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Methodism in the Soviet Union Since World War II*

MARK ELLIOTT

BACKGROUND

Methodism progressed through the northwestern portions of the Russian Empire beginning in Finland (from 1861), then to St. Petersburg (from 1889), to Lithuania (from 1893), to Latvia (from 1904), and to Estonia (from 1907) by means of Swedish, Finnish, German and American mission activity.¹

Methodism made its way to Estonia through the influence of an American missionary in St. Petersburg. An energetic bachelor, Indiana native and graduate of Drew Seminary, Rev. George Simons was the unlikely New World connection between the capital of the Russian empire and its nearest Baltic possession. Upon his arrival in St. Petersburg in 1907, Simons made the acquaintance of an Estonian, Vassili Taht, who shortly became a member of the ethnically mixed Methodist congregation of St. Petersburg, which held Sunday services in succession in German, English, Russian, Swedish, Finnish and Estonian.² Taht quickly joined forces that same year with an Estonian friend, Karl Kuum, a Moravian lay pastor, soon-to-turn Methodist. The two of them began house and open-air preaching on the large island of Saaremaa, Estonia, with reports of thousands in attendance.³

In 1908, in the wake of these meetings, converts formed the first Methodist congregation in Estonia at Kuressaare, Saaremaa, officially recognized as a Methodist church in 1910. The Kuressaare sanctuary, erected in 1912, is the oldest in Estonia and still is in use.⁴

On the eve of World War II, Methodism in an independent Estonia counted sixteen hundred full members, an additional fifteen hundred youth and children, twenty-six churches and Sunday schools, fifteen pastors and a monthly periodical, *Kristlik Kaitsja* (*Christian Advocate*).⁵ In 1945, in the wake

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of two Soviet occupations, two deportations, Red Army- and Nazi-forced conscriptions, large-scale westward flight and battle casualties, what remained of the thirty-one hundred members and adherents were some seven hundred Methodists in twelve churches. Church membership in the capital of Tallinn declined from some three hundred in 1939 to 175 in 1945 with only forty still active.⁶ One-third of the Estonian Methodist clergy were killed in Soviet prisons or died in Siberian labor camps, including Superintendent Martin Prikask.⁷ Furthermore, the dismemberment of Methodism on Soviet soil in the 1920s and 1930s was followed after 1945 by the banning of the denomination in the newly annexed territories of Latvia, Lithuania and Western Ukraine.⁸

POSTWAR GROWTH

Nevertheless, growth against great odds characterizes Estonian Methodism throughout most of the postwar years. Membership in Tallinn's Merepuiestee Street Church, which has been the largest Methodist congregation in Europe since the early 1960s, peaked in 1971 with 1,166 full members, while the denomination as a whole recorded its high mark to date in 1974 with an Estonian membership of 2,363.⁹

In accounting for the survival—indeed expansion—of Estonian Methodism under Soviet rule, a strong, highly committed leadership cannot be overemphasized. Whereas only 77 of 250 Lutheran clergy remained in Estonia at the end of World War II, and whereas the majority of Methodist ministers in Latvia and Lithuania fled westward before the advancing Red Army, most Estonian Methodist preachers remained at their posts.¹⁰

Of twenty-eight former Baltic Methodist ministers attending a 1962 reunion in Bay View, Michigan, or sending greetings to the gathering, only two were Estonian (Alex Poobus and Konstantin Wipp).¹¹ Only one other Methodist minister, Eduard Raud, is known to have left Estonia during the war.¹² As of 1940 Estonian Methodism was self-supporting, whereas Latvian and Lithuanian Methodists still received financial support from the United States. Whether or not greater Estonian self-sufficiency contributed to a given minister's decision to stay with his flock, one can only speculate.¹³ The survival of Estonian Methodism, with its remnant of some seven hundred members in twelve churches in 1945, appears all the more remarkable when it is noted that Estonia's Moravian Brethren, with over one hundred churches as of 1940, saw all of their congregations closed by Soviet authorities following the war.¹⁴

Symbolic of the fortitude of Estonian Methodism was its unofficial patriarch, Rev. Alexander Kuum (1899-1989). Son of the 1907 Saaremaa evangelist, Rev. Kuum served many years as pastor of the Tallinn Methodist Church (1938-1952 and 1956-1970) and as Methodist superintendent (1962-1974). The night of March 9-10, 1944, a Russian bombing raid on Tallinn destroyed the twelve-hundred-seat Methodist sanctuary. Returning from the countryside, Kuum was crushed to find only charred embers where the

church had stood. Digging through the ashes he salvaged a metal piece from the baptismal font which still read, "Suffer the little children to come unto me...." Taking heart, he determined to start his church anew with his own six children and the few remaining members who had not fled or been killed in the war.¹⁵

Decades later Kuum shared the passion of his heart at a 1971 meeting of the Methodist World Conference in Denver, Colorado: "We Methodists in Estonia have one goal—to work for God in the Methodist way. Our aim is to save souls. We hold our hands high to receive God's power for we can't do without Him in these turbulent times."¹⁶ Western pastors, college and seminary professors and bishops all have been humbled in the presence of the quiet, steel-like but joyous faith of Alexander Kuum, who counted even Siberian imprisonment (1952-1956) a blessing.¹⁷

Rev. Hugo Oengo (1907-1978), Kuum's successor as superintendent (1974-1978), by all accounts brought exceptional gifts to his difficult job: a professor at the Tallinn Technical University, a member of the Estonian Academy of Sciences and one of Estonia's foremost construction engineers. Evacuated to Sverdlovsk in the Urals on the eve of the German invasion and a worker on major Estonian projects for the Russians after the war, he ultimately lost his job due to his outspoken witness. Like Kuum, Oengo had a reputation as a powerful evangelist with a special burden for the preaching of sanctification and healing.¹⁸

While Rev. Olav Parnamets (1937—), Oengo's successor as superintendent (1979—), does not possess the administrative strength of his predecessors, his quiet humility, gentle manner and spiritual depth consistently have won Estonian Methodism committed friends and helpers from the West. Pastor of Tallinn's Merepuistee Street Methodist Church since 1970, Rev. Parnamets holds to the conviction that motivated Rev. Kuum and Rev. Oengo before him: that prayer, evangelism and openness to revival are essential to the spiritual vitality of the church.¹⁹

Several Russian sources point to leadership through twelve-member class meetings as a factor explaining Methodist vitality. In 1979 the journal of Moscow's Institute of Scientific Atheism went so far as to argue that, "The existence of the classes and the fairly flexible and capable management of them is one of the main reasons for the vitality and activity of the Estonian Methodist Church."²⁰ Such small-group accountability indeed would be beneficial, Methodist leaders agree, but it has not been a feature of the denomination's life in Estonia since it was rooted out by Soviet authorities under Stalin.²¹

In addition to strong leadership, Estonian Methodism's growth may stem in part from *comparatively* restrained Soviet interference in church life. For all its trials under Soviet rule, the denomination has had to endure a relatively tolerable regimen compared to most churches in the U.S.S.R. Admittedly, the Stalinist years proved harrowing, with mass deportations of more than one hundred thousand members of the nation's professional,

spiritual, cultural and political elite in 1940, 1945-46 and 1949.²² Nevertheless, from the late 1950s on, de-Stalinization introduced an unwritten *modus vivendi* between Moscow and the Baltic states: In return for Baltic efficiency, industry and political submission, Moscow was willing to concede a somewhat looser leash, especially in regard to cultural life and foreign contacts.

Several factors contributed to the compromise. In the case of Estonia, the Russians found it quite difficult to penetrate the culture or comprehend the language.²³ Estonian Methodists, in contrast to Baptists and Adventists, have had the added advantage of not having to take orders from a non-Estonian, Moscow-based denominational leadership ever susceptible to political pressures.

Geography also has worked to Estonia's advantage. Tallinn is a mere forty miles across the Gulf of Finland from Helsinki and is a port of entry for large numbers of Scandinavian and other Western tourists. The Tallinn Methodist congregation, within sight of a major Intourist hotel and within walking distance of the port of entry for innumerable Western ferry passengers, undoubtedly has benefited from knowing and being known by large numbers of Western Christians who have worshiped with them. Because of the similarity of the languages and the proximity, Finnish television has been an Estonian mainstay for years. The Tallinn vicinity is the only part of the Soviet Union able to receive Western television broadcasts.²⁴

The Estonian Methodist Church holds membership in the Northern European Central Conference of The United Methodist Church. The presiding bishop from 1970 to 1989 was Rev. Ole Borgen, a Norwegian residing in Stockholm, Sweden. He first met with Estonian Methodists in 1972 and averaged biannual visits throughout his episcopacy. The bishop feels he was able to provide a measure of protection to his Estonian charges through (1) constant contact, (2) the unspoken possibility of bad publicity in the West if authorities were overbearing with Methodists, and (3) his avoidance of the twin pitfalls of heavy public criticism of Moscow or gratuitous praise of the Soviet system.

In 1989, Rein Ristlaan, the newly appointed head of the Estonian Council of Religious Affairs (CRA), told Borgen directly that Moscow did not like having an outside bishop over Estonian Methodists. Soviet authorities nevertheless grudgingly have acquiesced to Methodist "connectionalism," much to the long-term benefit of the Estonian churches.²⁵

Finally, Estonian Methodist leaders have proved comparatively resilient in the face of state harassment. Estonian Methodist pastor Heigo Ritsbek characterizes Alexander Kuum as "a good diplomat—a good ice breaker." "Kuum was fearless and made jokes of it when he was threatened by the KGB."²⁶ Rev. Oengo, like Kuum, knew Russian life firsthand. Schooled in the language and culture of his Slavic overlords, Oengo was not easily manipulated. According to his bishop, "He knew how to handle the Russians."²⁷

The current superintendent, Rev. Olav Parnamets, experienced his first KGB interrogation as a teenager in the early 1950s at the time of Alexander

Kuum's arrest. By nature a retiring person, he would seem less temperamentally suited to withstand constant pressure. As valid as this observation may be, it is still true that well before *glasnost* Rev. Parnamets encouraged important unsanctioned activities, such as Sunday schools led by his wife, even as he endured repeated KGB and CRA blandishments. Rev. Heigo Ritsbek, by no means a stranger to state pressures, put it succinctly: "In Estonia we had practically no underground churches, but all churches had some underground ministries."²⁸ And Estonian Methodist leaders have had a tradition of testing the limits of what the state will tolerate.

In addition to strong leadership and comparatively restrained state interference, Methodism grew in the postwar era due to the church's emphasis upon evangelism. The period of greatest expansion appears to have occurred in the mid- to late 1950s. Between 1953 and 1962 the Tallinn Methodist Church more than tripled its size from just over three hundred members in 1953 to one thousand in 1962. Also, over a longer time frame, the very small congregations in the rest of the country doubled their ranks from 530 total members in 1945 to 1,048 by 1964.²⁹ The return of Alexander Kuum from Siberian imprisonment in 1956 appears to have been the primary human catalyst for growth. Many saw a reflection of the divine in this pastor's love and lack of malice. "I have no bitterness," he told a Western visitor years later. "It was for me a time of discovery, deeper truth, even though it was a time of suffering."³⁰ On Kuum's first Sunday back in the Merepuistee Street pulpit that same spirit must have communicated to his congregation. It proved to be an emotional reunion, with everyone present standing to honor their shepherd. After the service many followed Kuum to his home for a time of hymn singing and continued rejoicing.

A revival soon broke out in the Tallinn Church which saw many converts added to the membership.³¹ The same phenomenon also occurred in 1956 in the Kuressaare Church following special services led by Hugo Oengo.³² Such regularly scheduled revival weeks, usually led by an invited guest pastor, have been a longstanding feature of Estonian Methodist life.³³ A remarkably sympathetic Soviet analysis of Methodist growth, written well before Gorbachev, attributes much of the church's success to these "revival weeks" and other forms of "active missionary recruitment."³⁴

Another factor which likely has contributed to Estonian Methodists' growth is the church's strong commitment to basic Christian beliefs coupled with unusual flexibility in worship and tolerance for a range of views on what are considered secondary issues. They, for example, confound their Baptist and Lutheran friends by baptizing adults, as do the former and children, as do the latter. Similarly, the majority of Methodist pastors have no personal experience with glossolalia (speaking in tongues), but at the same time have included believers of Pentecostal persuasion within their fellowships since at least the 1940s.³⁵

The most dramatic example of Estonian Methodism's openness to new forms of worship concerns its outreach to youth beginning in the late 1960s

through contemporary rock music. As background it is important to note that Estonians are enthusiastic lovers of music, it being perhaps the ultimate expression of the national culture. Methodists, no less than other Estonians, share this passion. Only two decades after the war, for example, the Merepuiestee Street Church boasted five different choirs, an orchestra and a trumpet ensemble.³⁶

According to Bishop Borgen, new musical expressions were a fruit of a revival among Methodists in the late 1960s which in turn contributed to the spread of the revival, especially among unchurched young people.³⁷ Also, performances of Western Christian groups such as *Living Sound*, *The Reach Out Singers* and *The Continental Singers* inspired imitation and led to Western gifts to young Methodist and Baptist musicians of a wide range of equipment including synthesizers, amplifiers, speakers, drums and electric guitars.³⁸

Jaanus Karner of the Tallinn Methodist Church formed the first Christian rock group in the Soviet Union in 1969. Karner's *Selah* helped spawn other Estonian ensembles such as *Ezra*, and also Valeri Barinov's *Trumpet Call* in Leningrad, better known in the West than the others because of its success in securing a commercial recording in Nashville.³⁹

The impact this new sound had on The Methodist Church and the youth of Tallinn is best described in the words of Rev. Heigo Ritsbek, an eyewitness:

God sent another mighty movement of His Spirit...during [the] seventies....Many young people began to attend the services at Tallinn Methodist Church on Thursdays, where through the music of the first gospel rock group in Eastern Europe the youth from Estonia and even from Russia were able to understand the message of Jesus for the first time in their lives. It was the message they had never heard before. All these Thursday evening worship services with the musical group *Selah* were jam-packed. It was a very moving experience to pray every evening with so many young people who committed their lives to Jesus.⁴⁰

By 1975 the Tallinn Methodist Church was meeting for worship seven times weekly with an average attendance of almost five hundred persons per service. Typically, four sermons in each meeting were interspersed by music from (now) twelve choral and instrumental groups performing traditional, folk and gospel rock arrangements.⁴¹

Methodist "peace rallies" (1977-1981) and youth camps (1980—) serve as final examples of the denomination's imagination and flexibility in reaching young people—and its boldness in testing the limits of official toleration. Organized by Rev. Heigo Ritsbek, these energetic youth-oriented events proved very successful, which in turn led to repeated and debilitating clashes with the authorities. Herbert Murd, leader of *Ezra* and co-laborer

with Ritsbek in various youth ministries, was arrested twice in 1980 and 1981, serving difficult, one-year prison sentences on each occasion. Tragically, the ordeal destroyed not only Murd's marriage, but all his ties with the church; of late he has been working as a secular concert organizer. Rev. Ritsbek was subjected to innumerable police interrogations and was denied visas to attend Methodist meetings abroad on forty occasions. He finally emigrated to the United States with his family in February 1989.⁴²

Finally, Estonian Methodism has experienced growth because of the moral and material support it has received from Christians in the West. Indeed, from the death of Stalin to the present, perhaps the most formative development for the denomination has been the end of its isolation. Estonian Methodism has emerged with a vengeance from its virtual quarantine in the 1940s and 1950s to its present-day command of an exhilarating—and exhausting—array of denominational and parachurch ties with the West.

With the dismantling of all Methodist work in Latvia and Lithuania, even the existence of the Estonian church was in question for some time. "For quite a while," notes a U.S. United Methodist Church official, "the churches...were out of contact with Methodist leadership in Sweden and in this country."⁴³ In 1952, the same year Alexander Kuum was banished to Siberia, proceedings of a Soviet peace conference held at Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Monastery included a rare acknowledgment of the continued existence of Estonian Methodism. In addition to a predictably fawning tribute to Stalin and Soviet peace policy by Estonian Methodist pastor Ferdinand Tombo, the conference volume, published in English, also noted that Rev. Martin Kuigre, superintendent of the Estonian Methodist Church, had attended.⁴⁴

Dr. Harry Denman, director of the Board of Evangelism of The Methodist Church, visited Tallinn in 1956, the first-known postwar contact of the Estonian church with a Methodist from the United States.⁴⁵ An especially dramatic break in Estonian Methodism's lonely vigil came in September 1962 with a visit from Bishop Odd Hagen of the Northern European Central Conference of The Methodist Church, the first bishop to visit Estonia in twenty-two years. "The situation," he reported, "is easier than it was under Stalin—but difficulties are many."⁴⁶ The previous April, the Estonian's second annual conference in more than two decades elected as its superintendent Alexander Kuum, no stranger to "difficulties."

In 1965 Estonian Methodists received their first-ever visit from a U.S. Methodist bishop, Richard Raines, and in 1966, their second, as they hosted Bishop Ralph Ward. The 1960s also saw perhaps Estonian Methodism's most acclaimed guest ever, Corrie Ten Boom of *Hiding Place* fame. But in terms of systematic sustenance and encouragement in the 1960s, the most important Western "breathing hole," to use Bishop Borgen's expression, was growing numbers of Finnish Methodist and Pentecostal visitors using the relatively easy access of the Gulf of Finland ferry between Helsinki and Tallinn.⁴⁷ In the 1970s and 1980s the number of contacts with Scandinavian,

West European and U.S. church and parachurch representatives, as well as with increasing numbers of Western Christian tourists, absolutely exploded. (See Appendix II.)

In the opposite direction, Soviet authorities permitted Superintendent Alexander Kuum his first postwar trip abroad to attend the Second World Christian Peace Conference in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in 1964. Subsequently Kuum was able to travel to Sweden and Finland in 1966, to Finland again in 1967 and to The United Methodist Annual Conference in Plauen, East Germany, in 1972. Superintendent Kuum's participation in the 1968 United Methodist General Conference in Dallas, Texas, was the first-ever visit of a Methodist from the Soviet Union to the United States.⁴⁸ In August 1971, Rev. Kuum also attended The World Methodist Conference meeting in Denver, Colorado. The superintendent addressed the gathering with Bishop Borgen serving as translator.⁴⁹

Rev. Hugo Oengo likewise managed a number of official visits to European Methodist meetings in his tenure as superintendent (1974-1978), including trips to Finland, Sweden, Norway, East Germany, Switzerland and England.⁵⁰ Finally, the present superintendent, Olav Parnamets, has traveled extensively. Since 1975, in addition to various Northern European Conference meetings in Sweden, Denmark and Finland, he has attended one U.S. General Conference (1988), three sessions of the Conference of European Churches (1979, 1987, 1989), two U.S. Methodist Board of Discipleship "New World Missions" (1978 and 1990), the Second Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization (1989) and four meetings of The World Methodist Council (1978, 1981, 1985 and 1986). (See Appendix II.)

Evaluating the relative importance and effectiveness of Estonian Methodism's various Western contacts is fraught with difficulty, in good measure because the players are legion. But a second judgment comes easily to anyone conversant with the subject: that is, that the development of East-West ties has been a major—likely, *the* major—influence on the corporate life and morale of postwar Estonian Methodism. Especially for the past two decades, most major aspects of the church's life—for good and ill—bear the imprint of Western influence. To say this is not to belittle the Estonian Methodist achievement in the Soviet era. Actually, Estonian Methodism consciously and judiciously chose to encourage Western ties for its own protection.⁵¹

TIES WITH WESTERN CHRISTIANS

The most important East-West relationship has been that between Estonian Methodists and The United Methodist Northern European Central Conference, especially its bishop and its small contingent of Swedish- and Finnish-speaking Methodists from Finland. The relative ease and regularity of Finnish Methodist contacts and Bishop Borgen's forthright yet carefully nuanced relationship with the Estonian Council of Religious Affairs cannot be overestimated.⁵²

The collective ministrations of a host of parachurch groups rank second in significance. By no means can all such organizations be listed. But among others, important contributions were made by the Finnish-based staff of Youth With a Mission; touring Christian rock groups, especially *Living Sound* (Terry Law), *Reach Out Singers* and *Continental Singers*; I Care Ministries (Scott Wesley Brown); Slaviska Missionen (Rauli Lehtonen); Estonian Christian Ministries (Endel Meiusi); Campus Crusade for Christ (Jaan Heinmets); Biblical Education by Extension (Charlie Warner); and Issachar (George Otis and Steve Weber).

Throughout the postwar years, Scandinavian Christians have taken a disproportionately greater interest in fellow believers in the Baltic states than have other Western Christians. Geographic proximity (meaning lower travel costs), cultural and historic ties, linguistic affinity (in the case of Estonian and Finnish) and the dynamic and comparatively large Pentecostal churches of the Nordic region, all help explain Scandinavia's importance to Estonian Methodism.⁵³

United States tour groups, many including Christians from The United Methodist Church and other denominations, have been an encouragement and help to Estonian Methodists, even as these visitors have been encouraged by participation in worship in Estonia. By this means evangelically minded Estonian Methodism first made contact with Asbury College, Asbury Theological Seminary and the Good News movement—all of Wilmore, Kentucky and all strongly identified with the evangelical camp within United Methodism.

Olav Parnamets learned English with a dream in mind of one day studying at Asbury Theological Seminary. That possibility seems, now, to have passed, but with the 1989-1990 academic year Heigo Ritsbek did become the first Estonian Methodist to commence studies at Asbury Seminary. Estonian Methodism's predilection for the Asbury institutions and the like-minded Good News movement proved a pleasant if unexpected surprise in March 1981 as the writer, at that time an Asbury College professor, led a tour group to Estonia.⁵⁴

In March 1981, an Asbury College tour group under this writer's direction, and including Dr. and Mrs. Harold Kuhn (now retired professor of philosophy of religion at Asbury Theological Seminary and retired professor of German at Asbury College respectively), worshiped with Estonian Methodists for the first time. This initial Asbury connection ultimately spawned a variety of helps for Estonian Methodism emanating not only from the college and seminary but from a number of Wesleyan parachurch bodies as well: the Estonian Methodist Fund, the Ed Robb Evangelistic Association, the Francis Asbury Society, and Missionary World Service and Evangelism. Most recently the thirty-six-member Asbury College Concert Choir, under the direction of Dr. Don Donaldson, performed in the Merepuiestee Street Methodist and Oleviste Baptist Churches in Tallinn in May 1990.

