of Jewish identity in order to begin to be accepted into the Jewish “family” or ethnicity, and one would need to be accepted into the inside of the group by those who already belong to the group.

Just as Jews identified themselves as a group descended from a common ancestor, and thus as in many ways the largest unit of a kinship group, so too Christians take up the language of ethnicity and kinship in the New Testament. It becomes clear that the good news of God’s faithfulness and his saving work in the person of Jesus Christ is good news for all nations (e;qnh). This theme is revealed in a variety of ways. For example, the Gospels show that Jesus’ message is not only for the Jews but for all the nations (e.g., Mark 11:17; Luke 2:32, et al.). In the Acts of the Apostles there is a deliberate inclusion of those from other cultures and ethnicities in the new Christian mission and reality. The message is for both Greek and Aramaic speaking Jews (Acts 6). The good news is for both Jews and Samaritans (ch 8). The new understanding of the word of God through Jesus Christ is for both
Jews and Ethiopians, even for eunuchs (chs 7 and 8). The gift of the Holy Spirit is for Jews and Samaritans and the whole household of a Roman centurion (ch 10). And Paul’s mission of spreading the good news is for Asia Minor and Greece and Rome itself. But the question is, when these people from all over the known world are baptized into life in Christ, do they leave behind or give up their previous ethnic identity? To put it more baldly, is their previous ethnic identity eradicated and replaced with a new identity?

It seems clear that there was at least one group in the early church that insisted that all those who became followers of Jesus and who identified themselves with the new movement of God through the gift of the Holy Spirit should become Jews by receiving circumcision and observing the dietary restrictions and laws of the Torah (implied from Gal 2:12 et al.). This position was adamantly argued against by the apostle Paul who insisted that the new identity that Gentiles received in Christ did not involve becoming Jewish. In fact, he argues that even though he himself as well as Peter are both Jewish they have come to believe that they are justified because of their relationship with Jesus Christ (Gal 2:16) rather than because of their relationship to the law. It is clear from Galatians in particular and other parts of the New Testament that non-Jews are not required to become Jewish in order to be Christian. But this still leaves open the question of whether people are required to give up their previous ethnic identity as part of their conversion.

In other words, is there a Christian identity that both supersedes and subsumes ethnic identity? This paper will argue that the answer to that question is, “Yes, there is a Christian identity and ethos that supersedes ethnic identity.” And, this paper will also argue that not all ethnic or cultural markers must be given up in order to be Christian.

If the primary markers of ethnic identity are common ancestry and common locale, we may suggest, along with others, that Christians are given a new ethnic identity upon their entry into faith (Hansen 2007:53). Christians are identified as the “children of God” (e.g., John 1:12; Rom 8:12) and find their location and home in Christ (e.g., Rom 6:11). These are ethnic markers that can be used to identify themselves with one another. But what sets them apart in a recognizable way for outsiders? Jesus identifies this as the ethic of love that Christians have towards one another (e.g., John 13:34-35). This other-oriented way of life—a way of life that bears the burdens of others, that gives up one’s rights for the sake of the other, that recognizes the value and necessity of the body (i.e., the Christian group)—is one of the external marks of Christian faith. It is worth reminding ourselves, as well, that care for the other was not a “natural” outcome of the first century culture. Rather, this was a culture in which family groups were engaged in a great deal of competition to claim and retain as much available honor as possible for themselves (DeSilva 2000). In such a context, “Paul’s directions to show
mercy, care for the weak, place the honor of others ahead of your own, maintain unity and peace, all reflect an ethos that in antiquity would be appropriate only within the family or clan” (Hansen 2007:58).

The language of the New Testament locates Christians within a new family, a family with God as its head and with relationship in Christ as its main location. And this new familial and thus ethnic identity is to shape the behavior of Christians to be a certain type of people. But this still leaves unanswered the question regarding the extent to which this new ethnic identity eradicates one’s old ethnic identity. In answering this question we might consider two examples: First, the example of the life of the Apostle Paul; and, second, the oft-cited passage in Gal 3:28 (“there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”).

The Apostle Paul was sent to the uncircumcised (Gal 2:7). It appears that while he defended Gentile converts from groups who would have exhorted them to become Jewish, he also did not cease to be a Jew. See, for example, Paul’s cultural practices when he went up to Jerusalem and into the temple in Acts 21. But at the same time, Paul’s primary ethnic identity is as one who “is subject to the law of Christ” (1 Cor 9:21). In his letter to the Corinthians, he is inflexible in regards to his primary identity as one whose life is ruled by the law of Christ, but he is flexible in his other ethnic orientations. He is willing to live as a Jew for the sake of winning those who are Jews and to live as a Gentile in order to win those who are Gentiles. But neither Jewish nor Gentile ethnicity is his primary identity. In some ways, Paul displays an example of “nested identity.” On the one hand, his primary identity is as a follower of Jesus, but he can act within other ethnic identities that he also has.

One of the verses that comes easily to mind when discussing the question of whether previous ethnic identity should be eradicated is Galatians 3:28. A surface reading of the text apart from its context in Galatians can be understood as communicating that all the significant social boundaries of the first century are eradicated through oneness in Christ. One can name three significant social boundaries at this point: ethnicity (Jew/Greek), status (slave/free), and gender (male/female) (Hays 2003:185). This reading would “level the playing field” in a radical assertion of equality in which the persons involved cease to belong to their previous identities as Jew or Greek or slave or free or male or female and instead are all the same in Christ.

Others have suggested that Galatians 3:28 should be understood in light of the privilege that falls on one side of the equation. In other words, Jews, free people, and males had more power and position in the court of reputation of the new Christian movement than Greeks, slaves, and females. For the sake of Christian unity, Paul reminds his audience that these are no longer their primary identities. Rather, their primary identity is now located in Christ. Do people cease to be male or female when they come to Christ? No.
But these identity markers are no longer their primary orientation towards life. Rather that orientation is as one who has put on Christ and been born not only into new life but into the new ethnic identity of God’s family. Some have argued that the underlying concern behind Paul’s presentation of his preaching to the Jerusalem elders (Gal 2:2) is that his assertion that Gentiles were fully children of God without being circumcised would not be accepted and would thus force a split between groups who advocated circumcision and those, like himself, who did not (Hansen 2007:85). In Galatians, Paul identifies his audience as his children, “Sarah’s offspring, residents and children of the eschatological Jerusalem, sons of Abraham, heirs of his blessing, and, above all, as sons of God through Jesus Christ” (Hansen 2007:129). This is a new ethnic identity—a reworking of the traditional Jewish identity that is only possible in light of the cross. In light of this, Paul must confront any idea that “separate-but-equal” was a sufficient understanding of Christian unity. In Gal 2 this is demonstrated in the confrontation between Peter and Paul over table fellowship. Peter has withdrawn from eating with the Gentiles, leaving two implied choices: one, separate tables; or, two, Gentile conformity to Jewish dietary practices (which would be another move towards becoming Jewish). Paul argues for unity in Christ, rather than for separate practices. In this regard, it is the new identity as members of Christ that forms the most important ethnic identity for believers. At the same time, Paul is still able to recognize the other ethnic identities of the believers. Thus, one can hear the call to a new identity as the people of God, and such a call may mean giving up controlling ethnic identities as well as other identity markers, but there appear to be secondary ethnic and identity markers that still remain.

Ethnicity and Race in the United States

All cultures, including those of first century Palestine, develop ideologies that are used to “make sense” of the ethnic or cultural diversity of their social reality. The term ideology is most commonly used to refer to the political beliefs of a person or movement, and often with negative connotations; to label someone an ideologue is to dismiss him or her as a propagandist for a cause, someone who cannot be rationally engaged in a political discussion. However, the term can also be used in a broader sense, seeing ideologies as “schematic images of the social order” that are “most distinctly, maps of problematic social reality and matrices for the creation of collective conscience” (Geertz 1973: 218, 220). Using the term in this way, the anthropologist Raymond Scupin has written,
Cultural anthropologists have established that ingrained attitudes, general and scientific prejudices, and economic competition have often had far more to do with racial definitions than have the real physical attributes or geographic origins of people. ‘Race’ in these investigations is conceived of as a cultural construction, not a biological fact. *It is in reality a kind of ideology, a way of thinking about, speaking about, and organizing relations among and within human groups*” (2002:12, emphasis added).

In North America these ideologies were used prior to colonization in encounters between Native American groups. But our focus here is on how the ideology of race developed within the dominant (white) population, and how this continues to affect race relations in the United States today.

Perhaps a good starting point for the articulation of this ideology is found in the writing of one of our Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson. The same person who penned the incredible words that “All men are created equal” also wrote in 1781, “I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind” (*Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query 14, Laws). Less than a hundred years later this “suspicion” was a scientific “fact,” and codified through, among other things, the Supreme Court’s *Dred Scott* decision in 1857, which declared that slaves were “chattel” (i.e., moveable property), remained so even if they moved to free territories, and could not become citizens of the United States.

Racialism in the West, the belief “that Caucasians are biologically superior and that most people of color, especially blacks, have an inferior culture determined by their ‘race’” (Lieberman 2003: 36) has its scientific roots in the classificatory work of the Swedish botanist Linnaeus. His publication in 1758 classified humans into four categories—white, red, yellow, and black—and attached behavioral characteristics with each “race.” As Lieberman notes, “It was a taxonomy of superiority-inferiority that reflected the politically correct views of his time. It was a way of thinking that would prevail, with few exceptions, for the next three hundred years” (2003: 38). The scientific bases for this ideology of race was further expanded in the first half of the nineteenth century through the cranial measurements of Samuel Morton. Morton’s results supported the prevailing view that Caucasians had larger brain sizes, and were therefore more intelligent and advanced than other “races.” What Morton’s work really demonstrates is the power of our ideologies to affect how research is done and how results are interpreted. Morton systematically, though perhaps unintentionally, made sampling errors that reinforced the dominant racialist ideology of the day (see Gould 1996 for a thorough critique of Morton’s methodology). So strong was this racialist ideology that many prominent
scientists proposed that the different races represented separate “creations” (polygenism). By the time anthropology as a discipline came on the scene in the latter half of the nineteenth century, this racialist view of the world was firmly rooted in science. Not surprisingly, the early anthropologists applied these views to the cultures of the world, seeing some as being in the evolutionary stage of savagery, others in barbarism, and still others (i.e., whites) as civilized.