The Asbury institutions' most significant contribution to Estonian Methodism to date would appear to be an ongoing series of pastors' workshops led by faculty from Asbury Theological Seminary. In December 1985, Dr. Robert Mulholland, professor of New Testament, accepted this author's invitation to travel to Estonia for work with Methodist pastors. His lectures on Acts and Revelation, subjects requested by Rev. Parnamets, were received with eagerness and rapt attention by more than one hundred pastors and lay persons. Now provost of Asbury Seminary, Dr. Mulholland is in an ideal position to facilitate the continuation of these pastors' workshops. In August 1988, Dr. Steve O'Malley, professor of church history and historical theology, gave lectures to assembled Estonian Methodists on historic Christian teachings as framed in the Apostle's Creed. Finally, in August 1989, Dr. and Mrs. David Seamands traveled to Estonia. Dr. Seamands, professor of pastoral ministry and author of a number of best-selling books including *Healing for Damaged Emotions*, led fellow Methodist ministers in Russian-occupied Estonia down the difficult but liberating path of forgiveness of one's enemies. One would have to be hard-hearted indeed not to be moved by the gripping trip reports of this trio of professors.⁵⁵

Since 1978 many British Methodists have come to a rich appreciation for Estonian Methodism through trips organized by Rev. David Bridge. In addition to sizeable groups escorted to Estonia, in 1988 Rev. Bridge managed an unprecedented visit to a newly registered Methodist church in a previously off-limits border village in Western Ukraine. (In Tallinn in 1982, Rev. Bridge had witnessed a moving service of ordination for Rev. Ivan Vuksta, pastor of this small, ethnically diverse congregation in Kamenitsa, Transcarpathia, annexed by the Soviet Union from Czechoslovakia after World War II.)⁵⁶

Ten U.S. Methodist bishops (Richard Raines, Ralph Ward, Jack Tuell, Finis Crutchfield, Paul Washburn, Marjorie Matthews, Paul Millhouse, Lance Webb, Edward Tullis and C. P. Minnick) have visited Estonia, as well as representatives of U.S. United Methodist boards and agencies (Harry Denman, Eddie Fox, William Ellington, Ezra Earl Jones, Mary Sue Robinson, Carl Soule, Robert McClean and Maxie Dunnam). (See Appendix II.) While some United Methodist officials from the United States have had a powerful spiritual impact upon Estonian Methodists, Bishop Webb being a revered example, other American representatives have caused consternation within Estonian Methodist ranks by espousing pro-Socialist, even pro-Marxist sentiments and by questioning various tenets of historic Christian and Wesleyan doctrine.⁵⁷

Additional Western groups which have established ties with Estonian Methodism include The World Methodist Council (Estonian visits by General Secretary Dr. Joe Hale, Dr. Alan Walker and Dr. Maxie Dunnam), the Estonian emigre community (including Rev. Evald Leps and Endel Meiusi) and the ecumenical movement (World Council of Churches and the U.S. National Council of Churches). (See Appendix II for specific dates of WMC, emigre and NCC visits.)

MEMBERSHIP DECLINE

In contrast to the postwar growth into the 1970s, between 1974 and 1990 Estonian Methodist membership fell from 2,363 to 1,783, a decline of twenty-five percent. Similarly, the size of Tallinn's Merepuistee Street Church, which numbered 1,166 in 1971, stood at 880 in January 1990.⁵⁸ Painfully conscious of the downturn and earnestly praying for renewal is Rev. Olav Parnamets. During an August 1985 visit to England he reflected with remarkable candor on the situation, seeing unfortunate similarities in the English and Estonian experiences:

We have to go back to our founder to the sources where all is clear and powerful, so that when we want to go forward, as we must, we have to go very much deeper than we are at the moment....My feeling is that we in both Estonia and Britain do not have the hearts to save souls, to preach the Gospel with the life-changing love and power as John Wesley and others did in their generation....The Lord wants to give us revival but sometimes we have become so lukewarm and formalistic and lifeless, so that when the Lord sends revival we do not recognize it.

A final line epitomizes Rev. Parnamets's understanding of the solution: "But we are not a hopeless people—God can do it again when we pray."⁵⁹

One-time visitors rarely perceive a need for renewal in this Estonian church; in fact, just the opposite. Enriched by the perseverance, friendliness and deep faith of these Methodists, the vast majority of Western guests depart blessed and oblivious to the spiritual concerns voiced by Rev. Parnamets. However, a number of longer-term Western observers quite sympathetic to Estonian Methodism have detected smaller crowds and waning vitality in recent years.⁶⁰ In any case, the statistics for the past two decades are such that, sadly, Estonian Methodism is misplaced as the opening chapter in Lorna and Michael Bourdeaux's study of *Ten Growing Soviet Churches*.

Rev. Parnamets is to be commended for so squarely facing the difficult problem of membership decline and, as he puts it, lukewarmness. Evaluating the causes in human terms, likewise, is a painful exercise for one sympathetic to the church and its leaders. But historical research worthy of the name will have it no other way.

In demographic terms, funerals were frequent in the 1970s and 1980s for many of the mostly middle-aged converts of the revival years of the 1950s. Whereas the Tallinn Methodist Church conducted an average of twenty funerals for members per year in the 1960s, the number of funerals per year in the 1980s rose to fifty.⁶¹ On the other hand, in the 1970s and 1980s many young people attended and even joined the Methodist Church—but they did not necessarily remain. Quite a few joined the Baptist Church; recently quite a few have emigrated to the West; and, also recently, quite a few have joined a strongly nationalistic Pentecostal movement, Word of Life.

While it is true that Christian rock music in the Soviet Union started in the Estonian Methodist Church and that Alexander Kuum and Hugo Oengo favored it for its appeal to youth, other Methodists, including former Moravians, opposed it. By the time Rev. Parnamets was reconciled to Jaanus Karner and the *Selah* sound in 1977, many young people already had departed the fold. Heigo Ritsbek estimates that forty percent of the youth who joined Tallinn's Oleviste Baptist Church in 1976 were converted in Methodist meetings.⁶²

Emigration to the West in the 1980s, as well, has taken its toll. Some seventy former members of the Tallinn Methodist Church now live in the United States, approximately sixty from the Russian congregation and ten from the Estonian congregation, including Jaanus Karner's family (1982), organist Monika Kaldre (1988), Heigo Ritsbek's family (1989) and Kersti Parnamets, oldest daughter of the superintendent (1989). Between July 1988 and July 1989 alone, thirty Russian-speaking Methodist families departed for the West.⁶³

The loss of members to the Word of Life movement in the late 1980s also weakened Estonian Methodism. Imported books and Samizdat (privately reproduced and distributed literature) advocating "health and wealth" prosperity theology have been circulating in the Baltic states for decades. Generously funded by its advocates, especially in the United States and Scandinavia, this "theology of success," with which Estonia's Word of Life Church identifies, teaches that a true Christian (a) will possess health and wealth; and (b) will profess the baptism of the Holy Spirit accompanied by glossolalia (speaking in tongues) and healing miracles. Prosperity theology holds that believers who do not possess the above signs of grace "are not Christians at all, or are Christians weak in faith or are living in sin." A radical offshoot of the Charismatic movement, various aspects of "health and wealth" teaching derive from American preachers Kenneth E. Hagin (especially influential in Scandinavia and the Baltic states), Kenneth Copeland, Robert H. Schuller and Norman Vincent Peale and Scandinavians Ulf Ekman (Sweden) and Hans Braterud (Norway).⁶⁴ In addition, the Estonian Word of Life Church aggressively advocates national independence and has criticized Methodist and Baptist leaders unwilling to take public positions on political issues.⁶⁵

On several occasions Scandinavian guest preachers urged Word of Life teachings on Methodist gatherings without the blessing of the church's leadership. "Health and wealth" theology spread within Methodist ranks to the point that serious friction emerged in a church not known for its material aspirations, politics or doctrinaire theology. Finally, in 1987, more than one hundred young advocates of Kenneth Hagin's teachings left The Methodist Church (mostly adherents, rather than members), while a larger departure from the Oleviste Baptist Church occurred at the same time over the same issue. Many young people, including musicians, left the Tallinn Methodist Church, causing Rev. Parnamets, Rev. Ritsbek and the congregation genuine grief.⁶⁶

By all accounts Superintendent Parnamets' strength is his prayer life and spiritual grounding, rather than his attention to administrative detail. At the same time his increasingly frequent absences for trips abroad have at times left his church adrift. Since 1975 Rev. Parnamets has taken at least twenty-one trips abroad, on occasion for several months at a time.⁶⁷ Rev. David Bridge, the superintendent's good friend from England, is deeply concerned about the situation. "I wonder...what is the effect of Olav Parnamets having become something of a world figure within Methodism with the result that he has to be away from his home church on a number of occasions and frequently for many weeks at a time."⁶⁸ Unquestionably, moral and material benefit derives to Estonian Methodism from the superintendent's cultivation of Western ties. The question, then, is one of balancing the advantages of travel against the disadvantages of a shop left untended. With Rev. Ritsbek's emigration in February 1989, the problem would appear to have become more acute.

Rev. Hans Vaxby, the Northern European Central Conference's new bishop as of 1989, may consider it imprudent or impossible to countermand the recent sale of the Tallinn Methodist parsonage to the Parnamets family, a stumbling block for some other Estonian pastors. But the bishop has taken steps to regularize the channeling of Western aid to Estonian Methodists. On January 22, 1990, Vaxby appointed a Helsinki-based Estonian support group, including one representative each from the Finnish-speaking and the Swedish-speaking annual conferences of Finland; an Estonian living in Finland; Rev. Parnamets; the bishop and, as chairman, Rev. Hakan Sandstrom, a Swedish-speaking Finn with a long history of assistance to Estonian Methodism. "The intention with the group," Bishop Vaxby relates, "is to co-ordinate all help to Estonia as well as all information and exchange programs with Methodists within the [Northern European] Central Conference (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden), with other Central Conferences, United Methodists all over the world, British Methodism and other Methodist Churches and with individuals and congregations of other denominations."⁶⁹

One of the specific charges of the support group is to coordinate Western visits with Estonian Methodists. Some such liaison is needed, given the extraordinarily large volume of visitors the Tallinn Methodist Church in particular is obliged to host. Heigo Ritsbek, who for years bore the brunt of translating duties, admits, "We had no normal church life. How could you...with five hundred foreign guests in a year?"⁷⁰

The practice of having the vast majority of Western guests preach also would appear to have been a mixed blessing. British Methodist David Bridge, who has delivered his fair share of sermons in Estonia, has written to the present writer with second thoughts concerning the phenomenon: "As you have experienced yourself, visitors are frequently invited to preach in the church. While this is a nice thing in small doses, the growing number of visitors must have meant that the worship and teaching life of the church

has been seriously disrupted. Again not all visitors are of equal value and a few seem to have done real harm."⁷¹

The church's leadership would see foreign guests introducing divisive Word of Life teachings as one example. A second would be culturally insensitive sermons by some United Methodists theologically and politically far afield from the strongly evangelical Estonian Methodists. Such messages delivered by Western preachers, nicknamed "Leftodists," agitated the membership sufficiently that the Tallinn Methodist pastors on occasion have refrained from announcing some upcoming U.S. Methodist visitors beforehand.⁷²

Disruptive messages aside, which in any case would appear to be less numerous than edifying ones, the sheer volume of visitors leading in worship would seem to inhibit any continuity in teaching from Estonian pastors. Why Rev. Parnamets directs, and why leaders before him directed, foreign guests into the pulpit as a matter of course is an interesting question. Traditional Estonian hospitality must play a part. In addition, a psychological reaction to decades of fearsome isolation may be at work.⁷³ In 1987, when asked by representatives of a parachurch ministry, "what was the most important thing we could do for him [Rev. Parnamets], we were impressed with his period of silent consideration of the question and greatly touched by his reply: 'Maintaining fellowship of the entire Body of Christ, visiting and praying so that we know that we are not alone.'"⁷⁴

Whatever the merit of various reservations concerning Rev. Parnamets' leadership and whatever portion of responsibility he should bear for Estonian Methodism's membership decline, there is no denying that throughout his tenure the superintendent and his church have been an exceptional blessing to a host of Western sojourners. Teenagers and bishops alike have come away, and still come away, moved by the worship and witness of this farflung outpost of Methodism. (See Appendix III for a sampling of visitors' commendations.) Rev. Eddie Fox of The United Methodist Board of Discipleship speaks for many in recounting his time among Estonian Methodists: "I have never experienced such intensity of worship of Jesus Christ. As the elements for holy communion were served, many persons openly wept for joy."⁷⁵ But perhaps the most telling testimonial comes from the pages of the Soviet Academy of Science journal, *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma* (*Problems of Scientific Atheism*) in a 1979 analysis of factors contributing to Methodist growth and vitality, not the least of which this Marxist piece lists as the centrality of prayer and the congregation's obvious dependence upon it during worship.⁷⁶ Not surprisingly, Lorna and Michael Bourdeaux, from the vantage point of 1986, characterize this article as "one of the liveliest and most attractive accounts of Christian life ever to have appeared in a Soviet source."⁷⁷

1980s: SIGNS OF HOPE

For all the concern over membership decline since the 1970s, *glasnost* in the 1980s has provided Estonian Methodism with any number of hopeful signs. In December 1988-January 1989, Endel Meiusi of Estonian Christian Ministries, with the assistance of The International Bible Society, imported twenty thousand copies of a revised translation of the Estonian Bible. This shipment, forming the largest legal distribution of Estonian Bibles since the Soviet wartime takeover, was printed in Finland and shipped to Tallinn. Weighing some twenty-six tons, the Scriptures were distributed in proportion to membership to the Lutherans, Evangelical Christians-Baptists, Orthodox, Methodists (two thousand copies) and Pentecostals.⁷⁸

Subsequent, even larger shipments of Estonian Scriptures bring total imports for 1988-1990 to two hundred thousand. Estonian Methodists now have sufficient Scriptures for their membership, with an additional supply for use in outreach to nonbelievers.⁷⁹ At the same time that Estonian Methodists were the beneficiaries of donated Scriptures the membership managed a 1989 contribution of six thousand rubles from its modest resources for Armenian earthquake relief.⁸⁰

Work with children and young people also has taken on renewed vitality of late. Sunday schools, begun without state permission in 1972, but unofficially tolerated for years, came under new restrictions in the mid-1980s. Today, in contrast, the work is open and growing, at present in Tallinn numbering one hundred Estonian and seventy Russian children. As Urve Parnamets, founder of the Methodist Sunday schools puts it, "Now in Sunday school I see ten pair of new eyes I haven't seen before and they listen well. So we have a big field of work."⁸¹ Rev. Ullas Tankler also relates a burgeoning Sunday school ministry in his Parnu congregation.⁸²

In the summer of 1988 young people from the Tallinn Methodist and Oleviste Baptist Churches inaugurated a first-ever youth evangelism campaign in connection with an annual festival in the city's historic Old Town.⁸³ The next summer the Tallinn Methodist Youth Choir began a women's prison ministry which has seen scores of inmates' lives transformed.⁸⁴

In Parnu in March 1989 and soon after in Tallinn, Methodists and Baptists launched a joint children's foundation. Through an interdenominational children's choir, funds are being raised for aid to orphans.⁸⁵ In June 1989 the Tallinn Methodist Church held a confirmation service for twenty-four young people, while the denomination's annual summer camp in July had 250 participants.⁸⁶ In 1989 the Parnu Methodist Church was able to donate Bibles to each of the city's thirteen schools.⁸⁷ Finally, in August 1989 an Estonian organizing committee, including Methodists, worked with Youth for Christ, Outreach for Christ International, Scott Wesley Brown and others to sponsor a gospel festival including four days of concerts by some one hundred Western and Estonian Christian musicians. Held in the six-thousand-seat Lenin Palace of Culture and Sports, more than thirteen hundred

persons made public, Christian commitments. A large number of Methodists of all ages sat together. A visiting David Seamands heard them repeat, "We're here. We know it's happening, but we can't believe it. We've prayed for it for so long!"⁸⁸

While Estonian Methodism still considers education for pastors a major need, a number of developments in the 1980s have at least made short-term contributions to that end: pastor's workshops led by Asbury Theological Seminary faculty (1985—), Youth With a Mission Schools of Evangelism (1986—) and Biblical Education by Extension (late 1980s—). In 1987 Rev. Uilas Tankler, pastor of the Parnu Methodist Church, left for the Methodist Seminary at Bad Klosterlausnitz, East Germany, becoming the first Estonian Methodist since World War II to study abroad. More recently, in September–November 1989, Rev. Toomas Pajusoo from Tallinn studied at the Free Church Bible College, Santala, Finland. (Heigo Ritsbek, studying at Asbury Theological Seminary from September 1989, emigrated to the United States in February 1989 with little expectation of returning to Estonia. Should Estonia regain its independence in the next several years, Rev. Ritsbek likely would return.)⁸⁹

Church planting and church building in the 1980s also have boosted the morale of Estonian Methodism: dedication of a new church building in Narva (1987); dedication of a newly renovated Orthodox chapel for a newly registered Methodist congregation at Karsa (February 1990); permission granted for Methodist congregations in Tallinn and Parnu to build their own sanctuaries after decades of renting from Seventh-day Adventists (1989); registration of a Methodist congregation in Syktyvkar, Komi [A.S.S.R., U.S.F.S.R.] (1988); and the possibility of Methodist registration for a fellowship of believers in Yakutsk, Siberia.⁹⁰ After World War II, Rev. Endel Rang from the Tapa Methodist Church spent time in a Siberian labor camp. For many years he has returned at least once a year to minister to several small fellowships he helped to establish. Estonian authorities have given permission for Methodists to establish a building fund with a hard-currency bank account. Western contributions now may go directly toward the construction of the Tallinn Methodist Church.⁹¹

Bishop Hans Vaxby's deep sympathy for and active interest in Estonian Methodism continues a pattern ably set by Bishop Ole Borgen before him. Since his April 1989 election to head the Northern European Central Conference, Bishop Vaxby has visited Estonia twice with another trip planned to survey the prospects for Methodism in such seemingly improbable Soviet regions as Komi and Siberia. Especially heartening has been the bishop's timely appointment of an Estonian support group. This may be interpreted as a response to the clear need for more systematic liaison between Estonian Methodism and its Western sympathizers.

CONCLUSION

In the era of *glasnost*, churchgoing actually is becoming popular and patriotic in Estonia. But as Sunday school founder Urve Parnamets has put it, "Our nation needs more than just going to church."⁹² Increasing freedom of expression in Estonia can also, within the church, give rise to a new problem of nominalism. As Estonia and its Methodist Church revel in new liberties and opportunities, Bishop Borgen's recent caution should be taken seriously: "They [Estonian Methodists] will find it is much more difficult to be a Christian in good times than in bad times." A saying of the bishop's father puts it even more succinctly: "It takes a strong back to carry good days."⁹³ Whether the days be good or bad, there still is no reason to accept F. I. Fed-erenko's 1965 prediction that anytime now, "one should anticipate [the] complete disappearance of Methodism from the Soviet Union."⁹⁴

APPENDIX I

ESTONIAN METHODIST CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

DATE	TALLINN MEMBERSHIP	ESTONIA MEMBERSHIP	NUMBER OF REGISTERED CONGREGATIONS
1934		1,242 ¹	14 ¹
1939	under 300 ²		
1940		1,600 ³	26 ³
1943		1,242 ⁴	
1945	40 ⁵ /170 ²	700 ⁶ /750 ²	12 ⁶
1949	170 ³		
1953	300+ ³		
1960	1,000 ³		
1962	1,000 ⁷		
1964		2,048 ⁷	
1965		2,100 ² /2,122 ⁷	
1969			11 ⁸
1970	1,115 ⁹	2,109 ⁹	
1971	1,153 ¹⁰ /1,166 ⁹	2,208 ⁹ /2,200 ¹⁰ /2,300 ⁴	14 ¹⁰
1973		2,300 ⁴	
1974		2,363 ¹¹	
1977	1,151 ¹²	2,350 ¹²	
1979	1,087 ¹³	2,237 ^{5,14}	15 ^{5,14}
1981	1,100 ¹⁵	2,160 ¹⁵ /2,175 ¹	14 ^{1,15}
1983	1,100 ⁶	2,500 ⁶	15 ⁶
1987		2,200 ¹⁶ /2,350 ¹⁷	
1988	900 ¹⁸ /924 ¹⁹	2,000 ⁵ /1,788 ¹⁹	
1989	888 ¹⁹	1,747 ¹⁹ /1,900 ²⁰	15 ¹⁹
1990	880 ¹⁹	1,783 ^{19,21}	17 ²¹

SOURCES FOR APPENDIX I

1. Peter Stephens, *Methodism in Europe* (Cincinnati, OH: United Methodist Church, General Board of Global Ministries, 1981), p. 27. Add some three thousand adherents for all of Estonia in 1981.
2. Lorna and Michael Bourdeaux, *Ten Growing Soviet Churches* (Bromley, Kent: MARC Europe, 1987), p. 28. War-related deaths, deportations, conscription and flight make the figure of 170 enrolled members in Tallinn in 1945 unrealistically high (according to Heigo Ritsbek interview, July 16, 1990).
3. Heigo Ritsbek, "God at Work in Estonia," *Challenge to Evangelism Today* 23 (Spring 1990): 8. Add fourteen hundred plus adherents in 1940.
4. "O missiionerskoi i propovednicheskoi deiatel'nosti Estonskoi metodistskoi tserkvi," *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma*, No. 24 (Moscow: Mysl', 1979): 173.
5. Rauli Lehtonen, "Methodists in the Soviet Union—Bridge Between East and West," unpublished paper delivered at Vatican Conference on Religious Liberty, March 1988, p. 1.
6. *World Parish*, 1983. Total membership for 1983 appears to be high.
7. Michael Bourdeaux, "Letter to the Editor," *New Christian*, December 1, 1966, p. 17. Add two to three thousand adherents for all of Estonia in 1965.
8. Vello Salo, "Anti-religious Rites in Estonia," *Religion in Communist Lands* 1 (July-October 1973): 31.
9. Leonard Perryman, *United Methodist Information Service*, March 16, 1971.
10. Vello Salo, "The Struggle Between the State and the Churches" in *A Case Study of a Soviet Republic: The Estonian SSR*, ed. Elmar Jarvesoo and Tonu Parming (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978), pp. 206-207.
11. Heigo Ritsbek interview, July 16, 1990.
12. Peter Stephens, "The Methodist Church of Eastern Europe," *Religion in Communist Lands* 5 (Spring 1977): 16.
13. Letter of Heigo Ritsbek to Edward Pender, April 14, 1979.
14. Alexander Kuum, "Superintendent's Circular Letter No. 75," Tallinn, Estonia, March 1979, p. 3.
15. Mark Elliott, Soviet trip diary, March 1981.
16. Bourdeaux, *Ten Growing Churches*, p. 26.
17. World Methodist Council, *Handbook of Information 1987-1991* (Asheville, NC: Biltmore Press, 1987), p. 97. Add 2,150 adherents for all of Estonia for 1987. However, WMC figures for Soviet and East European churches tend to run higher than other sources.
18. Lehtonen, "Methodists in the Soviet Union," p. 2.
19. Heigo Ritsbek, "The Number of Organized Churches and Full Membership in the Methodist Churches in the U.S.S.R.," unpublished report, May 1990. Registered, non-Estonian Methodist churches in 1990 were Kamenitsa, Transcarpathia, Ukraine; and Syktyvkar, Komi, A.S.S.R., R.S.F.S.R.
20. Glen Larum, "Estonian UMs Credit Growth to 'Hero of Faith,'" *United Methodist Reporter*, March 17, 1989, p. 1.
21. Heigo Ritsbek, "New Church Opened in South Estonia," *World Parish* 30 (July-August 1990): 8. *Eesti Metodisti Kiriku Kalendar 1989* (Tallinn: Eesti Metodisti Kiriku, 1988), pp. 26-27.

APPENDIX II

1. ESTONIAN METHODIST VISITS ABROAD

Documentation for East-West contacts derives from a wide range of interviews, trip reports and articles by and about participants. These sources are included in the bibliography.

DATE	NAME AND TITLE	DESTINATION	OCCASION / COMMENTS
1966	Superintendent Alexander Kuum	Sweden, Finland	Visiting Methodist Churches.
1967	Alexander Kuum	Finland	Visiting Methodist Churches.
1968	Alexander Kuum	Dallas, Texas	United Methodist General Conference; First visit of a Methodist to the U.S. in 30 years.
Aug. 1971	Alexander Kuum	Denver, Colorado	World Methodist Conference.
1972	Alexander Kuum	Plauen, East Germany	Annual Conference.
1975	Rev. Olav Parnamets, Pastor of Tallinn Methodist Church	Sweden	
June 1976	Superintendent Hugo Oengo	Karl-Marx-Stadt, East Germany	East German Central Conference.
Nov. 1976	Hugo Oengo	Stavanger, Norway	First time an Estonian Methodist attended a meeting of the Northern European Central Conference.
Apr. 20-June 4, 1978	Hugo Oengo	Locarno, Switzerland; East Germany, Norway, Sweden and Finland	Preached six times in Switzerland. Attended Swiss Methodist Annual Conference.

ESTONIAN METHODIST VISITS ABROAD (APPENDIX II, cont.)

DATE	NAME AND TITLE	DESTINATION	OCCASION/COMMENTS
Apr.-June 1978	Rev. Olav Parnamets	Nashville, TN; Birmingham, AL	U.S. United Methodist Board of Discipleship program, "New World Mission."
Apr.-June 1978	Olav Parnamets	Canada	
Oct.-Nov. 1978	Hugo Oengo	London, England	Executive Meeting of World Methodist Council; Reopening of Wesley Chapel.
Oct. 1979	Superintendent Olav Parnamets	Crete, Greece	Conference of European Churches.
1979	Olav Parnamets	Finland	
Mar. 1980 or 1981	Olav Parnamets, Toomas Pajusoo	Helsinki, Finland	Northern European Central Conference.
1981	Olav Parnamets	Sweden	Northern European Central Conference.
July 1981	Superintendent and Mrs. Olav Parnamets	Hawaii	World Methodist Conference.
Mar. 1985	Olav Parnamets, Toomas Pajusoo	Denmark	Northern European Central Conference.
Aug. 1985 (3 weeks)	Olav Parnamets	London, England	World Methodist Peace Assembly.
Sept. 1985	Olav Parnamets	Lake Junaluska, NC	Executive Meeting of The World Methodist Council.
Sept. 21-24, 1985	Olav Parnamets	Wilmore, KY	Asbury College; Asbury Theological Seminary; Wilmore United Methodist Church.

ESTONIAN METHODIST VISITS ABROAD (APPENDIX II, cont.)

DATE	NAME AND TITLE	DESTINATION	OCCASION/COMMENTS
July 1986	Olav Parnamets	Nairobi, Kenya	World Methodist Conference.
1987	Olav Parnamets	Scotland	Conference of European Churches.
1987	Rev. Ullas Tankler, Parnu Methodist Church	Bad Klosterlausnitz, East Germany	Methodist Seminary; first Estonian Methodist allowed to study abroad.
Jan. 1988	Rev. Endel Rang	Sweden	
Apr. 1988	Olav Parnamets	St. Louis, MO	United Methodist General Conference.
1988	Olav Parnamets	Sweden	Conference of European Churches.
Feb. 9, 1989	Rev. and Mrs. Heigo Ritsbek and family	Camas, Washington	Emigration to the United States.
Apr. 4-9, 1989	Rev. and Mrs. Olav Parnamets, Rev. Andrus Norak (Tartu Methodist), Rev. and Mrs. Toomas Pajusoo (Tallinn Methodist) and Rev. and Mrs. Raivo Korgemagi (Tallinn Methodist)	Gavle, Sweden	Annual Conference of the United Methodist North European Central Conference; Bishop Borgen ordained Norak, Pajusoo and Korgemagi. Pajusoo elected to Conference Executive Committee.
1989	Olav Parnamets	Basel, Switzerland	Conference of European Churches.
July 1989	Olav Parnamets, Raivo Korgemagi and Ullas Tanker	Manila, Philippines	Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization.
Sept. 1989	Hope, Methodist children's choir	Finland	Directed by Piret Pormeister.

ESTONIAN METHODIST VISITS ABROAD (APPENDIX II, cont.)

DATE	NAME AND TITLE	DESTINATION	OCCASION/COMMENTS
Sept. or Nov. 1989	Toomas Pajusoo	Santala, Finland	Three months of study at Finnish Free Church Bible College.
1989	Helle Uusmaa	Gothenburg, Sweden	Methodist Bible School Seminary.
1989	18 to 20 Estonians (mostly Methodists)	Stockholm, Sweden	Unofficial visitors.
Mar.-Apr. 1990	Rev. and Mrs. Olav Parnamets	Nashville, TN; Owensboro, KY; Pennsylvania	"New World Mission."
		Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL	Conference on Christian perspectives on Western and Soviet Atheism.
		Atlanta, GA	Candler School of Theology.
		New York, NY	General Board of Global Ministries.
		Geneva, Switzerland	Conference of European Churches.
1990	Taavi Hollman	North Carolina	Western North Carolina Annual Conference- Northern European Central Conference Exchange Program.
(dates unknown)	Rev. Endel Rang, Tapa Methodist Church	Sweden	Several visits.
1990	Olav Parnamets	Sweden	
June 1990	Olav Parnamets	Virginia	

2. DOCUMENTED WESTERN CONTACTS WITH ESTONIAN METHODISTS (APPENDIX II, cont.)

DATE	NAME AND TITLE	OCCASION/COMMENTS
1956	Dr. Harry Denman, director, U.S. Methodist Board of Evangelism	First postwar U.S. Methodist visitor.
Apr. 1962	Bishop Odd Hagen, Northern European Central Conference of the Methodist Church	First visit of a Methodist bishop since 1939.
1964	Rev. Emilio Castro	United Methodist pastor from Uruguay, presently, president of the World Council of Churches.
1965	Bishop and Mrs. Richard Raines	U.S. United Methodist Church.
1965	Odd Hagen and Rev. Sergei Dubrovin	
1966	Bishop Ralph Ward	U.S. United Methodist Church.
1968	Corrie Ten Boom	Dutch Christian; author of <i>The Hiding Place</i> ; preached in Tallinn Methodist Church.
1968	Oral Roberts University student group	
1968	Leo and Ida Mondschein	
1968	Rev. Carl Soule, Department of Peace and World Order, United Methodist Office for the United Nations	Leader of a U.S. group.
1968	Rev. Glen Garfield Williams, Baptist; general secretary of Conference of European Churches	
1969	Rev. Carl Soule, Rev. Robert McClean, current director of the Department of Peace and World Order, United Methodist Office for the United Nations	

DOCUMENTED WESTERN CONTACTS WITH ESTONIAN METHODISTS (APPENDIX II, cont.)

DATE	NAME AND TITLE	OCCASION/COMMENTS
1970	Rev. Carl Soule	
1971	Rev. Earl Sanford, U.S. Embassy chaplain	
1972	Bishop Ole Borgen, Northern European Central Conference of the Methodist Church	From 1972 to 1989, Borgen made visits to Estonian Methodists at least once per year, sometimes twice, and one year three times.
1972	Leo Mondschein	
1972	Rev. Bambowski, East German minister	First East European Methodist pastor to visit Estonia in postwar period.
1973	Oral Roberts University student group	
1973	Bishop Ole Borgen	
1974	Bishop Jack Tuell, Bishop Paul Millhouse	U.S. United Methodist Church
1974	Bishop Ole Borgen, Leo Mondschein	
1975	Bishop Ole Borgen, Leo Mondschein	
1976	Bishop Ole Borgen	
	Youth With a Mission	First of repeated contacts which have continued to the present.
Oct. 8-12, 1977	Bishop Ole Borgen; Dr. Joe Hale, general secretary, World Methodist Council; Bishop and Mrs. Finis Crutchfield; Father Vello Salo, Catholic priest and Baltic scholar from Canada.	First WMC visit; on occasion of the 70th anniversary of Estonian Methodism, Rev. Hugo Oengo presiding.

DOCUMENTED WESTERN CONTACTS WITH ESTONIAN METHODISTS (APPENDIX II, *cont.*)

DATE	NAME AND TITLE	OCCASION/COMMENTS
Late 1970's	Rev. Friedrich Hecker	Superintendent, Hungarian Methodist Church.
1978	Bishop Ole Borgen	
Aug. 5-7, 1978	Rev. David Bridge, Methodist pastor from England and family; later, chair of European Affairs Committee, British Methodist Church	
Sept. 2-4, 1978	Bishop Paul Washburn	U.S. United Methodist Church.
Oct. 10-16, 1978	Rev. Jorunn Wendel	Methodist pastor from Bergen, Norway.
Dec. 15-17, 1978	Rev. Pentti Jarvinen, Methodist superintendent, Finland	Head of a Finnish Methodist delegation at funeral of Rev. Hugo Oengo.
Mar. 5-11, 1979	Bishop Ole Borgen	Bishop's first visit to Methodist congregations outside Tallinn (Tartu, Parnu and Paide).
1980	Bishop Ole Borgen	
June 1980	Rev. Alan Walker, Sydney, Australia, representing the World Methodist Council	Conducted "Mission to the 80's" meetings, described as the first large evangelistic crusade in the U.S.S.R. led by a Western preacher. Walker: "I have never seen anything like this anywhere."
1981	Bishop Borgen	
Mar. 1981	Dr. Mark Elliott, associate professor of history, Asbury College	First direct Asbury College contact (although Joe Hale is an alumnus).

DOCUMENTED WESTERN CONTACTS WITH ESTONIAN METHODISTS (APPENDIX II, *cont.*)

DATE	NAME AND TITLE	OCCASION/COMMENTS
Mar. 1981	Dr. and Mrs. Harold Kuhn, retired professor of philosophy of religion, Asbury Theological Seminary, and retired professor of German, Asbury College.	
Apr. 1981	Rev. H. Eddie Fox, director, New World Mission, United Methodist Board of Discipleship; North American Regional Secretary for World Evangelism, World Methodist Council	Fox and Ellington were the first U.S. Methodists to visit the Tartu and Parnu congregations in 40 years. (See next entry: Ellington).
	Rev. William Ellington	U.S. United Methodist Board of Discipleship.
June 21-23, 1982	Rev. Erik Hellsten, superintendent of Swedish Conference, Finland	Led a group from Finland.
July-Aug., 1982	Rev. Ed Robb, Ed Robb Evangelistic Association; member of the board of trustees, Asbury Theological Seminary	
1982 (before Oct.)	Bishop Marjorie Matthews	Visited Estonia, East Germany, Sweden.
Oct. 14-17, 1982	Bishop and Mrs. Ole Borgen, Bishop and Mrs. Edward Tullis, Rev. David Bridge, Finnish Methodist Vilho Letimaki	75th anniversary of Estonian Methodism.
1982	Dr. Maxie Dunnam, Upper Room Ministries; Rev. Ezra Earl Jones, general secretary of the U.S. United Methodist Board of Discipleship; Rev. H. Eddie Fox	Delegation presented Upper Room citation to Rev. Alexander Kuum.
1983	Bishop Ole Borgen	

DOCUMENTED WESTERN CONTACTS WITH ESTONIAN METHODISTS (APPENDIX II, *cont.*)

DATE	NAME AND TITLE	OCCASION / COMMENTS
Mar. 1, 1983- Feb. 1986	Rev. John Johannaber, chaplain, U.S. Embassy, Moscow	United Methodists Rev. and Mrs. Johannaber made four trips to Estonia during their tenure. They provided exceptional assistance to Estonian Methodism in a variety of ways.
1983	Rev. Evald Leps	Moravian pastor who fled Estonia during World War II; served in the Methodist ministry in the U.S. after seminary in Sweden.
1984	Bishop Ole Borgen	
1984	Rev. Endel Meiusi, Estonian Christian Ministries	Made ten ministry visits to Estonian Methodists between 1984 and 1990.
Dec. 22-26, 1984	Rev. and Mrs. David Bridge and family	
1985	Bishop Ole Borgen	According to Rev. Heigo Ritsbek, the Tallinn Methodist Church received approximately five hundred visitors from abroad in 1985.
1985	Rev. Robert McClean	
Summer 1985	Rev. Erik Hellsten	
1985?	Rev. Leighton Ford	Billy Graham Evangelistic Association evangelist.
1985?	Loren Cunningham	Founder, Youth With a Mission.
July 21-23, 1985	Dr. Mark Elliott	Leader of a group from Asbury College.

DOCUMENTED WESTERN CONTACTS WITH ESTONIAN METHODISTS (APPENDIX II, cont.)

DATE	NAME AND TITLE	OCCASION/COMMENTS
Aug. 1985	Scott Wesley Brown, I Care Ministries	Christian musician who has performed in Tallinn each August from 1985 to 1990. Has been generous with Estonian Methodists.
Dec. 7-16, 1985	Dr. M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., professor of New Testament, Asbury Theological Seminary	Teacher for first of a series of Methodist pastors' workshops, addressing the Book of Acts and Revelation.
1986	Bishop Ole Borgen	
1986-1989	YWAM Discipleship Training School and School of Evangelism	Twice-monthly sessions for Estonian Methodists and Baptists.
Sept. 1986	Hal Zimmerman, Washington State Senator	United Methodist layman who organized a lobbying effort on behalf of the emigration application of Estonian Methodist pastor Heigo Ritsbek.
1987	Rev. Walther Friedmar, East German Methodist superintendent	
1987	U.S. Methodist North Alabama Conference group	
Easter 1987	Rev. David Bridge	Leading a group of 32 British Methodists.
May 1987	National Council of Churches U.S.S.R. Travel Seminar	Of the 62 participants visiting Tallinn Methodist Church, 45 were United Methodists.
Fall 1987	Bishop Ole Borgen, Bishop and Mrs. C. P. Minnick, Jr.	80th Anniversary of Estonian Methodism.
Aug. 1987	Donn Ziebell; Konstantin and Elizabeth Lewshenia, Slavic Gospel Association	

DOCUMENTED WESTERN CONTACTS WITH ESTONIAN METHODISTS (APPENDIX II, *cont.*)

DATE	NAME AND TITLE	OCCASION/COMMENTS
1988	Bishop Ole Borgen	
Easter weekend, 1988	Rev. David Bridge	Led a group of 25 British Methodists to Methodist Church in Kamenitsa, Western Ukraine.
June 2-13, 1988	Dr. Joe Hale	Met with Superintendent Parnamets in Moscow.
Aug. 1-8, 1988	Dr. J. Steven O'Malley, professor of church history and historical theology, Asbury Theological Seminary	Second ATS Methodist Pastors' Workshop on the Apostles' Creed.
Aug. 1988	Rev. C. V. Elliott, Missionary World Service and Evangelism	Leading a group of United Methodists.
1988	Bill Bright, Campus Crusade for Christ	Lectured at Methodist headquarters building.
1988	Dr. Peter Stephens; Rev. David Bridge; Moira Sleight, <i>Methodist Recorder</i> ; John Pritchard, British Methodist Overseas Division; Reiner Dauner, West German Methodist Church	Brief visit to Tallinn of five Methodists attending a Helsinki meeting of the European Commission on Missions and Consultative Conference of European Methodist Churches.
Jan. 1989	Endel Meiusi	Estonian Christian Ministries, the International Bible Society and Finnish groups delivered 20,000 Estonian language Bibles (2,000 for Methodists).
1989	Bishop Ole Borgen	
Mar. 1989	Charlie Warner, Biblical Education by Extension	
Mar. 1989	Mary Sue Robinson, secretary for Europe and Africa, U.S. Methodist General Board of Global Ministries	

DOCUMENTED WESTERN CONTACTS WITH ESTONIAN METHODISTS (APPENDIX II, cont.)

DATE	NAME AND TITLE	OCCASION/COMMENTS
Mar. 1989	Dr. Mark Elliott	Met Rev. Vasili Popov, pastor of the newly registered Methodist Church in Syktyvkar, Komi, A.S.S.R., R.S.F.S.R.
1989	Deacon Michael Roshak, director, National Council of Churches U.S.-U.S.S.R. Church Relations Committee	
July 1989	Dr. Mark Elliott	Leading a Wheaton College-sponsored group of 25.
Aug. 1989	Dr. David Seamands, professor of pastoral ministry, Asbury Theological Seminary, and Mrs. Helen Seamands	Third ATS Methodist Pastors' Workshop on pastoral counseling.
Aug. 17-20, 1989	Gospel Music Fest with one hundred singers and speakers from U.S. and Europe including <i>Reach Out Singers</i> , <i>First Love</i> , Sheila Walsh, Scott Wesley Brown and Rob White	5,000+ for each of four concerts. Organized by Youth for Christ International and Outreach for Christ International. <i>First Love</i> gave a concert at the Tallinn Methodist Church.
Sept. 9-11, 1989	Bishop Hans Vaxby	Newly elected bishop of the Northern European Conference of The United Methodist Church made his first visit to Estonia.
Apr. 1990	Rev. David Bridge	Leading a group of 30 British Methodists.
May 1990	Asbury College Concert Choir, Dr. Don Donaldson, director	

APPENDIX III

THE INFLUENCE OF ESTONIAN METHODISM UPON
WESTERN VISITORS

"It is difficult to speak of the warmth and affection in which we hold our beloved Methodist sisters and brothers of Estonia. Their faithfulness, their quiet but steady witness is penetrating their society."

Letter from Rev. and Mrs. John Johannaber, U.S. Embassy Chaplaincy,
1983-1986, to author, February 19, 1990.

"The Estonian church, because of its persecution, is no doubt the strongest and most vital church in the Northern Europe Annual Conference of The Methodist Church. I think our people in Scandinavia very soon will realize what some of us have known very long—that the Estonian contribution to us is greater and far more important than our contribution to them, because our contribution is mostly material, theirs is eternal."

Letter from Bishop Hans Vaxby, Northern Europe Conference of
The United Methodist Church, to author, February 6, 1990;
quoted in Elliott, "Roomsad Teated! Good News in Estonia,"
Good News 15 (September/October 1981): 12.

"Our visit to Estonia was one of the highlights of my Episcopal ministry. The people were searching and hungry for Bible teaching. Bishop Borgen and I taught nearly all day Saturday in the Merepuistee church where the preachers had gathered. They would have stayed all night if we could have held on."

Letter from Bishop Edward L. Tullis to author, January 23, 1990.

"In the midst of all of their problems, the choral and congregational singing was fantastic. The emotional impact of sharing in such a service was overwhelming. At the close of one of those stirring [seventy-fifth] anniversary services, David Bridge, the representative of British Methodism, said to me, with tears streaming down his cheeks, 'I say, old boy, that was a bit much.'"

Edward L. Tullis, *Shaping the Church From the Mind of Christ*
(Nashville: The Upper Room, 1984), pp. 9, 32.

"Our life and worship among the Christian community in Estonia was a deeply enriching and inspirational experience. The presence and work of the Holy Spirit in their life is obvious and one's personal experiences in their fellowship affirms that presence over and over."

Letter of Bishop C. P. Minnick, Jr., to author, February 2, 1990.

Bishop Ole Borgen, North Europe Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1970-1989, refers to his participation in Tallinn, Estonia, in the 1982 ordination service of Ivan Vuksta, pastor of a long-isolated church in Western Ukraine, as "one of my most moving experiences in all my years."

Borgen interview, January 28, 1990.

"The Sunday morning in that church [Tallinn Methodist] was probably one of the biggest thrills of my life....The church was filled, the platform was full, the balcony was full and there were people standing in the back of the church."

Rev. C. V. Elliott, Vice President of Outreach Ministries, Missionary World Service and Evangelism, unpublished Soviet trip report, August 1988, p. 6.

"Rev. Parnamets had developed an excellent schedule for my time in Estonia. On Sunday, December 8, I preached at the morning and afternoon services at the Methodist Church in Tallinn. Both services were full with many people standing at the back and in the aisles. The people were very attentive to the messages and responsive in an extended time of prayer and commitment following the service.

"At the close of the 'formal' worship service...the Methodists of Estonia differ from us. Instead of heading home or to their favorite restaurant for dinner, the church comes alive with spontaneous prayer circles, discussion groups, Bible studies and a considerable number of seekers at the altar. People come to the altar for special prayer: for healing, for personal difficulties, for relationships. They come for counseling, seeking the deeper spiritual life."

Dr. M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., provost, Asbury Theological Seminary, unpublished Soviet trip report, 1986, p. 1; quoted in "With the Methodists of Estonia," *New World Outlook* 48 (October 1987): 40.

"On Tuesday, August 2, I traveled with Olav [Parnamets] 186 km to the university city of Tartu, where I preached on Hebrews 12 to an audience of more than three hundred persons in our UM church, which meets in a former Orthodox church building. The people were most gracious and eager to hear the gospel. Several professors and students were present, as well as members of our church. Many stayed after the service for prayer for salvation and healing and this time of blessing continued another 1 1/2 hours....Among my greatest joys was praying and sharing in depth at meals and in cars with Olav and Urve and two lay leaders of their congregation, who became heart brothers in Christ with me during these days. How good it is to know that God is with His people in Estonia, USSR. I have met them and I have met Him anew through them."

Dr. J. Steven O'Malley, Asbury Theological Seminary, unpublished Soviet trip report, 1988, pp. 1, 3.

"I...felt the Spirit clearly leading me to talk on the need to forgive and to face responsibility for our choices. This hit home because they have to constantly struggle with bitterness against the hurts and injustices perpetuated by a repressive government and an army of occupation. It was about 5:00 p.m. when the seminars ended and the invitation to prayer was given. Many prayed with deep emotion. A young pastor sitting near Helen sobbed and moaned and told her later that God had done a deep healing in his heart. It was the insistence on facing responsibility which had been Spirit-led. Olav told us later that they had not thought of that. 'For years,' he said, 'We have been blaming the Russians for everything. It is our great excuse. We must forgive them and then face our own responsibility for the future'....Helen and I can assure you, we will never be quite the same, for we will never forget our brothers and sisters in Christ in Estonia."

Dr. David Seamands, Asbury Theological Seminary, unpublished Soviet trip report, August 1989, pp. 4, 6.

NOTES

1. J. Tremayne Copplestone, *History of Methodist Missions* (New York: Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church, 1973), 4:366-372; Mark Elliott, "Methodism in Russia and the Soviet Union," *Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*, vol. 22 (Academic Press International, 1981); and John Dunstan, "George A. Simons and The Khristianski Pobornik, A Neglected Source on St. Petersburg Methodism," *Methodist History* 19 (October 1980): 21-40.
2. K. Smolin, "Proshloe i nastoiashchee metodizma," *Nauka i religii*, no. 12 (1974): 61; Dunstan, "Simons and Pobornik," p. 32; Heigo Ritsbek, "The Beginning of Methodism in Tsarist Russia (1859-1909)," unpublished paper, Asbury Theological Seminary, Spring 1990, pp. 9, 11.
3. Ritsbek, "Beginning of Methodism," pp. 17-18.
4. Ibid., p. 18; *Eesti Metodisti Kiriku Kalendar* 1989 (Tallinn: Eesti Metodisti Kiriku, 1988), p. 13; Peter Stephens, *Methodism in Europe* (Cincinnati: United Methodist Church, General Board of Global Ministries, 1981), p. 27.
5. Lorna and Michael Bourdeaux, *Ten Growing Soviet Churches* (Bromley, Kent: MARC Europe, 1987), pp. 25-26; Elliott, "Methodism in Russia," p. 17; Heigo Ritsbek, "God at Work in Estonia," *Challenge to Evangelism Today* 23 (Spring 1990): 8; "Report From Estonia, U.S.S.R.," *World Parish, International Organization of the World Methodist Council* 24 (September 1984): 3.
6. "Report from Estonia," *World Parish*, p. 3; *Eesti Metodisti Kalendar*, p. 13; H. Eddie Fox, "The People of God in Estonia," *New World Outlook* 71 (October 1981): 28; Rauli Lehtonen, "Methodists in the Soviet Union—Bridge Between East and West," unpublished paper delivered in Rome at Vatican Conference on Religious Liberty, March 1988, p. 1; author's interview with Heigo Ritsbek, 16 July 1990.
7. Arthur Voobus, *The Martyrs of Estonia: The Suffering, Ordeal and Annihilation of the Churches Under the Russian Occupation* (Stockholm: Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1984), p. 41; *Eesti Metodisti Kalendar*, p. 13; Ritsbek, "God at Work," p. 8; Ritsbek, "The Methodist Church in Estonia Today," Wheaton Conference on Glasnost and the Church, 14 June 1990.
8. Philip Walters, *World Christianity: Eastern Europe* (Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research Communication Center, 1988), p. 88.
9. Leonard Perryman, *United Methodist Information Service*, 16 March 1971; V. Voina, "Tysiasha granei odnoi problemy," *Nauka i religii*, no. 2 (1971): 22; Ritsbek interview, 16 July 1990. Letter from David Bridge to author, July 30, 1990. Harpenden Methodist Church with some 750 members has been for some years the largest British congregation.
10. Toivo U. Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), p. 168; Ole Borgen interview, 28 January 1970; Olav Parnamets interview, 8 April 1990; Ritsbek interview, 27 January 1990.
11. "Reunion, Baltic and Slavic Refugee Pastors of the Methodist Church in the United States, Bay View, MI, July 1-5, 1962," unpublished paper in author's possession.
12. Ritsbek interview, 16 July 1990.
13. "Reunion."
14. Parnamets interview, 4 March 1989.