**Race As A Cultural Construct**

The twentieth century saw science move away from this typological model of “race” as the fields of genetics, physical anthropology, archaeology, as well as anthropological fieldwork among cultures around the world, helped to dispel the previous racialist assumptions. However, this model still largely informs the “folk” or popular understanding of race in the United States (as well as most of the West). People find it hard to grasp that “race” as they understand it does not exist, and that it is, in fact, a cultural construct. One of the important things that our cultures do for is categorize the world, including the social world. When race is presented as “not real” to an audience (e.g., students) it is often met with the incredulous response “Of course races exist. Just look around you.” What they fail to grasp is that the meanings they are attributing to these different categories of humans is based on a particular interpretive framework provided by their culture, not biology.

 Probably the best way to illustrate this fact is to examine how other cultures categorize humans and define “races.” In the United States we have developed a system where race is related to ancestry—you are what your parents are. And if a person’s ancestry is mixed, then we have traditionally applied the “one drop rule” and hypo-descent. That is, if a person has any ancestors who were racial minorities, then that person is considered to be of that minority race. A current example of this would be president Obama; he is equally of African and white American descent, yet he is viewed as “black.” Brazil, on the other hand, defines races based on the physical appearance of the person. Characteristics such as skin color (and shade), hair texture, eye color, lip and nose shape are taken into consideration to determine “race.” A person’s race depends on the combination of these characteristics that he or she has. Contrary to what we would find in the United States, in the Brazilian classificatory system siblings can be different races. So, people who would be classified in one way in Brazil are often classified in another way in the United States, and vice versa, which can be quite confusing and disconcerting for the individuals involved (see Fish 1995). Races, then, are not found in nature, but rather in culture.
Social Ideologies

To argue that race is a cultural construction is not to say that race doesn’t matter, because it is real in its social implications. And those social implications are determined, to a certain degree, by the ideologies we hold about the way society is, or should be, structured and the relationship among its various parts. In other words, social ideologies are the “lenses” we use to view social reality. Throughout most of American history the dominant social ideology has been assimilationist in nature. Immigrants were to come to the United States, give up their “native” cultures and identity, and “become American.”

Just what “becoming American” meant depended on the particular social ideology that was employed. Early in our history the dominant ideology was Anglo-conformity. Through this lens “becoming American” meant adopting the cultural beliefs and social practices inherited from the British colonists. This ideology can be clearly seen in the writing of another of our Founding Fathers, John Jay, who wrote in 1787:

> Providence had been pleased to give this one connected country, to one united people, a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs (The Federalist Papers).

A more contemporary example of this ideology is when the district attorney in the movie My Cousin Vinny addresses the jury in a murder case, and tells them, “You’re the jury. It’s your job to decide who’s tellin’ the truth. The Truth: that’s what verdict means. It’s a word that came down from England and all our l’il ole ancestors;” which is met with a bewildered look by an African American member of the jury.

A second dominant assimilationist social ideology, and one that is still widely employed today, is the Melting Pot. In contrast to Anglo-conformity, the Melting Pot does not advocate assimilating into the sociocultural patterns established by our l’il ole English ancestors, but rather into something distinctly American. As a French immigrant, Jean de Crèvecoeur, wrote in 1782,

> What then is the American, this new man?...He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received into the broad lap of our great Alma Mater. Here individuals are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world (Letters From an American Farmer).

In the 1960s a third social ideology began to develop which challenged the assimilationist assumptions of the previous two and acknowledged the continued cultural diversity found in the United States. This ideology, referred
to as cultural pluralism, or more recently, multiculturalism, argues that American society is, and always has been, socially and culturally heterogeneous (Takaki 2008). It also points out that although the dominant social ideology has been assimilationist in nature, not all minority populations were allowed to assimilate—people of color were, and to a certain extent still are, excluded. Interestingly, whereas certain immigrant groups were initially classified as separate “races” in the American racialist scheme, eventually many of them came to be considered “white” (e.g., Italians and Irish. See Guglielmo and Salerno 2003, and Scupin 2003).

Today the assimilationist and pluralist social ideologies are both held by large segments of American society, which has spurred lively, if not angry, debate over such issues as immigration, access to social services, education, and health care. Considering just the first of these, immigration, those holding to an assimilationist ideology argue that the influx of such a large number of Latinos is a threat to American society as assimilation cannot occur fast enough to incorporate them into the American mainstream. This is very similar to the argument that was made around the turn of the twentieth century when large numbers of immigrants were arriving from southern and eastern Europe (my grandfather from the Basque Country of Spain being one of them). At that time the fear of the impact these immigrants might have on American society and culture, based on the assimilationist ideology, led to very restrictive immigration policies in the 1920s that essentially stemmed the flow of these immigrants. Advocates of multiculturalism, on the other hand, view the influx of immigrants from Latin America as something positive for American society as they infuse the society with values that Americans have long viewed as positive. These include, among other things, a deep belief in, and commitment to, family, and a strong work ethic.

What’s interesting about social ideologies is that the same person, or community, can employ different ones depending on the context. An example of this is found in the Iowa town of Postville (see Bloom 2001). Like many small towns in Iowa, Postville’s main economy is based on a local meat packing plant. When the plant was purchased by Hasidic Jews from New York City and turned into a kosher meat plant, the people of Postville, the majority being descendants of German immigrants, were puzzled by the culture and religious practices of these newcomers. Still, they expected the Jews to assimilate into the dominant culture and society of the town. However, in order to maintain their kosher lifestyle, and their religious beliefs and practices, the Jewish residents largely remained segregated from the native population. This development was not viewed positively by many of the natives in Postville, who couldn’t understand why these “white” people wouldn’t want to become a part of the larger community. A second population also arrived in the town around the same time to work in the meat plant—
Latino immigrants. Unlike their assimilationist frustrations with the Hasidic Jews, the native population was not too keen to have these immigrants in their town, and although the church was a place where natives and immigrants could have come together, many of the whites started going to church in nearby towns to avoid this engagement.

So, on the one hand natives used an assimilationist ideology with respect to the white Jews, but on the other a pluralist ideology (in its segregationist form) when it came to the Latinos. In this case we see the interplay between ethnicity and race; the Jews were “white” but had a distinct identity and culture, while the Latinos were culturally different but were also, according to the American scheme, of a different “race.” What the Postville case also illustrates is that it is members of the dominant society who set the rules of who gets to (or should) assimilate, and who can’t (or shouldn’t be allowed to). And, as we’ve indicated above, throughout American history it has been people of color who were kept out.

**Biblical Ideal for the People of God**

The biblical ideal is for those who follow Jesus to take on a new ethnic identity as the children of God who find their new life clothed in Christ and filled with the marks of their new life in Christ: love, joy, peace, patience, godliness, self-control, brotherly love, goodness, mercy, justice, obedience, and burden sharing. From the early days of the church there has been a concern over the markers of identity. There were some in the early church who argued that circumcision would be the only way in which Gentiles would come to fully belong to the early church. But this position was rejected in place of a position in which all were made new together as a new people of God with a new identity. In addition, other New Testament texts, including 1 Cor 8-9 and 12-14, argue that Christian unity is promoted when those with power and position are willing to give up their rights, position, and even honor for the sake of the weaker brother (e.g., 1 Cor 8-9) and when there is a recognition that all parts of the body of Christ are needed. In a similar way, one can assert that although all are one in Christ Jesus, individuals do not cease to be male or cease to be female; nor are slaves suddenly made free or those who are free made slaves. The challenge in light of Corinthians is to lay down those identity markers that would cause one group to exalt themselves over another. For the way of Christ is the way marked by self-sacrifice for the purpose of building up the unity of the body of Christ. This may mean the sacrifice of particular ethnic identity markers in order to best serve the unity of the body, but it does not have to mean and should not be taken to mean a complete eradication of one’s previous ethnic identity prior to being gripped by the way of the cross.
Ethnicity, Race, and the Church in the United States

Unfortunately, and much to our shame, the church in the United States has not been “a city on a hill” when it comes to challenging the dominant racist ideology of the broader society. On the contrary, we too often have read scripture through the lens of that ideology, using it to justify such abominable institutions as slavery, as well as such segregationist practices as Jim Crow laws in the South. Race relations have certainly changed a great deal since the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s, but sadly what Martin Luther King, Jr. observed back in 1963 is still largely true today—that 11:00 a.m. on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in our country. Today “[n]early 90 percent of American congregations are at least 90 percent one racial group” (Emerson and Kim 2003:217). Emerson and Kim give several reasons for this continued segregation along racial lines, such as 1) churches, like other voluntary associations, tend to attract members who are socially comfortable with one another; 2) churches often serve as “enclaves of support and identity,” especially where different languages are spoken; and 3) churches tend to draw from their local neighborhoods, and therefore reflect the racial/ethnic composition of those neighborhoods.

However, another key element is that, as we’ve stated above, the church is affected by the ideology of our racialized society. As Emerson and Smith note, “a racialized society is a society wherein race matters profoundly ...it is a society that allocates differential economic, political, social, and even psychological rewards to groups along racial lines that are socially constructed” (2000:7). They go on to argue that white evangelicals have not dealt well with racial issues because they most often misdiagnose the problem, seeing it as personal rather than structural. As a result, the argument goes something like this: “If I and my acquaintances are not racist, then the issue with race is dealt with and the problem is with racial minorities over-blowing the issue.” Emerson and Smith continue, “Most white evangelicals, directed by their cultural tools, fail to recognize the institutionalization of racialization—in economic, political, educational, social, and religious systems” (p. 170).