15. Ibid.
16. Leonard Perryman, World Methodist Conference press release, 25 August 1971.
17. Edward L. Tullis, *Shaping the Church from the Mind of Christ* (Nashville, TN: The Upper Room, 1984), pp. 48-49; David Bridge, "Estonian Diary," *Methodist Recorder*, 24 January 1985, pp. 10-12; Bridge, "Obituary [Alexander Kuum]," *Methodist Recorder*, 15 June 1989, p. 18; Elliott, "Roomsad Teated! Good News in Estonia," *Good News* 15 (September/October 1981): 8, 11; Elliott, unpublished Soviet trip report, 7 April 1989; Steve O'Malley, unpublished Soviet trip report, 1988, p. 3; Parnamets interview, 4 March 1989.
18. Alexander Kuum, "Superintendent's Circular Letter No. 75," Tallinn, Estonia, March 1979, p. 1; Bourdeaux, *Ten Growing Churches*, pp. 27-28; Borgen interview, 28 January 1990; Ritsbek interviews, 27 January and 16 July 1990; Ritsbek, "God at Work," p. 8.
19. C. V. Elliott, "MWS&E Preaches in Soviet Estonia," *The Explorer* 21 (Winter 1989): 1; Bourdeaux, *Ten Growing Churches*, pp. 34-35; Fox, "People of God," p. 29; Olav Parnamets, "Superintendent's Circular Letter No. 76," Tallinn, Estonia, May 1979; Borgen interview, 28 January 1990.
20. "0 missionerskoi i propovednicheskoi deiatel'nosti Estonskoi metodistskoi tserkvi," *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma*, 24 (Moscow: Mysl', 1979): 175. See also "Metodisty," *Slovar' ateizma* (Moscow: 1964), pp. 159-160. Western accounts following this Soviet lead include Bourdeaux, *Ten Growing Churches*, pp. 29-30; Lehtonen, "Methodists in the Soviet Union," p. 2; "Looting From Churches Goes Unpunished," *The Guardian of Liberty* 24 (March-April, 1980). For an earlier Soviet commentary anxious over Estonian free church growth, including Methodists, see Vello Salo, "The Struggle Between the State and the Churches" in *A Case Study of a Soviet Republic: the Estonian SSR*, ed. Elmar Jarvesoo and Tonu Parming (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978), p. 210, quoting a major atheist serial, *Nauka i religia*.
21. Borgen interview, 28 January 1990; Parnamets interview, 8 April 1990; Ritsbek interview, 27 January 1990.
22. Bourdeaux, *Ten Growing Churches*, p. 22.
23. Borgen interview, 28 January 1990; Lehtonen, "Methodists," p. 4.
24. Bourdeaux, *Ten Growing Churches*, p. 21; Lehtonen, "Methodists in the Soviet Union," p. 4.
25. Borgen interview, 28 January 1990. See also Lehtonen, "Methodists in the Soviet Union," p. 3.
26. Ritsbek interview, 27 January 1990.
27. Borgen interview, 28 January 1990.
28. Ritsbek, "God at Work," p. 8. See also "The Chairman Interviews Leo and Ida Mondschein," *Euroflame* (January 1976): 6-7.
29. Michael Bourdeaux, "Letter to the Editor," *New Christian*, 1 December 1966, p. 17; Bourdeaux, *Ten Growing Churches*, p. 28.
30. Conversation with author, July 1981.
31. "Report From Estonia," *World Parish*, p. 3. See also Ritsbek, "God at Work," p. 18. Walter Sawatsky reports similar waves of growth in Baptist churches following the return of pastors from prison: *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1981), pp. 64-65.

32. *Eesti Metodisti Kalendar*, p. 13.
33. Lehtonen, "Methodists in the Soviet Union," p. 2.
34. "0 missionerskoi i propovednicheskoi deiatel'nosti," pp. 174, 172-173.
35. Lehtonen, "Methodists in the Soviet Union," p. 2; Peter Stephens, "The Methodist Church of Eastern Europe," *Religion in Communist Lands* 5 (Spring 1977): 17; Ritsbek, "God at Work," p. 8; Borgen interview, 28 January 1990.
36. Bourdeaux, "Letter to the Editor," p. 17.
37. Borgen interview, 28 January 1990.
38. Scott Wesley Brown interview, 7 February 1990; Ritsbek interview, 13 July 1990.
39. Brown interview, 7 February 1990; Bourdeaux, *Ten Growing Churches*, pp. 22, 31, 40. (Selah is a designation in the Psalms for a musical interlude.)
40. Ritsbek, "God at Work," p. 8.
41. "0 missionerskoi i propovednicheskoi deiatel'nosti," p. 177; Stephens, "Methodist Church," p. 16.
42. On Herbert Mord see Bourdeaux, *Ten Growing Churches*, p. 22; Keston News Service 137 (19 November 1981), pp. 1-2; "Estonian Methodist Arrested," *Religion in Communist Lands* 8 (Winter 1980): 329; "Music and Ministry: Estonian Methodists," *Frontier* 1 (January-February 1987): 14. On Heigo Ritsbek see Douglas Ens, "Restrictions Force Estonian Pastor to Emigrate," *News Network International*, 20 March 1989, pp. 16-17; Ritsbek, "God at Work," pp. 8-9; Lehtonen, "Methodists in the Soviet Union," p. 3; Ritsbek interview, 27 January 1990.
43. Letter from Herman Will, United Methodist Division of World Peace, to Walter Sawatsky, 30 October 1973, "Methodist, U.S.S.R." file, Keston College Archives, Keston, England.
44. Moscow Patriarchate, *Conference in Defense of Peace of All Churches and Religious Associations in the U.S.S.R. Held in Troitse-Sergiyeva Monastery, Zagorsk on May 9-12, 1952* (Moscow: Moscow Patriarchate, n.d.), pp. 16, 179-181. See also Bourdeaux, *Ten Growing Churches*, p. 26.
45. Letter from Heigo Ritsbek to Robert McClean, director of the Department of Peace and World Order, United Methodist Office for the United Nations, 5 February 1990. Copy in author's possession.
46. "Methodist Church in Russia," *Together* 7 (July 1963): 1; Ritsbek interview, 19 July 1990.
47. Parnamets interview, 4 March 1989; Borgen interview, 28 January 1990; Ritsbek interview, 16 July 1990.
48. Perryman, *United Methodist Information Service*; Ritsbek interview, 16 July 1990. Heigo Ritsbek (27 January 1990, interview) noted that Estonian emigres purchased two cars for Kuum for Methodist work in Estonia.
49. Elliott, "Methodism in Russia," p. 18.
50. Kuum, "Circular Letter No. 75," pp. 1-2.
51. Avril Bottoms, "Estonian Methodists Support Alcohol Fight," *Methodist Recorder*, 15 August 1985, pp. 1, 13; Fox, "People of God," p. 30.
52. Borgen interview, 28 January 1990; Ritsbek interview, 27 January 1990.
53. A number of Scandinavian East European ministries are listed in Mark Elliott, ed., *East European Missions Directory* (Wheaton, IL: Institute for the Study of Christianity and Marxism, 1989). See also Mark Elliott, "In the Household of Faith," *Eternity* 37 (July/August 1986): 24-29.

54. Elliott, "Roomsad Teated," pp. 8-12. Former Northern European Conference Bishop Ole Borgen began teaching at Asbury Theological Seminary in 1988.
55. M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., unpublished Soviet trip report, 1986; J. Steven O'Malley, unpublished Soviet trip report, 1988; David Seamands, unpublished Soviet trip report, fall 1989.
56. Hazel Carmalt-Jones, "A Warm Welcome in Uzhgorod," *Frontier*, no. 6 (November-December 1988): 4-6. Services are in Russian for a mixed congregation of Russians, Ukrainians, Slovaks and Hungarians (Ritsbek interview, 19 July 1990).
57. Parnamets interview, 4 March 1989; Ritsbek interview, 27 January 1990. For critical discussions of the political orientation of U. S. United Methodist leadership see: Steve Beard, "Our Embarrassing Leftward Tilt," *Good News* 23 (January-February 1990): 18-20; Roy Howard Beck, *On Thin Ice: A Religion Reporter's Memoir* (Wilmore, KY: Bristol Books, 1988); James Heidinger II, "The United Methodist Church" in *Evangelical Renewal in the Mainline Churches*, ed. Ronald Nash (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1987), pp. 15-39; Edmund W. and Julia Robb, *The Betrayal of the Church: Apostasy and Renewal in the Mainline Denominations* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986); George Weigel, *Must Walls Confuse?* (Washington, DC: Institute on Religion and Democracy, 1981); and Robert L. Wilson, *Biases and Blind Spots: Methodism and Foreign Policy Since World War II* (Wilmore, KY: Bristol Books, 1988). Supportive of the church's postwar political orientations are Peggy Billings, *Paradox and Promise in Human Rights* (New York: Friendship Press, 1979) and James E. Will, *Must Walls Divide? The Creative Witness of the Churches in Europe* (New York: Friendship Press, 1981).
58. Perryman, World Methodist Conference Press Release, 25 August 1971; Perryman, *United Methodist Information Service*, 16 March 1971; Heigo Ritsbek, "The Number of Organized Churches and Full Membership in the Methodist Churches in the U.S.S.R.," unpublished report, May 1990; Ritsbek interview, 16 July 1990. The Karsa Methodist Church, registered in February 1990 with approximately 35 members, needs to be added to the tally in the Ritsbek report. Adding the single West Ukrainian and single Komi A.S.S.R. churches, the total 1990 Methodist membership in the U.S.S.R. was 1,838.
59. Bottoms, "Estonian Methodists," p. 13. On several occasions Rev. Parnamets has asked visitors from Wilmore, Kentucky, to share with his people concerning the historic 1970 spontaneous revival at Asbury College: Mark Elliott in 1985 and David Seamands, professor of pastoral ministry, Asbury Theological Seminary, in 1989. In 1985 Rev. Parnamets commented with some feeling that of the various books given to him by the present writer the one he most appreciated was Robert Coleman's account of the 1970 Asbury Revival, *One Divine Moment*.
60. Author's personal observations based on visits in 1981, 1985 and two in 1989; Lehtonen, "Methodists in the Soviet Union," p. 1; letters from David Bridge to Mark Elliott, 1 February and 5 May 1990; Borgen interview, 28 January 1990. See also Ritsbek, "God at Work," p. 8.
61. Letter from Bridge to Elliott, 1 February 1990; Ritsbek interviews, 27 January and 16 July 1990.

62. Ritsbek interview, 27 January 1990; Borgen interview, 28 January 1990. "Healthy competition from other churches," which Lorna and Michael Bourdeaux cite as a factor in Methodist growth, would apply generally for Estonia as a whole, but not for Tallinn in the 1970s, a decade that saw many youth move from the Methodist to the Baptist Church (see *Ten Growing Churches*, p. 39).
63. Ens, "Restrictions," pp. 16-17; Toomas Pajusoo interview, 9 July 1989; Parnamets interview, 8 April 1990; Ritsbek interviews, 27 January and 19 July 1990; Christine McLain, "Estonian Christian Views U.S.," *The Explorer* 22 (July / August 1990): 2.
64. Antonia Barbosa da Silva, "The 'Theology of Success' Movement: A Comment," *Themelios: An International Journal for Theological Students* 11 (April 1986): 91. More than thirty books by Kenneth Hagin have been translated into Estonian (Ritsbek interview, 19 July 1990).
65. World Without War Council, *Neformalniye: A Guide to Independent Organizations and Contacts in the Soviet Union* (Seattle, WA: WWWC, 1990), p. 35; "A Singing Revolution," *Frontier* (November-December 1989): 21; Keston News Service 293, 31 March 1988, p. 9. Marite Sapiets has provided helpful treatment of the group's political orientation, except that it should not be described as a specifically Baptist movement ("The Baltic Churches and the National Revival," *Religion in Communist Lands* 18 [Summer 1990]: 162-163).
66. Parnamets interview, 4 March 1989; Ritsbek interview, 19 July 1990; Endel Meiusi interview, 1 February 1990; Scott Wesley Brown interview, 7 February 1990.
67. See Appendix II for a list of trips to the United States, Canada, England, Scotland, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Kenya, Crete, Switzerland and the Philippines. See Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals*, pp. 359-385, for positive and negative sides to Baptist leaders' foreign travel.
68. Letters from Bridge to Elliott, 3 May and 1 February 1990.
69. Letter from Hans Vaxby to Elliott, 6 February 1990.
70. Ritsbek interview, 27 January 1990. A letter from Robert McClean to the author, 26 January 1990, expressed the same sentiment. The year referred to with five hundred guests was 1985.
71. Letter from Bridge to Elliott, 1 February 1990.
72. Ritsbek interview, 27 January 1990.
73. Ibid.
74. Donn Ziebell, Slavic Gospel Association, unpublished trip report, August 1987.
75. Fox, "People of God," p. 29.
76. "0 missiionerskoi i propovednicheskoi deiatel'nosti," p. 177.
77. Bourdeaux, *Ten Growing Churches*, p. 31.
78. Douglas Ens, "Estonians Receive Record Number of Bibles," *News Network International*, 20 March 1989, p. 14; Ullas Tankler, "Estland," unpublished report, November 1989. The author saw boxes of these Bibles in the Methodist headquarters building in Tallinn in March 1989.
79. Ritsbek, "Methodist Church," 14 June 1990. Rauli Lehtonen ("Methodists in the Soviet Union," p. 3) estimates the total number of Estonian Bibles published from 1945 to 1988 was 6,400. Even with the majority of these Bibles making their way into Estonia by unofficial means, the dramatic nature of 1988-1990 deliveries still obtains.

80. Glen Larum, "Estonian UMs credit Growth to 'Hero of Faith,'" *United Methodist Reporter*, 17 March 1989, p. 1.
81. Urve Parnamets, "The Role of Women in the Church in Estonia," Wheaton College Brown Bag Seminar, 16 April 1990. Heigo Ritsbek (19 July 1990, interview) suggests that the "targeted mission activity" in child and youth evangelism fostered by Olav and Urve Parnamets has been that family's "most wonderful contribution to Tallinn Methodists."
82. Tankler, "Estland," p. 13.
83. Rauli Lehtonen interview, 10 March 1989.
84. Ritsbek, "God at Work," p. 8; Ritsbek, "Methodist Church," 14 June 1990. This author attended a youth choir rehearsal on 3 March 1989, with 20 persons in attendance, ages 14 to 25.
85. Lehtonen interview, 10 March 1989.
86. Toomas Pajusoo interview, 9 July 1989.
87. Tankler, "Estland," p. 13.
88. David Seamands, unpublished Soviet trip report, August 1989, p. 5; Rick Bailey, "Young People of Estonia Hungry for Christianity," *Lexington Herald-Leader*, 2 September 1989, p. 32; Tankler, "Estland," p. 10; Ritsbek, "God at Work," p. 8.
89. Christine McLain, "Estonian Christian Views U.S.," *The Explorer* 22 (July / August 1991): 1-2.
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Reading Acts as History

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Unless instructed otherwise, the average person who picks up the book of Acts probably reads it as the history book of the Early Church.¹ Most scholars, however, do not read Acts in this way. The main interest of recent scholarship has been in the theological teaching of Acts rather than in its historical information.

Still, Acts remains the only record for much of what happened during this formative period and a number of Lukan scholars maintain that Acts should be given more credit for its historical contributions. The title of I. H. Marshall's book, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, indicates his opinion that Luke deserves to be taken seriously in both of the capacities named.²

Two questions are of significance in reading Acts as history: (1) How does Luke compare with other historians of his own day? (2) How can the book of Acts be used as a source for writing church history today? We will first examine answers that have been given to both of these questions and will then survey the views of scholars who have attempted to read the book of Acts as history.

LUKE AMONG THE ANCIENTS

Some scholars believe Luke never intended to write history. Richard Pervo regards Acts as a work of fiction, an ancient novel designed to entertain and to edify, but not to convey historical information.³ Many scholars, however, believe that Luke at least wants to be taken seriously as a historian. Attention is drawn to features of his writings that give them the appearance of historical accounts: the stereotypical prefaces in Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-5; the claim to rely on eyewitness testimony (Luke 1:2; Acts 1:3; and the "we" sections of Acts); and the numerous speeches presented in Acts. All these give the book "the stamp of a historical writing."⁴

Of course, Acts is not a work of history in the modern sense. Luke does not identify his sources and he fails to maintain a critical distance from his

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subject matter. Still, it would be unfair to decide whether Luke deserves to be respected as a historian on the basis of modern expectations. The question is, what were the expectations of historians in antiquity? Bertil Gärtner answers this in part by comparing Acts to other Hellenistic Jewish writings, especially the books of 1 and 2 Maccabees.⁵ These works show that it was acceptable for a historian of this age to interpret all events, as Luke does, from a religious standpoint. Victories and defeats are ultimately traced back to the intervention of God. Eckhardt Plümacher takes a different approach in his monograph, *Lukas als hellenistischer Schriftsteller*. He compares Acts to Greek authors, especially Livy.⁶ He notices many similar tendencies, including the use of an archaizing style for speeches and of a dramatic episode style for narrative. Plümacher concludes that, in many ways, Luke's work may be regarded as typical of ancient Hellenistic historiography.

W. C. van Unnik explores this theme from another angle in his article, "Luke's Second Book and the Rules of Hellenistic Historiography."⁷ He draws up a list of rules historians in Luke's day were expected to follow, according to two ancient writings: the Roman Antiquities of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, written between 30-7 B.C., and an essay by Lucian of Samosate, written between A.D. 166-168. Dionysius evaluates a number of historians according to certain standards that he thinks they should meet. Lucian gives outright instruction on how to write history. Since the book of Acts was written between the times when these two works were composed, it can be evaluated according to their criteria to determine what Luke's contemporaries would have thought of his work.

Dionysius thinks the first task of any historian should be to choose a "good subject of a lofty character" that will be truly profitable to its reader. He criticizes one ancient writer, Thucydides, for writing of a single war, which "should not have happened or (failing that) should have been ignored by posterity and consigned to silence and oblivion." Likewise, Lucian says that the subject should be "important, essential, close to home, or of practical utility." In short, history should be useful. Van Unnik thinks Acts fulfills this criteria, for Luke makes it clear that what he reports has lasting significance for all the earth (1:8; 10:36-42; 13:46-48; 26:26). Furthermore, his writings are intended to fulfill the practical need of offering their reader certainty concerning what has been heard (Luke 1:4).

Both Dionysius and Lucian are concerned with how a work of history should be structured. Lucian emphasizes that there should be a clear sequence to the order of presentation. Dionysius stresses that the work should begin and end appropriately. Van Unnik thinks Luke passes this point with honors. The book begins with a commission to the apostles to be witnesses to the ends of the earth (1:8) and then proceeds, sequentially, to trace the progress of the gospel to new areas: Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea, Antioch, Asia Minor, Greece, Rome. In this light, the ending, too, is appropriate. We may want to know more about what happened to Paul after he reached Rome, but Luke's simple report of his preaching there indicates that the goals of mission as set forth within this work (19:21) have been fulfilled.

In other matters, Dionysius and Lucian offer advice that might be rejected by historians today. Both advise historians to write with rapidity, omitting information that is not central to the significant points. In addition, the historian should write with a vividness that arouses the reader's emotions to compassion or anger. Luke does all this in Acts, sometimes to the chagrin of modern critics. Today's scholars consider his lack of detail concerning the organization of the Early Church and his omission of information concerning other apostles to be major gaffes. Likewise, the lively appearance of his stories and the skillful variety with which they are told lead some to believe he is more interested in achieving dramatic effects and pathos than in presenting an account of history. Yet van Unnik argues that in these matters Luke is doing precisely what would be expected of a historian in his own day.

Other items noted by van Unnik include Luke's paucity of topographical details and his introduction of speeches designed to fit both the speaker and the occasion. These considerations convince van Unnik that Luke must be regarded as a competent historian within the framework of his own age. Luke "knew the rules of the game and was capable of applying them with propriety."

To say that Luke was a competent historian for his own day does not necessarily imply that his work holds any merit by today's standards. Some scholars would say that, granted Luke's integrity as an ancient historian, the lack of concern for truth that characterized modern historiography disqualifies Acts as history today.⁸ Van Unnik, however, contests this point. Another feature that both Dionysius and Lucian emphasize in their "rules for Hellenistic historiography" is a commitment to telling the truth. Historians who are easily swayed by flattery or bribery, for instance, are to be rejected. Historians, even in ancient times, were expected to be honest.⁹

ACTS AS A RESOURCE FOR CHURCH HISTORY

In his work *Luke the Historian*, C. K. Barrett describes the dilemma faced by modern interpreters who wish to use Acts as a resource for church history.¹⁰ For Luke, history could not be divorced from preaching. Luke relates the history that he believes contains the gospel, and in doing so he offers us two pictures of the church. He sets out to depict the church of the first decades, but unconsciously depicts also the church of his own time. He does this by selecting and arranging materials that he believes will proclaim the message he wants his church to hear. He does so also by reading back into the past the assumptions and presuppositions of his own time. Thus, his work gives us the "impression of a screen upon which two pictures are being projected at the same time—a picture of the church of the first period, and, superimposed upon it, a picture of Luke's own times."

Barrett emphasizes that it is not to Luke's discredit that he has done this. Nevertheless, historians who are interested in the picture of the earliest church must work to distinguish what Luke offers concerning that period from what actually reflects his own period. Gerd Lüdemann has produced a

commentary on the entire book of Acts that attempts to do this.¹¹ He calls his book *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts*. Lüdemann's method, widely accepted among scholars,¹² begins by separating what he calls "tradition" from what he calls "redaction." Tradition here refers to that which derives ultimately from Luke's sources, oral or written. Redaction refers to that which derives from Luke's own editorial activity. Since Lüdemann believes Luke was not a witness to any of these events (including those reported in the so-called "we" passages), the question of the historical value of Acts is in reality a question of the historical value of the traditions incorporated into Acts. That which can be identified as redaction can be dismissed for historical purposes—it reflects Luke's own perspective.

The task of separating tradition and redaction is difficult. Lüdemann admits that Luke has integrated his sources so carefully into his work that linguistic and stylistic peculiarities are only rarely fruitful in identifying source material. Most of the time Lüdemann identifies as redaction that material which seems to serve Luke's own particular purposes. For example, in Acts 18:12-17, the mention of Paul's preaching every sabbath in the synagogue probably derives from Luke's interest in presenting Paul as an exemplary Jew. The positive portrait of Gallio reflects Luke's interest in demonstrating how Romans ought to behave toward Christians. These concerns are recurring themes in Luke's Gospel and in Acts—the sort of themes that Luke might have introduced for the benefit of the church in his own day.

Even traditional material might be historically worthless. After separating tradition from redaction, Lüdemann evaluates the tradition according to certain historical criteria. He rejects as historical all reports of the miraculous or supernatural. The healing of the lame man in 3:1-10 is no doubt traditional, but "those who are lame from their childhood are (unfortunately) not made whole again."

The principal means for seeking confirmation of traditional material, however, is comparison with other sources. Sometimes, of course, the information is unique and then a final judgment of its veracity might have to be suspended. Much of the time, however, we are able to ask whether the tradition Luke preserves "fits" with what we know about the Roman world from other writings or with what we know about Paul from his own letters. Lüdemann does not expect exact correspondence. If that were the case, Acts would, by definition, tell us nothing we don't already know. Rather, he asks whether this information is compatible with the general picture gained elsewhere. For example, Acts 21:21 mentions a hostile rumor to the effect that Paul taught Jews to forsake Moses. This is certainly to be classed as tradition, since Luke's own concern is to present Paul as a law-abiding Jew who gets along well with other Christians. The tradition, furthermore, is probably historical because some statements in Paul's letters (Gal. 2:11-19; 5:6; 6:15; 1 Cor. 7:19) make it easy to see how such a rumor could have started.

It has become axiomatic in Pauline studies to treat Acts as subservient to the epistles. As Richard Jeske puts it, "The proper procedure is to begin with

the data from Paul and to utilize the data from Acts, after critical assessment, alongside the Pauline scheme."¹³ Günther Bornkamm notes in the introduction to his highly respected biography of Paul that he draws on Acts only with "great restraint."¹⁴

Lüdemann's similarly restrained approach discovers much in Acts that is historical. In general, though, he finds Luke is better at preserving individual facts than at chronology or synthesis. Luke often brings various stories about one geographical place together in the narrative without regard for their historical sequence. Still, once a chronological framework has been devised through analysis of Paul's epistles, information derived from the traditions incorporated into Acts can be used to augment our understanding of early Christianity.

Colin Hemer, in his study *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, follows a methodology different from that of Lüdemann.¹⁵ Because Hemer regards the author of Acts as a companion of Paul and, therefore, an eyewitness of much that he reports, there is little need to distinguish "tradition" from "redaction." The bigger question is whether Luke is telling the truth. We should check his accuracy on those matters where it can be checked and thus gain a perspective for evaluating claims that cannot be verified. Following this approach, Hemer finds himself able to affirm the historicity of Acts to a much greater extent than can Lüdemann.

THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF MATERIAL IN ACTS

Whichever methodology is used to gain a historical reading of Acts, scholars end up comparing the material in Acts to evidence drawn from other sources. In general, three different types of material are discerned: that which is confirmed historically by other sources; that which is unparalleled by other sources; and that which contradicts or is in tension with other sources.

Material Confirmed by Other Sources

Adrian N. Sherwin-White, an historian of the Roman empire and a specialist in matters of Roman law and administration, recognizes that the book of Acts is a "propaganda narrative," liable to distortion. Nevertheless, he finds that in matters related to geography, politics, law and administration, "the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming."¹⁶ For example, Acts correctly identifies the chief magistrates of Philippi as "praetors" who are attended by "lictors" (16:35), while at Thessalonica, the city authorities are identified as "politarchs" (17:6). Sherwin-White thinks it absurd for biblical scholars to question the historicity of Acts with regard to such details. Roman historians, he avers, have long taken the book's accuracy on these matters for granted. Similarly, Gordon Hewart regards the book of Acts as offering the best available "picture of the *Pax Romana* and all that it meant—good roads and posting, good police, freedom from brigandage and piracy, freedom of movement, toleration, and justice."¹⁷ A recent study by Harry Tajra

focuses specifically on the details of Paul's trials before Roman officials in the second half of Acts and confirms the essential accuracy in the treatment of such matters as legal terminology, penal procedure and state institutions.¹⁸ Martin Hengel notes further that many obscure details about the Roman world as described in Acts are confirmed in the writings of the Jewish-Roman historian, Josephus.¹⁹ An example would be the references in Acts to certain obscure rebels (5:36-37; 21:38), whose deeds are also mentioned by Josephus.

In matters of background, then, Acts is deemed remarkably accurate.²⁰ This, as W. Ward Gasque notes, is even more noteworthy when it is remembered that Luke did not have access to all of the research tools available in libraries today.²¹ He manages to give correct information regarding the historical details of an age before his time and of geographical regions not his own. How? He must have had access to reliable information (either through written sources or through personal experience) and the inclination to convey this information faithfully.

Acts also offers a number of details about the life of Paul that agree with information provided by Paul's own letters. Gerhard Krodel gives the following list:²²

(a) Paul persecuted Christians prior to becoming a Christian himself (9:1-2; Gal. 1:13; 1 Cor. 15:9).

(b) Paul had been a Pharisee "zealous for the traditions" of his Jewish ancestors (22:3; 23:6; Phil. 3:4-8; Gal. 1:14).

(c) Paul was once smuggled out of Damascus by being lowered over the wall of the city in a basket (9:23-25; 2 Cor. 11:32-33).

(d) Paul went to Syria and Cilicia after his first visit to Jerusalem (9:30; Gal. 1:21).

(e) Paul worked with Barnabas in Antioch (11:25; Gal. 1:21, 2:1).

(f) Paul met with persecution in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra (13-14; 2 Tim. 3:11; cf. 2 Cor. 11:25).

(g) Paul did not require Gentile Christians to be circumcised (15; Galatians 1-2).

(h) Paul took Silas and Timothy with him on a missionary journey after quarreling with Barnabas in Antioch (15:39-40. 16:3; Gal. 2:13; 1 Thess. 1:1).

(i) Paul established churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth and Ephesus (16-19; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:2; 3:1 and the other Pauline letters), was treated shamefully in Philippi and met with opposition in Thessalonica (16:22; 17:5; 1 Thess. 2:2).

(j) Paul supported himself financially by working with his own hands (18:3; 20:33-35; 1 Thess. 2:9; 1 Cor. 4:12; 9:18).

(k) Paul met Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth and Ephesus (18:1-3, 18; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19; Rom. 16:3).

In addition to these aspects of Paul's own biography, details about other persons in Acts are sometimes confirmed by information in Paul's letters:

e.g., the ministry of Apollos in Ephesus and Corinth (18:24-28; 1 Cor. 16:12) and the role of James in leading the Jerusalem church (15; 20; 21:17-26; Gal. 2:9).

Though this list is impressive, some scholars note minor discrepancies with regard to these matters. In his letters, Paul speaks of his life as a Pharisee in the past tense (Gal. 1:13-14; Phil. 3:4-8), but in Acts Paul claims he still is a Pharisee (22:3; 23:6). In 2 Cor. 11:32-33, Paul describes the basket episode in Damascus as an escape from "the governor under King Aretas," whereas Acts 9:23-25 describes it as an escape from "the Jews." The reason for the quarrel between Paul and Barnabas given in Acts 15:36-40 is quite different from that offered by Paul in Gal. 2:11-13. Still, it can be said that, in many ways, Luke's account of Paul's life can be confirmed by information provided by Paul's own epistles.

Material that is Unparalleled

The vast majority of information offered in the book of Acts is neither confirmed nor contested by other sources. Scholars disagree widely as to how to regard this material with respect to historicity. F. F. Bruce says that since Luke usually gets the facts straight in those instances where he can be checked, he has earned "the right to be treated as a reliable informant on matters...not corroborated elsewhere."²³ Likewise, I. H. Marshall thinks that "a writer who is careful to get the background right may be expected to tell a reliable story as well."²⁴ Hans Conzelmann, however, objects to this reasoning, according to what he calls his "Karl May rule." An accurate description of milieu, Conzelmann says, "proves nothing at all relative to the historicity or 'exactness' of the events told."²⁵ For on that basis, "one can prove even the historicity of the stories of Karl May" (a German novelist who wrote about American Indian culture).²⁶ Similarly, Henry Cadbury admits that what we read in Acts generally conforms to what we know of the history and culture of the first-century world, but he also notes that Greek and Latin novels are often as full of accurate and local contemporary color as are historical writings.²⁷

The unparalleled material in Acts is of different types. First, as Gerhard Krodel points out, Luke offers a great deal of incidental information that is otherwise unknown to us.²⁸ Outside of Acts, we would never have heard of Matthias (1:23-26), Aeneas (9:33), Tabitha (9:36), Agabus (11:28; 21:10), Rhoda (12:13), Lydia (16:4), Jason (17:7), Damaris (17:34), or of the three different persons named Ananias (5:1; 9:10; 23:2). Acts also offers detailed information regarding the times and places for Paul's visits to various locations. Although it is impossible to verify such details, many scholars find the concrete nature of the information convincing in itself. It is not the sort of material a writer would invent. In addition, Krodel notes that such details are not found everywhere. The account of Paul's first missionary journey (13-14) lacks the precise references that are found later in the "we" sections. This indicates that Luke only cited names and places "when he knew them."

Another type of unparalleled material in Acts involves information that is similar to but more specific than information found elsewhere. Paul claims to belong to the tribe of Benjamin (Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5); Acts says his given name was "Saul" (7:58), the name of the most illustrious member of that tribe. Paul says he was trained as a Pharisee (Phil. 3:5; Gal. 1:14); Acts says his teacher was Gamaliel, one of the greatest Pharisees of the day (22:3). Paul says he persecuted the church violently (Gal. 1:13); Acts says he had Christians put to death (22:4; 26:10). Paul speaks of the gospel as the power of God for salvation "to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16); Acts depicts Paul as always preaching first to Jews in synagogues and only subsequently turning to Gentiles (13:44-46; 28:23-28). Some scholars regard these statements in Acts as partially verified by the information in Paul's letters and, therefore, as likely to be accurate.²⁹ Others, however, suspect that Luke is developing traditions that he knew only in vague or fragmentary form: He "spins off" new details and even entire stories from bits and pieces of data available to him.³⁰

A third type of unparalleled material in Acts includes accounts that strike many scholars as inherently nonhistorical, such as tales that are overly literary, adventurous or miraculous. Ernst Haenchen notes Luke's dramatic technique of "scene writing." When he is "untrammelled by tradition," he enjoys a freedom that we would grant only to the historical novel.³¹ A good example is the extended account of Paul's sea voyage and shipwreck in Acts 27-28. Although the details of the route may be historical, and although Paul himself says in 2 Cor. 11:25 that he was shipwrecked (three times!), the story told here may be a literary construction. Even F. F. Bruce, who thinks it is based on the author's personal recollection, admits that the form of the story goes back to Homer's *Odyssey* with some dependence on the Old Testament voyage of Jonah.³² As for stories involving the miraculous, judgments regarding historicity usually depend on the predispositions of the interpreter.³³ Lüdemann, we have seen, excludes the supernatural from historical consideration outright.³⁴ Many scholars regard the miracle stories in Acts as a crude attempt to represent the power of the Spirit as operative in the apostles. Others see the miracle tales as Lukan spin-offs of statements like that of Paul in 2 Cor. 12:12. Some, of course, have no a priori reason to doubt that such events happened just as Luke describes them.

In conclusion, material that is unparalleled in Acts is generally tested by scholars to determine its probable historicity. Concrete detail is usually rated high while especially literary accounts tend to be rated low. Partial correspondence with other traditions is interpreted positively by some scholars but negatively by others. The overriding consideration for evaluating the historicity of unparalleled material, however, is the question of whether the material appears to serve Luke's own agenda. If it does, its historicity is immediately suspect. On this basis, the identification of Paul as being from Tarsus (21:39; 22:3) is usually accepted as historical for it serves no redactional purpose. The identification of Paul as a Roman citizen (16:37-

39; 22:25-29) is more likely to be questioned, since this serves Luke's purpose of furthering peaceful relations between Christians and Rome.³⁵

Material in Tension with Other Sources

Some material in Acts appears to contradict what is expressed elsewhere, such as in Paul's epistles. An obvious example of such a contradiction can be seen by comparing Paul's own account of his visits to Jerusalem in Galatians 1-2 with that offered by Luke in Acts 9, 11 and 15.³⁶ Paul insists in Galatians 1:15-24 that he did not visit Jerusalem until three years after his "call" (conversion) and that he saw no apostles except Peter and James at that time. He was not "known by sight to the churches in Judea" and he did not return to Jerusalem for fourteen years (2:1). This is a matter of great importance for Paul, probably because he wants to make it clear that his ministry was not in any way authorized by or under the authority of the apostles in Jerusalem. He swears, "in what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!" In Acts, however, Paul is presented to the apostles by Barnabas (9:27). He goes "in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly" (9:28-29). He appears to have a close relationship with the Christians there, and they appear to play some role in determining his movements. They "bring" him to Caesarea and "send" him to Tarsus (9:30).

Even greater discrepancies become apparent when Paul's account of a later meeting with the apostles in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-10) is compared with Luke's account in Acts 15:1-35. To begin with, Paul insists that this is only his second visit to the city, but according to Acts it would be his third (11:30; 12:25). In any case, both Galatians and Acts describe the purpose of the meeting as being to settle the question of whether Gentile converts must be expected to obey the law of Moses. In Galatians, Paul reports that "nothing was added" and that he was encouraged to continue his law-free mission to Gentiles. In Acts, however, the council decrees that Gentiles must keep certain requirements and Paul is given the task of promulgating these restrictions.

Numerous theories have been proposed to resolve these tensions.³⁷ Colin Hemer favors a popular view suggesting that Galatians 2 and Acts 15 do not refer to the same event—the council described in Acts 15 took place at a later period, after the letter to the Galatians had been written.³⁸ Martin Hengel points to evidence for such dating in what appears to be a variant tradition incorporated into the book of Acts itself. In Acts 21:25 Luke portrays Paul being told about the decree in a way that implies he has not heard of it before.³⁹ Whatever reconstruction is given, however, historical problems remain. F. F. Bruce, who has a very high regard for the historical accuracy of Acts, decides that the accounts in Galatians and those in Acts are "impossible to harmonize."⁴⁰ Paul Achtemeier regards these discrepancies as evidence that the purpose of Acts and its value for us today do not lie in its detailed historical accuracy but in its theological points.⁴¹

Philipp Vielhauer alleges that Luke misrepresents Paul not only biographically but also theologically.⁴² For example, in the Areopagus speech of Acts 17:22-31, Paul is represented as espousing a friendly attitude toward pagan religion and as proclaiming the gospel in terms derived from Stoic philosophy. He does not mention the cross but appeals to his Greek audience with words of human wisdom. The real Paul, Vielhauer insists, would have preached Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1:22-24). Here, the gospel is forsaken for "natural theology." As Albert Schweitzer puts it, the Pauline emphasis on being in Christ by grace is replaced by a pagan emphasis on being in God by nature.⁴³

Bertil Gärtner, however, argues that the Areopagus speech is not incompatible with Pauline theology.⁴⁴ Paul is merely represented as seeking points of contact in order to gain a hearing. The basic ideas of this speech are the same as those presented in Romans 1-3, the essential difference being that in Romans Paul is writing to Christians and in Acts he is addressing pagans.

Vielhauer also objects to Luke's representation of Paul's attitude toward the law. The historical Paul, Vielhauer says, waged polemic against the law, declaring that Christ was the "end of the law" (Rom. 10:4). But in Acts, Luke portrays Paul as utterly loyal to the law. The Paul who wrote in Galatians, "If you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you" (5:2) is actually described in Acts as circumcising Timothy (16:3). Gasque, however, defends the Lukan portrait.⁴⁵ Paul was not anti-law, but anti-legalism. The argument in Galatians is directed toward persons who teach circumcision as necessary for salvation.

Vielhauer makes two further objections to the Lukan portrait of Paul's theology. With regard to Christology, Paul in Acts does not make reference to either the preexistence of Christ or to the saving effect of Jesus' death on the cross (except for 20:28). And, finally, with regard to eschatology, Paul is not presented in Acts as one who lives in the imminent expectation of the end. Gasque accepts these points as essentially valid, but thinks them less devastating to the historical veracity of Luke's narrative than Vielhauer imagines. Acts presents only a few representative sermons of Paul, not an exhaustive account of his theology. The fact that he omits certain major motifs should not call into question the accuracy of what he does present.

F. F. Bruce approaches the differences between Paul in his own letters and Paul in Acts from another perspective.⁴⁶ In Acts, Bruce says, Paul is consistently depicted as more adaptable than he appears to be in his letters. In the Areopagus speech he strives to be accommodating to Greeks, and in circumcising Timothy he strives to be accommodating to Jews. This tendency appears somewhat exaggerated in Acts, but Paul himself does say in 1 Corinthians that he has become all things to all people: "To those under the law, I became as one under the law...that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law, I became as one outside the law...that I might win those outside the law" (9:19-22). So the Lukan concept of an adaptable Paul is not entirely without warrant.

Like Gasque, Bruce also stresses that the Lukan Paul is distinctive mainly due to omissions. The quarrel with Peter in Antioch (Gal. 2:11-14) is absent here, as is any reference to the painful relations Paul had with the church in Corinth. Acts "tends to pass over fundamental controversies in silence and to emphasize the things that make for peace."

Bruce also explains the distinctive portrait of Paul in Acts with reference to two other points. First, echoing Gärtner, Bruce stresses that letters addressed to Christians should not be expected to represent Paul in the same way as speeches addressed to unbelievers. The differences in genre and audience are significant. Only once in Acts is Paul described as speaking to Christians (20:18-35) and, notably, it is in this address that his words come closest to what we expect of him in the epistles. He speaks of faith and grace (20:21, 24, 32) and he refers (only here) to the saving efficacy of Christ's death (20:28).

A second point Bruce makes is that allowance should be made for the differences between first-party and third-party perspectives when comparing the Paul of the epistles and the Paul of Acts. Likewise, I. H. Marshall notes, "a man's self-portrait will not necessarily agree with the impression of him received by other people."⁴⁷

In consideration of points like these, Jacob Jervell has challenged the basic tendency in New Testament studies to evaluate Acts from the perspective of Paul's epistles but not to make judgments the other way around.⁴⁸ Acts offers us a glimpse of an otherwise "unknown Paul." In the epistles, Paul is always arguing or dealing with the particular questions or problems of a specific church. "What about the unpolemical Paul?" Jervell asks. "What about all those aspects of his preaching that nobody objected to?" If there is one thing Paul's letters make clear, it is that Paul was a complex personality. Luke's view of Paul is admittedly one-sided, but that does not mean it is incorrect. Luke records a side of Paul that Paul himself sometimes displayed—a Jewish, law-observant Paul who is also a visionary, charismatic preacher, healer and miracle worker. In short, "that which lies in the shadow in Paul's letters Luke has placed in the sun." The picture of Paul in Acts is a completion, a filling-up of what we have in the epistles. In order to get at the historical Paul, we cannot do without Acts.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

We have observed that, although today the book of Acts is studied primarily for its theology, interest in reading it as history is still alive and well. Even scholars who view Acts as a history book, however, differ in their methodological approaches to evaluating the history it contains. These differences are often a product of varying views concerning matters such as authorship and sources. A scholar who believes the author of Acts was a companion of Paul and, so, an eyewitness to some of the events will naturally treat the book differently than scholars who cannot accept this.

Scholars also reach different conclusions regarding the reliability of what is reported in Acts. Lüdemann believes the book contains numerous facts, but is frequently mistaken in its chronology. Krodel thinks Luke is good on detail but sometimes misses the big picture. Bruce and Gasque admit that Luke leaves out much that is significant, but stress the accuracy of what is reported.

In 1978, A. J. Mattill discerned three contemporary views among scholars as to the use of Acts as a source for the study of Paul.⁴⁹ Some scholars downplay discrepancies and argue that the Paul of Acts is basically consistent with the Paul of the epistles; some contend that both the epistles and Acts present one-sided views of Paul and that both are therefore necessary for historical completeness; some insist that Acts is unreliable and must be constantly tested and corrected by the epistles. We have seen examples of all three of these views.

Mattill also noted what he believed was a tendency for scholars who espoused the first and the third views cautiously to accept the second. In other words, he believed there was increasing acceptance of the idea that Acts offers important, though incomplete, information of a historical nature. Jacob Jervell is one scholar we have noted who has made such a move.

Finally, we should note that the subject of this article has been finding history in Acts, not placing Acts in history.⁵⁰ Space does not permit discussion of the numerous archeological⁵¹ and social-historical⁵² works that enhance our knowledge of the world in which Luke's story of the Early Church transpires.

Notes

1. I. H. Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 17.
2. I. H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).
3. Richard I. Pervo, *Profit With Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).
4. W. C. van Unnik, "Luke's Second Book and the Rules of Hellenistic Historiography," in *Les Actes des Apôtres: Traditions, rédaction, théologie*, ed. J. Kremer, BETL (Gembloux, Belgium: Duculot, 1979), 48:37-60, esp. p. 41.
5. Bertil Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1955), pp. 7-36.
6. Eckhardt Plümacher, *Lukas als hellenistischer Schriftsteller: Studien zur Apostelgeschichte*, SUNT, vol. 9 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972).
7. Van Unnik, "Luke's Second Book."
8. Ernst Haenchen, "The Book of Acts as Source Material for the History of Earliest Christianity," in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. L. Keck and J. Martyn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980; original, 1966), pp. 258-278.

9. Van Unnik, "Luke's Second Book," pp. 50-51. Cf. Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1989), pp. 63-100.
10. C. K. Barrett, *Luke the Historian in Recent Study* (London: Epworth Press, 1961), pp. 24-25.
11. Gerd Lüdemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989; German original, 1987).
12. Since Martin Dibelius, "Style Criticism of the Book of Acts," in *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956; German original, 1923), pp. 1-25. But see Beverly R. Gaventa's objections in "Toward a Theology of Acts: Reading and Rereading," *Int* 42(1988): 146-157.
13. Richard Jeske, "Luke and Paul on the Apostle Paul," *CurTM* 4 (1977): 28-38, esp. 29.
14. Günther Bornkamm, *Paul* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971; German original, 1969), xxi.
15. Hemer, *Book of Acts*.
16. Adrian N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 189. Cf. F. F. Bruce, "The Acts of the Apostles: Historical Record or Theological Reconstruction?" in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* 11/25, ed. W. Haase (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985), pp. 2576-2577.
17. Gordon Hewart, "Presidential Address," *Proceedings of the Classical Association* 24 (1927): 27. Cf. Bruce, "Historical Record," p. 2576.
18. Harry W. Tajra, *The Trial of St. Paul: A Juridical Exegesis of the Second Half of the Acts of the Apostles*, WUNT, vol. 35 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1989).
19. Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 39.
20. See also Hemer, *Book of Acts*, pp. 101-220.
21. W. Ward Gasque, "The Book of Acts and History," in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd*, ed. R. Guelich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), pp. 54-72, esp. 55.
22. Gerhard Krodel, *Acts, Proclamation Commentaries* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), pp. 103-104.
23. F. F. Bruce, "Historical Record," pp. 2570-2603, esp. 2578.
24. Marshall, *Historian and Theologian*, p. 69.
25. Hans Conzelmann and Andreas Lindemann, *Interpreting the New Testament, An Introduction to the Principles and Methods of New Testament Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988; German original, 1985), p. 36.
26. Hans Conzelmann, "Review of W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles*," *Erasmus* 28 (1976): 65-68, esp. 68.
27. Henry J. Cadbury, *The Book of Acts in History* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1955), p. 120.
28. Krodel, *Acts*, pp. 104-108.
29. F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, NICNT, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).
30. Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*. Cf. A. J. Mattill, "The Value of Acts as a Source for the Study of Paul," in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts*, ed. C. Talbert (Danville, VA: Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, 1978), pp. 99-111, esp. 87-95.
31. Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, 14th ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), p. 107.