The lasting impact of this segregation is that whites don’t get to know people from ethnic and racial minority populations, and vice versa. However, blacks and other minorities have had to adapt to the dominant culture and society, and therefore know it to a certain degree, whereas whites, owing to their lack of immersion in minority cultures and associations, don’t know or understand the “cultural toolkit” of these minorities. Thus the problem of the racialized church continues in its seemingly never-ending cycle.

To break this cycle will take intentional effort on the part of all Christians involved. White evangelicals will need to work hard to understand the complexity of our racialized society, and the role that race continues to play
in our churches, if we are to bring about true reconciliation. This will be no easy task since, as Clifford notes,

> The Evangelical Protestant mind has never relished complexity. Indeed its crusading genius, whether in religion or politics, has always tended toward an oversimplification of issues and the substitution of inspiration and zeal for critical analysis and serious reflection (N. K. Clifford, “His Dominion: A Vision in Crisis.” In Sciences Religieuses/ Studies 2:323, quoted in Emerson and Smith 2000:171).

And for their part, ethnic and racial minority Christians will have to forgive past injustices at the hands of the dominant group, and develop a level of trust that will free them to interact with their white brethren in the unity and love of Christ. Again, given the past, and present, abuses, this will be no easy task. But as Volf (1996) argues, we as Christians have the hope of reconciliation because we, above all other peoples and religions of the world, have a theology of the cross. How can we, who while we were yet sinners were reconciled to God, not forgive and be reconciled to our brothers and sisters in Christ?

Ultimately, true reconciliation will take place only when all Christians in the United States take on the “markers” of our identity in Christ discussed above—love, joy, peace, patience, godliness, self-control, brotherly love, goodness, mercy, justice, obedience, and burden sharing—and, with humility, strive to understand and serve one another as brothers and sisters in the family of God.

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**Endnotes**

1 The authors found the collaborative process for this paper both enjoyable and challenging. While there was broad agreement on most of the points presented, there were certain areas where the authors “agreed to disagree.”


4 Though there may be more evidence of racial understandings in the Old Testament (Hays 2003).

5 There are, of course, exceptions to this. Quakers and other Christian groups were some of the early abolitionists in the country, and the Civil Rights Movement originated and was sustained by the African American church in the South.
Abstract:
In this article, the author explores John Wesley’s perspectives on marriage and how these views related to his practice of ministry. Specifically, the author examines Wesley’s developmental journey from believing he could not marry to actually contracting a marriage with Mary Vazeille. Following exploration of Wesley’s perspectives on marriage, the author discusses these issues in relation to two observed patterns in his significant intimate relationship with Sophy Hopkey, Grace Murray and Mary Vazeille; namely that for the most part, Wesley cultivated these relationships out of travel and illness. The author concludes that even though Wesley moved from a position of celibacy to contracting a marriage, he never truly resolved the conflict between conjugal and ministry obligations. In fact, Wesley largely operated out of the belief that ministry obligations must always take primacy over marital responsibilities. Finally, the author draws out the implications of this stance for Wesley’s ministry and marriage and the lessons current clergy might learn from his example.

Key terms: ministry, marriage, occupational conflicts, John Wesley, developmental stages, sect-type clergy, church-type clergy

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Across the years, Wesley’s intimate relationships with Sophy Hopkey, Grace Murray and his eventual marriage to Mary Vazeille have intrigued several authors (Abelove, 1990; Frank Baker, 1966; F. Baker, 1977; Caswell, 1903; Collins, 1993; Ethridge, 1971; Maser, 1977; Rogal, 1988). To suit their purposes, some authors have largely focused on one relationship, with less attention to the others. However, some have highlighted common patterns across the relationships (Collins, 1993; Rack, 1989). For example, in his *Reasonable Enthusiast*, Rack (1989) considered patterns across John’s relationships with Hopkey and Murray. He highlighted this similarity in the following words:

> Like all matters concerning Wesley’s relationship with women, the Murray affair is one which has rather embarrassed Methodist biographers. It is still difficult to unravel the process by which this sad affair muddled its way to catastrophe. For the student of Wesley’s character, however, his conduct of the affair and his private account of what happened so closely resembles the earlier episode with Sophy Hopkey as to give rise to the suspicion that this was not simply a tragedy of errors but further evidence of some deep-rooted psychological disability in his nature as regards relationships with women (Rack, 1989, p. 257).

Similar to Rack, the author believes this approach of considering Wesley’s significant relationships together can yield interesting parallels. In fact, the author has discussed such themes in a recent book on John Wesley (Headley, 2010). However, in this article the author will limit the discussion to understanding Wesley’s major beliefs about ministry and marriage. In addition, two major patterns will be discussed in relation to these beliefs. These discussions will allow the author to connect the latter patterns to John Wesley’s philosophy of marriage in relation to ministry. Before delving into his philosophy and patterns, a brief review of Wesley’s developmental views on marriage is warranted.

**Developmental Stages in Wesley’s Views on Marriage**

In *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, Heitzenrater (1984) provided an account of the development stages through which Wesley progressed as he considered marriage to Grace Murray. A review of this document reveals five principal beliefs around which his philosophy of marriage revolved. These beliefs
were laid out and countered in 27 points. Because the points reflected his beliefs about marriage, the author has made them more pronounced by stating them in statement form and providing a brief summary of each.

1. **I will never find a wife like my father had** — From age six through seven, John possessed an idealized view of his mother as the perfect mate against whom all potential marriage partners would be measured.

2. **I am unable to keep a wife** — From age 17 through twenty-six or twenty-seven, he continued his intention of not marrying because he believed he was unable to keep a wife.

3. **It is unlawful for a priest to marry** — Based on his misperceptions of the practice in the early church, he thought it unlawful for a priest to marry. From his reading of the mystic writers, he concluded that “marriage was the less perfect state,” and that the marriage bed tainted the mind. Reading from Paul’s Corinthian epistles, convinced Wesley that a married man would be distracted in service.

4. **Marriage would become an extra expense which would detract from using my resources in ministry** — He thought marriage would consume the resources he now gave away.

5. **Marriage would hinder the preaching of the gospel** — For the twelve years (prior to writing this argument) Wesley thought a dispensation of the gospel had been committed to him and that marriage would directly or indirectly hinder the preaching of the gospel (Heitzenrater, 1984, pp. 181-183).

From this developmental account it appears that at various stages, Wesley resisted marriage for a variety of reasons. Because developmental stages are rarely linear and discrete, several of these stage beliefs likely existed concurrently. However, Wesley was able to move beyond some of his initial prohibitions against marriage through historical, biblical and experiential proofs. In the rest of the steps in his marital developmental journey, Wesley allowed us to see how he was able to counter his early beliefs sufficiently to consider marriage to Grace Murray. Much of his seminal thoughts about his journey were captured in point number 8 – 12. For example, to counter his first belief about his inability to find a wife like his mother, Wesley discovered that, though few, women existed who could match his mother in knowledge and piety. Furthermore, in reference to his second belief, he realized keeping a wife did not solely depend on him but on the woman’s ability and willingness to keep with him. Readings from significant sources such as St. Paul and Beveridge’s Codex Conciliorum helped shift his perspectives. Speaking of Paul’s writings, Wesley wrote: “St. Paul slowly and gradually awakened me out of my mystic dream; and convinced me, “The bed is undefiled and no necessary hindrance to the highest perfection.” Though still I did not quite
shake off the weight, till our last conference in London” (Heitzenrater, 1984, p. 182). Ever dependent on experiential proofs, Wesley discovered men such as Dr. Koker who found that rather than being a care and a distraction, marriage facilitated ministry when one’s partner was able and willing to help carry the burden of ministry (Heitzenrater, 1984).

**Wesley’s Persisting Belief: The primacy of ministry before marriage.**

However, even though Wesley resolved his beliefs sufficiently to consider marriage to Grace Murray, this author argues that he did not resolve them all. Wesley seemed to have mostly resolved his first four beliefs (finding a wife like his mother; his ability to keep a wife, ecclesial prohibitions against marriage and use of his resources in marriage). However, this author believes Wesley did not fully resolve his belief that marriage might pose a hindrance to preaching the gospel. As we will see, Wesley tried to avoid such hindrance by laying out a rule for his marriage: namely, he would not travel one day less or preach one less sermon while married (Heitzenrater, 1984; Telford, 1887). As the same time, this rule amply demonstrates that he placed ministry obligations above marital responsibilities. Several authors have noted his elevation of celibacy for ministers above marriage (Abelove, 1990; Collins, 1993; Curnock, 1909; Ethridge, 1971, Heitzenrater, 1984) and the evidence from his significant relationships supports this conclusion. Celibacy would be a way to solve the possible conflict between conjugal and ministry obligations. It would largely allow for the unconditional absorption of a clergy person in ministry activities (Simmel, 1955).