32. Bruce, "Historical Record," p. 2578.
33. See Mattill, "Value of Acts."
34. Lüdemann, *Early Christianity*.
35. But Lüdemann accepts it as historical (*ibid.*, pp. 240-241).
36. Krodel, *Acts*, pp. 95-102; Paul J. Achtemeier, *The Quest for Unity in the New Testament Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).
37. Charles H. Talbert lists seven in "Again: Paul's Visits to Jerusalem," *NovT* (1967): pp. 26-40, esp. 26, n. 3.
38. Hemer, *Book of Acts*, pp. 261-307.
39. Hengel, *Acts*, p. 117.
40. Bruce, "Historical Record," p. 2580. He thinks the private meeting referred to in Gal. 2:1-2 probably matches the visit in Acts 11:30 rather than that in Acts 15, but even so Gal. 1:18-20 does not square with Acts 9:26-29.
41. Achtemeier, *Quest for Unity*, p. 75.
42. Philipp Vielhauer, "On the 'Paulinism' of Acts," in *Studies*, ed. Keck and Martyn, pp. 33-50.
43. Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (New York: Macmillan, 1955; German original, 1930), p. 6. Cf. Bruce, "Historical Record," p. 2586.
44. Gärtner, *Areopagus Speech*.
45. Gasque, "Book of Acts," 64; Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 2d ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), p. 288.
46. Bruce, "Historical Record," pp. 2579-2582.
47. Marshall, *Historian and Theologian*, p. 75.
48. Jacob Jervell, *The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), pp. 13-25, 52-95. Hemer likewise considers the preference scholars give to information provided by Paul over that provided in Acts to be based on an unwarranted assumption (*Book of Acts*, p. 24).
49. Mattill, "Value of Acts."
50. The distinction between the two is stressed by Henry J. Cadbury in *The Book of Acts in History*, p. 3.
51. See especially Jack Finegan, *The Archaeology of the New Testament: The Mediterranean World of the Early Christian Apostles* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1981); Edwin Yamauchi, *The Archaeology of the New Testament Cities in Western Asia Minor* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980).
52. See especially Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The New Testament and Its Social Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986).

No End Without the Means: John Wesley and the Sacraments

OLE E. BORGEN

The teachings of John Wesley on the sacraments, their presuppositions, their content and consequences, are so extensive that large studies and several books would be necessary for a truly exhaustive presentation of his thought in this area. Consequently, this essay will merely survey the topic, lifting up some of the main points.¹ It is hoped that, in spite of these limitations, it will reveal some of Wesley's rich theology and whet the appetite for further Wesley studies.

Wesley has often been accused of being inconsistent, fragmentary and even confused in his theological thinking. But a thorough study of his works reveals a different picture. His theology, and thus also his sacramental theology, is unitive and systematic and not incidental and disconnected. He has one unified doctrine of the sacraments, comprising baptism and the Lord's Supper, which forms an integral part of the greater unitive structure of his understanding of the *ordo salutis*. The theological and practical importance of the sacraments for John Wesley lies in their functions. Within the framework of the *ordo salutis* they function as (1) effective signs, (2) effective means of grace and (3) effective pledges of glory to come, conjoined with the added aspect of sacrifice.²

Wesley operates with a threefold doctrine of sin: first, original sin, involving guilt and loss of the image of God; second, involuntary sin, sins of infirmity, ignorance and error; third, actual willful sin against a known law (including the "law of love"), which in essence is a rebellion against God.

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All of these need the atonement of Christ, but man is only responsible and condemned for the latter, unless repented of and forgiven. Wesley wrote, "By sin I mean a *voluntary transgression of a known law*" and "...all guilt must suppose some concurrence of the will."³ Thus, it is clear that the Atonement plays an essential and decisive role in Wesley's understanding of God's saving work for man. "...Every man needs the blood of the atonement, or he could not stand before God."⁴ Christ is the author and efficient cause of all our salvation, and the sole meritorious cause both of our justification and sanctification.⁵ But Christ's suffering and atonement is not just an event which happened once at a certain point in history. Its virtue extends backward as well as forward in covering all sins of the past as well as of the future. His work still goes on; as Christ intercedes before the Father, the Holy Spirit continuously and continually applies all the benefits of the Atonement to one's life. Thus, in Wesley's theology of the *ordo salutis*, the Atonement is always presupposed, always the foundation, always the spring of all God's grace, all actualized by the power of the Holy Spirit. By virtue of the Atonement, prevenient grace (which includes "natural conscience") is given to all.⁶ By virtue of the same Atonement, the believer gradually grows in holiness until perfected in love. And by virtue of this Atonement all sins of omission, all mistakes and shortcomings, are covered until, on the basis of the same atoning work of Christ, one shall be received in glory.⁷ Such is the basis of all grace, even the grace conveyed through the means of grace, including the sacraments.

As already pointed out, the Holy Spirit's function as agent bringing God's grace to persons is central in Wesley's thought.

The author of faith and salvation is God alone. It is he that works in us both to will and to do. He is the sole Giver of every good gift and the sole Author of every good work. There is no more of power than of merit in man; but as all merit is in the Son of God, in what he has done and suffered for us, so all power is in the Spirit of God....But however it be expressed, it is certain all true faith, and the whole work of salvation, every good thought, word, and work, is altogether by the operation of the Spirit of God.⁸

Likewise, whenever Wesley speaks of the means of grace, and the sacraments in particular, he unhesitatingly affirms that whatever is, or becomes, or happens in, with, or through any means whatever, or any action or words connected therewith, is done by God through His Holy Spirit:

Settle this in your heart, that the *opus operatum*, the mere *work done*, profiteth nothing; that there is no *power* to save, but in the Spirit of God, no *merit*, but in the blood of Christ, that, consequently, even what God ordains, conveys no grace to the soul, if you trust not in him alone.⁹

Wesley would not accept any automatic or *ex opere operato* effect of any means or sacraments. At the same time he rejects the opposite error of a "stillness" doctrine. For him there exists no difference between "immediate" and "mediate" in God's economy of salvation: "...Every Christian grace, is properly supernatural, is an *immediate* gift of God, which He commonly gives in the use of such means as He hath ordained."¹⁰ Whatever means or instrument God employs, He is still active in an immediate and direct way. Thus Wesley avoids the trap of "quietistic spiritualism." At the same time he counteracts any overemphasis on the means as such. They are means only when God employs them, and we use them because He has promised to use them as channels for His grace. Thus, Wesley's high doctrine of the means of grace and the sacraments is actually a consequence of his full and rich doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and is not based upon the nature of the sacraments as such.

Wesley often turns to the doctrinal statements and formulations of the Church of England for his definitions. When faced with the question of a definition of a sacrament, he turns to the Church of England *Catechism* and directly adopts its Augustinian distinction of *signum* (the sign) and *res* (the thing signified) "...Our own Church...directs us to bless God both for the means of grace and hope of glory; and teaches us, that a sacrament is 'an outward sign of inward grace, and means whereby we receive the same.'"¹¹ Wesley's Article 16 (Church of England Article 25) expresses the same in a little more detail:

Sacraments ordained of Christ, are not only badges or tokens of Christian Men's Profession; but rather they are certain Signs of Grace, and God's good Will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him.¹²

The definition Wesley adopts here clearly demands of a sign that it be "outward" and "visible," and ordained by Christ. Christ ordained two sacraments with certain signs suitable for the purpose, and only these are to be considered sacraments. Because of our weaknesses, infirmities and inability to understand the "heavenly and spiritual," God has ordained outward and visible signs to aid us in overcoming these weaknesses.¹³ The natural qualities of the significative elements reveal a definite parallelism or analogical relationship with the thing signified. The cleansing and purifying qualities of water, the matter of baptism, symbolize analogically the inward washing of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ Likewise, as bread and wine nourish our bodies, so the partakers of the Lord's Supper will be fed with the body and blood of Christ.¹⁵

The second part of the sacrament is the thing signified, the "inward and spiritual grace," namely, Jesus Christ and all His benefits. More specifically, in baptism it is "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness."¹⁶

Baptism is a means of grace. Wesley rejects the idea of making baptism only "a sign of profession and mark of difference" (Wesley's Article 17) and refuses to accept a reductionism which makes baptism purely a symbolic act. The thing signified in the Lord's Supper is the "food of our souls...that Inward Grace, which is the Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the Faithful in the Lord's Supper."¹⁷ The inward grace of the Lord's Supper is:

His bleeding Love and Mercy
His all-redeeming Passion,
Who here displays
And gives the Grace
Which brings us Our Salvation.¹⁸

However, the sign and the thing signified are not identical or the same. "Baptism is not the new birth: They are not one and the same thing....There may sometimes be the outward sign, where there is not the inward grace....The outward sign is no more a part of the inward grace than the body is a part of the soul."¹⁹ Wesley allows for no confusion of the *signum* with the *res*. The one is outward, material and visible; the other is inward, spiritual and invisible. This is a basic Protestant stand, which can be traced back beyond the Reformers to Augustine himself.²⁰ Neither must the sign be separated from the thing signified. They are not identical but distinct, and yet not separated. There is a carrying over from one to the other, in baptism as well as in the Lord's Supper. Thus both parts are required.²¹

The problems of transubstantiation and consubstantiation are, of course, relevant in this connection. Wesley is consistent and clear at this point. In his Article 18 (taken verbatim from Article 28 of the Thirty-nine Articles) he asserts, "Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by holy writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions."²² Likewise, he also rejects the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation and ubiquity, which require a communicating of the properties of the divine nature to the human.²³ Christ is present in the sacrament in His *divinity*, applying the merits of the great Atonement to each true believer. Wesley holds a view of the "Real Presence" of Christ, which may properly be called "dynamic" or "Living Presence." Where God acts, there He is. The "objective presence" cannot be thought of as the static presence of an object, but rather as that of a living and acting person *working* through the means.²⁴

The sacraments are thus effective when God acts through the Holy Spirit. Augustine, followed by Luther and Calvin, calls the sacraments "visible words," and claims the "word" to be constitutive of a sacrament, thus making it valid. Wesley never uses the term "visible word" and refuses to apply it to the sacraments. They must not be subsumed under the word. For

Wesley the Lord's Supper is the foremost of the means of grace.²⁵ The validity of the sacraments are thus not constituted by the "word," although the word is a part of the sacramental celebration. Formal validity is, for Wesley, dependent upon three factors. First, the proper material elements (water, bread and wine) must be employed. Second, baptism shall be administered in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (For the Lord's Supper the pronouncing of Christ's words of institution together with an invocation are required.) Third, an ordained minister is necessary: "...Our Lord gave this commission only to the Apostles and their successors in the ministry."²⁶ Unordained preachers were not to take upon themselves to administer either sacrament. The Church of England allowed for lay baptism; thus, Wesley was here more strict than his church. Nevertheless, for him all of these criteria are a question of *formal* validity. They are a matter of church order, of validity in the church's eyes. But formal validity must not be confused with efficacy. The former is related to the work of persons; the latter wholly God's gracious work of salvation.

EFFECTIVE SIGN: THE ATONEMENT REMEMBERED

Wesley holds that there are three aspects to the Lord's Supper as a sacrament. He says:

THE LORD'S Supper was chiefly ordained for a sacrament, 1. To *represent* the Sufferings of CHRIST, which are *past*, whereof it is a *Memorial*; 2. To *convey* the First Fruits of the Sufferings, in *Present Graces*, whereof it is a *Means*; and 3. To assure us of *Glory to come*, whereof it is an infallible *Pledge*!²⁷

Wesley makes an important contribution to sacramental thought in his conception of the Lord's Supper as a memorial. The concept "memorial" is nothing new in sacramental theology. It has largely been connected with a "memorialist" conception of the Lord's Supper and, consequently, with a doctrine of what is very aptly called "real absence."

On the other hand, the "memorial" Wesley presents is a dynamic drama of worship in which both the believer and the Holy Spirit are actively involved. The memorial has, of course, a direct connection with "remember," in the sense of "calling to mind." But Wesley proceeds beyond the mere level of memory. He does not stop at the level of static signification, but operates with the existential and personal question of meaning. The meaning of the sacrament is the setting before our eyes Christ's death and suffering, and the fact that He sacrificed Himself to atone for our sins. That is, the Lord's Supper *shows forth* Christ's death. God appointed the sacrament, and it was His express design to *revive* His *sufferings* and expose them to *all our senses* as if they were present now. Not only our minds or memories are involved, but all our senses as well.

Thus the sacrament as a memorial involves a total and vital worship experience which is expressed in what is called the three degrees of devotion

or worship.²⁸ In the first stage, the worshiper begins by meditating upon "the Great and dreadful Passages" of Scripture which the ordinance sets before him. When looking at the consecrated elements he says in his heart, "...I observe on this Altar somewhat very like the sacrifice of my Saviour." Employing the powerful means of analogy and similitude, the worshiper, with his whole being, empathically enters into the sufferings of Christ. Thus the Bread of Life was broken. "My LORD and my GOD, I behold in this Bread, made of Corn that was cut down, beaten, ground and bruised by Men, all the heavy Blow and Plagues and Pains; which thou didst suffer from thy Murderers."²⁹ But the path of analogy leads further. The whole drama of the Atonement enters in. "I behold in this Bread dried up and baked with Fire, the fiery Wrath which thou didst suffer from above! My GOD, my GOD, why hast thou forsaken him?"³⁰ Quoting Augustine, Wesley declares, "...this Sacrament duly received, makes the thing which it represents, as really present for our Use, as if it were newly done."³¹ Having thus existentially appropriated the message conveyed analogically through the consecrated elements, the worshiper naturally enters the second stage. "Ought he not also to reverence and adore, when he looks toward that Good Hand, which has appointed for the Use of the Church, the Memorial of these great Things?"³² The eye of meditation and worship penetrates beyond the elements to the giver of all mercy, God himself. The first two "degrees of devotion" fit, of course, perfectly into a memorialist conception of the sacrament. The memorialist operates exactly within the framework of meditation, analogy and attitudes of praise and prayer. However, the memorialist is unable to follow Wesley into the third and essential stage. It is here that we meet with what I call Wesley's doctrine of the "Eternal Now." The main intention of Christ herein, was not the bare *remembrance* of His Passion; but over and above, to *invite* us to His sacrifice, to a "Soul-transporting Feast":

Oh what a Soul-transporting Feast
doth this Communion yield!
Remembering here thy Passion past
We with thy Love are filled.³³

Christ invites us to His sacrifice, but He alone can give the "dreadful Power":

PRINCE of Life, for Sinners slain,
Grant us Fellowship with Thee,
Fain we would partake thy Pain
Share thy mortal Agony,
Give us now the dreadful Power,
Now bring back thy dying Hour!

Surely now the Prayer He hears:
Faith presents the Crucified!
Lo! the wounded Lamb appears
Pierc'd his Feet, his Hands, his Side,
Hangs our Hope on yonder Tree,
Hangs, and bleeds to Death for me!³⁴

The whole economy of salvation is brought to bear upon this awesome event; looking with the eyes of faith, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the worshiper transcends both time and space and finds himself, as it were, at the foot of the cross, and realizes it is for *him* Christ dies. As one who has seen and experienced, Wesley cries out:

HEARTS of Stone, relent, relent,
Break by JESU Cross subdued,
See his Body mangled, rent,
Cover'd with a gore of Blood!
Sinful Soul, what hast Thou done?
Murther'd GOD's eternal Son!

Yes, your Sins have done the deed,
Drove the nails that fix Him here,
Crown'd with Thorns his sacred Head,
Pierc'd Him with the Soldier's Spear,
Made his Soul a Sacrifice;
For a sinful World He dies.³⁵

Thus, there is a two-way suspension of time and place. Christ is crucified now and here; and *my* sins drive the nails through His hands on Calvary, then and there. But, as believers repent, almost crushed under the burden of acknowledged guilt, they also realize the full importance for them now. Christ invites them to His Sacrifice "...not as done and gone many Years since, but as to Grace and Mercy, still lasting, still *new*, still the same as when it was first offer'd for us."³⁶ Actually, as Adam's sin transcends time and space and becomes mine, so the blood of the Second Adam reaches just as far. Salvation is a present reality. Until God ends all time, there is an "Eternal Now" operating in God's grand plan of salvation. No memorialist conception will satisfy one for whom this truth has become a reality. Christ Himself is present here and now to save and uphold, and His presence is as real as God is real, and, as a means, the sacrament actually conveys what it shows.

EFFECTIVE MEANS OF GRACE: THE ATONEMENT APPLIED

1. *The Means of Grace in General*

At Aldersgate Wesley experienced the truth in what Peter Böhler had told him: Salvation is a free gift of God. But he also knew that, although the life of faith is a gift of God, it is also true that God uses certain outward means as the ordinary channels of grace.

In his sermon, "The Means of Grace," Wesley clearly defines his topic. "By *Means of Grace* I understand Outward Signs, Words or Actions, ordain'd of GOD, and appointed for this End, to be the *Ordinary Channels* whereby he might convey to Men, preventing, justifying or sanctifying Grace."³⁷ The central place given the means of grace in the Church of England and, through Wesley, in the Methodist Church, is shown in Article 13, "Of the Church." Here the church is not defined in terms of its organization, hierarchy or ministry, but in terms of the means of grace: The pure Word of God must be preached, and the sacraments duly administered in a "congregation of faithful men."³⁸ The means are given as aids to those who should "wait upon God in all his ordinances." Writing to William Law, Wesley flatly rejects any quietist doctrine of an inward, purely mystical way to holiness:

This is most true that all externals of religion are in order to the renewal of our soul in righteousness and true holiness. But it is not true that the external way is one and the internal way another. *There is but one scriptural way wherein we receive inward grace—through the outward means which God hath appointed.*³⁹

Thus, the outward means are indispensable and a necessity for all who desire God's grace, because God has so ordained. But God is above all means. "He can convey his Grace, either in or out of any of the Means which he hath appointed. Perhaps he will."⁴⁰ Wesley clearly affirms the efficacy of God's ordinances. But, as mentioned above, he definitely warns of any *ex opere operato* effect:

We know there is no inherent Power, in the Words that are spoken in Prayer; in the Letter of Scripture read, the Sound thereof heard, or the Bread and Wine receiv'd in the Lord's Supper: But that it is GOD alone who is the Giver of every good Gift, the Author of all Grace.⁴¹

All means are nothing but channels or instruments in God's hand. Their only value lies in their being actually *used* by him.⁴²

There are two misconceptions concerning the place of the means of grace in God's plan of salvation, against which Wesley fought a continuous battle. One is the pitfall of "enthusiasm." He fights this problem in his own society in Fetter Lane, from which he and his brother Charles consequently felt compelled to withdraw. After that he firmly asserts, "Enthusiasts ob-

serve this. Expect no ends without the means." Another time he sadly asks, "Why are not we more holy?...Chiefly because we are enthusiasts; looking for the end without the means."⁴³ On the other hand, Wesley also attacks the opposite error of putting the means in the place of their end, of "trusting in the means."

LONG have I seem'd to serve Thee Lord,
With unavailing Pain;
Fasted, and pray'd and read Thy Word,
And heard it preach'd, in vain.

But I of *Means* have made my Boast,
Of *Means* an Idol made;
The Spirit in the Letter lost,
The substance in the Shade.

The solution for this misuse is not non-use, but the proper use:

I do the Thing thy Laws enjoin,
and then the strife give o'er:
To Thee I *then* the whole resign:
I *trust* in Means no more.⁴⁴

Wesley encouraged his people to lay stress on the "weightier matters of the Law." These matters are faith, love, mercy, holiness—that is, the *end* of the means. Without God's grace added to the means, these are useless.⁴⁵

Wesley operates with three kinds of means of grace. First, the *general* means: "How should we wait for the fulfilling of this promise? A. In universal obedience; in keeping all the commandments; in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily. These are the general means which God hath ordained for our receiving his sanctifying grace."⁴⁶

Second, there are the *prudential* means. They may vary according to the person's needs and circumstances. These means can be almost anything. Whatever is conducive to holiness and love becomes, to that extent, a means of grace. But the third kind, the *instituted* means of grace, are of the greatest importance for Wesley. For him there are five *chief* instituted means of grace: prayer, the Word, fasting, Christian conference (the Christian fellowship) and the Lord's Supper.⁴⁷

"...All who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the way of prayer." Whatever we may desire or seek from God, we must realize the absolute necessity of using prayer as a means toward this end: "Every new victory which a soul gains is the effect of a new prayer....Prayer may be said to be the breath of our spiritual life. He that lives cannot possibly cease breathing."⁴⁸ A Christian prays always, at all times, and in all places and

"with all sorts of prayer, public, private, mental, vocal."⁴⁹ There are four parts of all prayers: deprecation (pleading for forgiveness and mercy), petition (asking), intercession (praying for others) and thanksgiving. Prayer prepares and enables those who pray to receive God's blessings:

So that the end of our praying is not to inform God, as though He knew not your wants already; but rather to inform yourselves; to fix the sense of those wants more deeply in your hearts, and the sense of your continual dependence on Him who only is able to supply all your wants. It is not so much to move God, who is always more ready to give than you to ask, as to move ourselves, that you may be willing and ready to receive the good things He has prepared for you.⁵⁰

No man is under the necessity of falling from grace, but the possibility is always present. Wesley, therefore, exhorts, "Watch, that ye may pray, and pray, that ye may watch."⁵¹

The greatest efficacy of fasting, as Wesley sees it, is in connection with prayer.

And it is chiefly, as it is a help to prayer, that it has so frequently been found a means in the hand of God, of confirming and increasing, not one virtue, not chastity only...but also seriousness of spirit, earnestness, sensibility and tenderness of conscience, deadness to the world, and consequently the love of God, and every holy and heavenly affection.⁵²

Through fasting our bodies are "kept under," a spiritual strength from God is graciously bestowed and fruits of humiliation and real reformation of life will result.⁵³

Christian fellowship, as Wesley understands it, has two aspects: "Christian conference" (or "conversation") and the "assembling together." The matter of conversation is never an indifferent matter. It may tear down or build up.

That it may minister grace—Be a means of conveying more grace into their hearts. Hence we learn, what *discourse* is *corrupt*, as it were stinking in the nostrils of God; namely, all that is not *profitable*, not *edifying*, not apt to *minister grace to the hearers*.⁵⁴

The other aspect of this ordinance is the assembling together. Attending church, the public worship of God and sharing in Christian fellowship have

been shown to be essential in growing in grace. "God in answer to their prayers, builds up His children *by each other* in every good gift; nourishing and strengthening the whole 'body by that which every joint supplieth'"⁵⁵ Christian fellowship and conversation are truly efficacious means for all who desire God and His salvation.

"All who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in searching the Scriptures."⁵⁶ The Word, through the Holy Spirit, convicts of sin. Faith is given by hearing the same Word preached; and believers grow in holiness. Although private reading and meditation are important aids to a life of faith, hearing the Word preached has always remained central in Methodism. It should be preached both as law and gospel, "...duly mixing both, in every place, if not in every sermon."⁵⁷ God's Word appears as a complete means of grace, conveying severally to each person God's grace according to his needs. But this means must be used: there must be regular preaching, and the Bible used, or else faith would languish and die.

How, then, are the means related to one another? If fasting and prayer are *preparatory* (and, as such, indispensable), then God's Word (preached, heard, read and meditated upon) may be termed a convicting, converting and confirming ordinance. At Wesley's time the Lord's Supper was considered the chief and superior *confirming* ordinance. But Wesley affirms it to be a *converting* ordinance as well: "I showed at large...that the Lord's Supper was ordained by God to be a means of conveying to men either preventing, or justifying, or sanctifying grace, according to their several necessities."⁵⁸ And, finally, the "Christian fellowship" and "Conference" provide the proper environmental context within which all the other instituted means, as well as other prudential means, may be exercised.

The Word plays an important role in God's plan of salvation. But for Wesley, the Lord's Supper always remains the means of grace *par excellence*. Such conceptions seem only natural when it is remembered that, in a service of the Lord's Supper, *all* instituted means are involved: The Word of God is read, preached and meditated upon; prayers of several kinds are central to the whole sacrament; there issues communion and fellowship with God and fellow worshippers, all woven together into a mighty symphony of blessings:

This is the richest Legacy,
Thou hast on Man bestow'd
Here chiefly, LORD, we feed on Thee,
And drink thy precious Blood.