When one considers his first relationship with Sophy Hopkey, it seems clear Wesley placed ministry considerations above his desire to marry this young woman. In regards to Sophy, Wesley thought such a marriage would hinder his mission to the Indians. Moreover, he also raised the specter of his inability, noting his incapability of bearing the complications marriage would bring (Curnock, 1909). It is likely this latter thought formed a large part of his belief that he could not keep a wife. Apparently, he had not yet fully worked out that part of his belief system. One sees similar reservations with Grace Murray suggesting the primary concern for ministry above marriage. Before he would marry Grace, he would need to address questions about the use of his resources, and whether Grace would prove a distraction and hindrance to ministry. Until he settled these he would not consider marriage. However, Wesley reasoned that since he was already supporting Grace Murray who worked at his Orphan House in Newcastle, there would be no further expense. He further reasoned that any children from the marriage would be educated at his school at Kingswood and therefore not constitute added expense. Wesley then dealt with the objection that marriage to Grace Murray would prove a distraction or hinder the gospel. Based on his keen observation of her over
several years, three of which were spent under his roof, Wesley concluded Grace “would exceedingly further me in the work of the Gospel” (Heitzenrater, 1984). Clearly, Wesley’s rationale for marriage to Grace was primarily founded on pragmatic and utilitarian foundations. Furthermore, Wesley deemed Grace an appropriate help mate for him since she would fulfill the following roles:

15. First as a housekeeper....
16. As a nurse....
17. As a companion....
18. As a friend....
19. Lastly, as a fellow labourer in the Gospel of Christ (the light wherein my wife is to be chiefly considered)....” (Italics mine) (Heitzenrater, 1984, p. 183).

As one reads this excerpt, the entirely utilitarian and unromantic rationale for his marriage to Grace appears pronounced (Headley, 2010). One is struck by the utilitarian emphasis on housekeeping and nursing, followed by relational considerations of Grace as a companion and friend. One is also struck by the emphasis in point 19; namely that Grace would serve as a fellow labourer in the gospel. Wesley further emphasized this by his bracketed qualifier that Grace’s potential as a fellow labourer was the chief qualification for his wife. Indeed, this qualifier was not simply about Grace but pertained to any person considered a potential wife for Wesley. Anyone legitimately considered would need to meet this benchmark. Thus, for Wesley, the role of fellow labourer in the gospel took precedence over all other roles such as housekeeper, nurse, companion and friend (Headley, 2010).

Wesley likely utilized this same pragmatic thinking, reflecting the priority of ministry, in pursuing a marriage to Mary Vazeille. A few considerations support this conclusion. First, Wesley’s primary concern for a marriage which would serve ministry rang true in his reasoning for considering marriage to Mary Vazeille. He noted: “For many years I remained single, because I believed I could be more useful in a single than in a married state....I now as fully believed that in my present circumstances I might be more useful in a married state” (Curnock, 1909, Vol. 3, p. 512). The emphasis in this rationale clearly focused on usefulness. Wesley decided on marriage because it would prove most useful to his ministry, given his changing circumstances. No doubt the aspersions cast upon him as a “bachelor rake,” might have contributed to his new attitude towards marriage (Abelove, 1990).

Second, as mentioned earlier, Wesley sought to avoid marriage becoming a hindrance by crafting a rule whereby he could continue his pace in ministry. Some weeks after his marriage, following intense travel and preaching, he wrote: “I cannot understand how a Methodist preacher can answer to God to preach one sermon or travel one day less in a married state than in a single
state. In this respect surely ‘it remaineth that they who have wives be as though they had none’ (Telford, 1887, p. 254). Wesley evidently took some pride in his ability to continue his ministry habits despite his marriage. Additionally, these spoken words might have been meant as a veiled slap at his brother Charles, whose marriage to Sarah Gwynne had led to a curtailment of his ministry practices (Lloyd, 2002; Tyerman, 1872). Significantly, Wesley repeated similar words to his wife, telling her: “If I thought that I should (that is preach one sermon less or travel one day less), my dear, as well as I love you, I would never see your face more” (Telford, 1887, p. 254). Moreover, according to words ascribed to one Henry Moore, Wesley had apparently struck such a pact with his wife (Telford, 1887). By taking these steps, Wesley believed Mary would not become a hindrance but a help in ministry. Initially Mary obliged: she traveled extensively with John Wesley during the first four years of the marriage (Collins, 1993, Telford, 1887).

Third, in terms of his consideration for wise use of his resources in ministry, marriage to Mary made sense: she would pose no additional strain on his resources, given her affluence. Her husband, Anthony Vazeille had left her in good financial shape with some 10,000 British Pounds, in addition to a house on Threadneedle St. and a home in the country (Heitzenrater, 1984, Rogal, 2001).

From this evidence, the author concludes that Wesley continued to harbor his persistent belief that marriage must take a back seat to ministry. Not surprisingly, a few days after his marriage, Wesley spoke to the single young men and admonished them to remain single for the kingdom’s sake (Curnock, 1909). For a man recently married, the words seem incongruous. However, further thinking reveals they are not. Wesley evidently believed ministry considerations must always take precedence over any decision to marry (Headley, 2010). This held true in his case and he only came to a decision to marry once he was able to satisfy himself that marriage would not hinder his ministry in any fashion. According to his reasoning, when one is not able to ensure marriage’s detraction from ministry, one should remain celibate “for the kingdom of heaven’s sake.” For Wesley, though a priest could marry, celibacy was the most appropriate stance when full devotion to ministry could not be guaranteed. Thus, although Wesley moved from a position of celibacy for priests to one which freed him to marry, one consistent belief remained: *Ministry considerations must always come before marriage*, even if this meant remaining celibate (Headley, 2010). Given this stance, the next two patterns in Wesley’s relationships make perfect sense. Here I refer to the fact that his relationships largely seem to have been cultivated in illness and travel.

**Attractions Fostered in Illness**

This author finds it significant that Sophy Hopkey, Grace Murray and
Mary Vazeille each nursed John Wesley during some illness. Speaking of his illness and the nursing provided by Sophy Hopkey, Dobree (1997) wrote:

moreover she had nursed him through a fever due to his having taken a little meat and a dash of wine at Oglethorpe’s request, who was afraid that his abstention might be misconstrued (p. 28).

We find a similar situation involving illness in John Wesley’s relationship to Grace Murray. Grace Murray had nursed Wesley back to health in August 1748 when he fell ill in the Newcastle Orphan House Baker (Frank Baker, 1966; Lloyd, 2002; Rogal, 1988). Dobree (1997) described the occasion in rather florid language:

And then, 1748, across these scenes of effort and strife, of dust and turmoil, of ceaseless journeyings, amid the tense concentration of constructive work, there floated into Wesley’s vision the beckoning figure of Grace Murray, promising succour and she was so refreshing as a nurse, that if the itinerant preachers fell sick, they did so more often at Newcastle than anywhere else. Wesley himself was slightly ill there in this year and, considering his nurse — so good a worker, so cheerful, so neat — he thought that she would be the very wife for him. (p. 69)

Finally, we have John’s severe ankle problems which led to being nursed by his future bride, Mary Vazeille. Baker (1966) suggested this relationship was likely a reactive response to the loss of Grace Murray, but also indicated the role of his illness in its formation when he wrote: “As for the bereft John Wesley, yet another convalescence gave him leisure to study yet another widow who used a gentle hand in nursing him, and to whom he proposed marriage.” (p. 188).

Given these parallels, one is led to ask: “What is there about illness which made Wesley more likely to fall in love and consider marital commitment?” Several possibilities present themselves. Along with Baker (1966), one could surmise that “… his enforced leisure gave him more appreciative eyes for his housekeeper, who also served as his nurse” (p. 177). Consumed as he was with ministry in terms of his time, energy and emotion, only a forced leisure would allow Wesley the time to consider women and a potential intimate relationship. This reasoning fits nicely with the primacy he placed on ministry above marriage. However, one might entertain other considerations. For example, illness might have created a physical vulnerability which forced him to consider his mortality and along with it the human need for care and companionship. In this context, one should remember that in the developmental account of his decision to marry, Wesley carved out a prominent place for both nurse and companion. Indeed, these two formed his points 16 and 17 respectively (Heitzenrater, 1984). Furthermore, it does not appear to
be a leap of logic to suggest that his sense of mortality could unearth a concomitant emotional vulnerability. This would allow him to entertain, even if briefly, his emotional need for a female friend and companion.

One might even entertain a somewhat psychodynamic interpretation to explain the relationship of love and illness in Wesley’s life. By this, the author means that Wesley’s illnesses and subsequent nursing by these women replicated maternal care from his childhood. These occasions likely provided him an opportunity to see these women in gentle and caring roles similar to what he had experienced with his mother and thus made them more attractive (Headley, 2010). This way of thinking appears more plausible when one considers point 1 in Wesley’s developmental steps regarding marriage where he presents his mother as the quintessential mate. Similarly, in point 8, Wesley spoke of finding a few women who could match his mother in knowledge and piety (Heitzenrater, 1984). Clearly, Wesley pictured his mother as the idealized woman and the prototypical wife. Given this stance, he likely measured each potential mate against Susanna. Illness provided Wesley an opportunity to consider the gentle and caring roles these women displayed. This cast them to some degree in his image of the idealized woman and wife. This alone might have made them appropriate marital partners in his eyes (Headley, 2010).

Attractions Fostered in Travel

A final pattern involves the role of travel in the formation of Wesley’s intimate relationships. This pattern clearly appeared in his relationship with Sophy Hopkey and Grace Murray. Relative to Sophy Hopkey, Wesley provided an extensive account of this first significant relationship. According to Curnock (1909), Wesley wrote the account earlier and more briefly and hurriedly but later refined and finished it on March 12, 1738 at Oxford. This account included a detailed report of his travel from Frederica to Savannah in the company of Sophy. The account seems remarkable for a number of reasons. First, a synchronicity exists in the important dates relative to his relationship with Sophy. Wesley first met Sophy on March 13, 1736 and she married William Williamson on March 12, 1737. Wesley apparently made his final revision to the account of Sophy Hopkey on March 12, 1738 at Oxford (Curnock, 1909). From this perspective, Wesley’s account was an anniversary event, revisiting his first encounter with Sophy Hopkey and losing her to William Williamson the following year (Headley, 2010). In their book *Genograms in Family Assessment*, McGoldrick and Gerson (1985) devote some attention to anniversary reactions. For them, “Certain so-called coincidences can be understood as anniversary reactions, i.e., family members react to the fact that the date is the anniversary of some critical or traumatic event” (1985, pp. 92-93). From this perspective, the loss of his relationship with Sophy Hopkey was a traumatic experience...
for Wesley, a reality supported by his intense and distressing emotions following the discovery of her engagement and subsequent marriage (Curnock, 1909; Heitzenrater, 1984). Furthermore, the experience was likely reawakened by the anniversary of the loss. From this perspective, the lengthy account was likely a way for Wesley to come to some kind of closure (Headley, 2010).

Second, being an anniversary event, the account provides candid insights into John Wesley and his relationship with Sophy Hopkey. Curnock believed the story was “transparently truthful” and reflected his personal experience. He considered it “a psychological review of motives and emotions by a man torn by inward conflict - a conflict between duty and affection” (Curnock, 1909, Vol. 1, p. 288). This is not surprising given the emotions which anniversary events can evoke, particularly when these events involve grief and loss.

Third, the account indicated the transformations which took place in the relationship during the journey from Frederica to Savannah. Wesley previously made veiled hints at marriage and on this trip he again came close to a marriage proposal. Curnock (1909) spoke about a quasi-engagement with Sophy although Wesley was still struggling “...for freedom and a clear path of duty.” Concerning this veiled proposal, Wesley wrote:

Feb. 3 [I was now in a great strait. I still thought it best for me to live single. And this was still my design; but I felt the foundations of it shaken more and more every day. Insomuch that I again hinted at a desire of marriage, though I made no direct proposal. For indeed it was only a sudden thought which had not the consent of my own mind...] (italics mine). (Curnock, 1909, Vol. 1, p. 315)

This statement reveals a great deal about Wesley’s emotional dynamics during this trip. In the italicized sentence noted in his journal entry, we find the slippage of what has been termed “implicit working memory.” Namely, we have here a primary emotional response from his right brain, before his left brain could counteract it or dissent. According to Schore (2003), emotional responses centered in the right brain are far quicker than responses from the left brain which governs cognition, language and linear processing. Given Wesley’s consistent bias towards a rational approach to life, honed early in his life, he had likely somewhat slowed this quicker emotional response. But on this trip with Sophy, the closeness must have provoked such intensity of emotions that they overrode his usual cognitive bent before he could censure it. The emotional intensity engendered during the trip continued for sometime, for a few days later, Wesley wrote:

[Tuesday 8 (Feb) - The next morning I was obliged to go down to Savannah. There I stayed about an hour; and there again I felt, and groaned under the weight of, an unholy desire. My
heart was with Miss Sophy all the time. I longed to see her, were it but for a moment.”] (Curnock, 1909, Vol. 1, p. 317)

But rationality eventually resurfaced and dictated against marriage for two reasons. Wesley reasoned marriage to Sophy would obstruct his mission to the Indians. Secondly, he thought he was not strong enough to bear the complications of married life (Curnock, 1909). Here again, in the first reason, we see his modus operandi: considerations of marriage must always take a back seat to ministry, and where such an action would hinder ministry, one should curtail marriage considerations. Furthermore, we see that he had not yet resolved his belief about his inability to handle the difficulties of marriage. He would later resolve this belief in his detailed rationale for marrying Grace Murray. But for now he yet struggled. Nevertheless, from our discussion above, it is clear that this trip with Sophy was a significant point in his relationship with her. It fully exposed the emotional dynamics at work in him and brought him to the brink of marriage.

In addition to his travel with Sophy Hopkey, Wesley also traveled a great deal with Grace Murray. In 1748, she traveled with him through Yorkshire and Derbyshire. Later, she accompanied him to Ireland in April 1749 and from Bristol, London and Newcastle for some five months. In fact, during this period, they were scarcely separated (Baker, 1966; Telford, 1887). These extensive travels permitted closer study of Grace's attitudes and behaviors. Thus, in his rationale for marrying her, Wesley bolstered his argument with evidence supplied from close and long association with her. In point 14, he argued that given his experiences with Grace, she would in fact greatly further his work in the gospel (Heitzenrater, 1984).

Clearly, his travels with her and the years she spent under his roof provided more than enough opportunity for him decide on her suitability as wife. As indicated in a previous section, such close contact allowed him to see her as a fit mate in the mold of his mother. Moreover, travel with her allowed more time for intimate conversation and for his love for her to grow. In fact, Wesley declared: “The more we convers’d together, the more I lov’d her; &c, before I return’d from Ireland, we contracted by a Contract de praesenti” (Frank Baker, 1966, p. 178).

Wesley's near brush with marriage to Sophy Hopkey and Grace Murray likely influenced his marital union with Mary Vazeille. By the time he met the latter, he had evidently resolved his reservations about marriage. This might partly explain the absence of the vacillation evident in the earlier relationships. Furthermore, one might suggest that having addressed his reasoning processes in the previous relationship with Grace Murray, he was now in a position to have his normal caution overridden by emotion and care for Mary generated during his convalescence. This author suggests Wesley was likely overwhelmed with emotion because of the quickness of the marriage and
the ignoring of his own regulations concerning consultation prior to marriage (Headley, 2010).

**Wesley’s Philosophy of Marriage and Patterns in his Intimate Relationships**

From the review of Wesley’s three intimate relationships, the author now draws a few conclusions. First, it appears the formation of relationships cultivated in illness and travel derived from his philosophy of marriage. Because of his radical devotion to ministry, Wesley would not have allowed himself the luxury of space and time to consider a serious relationship. Illness and travel provided necessary and convenient occasions in which he could study these women for their qualities as a mate and primarily as a fellow-labourer in the gospel (Headley, 2010).

Second, Wesley’s belief that ministry must always take priority over marriage fits well with John Scanzoni’s model of how clergy resolve occupational and conjugal conflicts (1965). He described two types of clergy: sect-type and clergy-type. Sect-type clergy view their kin group as a competitor to ministry and give greater priority to the clergy role. In addition, such persons elevate ministry above marital and family roles, and are consumed with the former to the exclusion of the latter. Not surprisingly, in times of conflict between these roles, the clergyperson gives priority to the ministry role (pp. 396-398). In contrast, Scanzoni spoke about church-type clergy. These persons differ radically from sect-type clergy: They see their families as allies deserving support and give a greater priority to their marriage and family roles, although they also value the ministry role. In times of conflicting needs, such persons give priority to the family role. Besides this, these persons find time and opportunity to get out of their occupational roles and make space for fulfilling marital, family and expressive roles. They demonstrate a balance between work and home (Scanzoni, 1965, pp. 396-398).

Given our previous discussion, Wesley’s approach to marriage and its relation to ministry clearly fit Scanzoni’s description of the sect-type clergy. This perspective explains several of John’s views regarding the relationship between ministry and marriage. It helps us make sense of his rather utilitarian approach to marriage and his sayings about not preaching one less sermon or traveling one less day in a married state than in a single one. It also explains his behavior when his wife became ill with the fever. His wife’s illness conflicted with ministry demands. Thus, after a somewhat cursory check, John proceeded to leave his wife and continue with his ministry journeys (Collins, 1993). These attitudes and actions clearly fit a sect-type model, in which marital and family considerations are always secondary to concerns about ministry. Although any minister should realistically evaluate how they would resolve conjugal and ministerial tensions, most would not make ministry the primary
consideration above marriage to the extent that Wesley did. In contrast to John’s style, a consideration of Charles Wesley’s marriage and ministry places him in the mode of a church-type clergy. Given his stance, Charles modified his travel schedule after his marriage and arrival of his children (Lloyd, 2002).

However, our discussion of Wesley also allows us to add to Scanzoni’s early thoughts. Scanzoni’s model addressed the resolution of conjugal and occupational roles in ministry and its impact on the marital relationship (Scanzoni, 1965). But Scanzoni did not address how this same philosophy impacts one’s own needs and sometimes leads to dire personal consequences. In considering Wesley’s relationships, we can point to the negative impact on the women with whom he related. However, his philosophy of ministry also led to severe consequences for his emotional life. This is evident in the significant turmoil he experienced following the loss of his relationships with Sophy and Grace (Curnock, 1909). One should also not forget the significant struggles he experienced in his tension-filled marriage to Mary Vazeille (Collins, 1993). In addition, his beliefs about marriage in relation to ministry did not allow him to consider the legitimate need for a marital companion unless it principally served ministry. Furthermore, his philosophy contributed to an apparent unconditional absorption in ministry (Simmel, 1955). Kenneth Collins (1993) was right in his conclusion about Wesley when he noted: “... a person so driven in the pursuit of ministry, like Wesley, so punctilious in his use and valuation of time, could only appear as unkind, cold, and neglectful to the suffering (and at times sick) spouse (Collins, 1993, p. 18). Later, Collins added the apt statement: “Wesley’s ministerial style, his particular balance of hearth and pulpit, can hardly serve as a model for contemporary married Methodist pastors” (Collins, 1993, p. 18). This author agrees entirely with this evaluation.

In light of these considerations, any philosophy of ministry must make space for conjugal, family and personal obligations. This thinking is line with this author’s emphasis on the need to reframe ministry (Headley, 2007). That is, ministry should not exclusively focus on serving others. It ought also to create space for rendering legitimate service to oneself and one’s family. Such a reframe would allow for a modification and expansion of one’s view of ministry, provide space for addressing one’s legitimate human needs and allow for the appropriate resolution of personal, conjugal and occupational roles. Such an understanding of ministry seemed largely absent in Wesley’s life and as a result, his potential marriages and the actual marriage to Mary Vazeille suffered immensely. Indeed, his model which placed ministry at a far higher level than marriage, wreaked havoc with his intimate relationships.
References


End Notes

1 Headley (2010), Family Crucible: The Influence of Family Dynamics in the Life and Ministry of John Wesley, Oregon: Wipf and Stock. In this manuscript, I discussed the developmental issues each woman faced. I also discussed the prior and present relationships each woman carried and the implications of those relationships for their connection to John Wesley, especially in terms of the potential for triangulation.
United Methodists have been belaboring their ongoing decline in church membership and cultural influence in the United States virtually from the founding of the denomination in 1968. Two factors, however, may help to put this fact into proper perspective. First, if a wide angle lens is employed, Methodism looks remarkably healthy. That is, when the World Methodist Council meets, as Lawrence points out, it embraces participants from over 132 countries and represents more than seventy-five million people, a number that is even larger than the world-wide Anglican communion. Second, since a smaller percentage of Americans participate in worship now than at any time since the 1930s, the decline of United Methodism is not unique but is actually a part of a larger American cultural trend.