Here all thy Blessings we receive,
Here all thy Gifts are given;
To those that would in Thee believe,
Pardon, and Grace, and Heaven.⁵⁹

2. *Baptism*

By water, then, *as a means*, the water of baptism, we are regenerated or born again; whence it is also called by the Apostle, 'the washing of regeneration.' Our Church therefore ascribes no greater virtue to baptism than Christ himself has done.⁶⁰

Baptism, therefore, serves the same function as the other instituted means of grace. God has so ordained that through this ordinance His grace is channeled to the baptizand according to that person's state and needs. It parallels closely the various aspects of the Lord's Supper, with the main distinction that baptism is initiatory; its function is to *commence* what the Lord's Supper (with other means of grace) is basically ordained to *preserve* and *develop*—a life in faith and holiness. While the other means are used by God as converting as well as confirming ordinances, the task of baptism is to be the starting point on the road to salvation. We are obliged to make use of baptism, to which God has tied us, although He is free to bestow His grace with or without means. "Indeed," Wesley admits, "where it cannot be had, the case is different, but extraordinary cases do not make void a standing rule."⁶¹

In Wesley's teaching on the way of salvation, the doctrine of total corruption is a necessary presupposition for God's grace:

*This then, is the foundation of the new birth,—the entire corruption of our nature. Hence it is that being born in sin, we must be 'born again.' Hence every one that is born of a woman must be born of the Spirit of God.*⁶²

So far Wesley follows the Calvinist position. That the guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to all, he allows. "But," he asserts, "that any one will be damned for this alone, I allow not, till you show me where it is written."

No dire decree of thine did seal
or fix th' unalterable doom;
Consign my unborn soul to hell,
Or damn me from my mother's womb.

"And none ever was or can be a loser but *by his own choice*."⁶³ By virtue of Christ's atonement, prevenient grace is given to all.⁶⁴ Thus no person is lost because grace has not been received, but because the grace received has not been used.

But all persons sin and stand guilty and condemned before God. They need forgiveness and finding favor with God, that is, justifying grace:

It is true the Second Adam hath found a remedy for the disease which came upon all by the offence of the first. But the *benefit of this* is to be *received* through the *means which he hath appointed*; through baptism in *particular* which is the *ordinary means* he hath appointed for that purpose and to which God hath tied us, though he may not have tied himself.⁶⁵

That is, as Wesley sees it, baptism, generally, in an *ordinary* way, is necessary to salvation, but not in the *absolute* sense: "I hold nothing to be (strictly speaking) necessary to salvation but the mind which was in Christ."⁶⁶

But Wesley's conception of baptismal grace consequently includes also the second "grand branch of salvation," namely, sanctification, here expressed in terms of its inception, the New Birth. The New Birth implies a radical, inward change effectuated by the workings of the Holy Spirit. Wesley states, "By water then, as a *means*, the *water of baptism*, we are *regenerated or born again*; whence it is also called by the Apostle, 'the washing of regeneration'! Our Church [of England] ascribes no greater virtue to baptism than Christ himself has done."⁶⁷ He goes on to clarify what he means, in order to prevent a splitting up of the sacrament into its two parts by emphasizing the one or the other: "Nor does she ascribe it to the outward washing, but to the inward grace, which added thereto, makes it a sacrament."⁶⁸ The Spirit brings the cleansing of the soul, and effectuates the New Birth. Thus the two great parts of salvation, justification and the New Birth, are held out as the major benefits conveyed in baptism. Baptism is the "gate" into the entering seal of the covenant.

"By baptism we are admitted into the Church, and consequently made members of Christ, its Head. The Jews were admitted into the Church by circumcision, so are the Christians by baptism."⁶⁹ This does not only mean becoming a member of the church as an institution. It involves a union with Christ:

For 'as many as are baptized into Christ,' in his name, 'have' thereby 'put on Christ' (Gal. 3:27); that is, are mystically united to Christ, and made one with him. 'For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body,' (1 Cor. 12:13) namely, the Church, 'the body of Christ' (Eph. 4:12).⁷⁰

Thus, although baptism admits into the visible and organizational church as well as the Church as the mystical body of Christ, nevertheless, it is possible to be a member of the former and not of the latter, because membership in the mystical body is not a formal, but a spiritual matter. As long as a person is one with this root, he will draw spiritual life from it.

"The Baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church."⁷¹ With this simple sentence Wesley affirms his preference for infant baptism. In or-

der to show that infants are proper subjects of baptism, he proposes to "...lay down the grounds of infant baptism, taken from Scripture, reason, and primitive, universal practice."⁷² He argues on several levels—first on the basis of the infant's need: "If infants are guilty of original sin, then they are proper subjects of baptism; seeing in the ordinary way, they cannot be saved, unless this be washed away by baptism."⁷³

Second, infants ought to come to Christ, be admitted into the church, and dedicated to God. Wesley understands this aspect of baptism to include the parents' willingness to give their child to God by bringing the child to be baptized, as well as their taking a twofold vow: In behalf of the child they promise to take up the obligation as well as the privileges of the covenant; and in their own behalf they promise to teach the child the ways of the Lord.⁷⁴ Modern Methodism has, by and large, watered down Wesley's rich sacramental thought. Often only the aspect of dedication is left of his teachings on baptism, and sometimes not even that.

Wesley next argues from apostolic practice. There are no explicit examples in Scripture of baptism of infants, but, Wesley argues, if infants were to be excluded from baptism, Jesus must have expressly forbidden them. He also argues on the basis of probabilities: "*She was baptized, and her family—Who can believe that in so many families there was no infant? or that the Jews, who were so long accustomed to circumcise their children, would not now devote them to God by baptism?*"⁷⁵ Wesley also refers to several Church Fathers, and continues, "...we may safely conclude, it was handed down from the Apostles, who best knew the mind of Christ."⁷⁶

But Wesley's main argument in support of baptizing infants is based upon the continuity of the covenant of grace established with Abraham. Baptism is now the "circumcision of Christ" and the New Testament seal of the covenant. He asserts, "Now, if infants were capable of being circumcised, notwithstanding that repentance and faith were to go before circumcision in grown persons, they are just as capable of being baptized; notwithstanding that repentance and faith are, in grown persons, to go before baptism....They may be saved, and may be baptized too, notwithstanding they are not Believers."⁷⁷

It is clear that Wesley accepts a doctrine of New Birth through the means of baptism, and that this suffices for those who die in infancy. This grace may properly be termed "objective" in that its origin is found outside the subject, in this case an infant. It must not be considered objective, however, in the sense of being impersonal and formal only; Wesley teaches that something new is *born*, comes into being, a "principle of grace is infused," the Holy Spirit is given, and the baptized is "mystically united to Christ....From which *spiritual*, vital union with *him*, proceeds the *influence* of his grace on those that are baptized."⁷⁸ A fact which is often overlooked is that Wesley firmly believed in adults being "born again" through the means

of baptism. He only adds, with the Church of England, two conditions: that they repent and believe the gospel. "Baptism, administered to *real penitents*, is both a means and a seal of pardon. Nor did God ordinarily in the primitive Church bestow this on any, unless through this means."⁷⁹ Actually, for adults baptism may function in one of two ways. If a person is already converted, that person should also be "born of the water." On the other hand, if not already converted, that person should be baptized in order to be "born again" through that means:

Either men have received the Holy Ghost, or not. If they have not, 'Repent,' saith God, 'and be baptized and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' If they have, if they are already baptized with the Holy Ghost, then, who can forbid water?⁸⁰

In his *Journal*, Wesley gives many examples of adults who were baptized and who found that God poured out His grace according to the person's need.⁸¹

We have already mentioned that Wesley believes that infants are "born again" through the means of Baptism. But he rejects the suggestion that infants believe, aided by the faith of others, as Luther proposed.⁸² When Calvin teaches that God acknowledges infants as His children directly from their birth, that they receive sanctification from their parents, and consequently, are baptized because they already belong to Christ, Wesley differs at several points. For Calvin these privileges belong only to those born within the covenant while, as Wesley sees it, this prevenient grace is given to all. Furthermore, Wesley would agree with Luther that children are born again through baptism, and not only given the sign as seal and assurance of something which has already taken place. He would, nevertheless, agree with Calvin when he says: "*Infants* are renewed by the Spirit of God, according to the capacity of their age, till that power which was concealed within them grow by degrees and becomes fully manifest at the proper time."⁸³ Wesley would insist that God work this "renewal," or at least its beginning, through the means of baptism. Calvin operates with a concept of "federal holiness"; that is, the children have holiness by their parents being within the covenant. John Wesley rejects this. For him it is a question of *actual* faith and *actual* holiness.

All grace, even baptismal grace, may be lost, although that is never necessary. Wesley speaks of "baptized heathens" or "baptized infidels."⁸⁴ If this grace is lost it can still be received anew. It is, therefore, extremely important that the children be taught in order to counteract the natural corruption and make it possible for them to grow in grace.⁸⁵

3. *The Lord's Supper*

Receiving the Bread
On JESUS we feed,
It doth not appear
His manner of working;
but JESUS is here.⁸⁶

"At the Holy Table the People meet to worship GOD, and GOD is present to meet and bless his people....And GOD offers to us the Body and Blood of his SON, and all the other blessings we have need to receive."⁸⁷ The sacrament of the Lord's Supper conveys, first, Christ's death and sacrifice, and, second, all the fruits or benefits flowing from this sacrifice as "present Graces." Through the sacrament the communicant receives; Christ's sacrifice is *conveyed* to that person. Communion, therefore, in this sense, becomes *communication*. "And by this means it conveys to me the *Communion of his Sufferings*, which leads to a Communion in all his Graces and Glories."⁸⁸ Christ there feeds our souls with the constant supply of His mercies, as really as He feeds our bodies with bread and wine.⁸⁹ The Lord's Supper is an efficacious means of grace.

Is it not the eating of that bread, and the drinking of that cup, the outward, visible means, whereby God conveys into our souls all that spiritual grace, that righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which were purchased by the body of Christ once broken and the blood of Christ once shed for us? Let all, therefore, who truly desire the grace of God, eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.⁹⁰

Thus the Lord's Supper, in its function as a means of grace, actually communicates what is there shown, namely, Christ's death and His intercession for the believer before God.

As for the direct content of the grace conveyed through the Lord's Supper, Wesley is definite and clear. "I showed at large...that the Lord's Supper was ordained by God to be a means of conveying to men either preventing, or justifying or sanctifying grace according to their several necessities."⁹¹ In his *Dictionary* Wesley defines "prevent" as "to come or go before"; in this context it would then refer to grace "coming before" the saving grace of justification and the New Birth.

Salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) *preventing grace*: including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life; some degree of salvation; the beginning of a

deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and things of God.⁹²

The second great branch of the sacramental grace is justification. Since justification means forgiveness of sins and finding favor before God, it must follow that the Lord's Supper is also a converting ordinance. Wesley had seen this happen. In a versified epitaph for his mother, Charles Wesley speaks of "a legal night of seventy years," until

The Father there revealed His Son
Him in the broken bread made known;
She knew and felt her sins forgiven,
And found the earnest of her heaven.⁹³

Therefore, unbelievers ought to communicate. "Ought every unbeliever to pray and communicate? Yes! 'Ask and it (faith) shall be given you.' And if you believe Christ died for guilty, helpless sinners, then eat that Bread and drink of that Cup."⁹⁴

Third, the Lord's Supper conveys the grace of sanctification. "When we are born again, then our sanctification, our inward and outward holiness begins: and thenceforward we are gradually to 'grow up into Him who is our Head.'"⁹⁵ God not only sustains the new life in the soul, He makes one grow up into the full stature of Christ. Therefore Wesley exhorts his people, "Lose no opportunity of receiving the sacrament. All who have neglected this have suffered loss; most of them are as dead as stones; therefore be you constant therein, not only for example but for the sake of your own souls."⁹⁶

Not only is the Lord's Supper a communion with Christ. It is a communion of all believers, a union of love, holiness and perfection. "*We being many are yet, as it were, but different parts of one and the same broken bread, which we receive to unite us in one body.*"

One with the Living Bread Divine,
Which now by Faith we eat,
Our Hearts, and Minds, and Spirits join.
And all in Jesus meet.⁹⁷

EFFECTIVE PLEDGE OF HEAVEN

As a pledge, The Lord's Supper functions on two levels. First, the right and the title to the inheritance is actually made over to the communicant through the sacrament. Second, the holy sacrament is a pledge from the Lord that He will give to the believers His glory, that He will "faithfully render to us the Purchase."⁹⁸ The Lord's Supper is a pledge and assurance that God, as it were, will keep His side of the covenantal agreement. But this does not mean that Wesley indirectly accepts the Calvinistic doctrine of the perseverance of the saints; the possibility of falling out of grace is always

present. But God's promise is sure. In this sense only can the sacrament be considered an "infallible pledge."⁹⁹ There is one use of the idea of assurance by means of a pledge which Wesley clearly rejects. No outward form or action is a guarantee that I am in a state of grace, or born again *now*. Even if a person is baptized, partakes regularly in prayers, worship and the Lord's Supper, that person may still not be a Christian.¹⁰⁰ As quoted above, Wesley witnessed, "I trust in means no more." The distinction between a pledge and an earnest is crucial here:

A *Pledge* and an *Earnest* differ in this, That an Earnest may be allow'd upon *Account*, for part of that Payment which is promised, whereas *Pledges* are taken back. Thus for Example, Zeal, Love and those Degrees of Holiness which GOD bestows in the Use of his Sacraments, will remain with us when we are in Heaven and there make Part of our Happiness. But the Sacraments themselves shall be taken back and shall no more appear in Heaven than did the Cloudy Pillar in *Canaan*. We shall have no Need of these sacred Figures of CHRIST, when we shall actually possess it. But till that Day, the Holy Sacrament hath that Third Use, of being a *Pledge* from the LORD that he will give us that Glory.¹⁰¹

The sacrament, therefore, is not an earnest. The content of the earnest is love, zeal and holiness, even Christ the Redeemer Himself. It is heaven here.

Thee in the glorious Realm they praise,
And bow before thy Throne,
We in the Kingdom of thy Grace,
The Kingdoms are but One.¹⁰²

Again Wesley's doctrine of the "Eternal Now" clearly becomes visible. The efficacy of the sacrament is proven by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. The ultimate test of the efficacy and, consequently, assurance, is that God actually bestows the earnest. Although both past and future, salvation is always and essentially a present salvation.¹⁰³

EFFECTIVE SACRIFICE: THE ATONEMENT APPROPRIATED

For Wesley there are two main branches of the Lord's Supper: namely, a sacrament, the functions of which are "memorial," "means of grace" and "pledge of heaven" and, secondly, a sacrifice. The content of sacrifice for Wesley is the believer offering up body, soul and whatever else can be given.¹⁰⁴ Wesley understands Christ's "Priestly Office" as consisting of two parts: first, His life, death and suffering upon the cross (i.e., the Atonement, His dying in our place); second, Christ's continuing high-priestly office as constantly interceding at the throne of God the Father. However, although Christ's atoning work is continual and ongoing, it must not be implied that

Christ's sacrifice can be repeated. Wesley rejects the sacrifice of the Roman Mass, whether that is said to be "bloody" or "unbloody"; if they are both propitiatory, then they are of the same virtue and serve the same end.¹⁰⁵ For Wesley the sacramental sacrifice is neither propitiatory nor expiatory. In the direction from God to humankind it is the task of the minister to bring a clear understanding of the present efficacy and availability of Christ's death "as still powerful for eternal salvation." Thus the Lord's Supper communicates the body and blood to the communicants. At the same time, in the Godward direction people present not the same sacrifice, but the sacrifice in its consequent effects, "...as bleeding and suing for mercy." The believer receives the benefits of Christ's sacrifice and, having *received* Christ, is able to "set forth the death of the Lord" before the Father, and, together with that, also himself.¹⁰⁶ The Lord's Supper is a means of conveying Christ's sacrifice *both ways*. First, Christ's sacrifice is received and feasted upon.¹⁰⁷ Second, it is this sacrifice, already received, which is "set forth" before the Father as a pleading sacrifice together with the offering up of "self."¹⁰⁸

Thus the sacrament, as it is a sacrifice, is "the sacrifice of ourselves." The believer offers up to God all thoughts, words and actions, "through the Son of His love, as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving."¹⁰⁹ But the believer does not only share in the benefits of Christ's sacrifice, but also bears the Cross of Christ and dies with Him in sacrifice.¹¹⁰ "I am crucified to the world, and the world crucified to me" (Gal. 6:14).¹¹¹ We must bear Christ's cross: "Prepare for the Cross; welcome it; bear it triumphantly, live Christ's Cross, whether scoffs, mockings, contempt, imprisonments. But see it be Christ's cross, not thine own."¹¹²

In conclusion, it seems appropriate to close with the words with which Wesley concludes his preface to the sacramental hymns, and pray with him:

Forgive, I beseech Thee, my Sins, deliver me from my Sorrows, and accept of this my Sacrifice: or rather look in my Behalf, on that only true Sacrifice, whereof here is a sacrament; the Sacrifice of thy well-beloved Son, proceeding from Thee, to die for me, O let Him come unto me now, as the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth!¹¹³

Notes

ABBREVIATIONS

Brevint (W)	John and Charles Wesley, <i>Hymns on the Lord's Supper, with a Preface concerning The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice. Extracted from Doctor [Daniel] Brevint</i> , 1st ed. (Bristol: Felix Farley, 1745).
HLS	John and Charles Wesley, <i>Hymns on the Lord's Supper</i> (Bristol: Felix Farley, 1745).
Journal	<i>The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.</i> , 8 vols., ed. Nehemiah Curnock (London: Epworth, 1909-1916).
Letters	<i>The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.</i> , 8 vols., ed. John Telford (London: Epworth, 1931).
NT Notes	John Wesley, <i>Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament</i> (London: The Epworth Press, 1954).
OT Notes	John Wesley, <i>Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament</i> , 3 vols. (Bristol: William Pine, 1765).
Sermons	<i>Wesley's Standard Sermons</i> , 2 vols., ed. E. H. Sugden (London: Epworth Press, 1961).
Works	<i>The Works of John Wesley</i> , 14 vols., reprint, ed. Thomas Jackson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958-1959).

1. For a more exhaustive study see Ole E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments: A Theological Study* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1973; Grand Rapids, MI: Asbury Press, 1986).
2. Borgen, *Wesley on the Sacraments*, pp. 46-47; cf. pp. 36-44.
3. *Works*, 6:417, 423. *Sermons*, 2:132, cf. 1:44, 45, 304. Borgen, *Wesley on the Sacraments*, p. 172.
4. *Works*, 4:413.
5. *OT Notes*, 1 Chr. 21:26; Lev. 25:25; Num. 15:2, 19:2.
6. *NT Notes*, Rom. 9:25; 1 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 2:10, 13:20.
7. Borgen, *Wesley on the Sacraments*, pp. 44-46.
8. *Works*, 8:49.
9. *Sermons*, 1:259; cf. 243.
10. *Letters*, 2:46. Cf. *Works*, 6:369; 8:107; and Borgen, *Wesley on the Sacraments*, pp. 82-85.
11. *Sermons*, 1:242, cf. 2:237-238. The full text of the "Catechism" reads: "...an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same...." ("A Catechism," *Book of Common Prayer*, quoted in Borgen, *Wesley on the Sacraments*, pp. 49-50, n. 1).
12. John Wesley, *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America* (London: Strahan, 1784), pp. 311-312.
13. John Wesley, *The Duty of Receiving The Lord's Supper*, unpublished holograph dated 1731/2., transcribed by Ole E. Borgen, p. 10.
14. Brevint (W), 3.2:9.
15. Brevint (W), 3.2-3:9-10; *Works*, 7:148.
16. *Sermons*, 2:237-238.
17. Wesley, *Duty of Receiving*, p. 11.

18. *HLS*, no. 162:1.
19. *Works*, 6:73-74; and *Letters*, 4:38.
20. Augustine, *First Catechetical Instruction*, Ancient Christian Writers, 34 vols., ed. J. Quasten and W. Burghardt (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1960—), 2:82.
21. Cf. *Works*, 10:192, "...inward grace, which added thereto, makes it a sacrament."
22. Wesley, *Sunday Service*, p. 312. Wesley speaks of "...the senseless opinion of transubstantiation." It is "hurtful to piety" and goes against Scripture, sense and reason (*Works*, 7:64; 9:278; 10:151).
23. *Letters*, 1:118; *NT Notes*, John 3:13.
24. Wesley, *Duty of Receiving*, p. 8; *HLS*, no. 30:5; Borgen, *Wesley on the Sacraments*, pp. 58-69.
25. *Sermons*, 1:440; Wesley, *Duty of Receiving*, p. 1; *HLS*, no. 42:2-4.
26. *Works*, 10:150, cf. p. 114; Borgen, *Wesley on the Sacraments*, pp. 69-81.
27. Brevint (W), 2:1:4.
28. *Ibid.*, 2:7:6.
29. *Ibid.*, 2:5 and 9:6-7.
30. *Ibid.*, 2:9:7; cf. 3:2, 9-10.
31. *Ibid.*, 2:3:5.
32. *Ibid.*, 2:6:6.
33. *Ibid.*, 2:7:6; *HLS*, no. 94:2.
34. *HLS*, 22:1, 3; cf. nos. 25:2, 123:3.
35. *HLS*, no 23:1-2.
36. Brevint (W), 2:7:6.
37. John Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions*, 2d ed. (W. Bowyer, 1754), 1:229.
38. Wesley, *Sunday Service*, art. 13, p. 310.
39. *Letters*, 3:366-367.
40. Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions*, 1:248.
41. *Ibid.*, 1:230; 249-250. Cf. *Works*, 8:18, 20, 62; 10:135; 11:283; *Sermons*, 1:467.
42. *Sermons*, 1:97, 254; *Letters*, 3:322; 6:117.
43. *NT Notes*, 1 Tim. 4:13; *Works*, 8:316.
44. *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, 13 vols. (London, Wesleyan-Methodist Conference Office, 1868-1872), 1:233 ff.; 4:451 ff.
45. *Letters*, 1:86; *Sermons*, 1:243, 344, 528; 2:33.
46. *Works*, 8:286, 323.
47. *Journal*, 1:330; *Sermons*, 2:144, 292; *Works*, 6:510-511.
48. *Sermons*, 1:246, 248; *Works*, 11:437; *NT Notes*, 1 Thess. 5:16-17.
49. *NT Notes*, Eph. 6:18.
50. *Sermons*, 1:430-431; *NT Notes*, Matt. 6:8.
51. *NT Notes*, Eph. 6:18, 2 Tim. 4:5, 1 Pet. 4:7.
52. *Sermons*, 1:458.
53. *NT Notes*, Matt. 4:2; *OT Notes*, Isa. 58:5; *Works*, 8:364.
54. *NT Notes*, Eph. 4:29; Heb. 10:22.
55. *NT Notes*, Heb. 10:25, Acts 5:11; *Sermons*, 1:395. Italics added.
56. *Sermons*, 1:248.
57. *Letters*, 3:79.
58. *Journal*, 2:361.
59. *HLS*, no. 42:4-5.
60. *Works*, 10:192. Italics added.