Making a distinction between rescue (“in the aftermath of an extreme event, the first response is rescue”) and recovery (“in the aftermath of a tragic event, [the] second phase is recovery”), Lawrence maintains that the recovery of the United Methodist Church will entail nothing less than a renewal of unity as well as the three criteria that constitute the church, namely, faithfully preaching the Word of God, duly administering the sacraments, and adhering to proper order and discipline. This broad prescription is particularized into sixteen themes among which include the following: 1) “Learning again how to define what ‘church’ is,” 2) “Changing the practices of discussion from the legislative to the theological” and 3) “Restoring the role of oversight to the episcopacy.”

Recognizing that the recovery of United Methodism will not likely occur until it not only rediscovers its message of redemption but also finds a mission worthy of its life and call, Lawrence rightly points out that four factors continue to pose problems for recovery so understood, namely, “the congregationalization of the church, the identification of American Methodism with the North American middle class, the acceptance of secular political categories as a way to understand the church, and the tendency to transmute the art of ministry into the management of ministry.”
Appreciating the universal nature of the gospel, Lawrence offers prescriptions that break out of the class-warfare models (often informed by Marxist analysis) that have been offered repeatedly by United Methodist leaders in the past. Along these lines he notes that “Jesus ministered to the rich as well,” a statement rarely intoned during Methodist morning worship. Beyond this, Lawrence argues that it will undoubtedly be helpful to Methodists to change the operative paradigm from the political to the theological. Indeed, a politicized gospel can easily become sectarian, limited, and in the end divisive. The gospel of Jesus Christ, however, is genuinely inclusive, that is, indicative of the universal love of God in which as the Apostle Paul states, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:28 TNIV)

Lawrence concludes his analysis by noting that the way forward must entail the transformation of both the world and individuals, but that transformation always requires telling the truth—about God and about ourselves. As such this small volume is a helpful addition to the burgeoning problem/solution genre focused on the decline of North American United Methodism.

Charles Yrigoyen, John G. McEllhenney, and Kenneth A. Rowe
United Methodism at Forty: Looking Back Looking Forward

Everyone knows that the United Methodist Church is in decline. Few, however, realize just how gray the denomination has become. In fact, according to this recent book by Yrigoyen and others, elders under thirty-five today represent less than five percent of the ordained clergy. And according to Larry Hollon the median age of a person in a United Methodist the pew is fifty-seven!

Aware of this unenviable predicament, Yrigoyen, McElhenney and Rowe set out to assess the future of America’s second largest Protestant denomination by looking back at its forty year history. Established in 1968 through a union with the Evangelical United Brethren, the United Methodist Church in many ways is emblematic of the turbulent yet promising decade in which it arose. Indeed, after listing five culture currents from the sixties (Liberation, Inclusion, Autonomy, Participation, and Globalization), the authors set up a typology that makes this particular decade the gold standard. Thus, persons and groups are defined principally as either pro or anti-sixties. Anti-sixties folk, for example, are portrayed as those who view things in terms of “right and wrong.” Republicans, led by Newt Gingrich, so it is claimed, “ushered in an anti-sixties agenda for America.” Such a typology,
however, is tedious, inadequate and may even be prejudicial, since it routes
readers down the well grooved paths of the social mores and political
judgments that the authors so vigorously prefer. The sixties decade, however,
was far more complicated than such a glib analysis can ever allow. It was
marked by both good and bad, promise and tragedy. On the one hand, the
Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964 which gave Afro-Americans the freedoms
they richly deserved. On the other hand, the sexual revolution of this decade
led to the cataclysmic rise of unwed motherhood which is one of the leading
engines of poverty in this country even today.

Beyond preferred typologies the authors repeatedly employ prejudicial
language that does not allow readers to come to their own seasoned (and
more accurate) judgments. Thus, for example, the evangelical association for
renewal in the United Methodist church known as “Good News” is painted
as a “window closing” movement. Moreover, those who disagree with the
social, political and theological judgments of these authors are swept aside as
“Bible thumping” critics. Again, those protesting theologies that revel in
divisive identity politics are described as “many-colored” while traditionalist
theology is referred to quite simply as “black and white.” And as if this were
not enough, layers of guilt by association are added to this mix as it is claimed
that traditionalists “borrowed from the five fundamentals of Fundamentalism.”

The chapters on Doctrine, Worship, Ministry and Mission lack depth and
proper focus. Accordingly, the vital notion of the transformation of being
that occurs through faith in Jesus Christ and that cleanses believers in holy
love floats by these authors like a blur. Indeed, their attention is elsewhere,
not on grace, holiness and beauty, but on the hot button social issues of the
day as they mimic the political rhetoric of the left. To illustrate, they engage in
special pleading and paint United Methodists as essentially being pro choice
on abortion. Beyond this, special treatment is given to the controversial topic
of homosexuality, and the reader quickly gets the sense that this is one of the
leading themes of this book. In fact, there are more page references to
homosexuality listed in the index than to any other topic and one more than
even for John Wesley, himself!

In the end, this volume relates the story of the last forty years of United
Methodism utterly from the perspective of the left, a perspective which at
times is confused with the center. But the United Methodist church is actually far more diverse than these authors have ever imagined. To be sure, another, far more accurate and accountable story needs to be told.

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Scott J. Jones  
*Staying at the Table: The Gift of Unity for United Methodists*  
*2008. Nashville: Abingdon Press*

“These are difficult times for the United Methodist church,” so states the first paragraph of yet another book on the malaise of contemporary Methodism. Lifting up the theme of unity as the way forward (although equally as much and perhaps even more is written about diversity), Bishop Scott Jones wants to chart a course that avoids the extremes of both the right and the left to end up with what he calls (idiosyncratically) “the extreme center.”

Repeating the bromides that the United Methodist church should not split, Jones suggests that unity can arise from a common mission. The problem, of course, not identified by Jones, is that the United Methodist church cannot agree on its basic mission because beyond the vague assertion of “making disciples of Jesus Christ,” the church is actually rife with interest groups with all sorts of agendas, some of which, ironically enough, undermine holiness and purity, and therefore serious Christian discipleship as well. And though the Bishop bewails the loss of mission among many UM congregations that have become “internally focused” and therefore, “more of a club than a church,” he continues in that same exclusivist manner by failing to include many evangelicals in his analysis. To be sure, not one Asbury Seminary professor was invited to participate in the respondents section with its sixteen contributors, though according to the best estimates available, evangelicals constitute a full third of United Methodism. What’s more when groups are indentified to be included in the ministry of the church (“We need Yankees [a disparaging term for Northerners] as well as Texans; we need seminary educated persons as well as part-time local pastors. We need women and men, African-Americans, Asians, Native Americans, Hispanic/Latinos/Latinas and Anglo folk,” there is not a single, specific mention of evangelicals at all, other than a vague reference later on to “conservatives,” whatever that means. Oddly enough, Jones vision includes identifying those who have body piercings and tattoos but, once again, not evangelicals. While the former should indeed be included in the circles of ministry, marked by holy love, so should the latter. This is not the extreme center, as Jones claims, but the leftist center.
Failing to find the unity of the church among its many peoples, Jones then turns his attention to doctrine which may yet hold the power to unite. After affirming the importance of Scripture, constitutionally protected standards of doctrine (such as Wesley’s Sermons and Notes), the Book of Discipline, liturgy and hymnody, Jones then lifts up a number of essential doctrines of the church that embrace all of the following: “Trinity, including Christology, creation, sin, repentance, justification, new birth, assurance, sanctification, grace, mission.” This is clearly a movement in the right direction though things quickly unravel as Jones identifies six divisive issues (Race and Gender, Scripture, Christology, Homosexuality, Global Nature, The Gift of Unity and Holy Communion). Indeed, not only does Jones label the view that we should judge persons not on the color of their skin but on their qualifications as extreme (he prefers an affirmative action that focuses on race—and gender) but he also maintains that the United Methodist church needs to be more accepting of lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender folk. Demonstrating that his analysis is far more political than theological, the Bishop makes the additional claim that he does not “regard our teaching on homosexuality as an essential doctrine,” not realizing, of course, that the doctrine of creation (listed as essential earlier) impugns, indeed militates against many homosexual practices when natural law as grounded in a created order is considered. Such a truth, of course, does not deny that homosexuals are people of sacred worth as the Book of Discipline clearly states, but that a sacred canopy can not be laid atop all homosexual behaviors without qualification.

Perceptive readers will likely come to the conclusion that a meta-narrative of identity politics, even political correctness, actually informs so much of the analysis of Bishop Jones. Though the language is often theological the argument is actually sociological and political, focused neither on the transcendent love of God nor on the moral law (as an expression of the 

imago Dei

) but on groups, on the cacophony of voices currently in United Methodism clamoring for attention, rights, justice and what not. This is hardly a prescription for unity. These are indeed difficult times for the United Methodist Church.

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Book Reviews

Ogbu U. Kalu, ed., Alaine Low, Associate ed.
Interpreting Contemporary Christianity: Global Processes and Local Identities
Reviewed by Frances Adeney

This interesting collection of essays, grew out of papers presented at an international conference on Protestant missions and the religious aspects of globalization in 2001. The essays take perspectives that privilege Third World indigenous and local contributions to recent trends in world Christianity. Organized into sections on theory and context, globalizing tendencies in Christianity, ministerial formation in theological education, and local influences in Charismatic and Pentecostal transformations, the volume clearly situates contemporary Christianity in non-Western locales: China, Africa, South America and Asia. That focus alone makes this a worthwhile addition to a growing literature on globalization and religion.

Editor Ogbu U. Kalu frames the discussion using the metaphor of changing tides to outline the chapters and present some of his own perspectives on the issues addressed. Paul Freson then brings correctives to globalization and religion discourse by focusing on Third World perspectives in his essay “Globalization, Religion, and Evangelical Christianity: A Sociological Meditation from the Third World.” He advocates paying more attention to those voices on issues such as use of global data on religions, growing constraints on religious freedom in many parts of the world, and the importance of conversion and mission activity from the Third World as a key theme in the religion and globalization conversation. He also reflects the general theological thrust of the book in his discussion of the need to distinguish between evangelicalism and fundamentalism in Christianity. Many of the authors of this volume speak for the evangelical and charismatic constituencies of Christianity, and would, of course, eschew the label of fundamentalism.

Various critiques of points of view of First World scholars in the religion and globalization debate run throughout the text and are helpful reminders to scholars that the historical location of historians and theologians greatly influences the ways they interpret history. Paul Freson criticizes Mark
Juergensmeyer’s assumption that a common “religious” point of view can be a basis for resisting “the secular” (26f). Jehu J. Hanciles in his chapter “African Christianity, Globalization, and Mission” takes Paul Gifford to task, claiming that Gifford overemphasizes the “externality” factor in African Christianity (82f). Dana Robert notes the lack of attention to internationalism as a counterpoint for understanding both indigenization and globalization during the inter-war period in North America (94). In Sebastian c. H. Kim’s article “The Kingdom of God versus the Church,” he recounts P. Chenchiah’s critique of Hendrick Kraemer’s views on the centrality of the church in spreading Christianity in India (140f-142). Chenchiah saw the church itself as an obstacle to mission in India and argued instead for the centrality of inter-religious relations as a critical element in understanding the Christian message (141f).

In addition to those critiques, positive contributions from Third World scholars add texture and particularity to the discussion. Brian M. Howell and Anthony dela Fuente present a fascinating account of Protestantism and popular culture in the Philippines by using localization theory in critiquing popular films in “Redemption and Progress: Analogies of Protestantism and Popular culture in the Philippines.” Edith L. Blumhofer draws the reader into the rich cultures of India and Pentecostalism with her descriptions of Pandita Ramabai in, “Consuming Fire: Pandita Ramabai and the Global Pentecostal Impulse.” Diane Stinton graphically portrays images of Jesus in “Local Portraits of Christ in Africa Today: Jesus as Chief/King in Ghanaian Christianity.” And Philomena Njeri Mwaura illuminates the gender changes that both globalization and Christianity are introducing to Kenyan society in “Gendered Appropriation of Mass Media in Kenyan Christianities: A Comparison of Two Women-Led African Instituted Churches in Kenya.”

The rich content of this volume does not, however, exempt it from some of the usual difficulties faced by edited works: unbalanced sections, uneven quality, and some arbitrariness in essay topics. The well developed section on local agency and charismatic and Pentecostal transformation presents rich and original essays. But the section on cultural and socio-political dimensions of global process presents the reader with only one essay, a case study at that. The section on ministerial formation focuses broadly on evangelical universities and a single essay on theological education in China in the early 1900s. One wonders why ministerial formation is the topic here and not inter-religious leadership formation, an area more germane to the overall subject matter. Or one might ask why the globalizing impulse in Christianity section stops with WWII and does not include an essay on current globalizing issues in contemporary Christianity, since interpreting contemporary Christianity is the overall topic of the book.

Perhaps we ask too much of an edited volume. Bringing together the essays in this book enrich the reader’s knowledge of the interstices of
Christianity and globalization. The focus on Third World influences and contributions from international scholars helps to fill a lacuna in mission studies. And the essays one might wish to read plus the questions raised by the essays included present crucial areas of research that scholars can pursue to further the discussion of global processes and local identities in Christianity.

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**Afe Adogame, Roswith Gerloff and Klaus Hock, eds.**

*Christianity in Africa and the Africa Diaspora: the Appropriation of a Scattered Heritage*

*2008. London: Continuum International Publishing Group*

Reviewed by Gwinyai Muzorewa

Christianity in Africa and the Africa Diaspora was authored by three most competent scholars whose academic skills are commensurate with the task they undertook. With Afe Adogame’s expertise in African religions in diaspora, Roswith Gerloff’s competency in intercultural theology and Klaus Hock’s specialty in interfaith dialogue [Christianity/Islam], African religions and transculturation, the three make an excellent trinity of scholars who have expertly put this compendious and instructive book together.

The book is systematically organized into four parts, making its variegated topical content flow together coherently. Part two builds logically on part one which lays the historical and conceptual foundation for the rest of the book. Parts three and four which discuss Pentecostalism and the adaptability of African Christianity, as well as African presence in foreign regions, reflect the results of the aspects of socio-economic and religio-political liberation struggles depicted in pages 9 through 109. Each chapter brings in original and forceful information which is presented with clarity. To say, “The goal of mission must essentially be about improving the quality of life for people in community in the widest sense: personal, spiritual, cultural socio-political and economic dimensions of life,” sums it all. [p.74]. Each chapter invites a re-thinking of the mission and purpose of Christianity in the African context. The traditional Euro-American mission church concept is an old shell out of which the new mission is emerging.

The African Christians are seeking the Voice and guidance of the Holy Spirit for themselves, not as it has been interpreted to them. That is why most church communities have their own “prophets”. The birth of the rapidly growing Kimbanguism is such an example. It is characterized by
indigenousness. Where statistics, polls or surveys are employed, such data provide independent and lucid information that speaks for itself. Numerous works concur that New Religious Movements are fueled by the “Holy Scriptures which are therefore Christian or derived from Christianity” Pages 117 through 122 furnish us with persuasive statistics, leading us to believe the claim that “the phenomenon of female leadership in the churches appears to be an upsurge that is spreading like wild fire in the Nigerian ecclesial experience.” [p.116]. Addressing gender issues further, the book makes the point that scripture-based Christianity effectively liberates the oppressed and provides a therapeutic theology to the suffering. Based on surveys conducted by various scholars, there is a steady movement toward liberation in a Christian as well as secular context. “A greater number of Pentecostal women are seen as rejecting the stereotyped passive traditional and supportive roles of women as characterized by most mission churches for support of active female leadership roles in the churches.” [p.113]. As one scholar notes “enculturation and liberation hermeneutics” contribute to new spiritual insights for the many African Christians. The book covers select aspects of Christianity in Africa and Diaspora, and the authors view this as the heritage being “scattered”. I think this is a negative view of church growth.

The book brings to us clarity on gender issues within Christianity in Africa, Pentecostalism and religious enculturation in diaspora from the point of view of people of African descent the world over, especially Europe. Thus, the authors succeeded in informing and educating the African readership on the continent and those in Diaspora through authentic data acquired through thorough research. Also, any other interested audience from various disciplines may also benefit from these excerpts/select chapters. The book also has an overall effect of explaining why and how far afield African Christians have taken the faith. Great! It is in this sense that I believe that the phrase “scattered heritage” in the sub-title is a misnomer. What we see here is how African Christians have spread their Christian heritage in its “African garb” along with their culture, to Europe, Asia and the Americas. This is a right the African America was denied and deprived of due to their slavery status. Christianity in Africa and Diaspora, viewed as a movement, can be regarded as a case of reverse missions. The challenge is now for the Western communities to receive the good news from “Samaria, “ answering the rhetorical question: what good can come out of Samaria. This book presents world Christianity leaders with an opportunity to develop interconnectedness and an all-inclusive religious expansion. I therefore strongly recommend this reading to missionaries, seminarians [especially homiletics professors] and any other interested audience who may serve as the agents of enculturation, contextualization and globalization.
Jehu J. Hanciles
Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West
Reviewed by Gwinyai Muzorewa

Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West attempts to embrace or capture world history in the making. The North and the South are having to meet somewhere, but not half way. Dr Hanciles does not speak for the South, which happens to be his domicile, nor does he speak for the North, which is his habitat. This book, in computer language, is a theological “chip”, loaded with historical, missiological, political, economic, cultural and sociological dimensions of the twenty-first century humanity. Although the book is not an autobiography, or even simply a biography, its great merit is that the author is very much a part of the phenomenon with which he is wrestling academically. This may be one reason he chose this topic and not any other at this juncture. That the author places African immigrants at the center of the stage is not coincidental but a matter of fact, in his perspective. The book argues that there is a “missionary movement which has much broader significance than meets the eye, as it were. In articulating this crucial component, the book conveys a breath-taking originality, coherence, forcefulness and conciseness. Furthermore, as primarily a historian, the author has capably presented his material from his academic discipline’s perspective, without making this a history textbook. Dr Hanciles essentially argues that only these notoriously religious Africans, some of whom are “highly educated men and women in their prime of life”, whose sociology and spirituality make them a community-bound and conscious people, are wired to be this kind of a new missionary.

However the challenge this new African missionary movement may have to face is whether the two cultures, South and North, will receive what seems to be inevitable interconnectedness and the consequent transformation. But as long as this movement is already manifesting itself in the North, whether it is viewed by either or both groups as “globalization from below” or not, the fact remains that it is globalization however defined, and change is inevitable.

The one difference between the missionary movement from the South and the North, is that the latter came wearing imperial garb, while the former does not. It is important to note that African Christianity as it is imported by the immigrants, enjoys the humility that Christ manifested, and does not have the brand of colonialism or imperialism or racism. It is no coincidence that, as Robert M. Franklin is quoted remarking about the African America churches, “Their public mission was to compel America to become America
for everyone.”[p. 281] It was this same spirit that led the Black Church to spearhead the civil rights movement, which, through Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., called the American society to be humane in their treatment of every person. The Black Church would not acquiesce to the dominant White Church which embraced slavery and subsequent racism. Thus, the former served as a new missionary movement, with a voice advocating societal transformation within the United States. That spirit has not died since, hence the election of a Black man for President.

I highly recommend this book to everyone because social transformation permeates all aspects of life. Dr Hanciles has clearly articulated a reality of which we are all a part, but may not realize or accept. The reader is invited to answer the rhetorical question: Am I being globalized, or am I globalizing somebody, or is globalization, interconnectedness, religious expansion here for real? After reading this book, one might realize that the world is so interdependent that every human being is making a contribution consciously or unaware. Could it be that it is the “stranger at the gate” who is bringing the key to a new wave of Christendom?

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Thomas Jay Oord, ed.
Divine Grace and Emerging Creation, Wesleyan Forays in Science and Theology of Creation
Reviewed by Laurence W. Wood

Divine Grace and Emerging Creation is edited by Thomas Jay Oord. This work is a collection of essays that were presented at a joint meeting of the Wesleyan Theological Society and the Society of Pentecostal Studies at Duke University, March 13-15, 2008. The purpose of the book is to show that Wesley can serve as a mentor of how science and faith are interrelated. The reader is told in the Introduction: “Scientists and philosophers of science are returning to the questions and answers of Wesley’s day” and “that Wesley’s reflections on nature, science, and theology and the ongoing reflection in Wesleyan communities provide important grounds for exploring and making progress in answering the biggest question we now face.” These high-flying ideas about Wesley’s significance as a resource of relating science and theology is moderated in the actual discussions that follow, although an occasional hagiographical comment continues to make its way into the work.
Acknowledging in the Introduction that Wesley knew virtually nothing about evolution, science of mind, cosmology, and the social sciences, and that his contribution was to see the Bible’s purpose and function as soteriological, this work leads the reader immediately to ask at the outset—how is it that Wesley can serve as our mentor today for integrating science and theology, especially considering his pre-critical view of the Bible and his non-academic, lay understanding of science in his day, which is now antiquated? The reader can be reassured that the ten chapters will offer interesting and worthwhile insights from Wesley to show his relevance for today.

Chapter one is entitled, “John Wesley’s Precedent for Theological Engagement with the Natural Sciences” by Randy Maddox. With his usual talent for nuancing ideas, Maddox provides the historical perspective for Wesley’s engagement with science and shows how Wesley embraced a modest natural theology. Maddox gives close attention to Wesley’s main work on the relation of science and the Bible in *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in Creation; or, A Compendium of Natural Philosophy*, first published in 1763. Maddox points out the “transitional nature” of science in Wesley’s day, but shows that Wesley is one who can model for us the importance of engaging in conversation with science. John W. Haas, Jr., contributed an essay on “John Wesley’s Vision of Science in the Service of Christ.” He highlights Wesley’s inclination toward the system of Hutchinson’s High-Church response to the latitudinarian Low-Church theology linked to Newtonian science, tending toward deism and atheism. Haas points out that in Wesley’s time a pre-critical view of the Bible was still practiced, thus not provoking a crisis of how to reconcile a literal reading of Genesis with evolutionary theory. Haas also points out that Wesley did not write as an academic theologian. Rather, Wesley’s comments on science are scattered in a variety of writings in his sermons and essays and were made for the benefit of his preachers and Methodist adherents.

Chapter Three is by Laura Barteis Felleman on “Degrees of Certainty in John Wesley’s Natural Philosophy.” She sees a connection between Wesley’s concept of the degrees of faith and the epistemological concept of the degrees of certainty in the philosophical models of the 17th century. This is an interesting observation and deserves further attention, which will show that the concept of the degrees of certainty was first developed by Leibniz in his *New Essays in Human Understanding* (written in 1690 in response to Locke’s concept of the mind being like a “blank tablet” upon which is written our knowledge of the world by our senses as explained in Locke’s *Essay on Human Understanding*). Leibniz was the first modern scholar to develop what he called a “new kind of logic” that categorized the various levels of certainty particularly in reference to historical probability. His concept of the logic of certainty and probability was introduced into Britain by John Craig who used Leibniz’s calculus. [see L. Wood, *God and History*, 2005, pp. 71-77, 89n.11]. Felleman also sees Wesley’s
sermon *On Faith* (1788) as an example of this epistemological categorizing of certainty with his emphasis on degrees of faith. It would be interesting to explore further this possible connection, but the most immediate source of inspiration for Wesley’s sermon *On Faith* grew out of his conversation with Melville Horne earlier in the year over the question of Christian assurance in particular reference to John Fletcher’s concept of dispensations, which categorized the different degrees of faith. Horne gave a report of this meeting in his book, *An Investigation of the Definition of Justifying Faith.* Horne worried about Methodist preachers who were linking “indubitable assurance” with justifying faith. This book by Horne set off a firestorm in Methodism with Thomas Coke responding to Horne’s alleged misuse of Fletcher and Wesley over the concept of certainty and Christian assurance. A worthwhile PhD thesis-project would be to explore these connections that Felleman has made along with the heated controversy that developed after Horne’s interview with Wesley in 1788 over the concept of degrees of faith. Marc Otto and Michael Lodahl in Chapter 4 address the issue of “Mystery and Humility in John Wesley’s Narrative Ecology.” This essay highlights Wesley’s appreciation for God’s relation to the world of nature, which serves a basis for developing a theology of the environment. Jürgen Moltmann’s essay in Chapter 5 is entitled, “Sighs, Signs, and Significance.” This is largely a methodological focus on developing a hermeneutic of nature. The vast amount of knowledge and insights reflected in this compact essay is worth the price of the book. It is like a miniature textbook in theology, ranging from creation, the doctrine of revelation, the Church, the eucharist, to eschatology, with natural science as its synthesizing theme. Chapter 6 is by Timothy Crutcher and is entitled, “The Consonance of Wesleyan Theology and Modern Science.” This essay sees a connection between Wesley’s concept of experience and scientific methodology. A helpful insight is Crutcher’s correction of the common notion that Wesley simply bought into Locke’s empiricism. He shows that Wesley was more Aristotelian in his logic than Lockean. Chapter Seven is entitled, “How the Discoveries of Science and Archaeology Shift Interpretations of Genesis,” by Robert D. Branson. His main point is that a new paradigm has already been developed in biblical studies for dealing with the contentious issue of interpreting Genesis 1-11. This new paradigm is linked to a dynamical view of inspiration which allows that an interpretation of the Bible is influenced by its historical conditioning. Comparing Genesis 1 - 11 with the Ancient Near Eastern Literature, for example, shows that the creation account and the flood were shaped in part by a genre of literature that could not be taken literally. The theology of Genesis is what is more relevant today than a literal interpretation of the purported historical events. Rebecca J. Flietstra in Chapter Eight discusses “Rooting Evolution in Grace.” She offers a creative, Christianized version of the neo-Darwinian views of evolution, common
descent, multiplication of species, gradualism, and natural selection. She roots these re-interpretation in an intriguing way with God’s grace. W. Christopher Stewart in Chapter Nine discusses “On Giving Intelligent Design Theorists What They Say They Want.” He raises questions whether or not the idea of Intelligent Design to transform society through any “scientific project” is appropriate. Wesley modeled for us that practical theology and personal piety rather than systems of thought are the primary means of transforming society. He shows that this movement is “swimming upstream against the current of contemporary philosophy of science” and its claims to make scientific conclusions that prove God’s existence are flawed based on its empirical conclusions. Regarding its claim to scientific legitimacy, Stewart shows that ID is discredited by its untestability and unfalsifiability, as well as religious motivations which shape its interpretation. Chapter 10 is entitled, “Attachment, Spiritual Formation, and Wesleyan Communities,” by Sarah DeBoard Marion and Warren S. Brown. This essay develops the psychoanalytic theory of attachment that describes how the brain is a self-organizing system which is organized through its history of interacting with its social environment. Those individuals who have consistently been influenced by appropriate attachment relationships throughout their lives will have a more resilient neurobiological system of dealing with positive and negative emotional states. This underscores the relevance of Wesley’s use of classes, bands, and societies as means of grace. Spiritual maturation happens primarily through interpersonal and relational interactions.

This book shows that the evangelical Wesleyan tradition recognizes the need for engaging Christian theology with contemporary science, and it sees its founder, John Wesley, as one who serves as an inspiration for this task and whose theological assumptions contribute directly to ways that this task can be performed. It is also apparent that the authors of this book feel that it is important to justify their realignment of Wesleyan theology with contemporary science by assuring its readers that these readjustments are consistent with Wesley’s intent. This latter premise will be viewed skeptically by many. For example, the claim that Wesley’s interpretation of the Bible was governed by a soteriological intent is problematic, if such a claim implies that Wesley allowed for factual errors in the Bible insofar as those errors did not affect soteriology. I think it more productive to argue that Wesley was a transitional figure, who was beginning to be aware of biblical criticism, but he held to a pre-critical, literal hermeneutic. In this respect, Wesley’s biblical literalism is often incompatible with contemporary science. A sequel to this book should focus on ways that Wesley’s biblical hermeneutic must be re-adjusted to allow for the poetic and symbolic use of language, if the integration of science and theology is to be successful for today. Although there may only be a few, if any, readjustments needed in Wesley’s Trinitarian orthodoxy, his literal
interpretation of the words of the Bible regarding creation and the eschatological future will need to be revised in the light of contemporary philosophy of language. One important resource for this task is the phenomenological hermeneutic of Paul Ricoeur.

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