61. *Ibid.*, 10:193.
62. *Ibid.*, 6:66, 67, 68. Italics added.
63. *Ibid.*, 6:240, 10:190; *Poetical Works*, 3:15, 33.
64. *Ibid.*, 8:227-278.
65. *Ibid.*, 10:193. Italics added.
66. *Ibid.*, 10:198; *Letters*, 3:36.
67. *Ibid.*, 10:192. Italics added.
68. *Ibid.*, 6:509.
69. *Ibid.*, 10:191.
70. *Ibid.*
71. *Sunday Service*, Art. 17, "Of Baptism," p. 312.
72. *Works*, 10:193.
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Works*, 10:195; *NT Notes*, Acts 16:15, 1 John 5:7; *Works*, 8:73.
75. *NT Notes*, Acts 16:15; cf. *Works*, 10:196-198.
76. *Works*, 10:197-198.
77. *Ibid.*, 10:196-197, 199.
78. *Ibid.*, 10:191. Italics added.
79. *NT Notes*, Acts 22:16; *Works*, 8:48, 52.
80. *NT Notes*, Acts 10:47, Mark 16:16, Heb. 6:1.
81. See Borgen, *Wesley on the Sacraments*, pp. 161 ff., and nn. 171, 177.
82. Luther, *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia, The Muhlenberg Press: 1943), p. 187.
83. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20-21, ed. J. T. McNeill (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), IV.15.22:1323; 16.15:1337; 16.32:1359; John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, trans. W. Pringh (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 2:390.
84. *Sermons*, 1:194; 2:435; *Letters*, 2:196.
85. *Works*, 13:476; 7:77, 79, 83, 97; *Sermons*, 2:240.
86. *HLS*, no. 92:6; cf. no 101:2.
87. Brevint (W), 1.1:3.
88. *Ibid.*, 4.7:16.
89. *Ibid.*, 3.5:11.
90. *Sermons*, 1:253; cf. pp. 242-243, 344, 528.
91. *Journal*, 2:361.
92. *Works*, 6:509.
93. *Journal*, 3:31-32.
94. *Letters*, 6:124.
95. *Sermons*, 2:240; cf. *Works*, 6:509.
96. *Letters*, 4:272.
97. *NT Notes*, 1 Cor. 10:17; *HLS*, no. 165.
98. Brevint (W), 5.4-6:18-19.
99. *Ibid.*, 2.1:4.
100. *Sermons*, 1:267, 295-296, 300.
101. Brevint (W), 5.1:17.
102. *HLS*, nos. 88:4, 96:3.
103. *Works*, 6:44, 227, 230.
104. Brevint (W), 1.1:3-4.
105. *Ibid.*, 6.2:21.

106. *Ibid.*, 6.2:22.

107. *HLS*, nos. 35:1, 67:1; *Brevint*, 1.1:3-4; 4.8:16.

108. *OT Notes*, 1 Chr. 29:14.

109. *Works*, 6:414.

110. *OT Notes*, Exod. 27:4, 29:36.

111. *Brevint (W)*, 7.8:26.

112. *A Word of Advice to Saints and Sinners*, 11th ed. (London: Printed and sold at the New Chapel, City Road; and at the Rev. Mr. Wesley's Preaching Houses, in Town and Country, 1790), p. 11.

113. *Brevint (W)*, 8.6:32.

A Question of Identity: The Threefold Hermeneutic of Psalmody

JAMES L. MAYS

I.

In his *Confessions*, Augustine tells how he used the psalms as his own prayer: "What utterances I used to send up unto Thee in those Psalms, and how I was inflamed toward Thee by them."¹ Athanasius said of the psalms: "They seem to me to be a kind of mirror for everyone who sings them in which he may observe the motions of the soul, and as he observes them give utterance to them in words."² He was seconded by Calvin who wrote in the introduction to his commentary: "I am wont to call them an anatomy of all parts of the soul; for no-one will find in himself a single feeling of which the image is not reflected in the mirror."³

The historic comment on the psalms is strewn with such observations. These remarks testify to a general and continuous experience. Christians found themselves and came to expression in the language of the psalms. Their own selves were identified with, and identified by, the self whose voice speaks in these prayers.

When Christians talked like that, they were referring especially to one group of psalms, the prayers and songs composed as the voice of an individual. It was these psalms in the first person that invited an awareness of self and offered language to self. There are far more psalms of this genre in the book of Psalms than hymns of praise and poetry of instruction. By the

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weight of their number they dominate the Psalter and give a cast and tone to the whole.

The majority of the first-person psalms are the prayers of a person in trouble. There are some fifty of them in the book. There is real variety in the group in length, arrangement and content, but they are held together as a group in two important ways. First, they are consistently composed of a common set of elements. They name God and speak in direct address to the Lord. They feature descriptions of trouble that is personal or social or theological in various combinations. Each is organized around a petition to be heard and helped. Trust is avowed. A promise of praise and sacrifice to testify to the sought deliverance is made.

The second common characteristic of these prayers is what may be called paradigmatic openness. Those who speak in the psalms describe themselves and their situations, but they do it in a way that draws a verbal portrait of a set of types rather than a report about a specific person. The language of description is formulaic and metaphoric. It creates types of persons and predicaments. The descriptions offer roles which suit the continuing structures of neediness in human experience. It is precisely this commonality and openness that have rendered this group of psalms so available for the uses of corporate liturgy and private devotion. For nearly two millennia, Christians have sung, chanted and murmured these psalms as their prayers. In acts of worship and devotion they spoke of God and self and world with the words the psalms provided. They found and knew themselves through these prayers.

It is, however, a fact that these prayers have become difficult and strange for contemporary Christians. Where our predecessors in prayer received and used this language with a sense of recognition, discovery and illumination, it has become problematic for many in our time. We hear these prayers of pain and anguish as coming from another quarter. This voice that speaks so insistently, pleads and protests and even argues. This voice that addresses an absent God directly as if God were there, a presence. This soul riven by a desperate dependence for rightness and life. This pilgrim that must make a way as if through a dark valley surrounded by foes to trust and obedience. This human whose desire will not be satisfied by anything less than the experience of God. This individual in the prayer psalms has come to be different, a stranger, sometimes embarrassing.

The public evidence for this sense of discontinuity with the tradition of psalmody began to appear, I think, in the movement away from a complete Psalter in communions that had always used one. Where selections of psalms for singing and reading were made, it was psalms of this particular group that were omitted. Those that were included were frequently edited to omit portions felt to be difficult. The first version of the contemporary Common Lectionary was sparse in its use of the prayers for help. Emphasis on worship as celebration made them sound incongruent in liturgy. Understandings and fashions of prayer that do not easily accommodate the stance

and mood of psalmic prayers are widespread. The prayer psalms visibly lost their place as the canonical core of corporate liturgy and private devotion.

What brought about the rupture between the self evoked in the psalms and the self-awareness of believers? The problem is more than simple historical and cultural distance. After all, the correlation had lasted nearly two thousand years. What are the reasons? A liberal optimism about the human condition? A stolid technical literalism that lost the feel for the poetic, metaphorical, mythic as media of reality? Theologies that obscured the face of a God who could (or would) answer the cry, "Hear me, help me"? Surely, various related reasons exist, sometimes gathered up under the sign of modernity.

There is currently a revival of interest in this sector of psalmody. In part the interest has been stimulated by the liturgical renewal with its concern to restore the psalms to their traditional role in the materials of worship. The latest version of the Common Lectionary uses far more of the prayer psalms than the earlier one did. There seems to be a feeling of canonical guilt at work in this and a determination to be more inclusive. In part, the interest expresses the realization of pastors and pastoral care disciplines that these psalmic prayers give people language to express the distresses that press against the limits of our customary banal, trivial, deceptive talk. Rage, frustration, depression, grief and failure all can find a voice here not available in the usual confines of liturgy or the normal circumspection of pastoral engagement. These are positive and promising moves toward the recovery of psalmic prayer.

But, one must entertain serious doubt whether these moves get at the central alienation between people and psalms. It probably will not work simply to put these prayer psalms back in the service. They will likely remain the utterance of some person unknown and not understood. It will not do to employ them simply as a resource of counseling and therapy, a tool of catharsis that uses them to express a self-consciousness that is already there. The authentic use of the psalmic prayers in the tradition has involved not just the expression of the self through the psalms, but also (and most important of all) a self-realization that comes with using these prayers.

II.

What was the nature of the transaction between these psalms and those who prayed them? With that question on my mind I came upon a comment in the Mishnah Tehillim on Psalm 18: "R. Yudan taught in the name of R. Judah: all that David said in his Book of psalms applies to Himself, to all Israel and to all the ages." That is, the identity offered by the psalm is not simple but complex, not singular but threefold. Whoever prays Psalm 18, said these rabbis, assumes a self constituted of a relation to David and the people of God and mortal humanity.

One recognizes the parallel to early Christian interpretation. Augustine, commenting on Psalm 3, provides a typical illustration. Here are some

phrases culled from his discussion about who speaks in the prayer: "Christ speaks to God in his human nature...both the Church and her head...cry out with the lips of the prophet...which of the faithful cannot make this language their own?"⁴ Again, the hermeneutic of a threefold identity. The individual in the psalm is constituted of an interrelation between Christ, Church and Christian.

It would be easy to dismiss this transaction as a hermeneutical artifact, the practice of allegory or typology. I do not, however, think it is fair to the matter to assess this understanding as merely the result of a theory of reading applied in a somewhat technical way. It is, rather, an account of what happened when the psalms were used as Scripture and liturgy—that is, when in the synagogue the prayers of David were read as liturgy of the congregation and meditation of the pious; and when in the church, the psalms were read under the direction of their use by Christ in the Passion as the liturgy of worship and the prayers of believers. Hermeneutical theory, to the degree that was important, was generated by practice rather than the other way around.

It may be important for our history-oriented mentality and its concern about original meaning to bring yet another matter into consideration. This approach did not originate in the synagogue and churches of the first centuries of our era. It is a continuation of what happened in making the book of Psalms. To put the development in a sentence: Prayers written to provide individuals with appropriate typical languages became corporate liturgy and were related to the scriptural narrative of David. The semantic horizon of the redaction and collection of the psalms was this literary process.

As I have thought about this testimony of the rabbis and Augustine it has begun to dawn on me what is at issue here—a way of prayer far more profound than the one I practice, one learned because the communities of faith prayed these psalms in an awareness of the three selves of which their identity was constituted.

A way of prayer that is *Christological*, not just *autobiographical*.

A reading of these psalms as words that witness to the identification of Christ with our humanity.

A way of prayer that is *corporate*, not just *individual*.

A use of these first-person psalms as the voice of the community and of others in it in vicarious representative supplication.

A way of prayer that is *typical*, rather than *subjective*.

A saying of these psalms to create a consciousness of who and what we are, rather than as expressions of a consciousness already there.

I want to reflect on each of these ways of construing the first-person prayers in the psalms *in the form of questions*—questions because this three-

fold hermeneutic of prayer involves habits of consciousness that are difficult to acquire in our time.

III.

The first question: Can we, should we, find in these prayers of dereliction and trust an evocation of the Passion of our Lord? I am not proposing that we understand them as prophecy in the specific sense that term has in the classification of literature. These psalms were not composed aforetime to predict events and experiences of suffering that would come true in the life of Jesus. There is a nod toward this approach in the New Testament (John 19:28). There is a long and important tradition of reading psalms as prophecy in the history of Jewish and Christian interpretation, but that approach is not underwritten by what has been learned about the character and purpose of the psalmic prayers.

They are, rather, the literary deposit in the Scriptures that testifies to the range and depth of anguish that can and does come to those who are mortal and vulnerable and undertake to live unto God. They are the classics of life that undergoes the worst in faith and for the faith. They are the paradigms of the soul that uses affliction, alienation, pain and even dying as occasions to assert the reality and faithfulness of God. As such they can show us in detail the mortality that belongs to Christ in His identity with us.

The Gospels draw on the psalms to tell the story of Jesus more than on any other sector of the Old Testament. Particularly, the narrative of the Passion of Jesus uses language and motifs from them extensively. Features from Psalms 22 and 31 and 69 appear recurrently in the narrative. These psalms are not used as prediction and fulfillment, but as elements of the story itself. The self-description of those who pray in the psalms becomes a scenario which Jesus enacts. He identifies himself with and through them, assumes their afflictions, speaks their language.

The way that the Gospels use the psalmic prayers to tell the story of Jesus, the way that Jesus enters into the identity of the voice and experience heard in the psalms, must mean that these prayers are meant to be a major commentary on the meaning of His affliction. The relationship advises that the sufferings of Jesus were not unique. Their significance does not lie in the amount or measure but in the typicality. The identification of Jesus with the self who speaks in the psalms is the sign of the representative and corporate reality of His Passion. He suffers and prays with all those whose suffering and praying is represented by such prayers. He enters into their predicament. The hurt and cry of that great choir of pain is gathered into His life and voice. Henceforth the voice of affliction in these psalms is inseparable from the voice of Jesus. They are the liturgy of His incarnation, the language of His assumption of our predicament.

He is one of us and one with us in our mortal humanity. Yet, can we rely on our own experience, our self-consciousness, our language to grasp what His Passion, His identification with the human predicament involves?

We are too petty in our complaints, too limited in our empathies, too inhibited in our language. We will usually trivialize, but these psalmic prayers for help do not trivialize. Indeed, they seem one vast exaggeration until read toward His life. When we ask with Gerhard's great hymn on the Passion, "What language can I borrow to thank thee, dearest friend, for this thy dying sorrow?" can there be any other answer?

Can we learn to say these prayers as a way of hearing Christ pray in and for our humanity? Can we say them as the voice of His unending passion in and for our mortality?

IV.

The second question: Could the problem of our relation to the persons praying in these psalms lead us to a different understanding of how we use the first-person pronoun when we pray, the meaning with which we say "I/me/my"?

The use of the first-person psalms in Christian liturgy and devotion is complicated by a difference between Israel and contemporary Christians in consciousness of self and social group. The first-person pronoun had a different content and structure then. The Jews received identity and significance from identity with the group. To say "I" meant to speak of one's group as well as one's person. We bring our identity to a group, differentiate ourselves within it, join it, accept its ways and opinions, expect the group to nurture the individual and to justify itself to the individual.

In Israel, there was a real corporate identity which could say "I" authentically. And the individual said "I" in congruence with and not in distinction from the group. So the use of the first-person psalms by individuals today will work differently. We contextualize them in our identities. We wonder at the disparity between our experience and the experience described in the psalms because we don't think of ourselves typically or corporately.

Can we learn to say these prayers in liturgy and in devotion as an act of empathy and sympathy, as an expression of solidarity with others? Could we give voice to their pain and need, make these supplications serve as intercessions for them as one with us, as the body of Christ, as the totality of humanity?

The psalmic prayers come to us from the history of their use with the "I" already expanded to "we." It helps us to use our imaginations and remember how many countless thousands in all the ages have left their marks on these prayers: Jeremiah and Jesus and Paul and Augustine and Calvin and Wesley and the highlanders of Scotland and the Huguenots and...you complete the list. Know that history, and you cannot say and sing them without hearing the echoing chorus of "all the Saints from whom their labors rest, who thee by faith before the world confessed."

But our corporateness is a fact not only of yesterday but today. Could the use of these prayers remind us and bind us to all those in the worldwide Church who are suffering in faith and for the faith? All may be well in

our place. There may be no trouble for the present that corresponds to the tribulations described in the psalms. But do we need to do more than call the roll of such places as El Salvador, South Africa and China to remember that there are sisters and brothers whose trials could be given voice in our recitation of the psalms? The Early Church believed that it was all the martyrs who prayed in their praying the psalmic prayers.

Would it be possible to say them for the sake of and in the name of the fellow Christians known to us? We do make intercessions for them, but perhaps these psalms can help us do more than simply, prayerfully wish grace and help for them, help us to find words to represent their hurt, alienation, failure and discouragement.

Then there is the whole world of humanity beyond the Church known and unknown to us who have neither the faith nor the language to hold their misery up before God. In the day-to-day course of events they may become simply part of the scenery of life, features in the newspaper, in the evening news. These prayers are so poignant and vivid that they give concreteness and personal actuality to what is happening beyond the range of our personal experience.

The Apostle said, "If one member suffers, all suffer together" (1 Cor. 12:26). He also said, "Bear one another's burdens." Can these prayers become a way of doing that?

V.

The third question: Could the problem of our relation to the person praying in the psalms lead us to a deeper, truer, more ultimate awareness of who/what we are, why and that we need to pray for help?

The problem is certainly there. We live and think and feel as part of modern Western culture. It is true of our culture that it is not informed with the active consciousness of mortality that was characteristic of earlier ages, and is still characteristic for much of the rest of the world. But these psalmic prayers give the clear impression that they were composed in a culture and out of a consciousness structured by a sense of life's vulnerability.

In recent years the Israelis have been conducting an archeological excavation of a cemetery at a location near the walls of Jerusalem called Giv'at ha-Mivtar. The burials in the cemetery are dated to the second and first centuries B.C. As the archeologists have cataloged and identified the remains in the cemetery, they have learned that about sixty percent of the people who were buried there had died before they reached the age of twenty-five. Only six percent were sixty years old or older. It doesn't take much imagination to grasp what that meant for the sense of life.

The change from that kind of situation is very recent. A few years ago a professor at the University of North Carolina published a book titled *Children of Pride*. It is composed of a collection of letters which he found and edited, letters that had been written between the members of a family who lived in the early 1800s just south of Savannah, Georgia. The letters are filled

with the news of sickness and dying as part of the normal scene. The regular occurrence of illness and death created such a regular part of the texture of life that it is difficult for a contemporary to imagine what it must have been like. As I read the book I remembered the dying of my grandfather who acquired an aerecypilis infection in 1928 for which there was no help. Today, treatment for that illness is a fairly simple matter of several antibiotics. Now the old outnumber the young and the problems we ponder are the problems of people being kept alive.

But, is it the truth about us that we are not still essentially needy—that is, mortal, limited in our competence to manage what happens to us, vulnerable to events and to others—that we do not need divine help? In the long view, ultimately speaking, there is no technical or scientific solution to the reality of human finitude and sinfulness. To be human is to desire life and right-ness, and because we cannot autonomously secure either, to be essentially needy.

Could we use these prayers to learn that, admit that, learn from them to nurture a consciousness structured by an honest sense of our finitude and fallibility? The Jewish novelist, Isaac Bashevis Singer, once said, "I only pray when I am in trouble. But I am in trouble all the time."⁵

VI.

The answers to these questions—for each of us and for the contemporary community of faith—can be found only in the practice and experience of prayer. Can we discover through these psalm-prayers an identity that is Christological, corporate and typical? Can they break up and break into our preoccupying subjectivity and imperious individualism? Can their use bring us intimations of the consciousness the apostle spoke of when he wrote such sentences as: "Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24); "You are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor. 14:27); and "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20)?

Notes

1. *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*, ed. W. J. Oates (New York: Random House, 1948), 1:132.
2. Athanasius as quoted in A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* (Cambridge: University Press, 1930), p. ciii.
3. John Calvin, *Commentary on The Book of Psalms*, trans. J. Anderson (Edinburgh: Printed for The Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 1:xxxviii.
4. *The Works of The Fathers by Translation*, Ancient Christian Writers, ed. J. Quasten and W. J. Burghardt, no. 29 (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1960).
5. E. H. Peterson, *Answering God: The Psalms As Tools For Prayer* (Harper and Row, 1989), p. 99.

The Metaphysical Doctrine of Creation

THOMAS V. MORRIS

The majestic introduction to the book of Genesis proclaims that¹

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

This is the key to a distinctively theistic perspective on reality. This one statement captures the heart of a theistic world-view: We live in a created universe. For centuries, theists have held that the most important truth about our world is that it is a created world. And it is no exaggeration to add that one of the most important truths about God is that He is the creator of this world.

Aquinas once expressed the core of the doctrine of creation quite succinctly with the single sentence:

Anything that exists in any way must necessarily have its origin from God.²

The philosophical view which is here so crisply and simply conveyed, I shall refer to as the *metaphysical doctrine of creation*. I understand it as a thesis about the metaphysical or ontological dependence of all things distinct from God on God as their source of being, the ultimate cause of their existence.

As a philosophical thesis, the metaphysical doctrine of creation is not to be thought of as necessarily allied to, or as in competition with, any particular scientific theory of physical cosmology or biological development. A few years ago, many religious people enthusiastically welcomed and loudly endorsed what is popularly known as the *Big Bang Theory of Physical Cosmology*. The physical event which was postulated to have issued in an almost inconceivable, explosive origination of our current cosmos was widely baptized as a scientific acknowledgement of the act of divine creation. But, as

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many physical cosmologists were quick to point out, the postulation of the Big Bang is not at all the same thing as the acknowledgement of an absolute origination of all things physical from some nonphysical, divine source. The theorized explosion is compatible with an oscillating universe cosmology, according to which, on a colossal time scale, there are repetitive cycles of explosion, expansion, equilibrium and contraction, resulting in a further explosion, and so forth. An intelligent person can accept a Big Bang cosmology without endorsing any form of divine creation, or can adopt the metaphysical doctrine of creation without any commitment to the hypothesized Big Bang. A theist might, for example, endorse instead some form of the alternative tale told by recent plasma physics. Physics is not metaphysics. So in order to understand the theistic doctrine of creation, it is important to keep these two enterprises of human intellectual explanation distinct.

Nor is the metaphysical doctrine of creation alone to be viewed as a determinant of biological theory. In recent years, there have been high-pitched courtroom battles and skirmishes in the popular press between people widely known as *creationists* and others, called *evolutionists* by the creationists. However this ongoing debate is to be understood, it is not a debate in metaphysics, or in basic philosophical theology. Within the world of serious religious believers, there are both theistic creationists and theistic evolutionists in the battle over developmental biology. Biology is not metaphysics.

Our concern in this essay with the doctrine of creation will be entirely a concern with some of the fundamental metaphysical and philosophical issues faced by any traditional theist who thinks of God as altogether perfect, however he might appraise current theories of physical cosmology and biological development. We are seeking a level of understanding distinct from that promised by any application of the methods of the natural sciences. And our focus will be not so much on the natural world itself as on some of what can be learned about God by reflecting on the metaphysical doctrine that He is its creator, the ultimate source of its existence.

THE NATURE OF CREATION

In order to grasp what it means for God to be the world's creator, we need to examine some of what has been said about the act of divine creation, the nature of the activity itself, as well as about the dependence of God's creatures on Him which results from that activity. It will be natural to begin with a consideration of God's activity of creating.

It is often said that divine creation is an activity that is completely free, rational and good. People can, and usually do, mean a variety of things by this threefold characterization. I believe we can explicate them best by considering these three characteristics in reverse order. We shall thus explore first what is meant by the goodness of divine creation, then its rationality, and finally, its freedom. This will be a proper ordering of our examination due to the fact that, as will become clear, the goodness of creation informs its rationality, and both together structure its freedom.

In the Anselmian tradition of Perfect Being Theology, God is thought of as the greatest possible being, a being whose goodness could not possibly be surpassed by that of any other individual. And in all main streams of Christian philosophical theology, God is conceived of as a perfectly good agent. And as we shall see, a perfectly good agent's character can be expected to be manifested in his actions. Now, it is easy to see that the fundamental activity of creation, as performed by God, is the most basic *giving of being*. Human creation, by contrast, involves a *using of being* in novel ways. Any act of creation on the part of a creature presupposes the existence of things not brought into existence by that creative agent. Creaturely creation thus works with what is already given. Divine creation is more thorough-going and is not to be thought of as an operation performed upon something already existing. And since this most basic giving of being is thought to be the province of God alone, this sort of creation can be thought of as the most distinctively divine activity. As such, then, it should manifest God's goodness if anything does. It should be good. And, appropriately, from early on in the book of Genesis, we are told that God surveyed the products of His creative acts and saw that they were good, very good.³

But here we run up against what can be thought to be a philosophical problem. We expect any act of divine creation to be a good act. And it seems natural to suppose that no act of creation can be good unless its product, what is created, is itself also good. For, ideally, good gives rise to good. But this is where the problem arises. If God is the greatest possible being, no act of creation can result in anything greater. It is just impossible that anything be greater than a greatest possible being. Now, consider our universe as God's creation, the product of His creating activity. Either the universe has positive value, or it does not. But if it does have positive value, then it seems we are forced to admit that *God plus the universe* is greater than God alone. For if God manifests some positive level of value n and the universe manifests at least a single unit of positive value, 1 , then the additive value of God plus the universe is at least $n + 1$, which is greater than n . But it is impossible that anything be greater than God, so it is impossible that the universe have positive value.

This, however, seems to leave us with something equally unacceptable. For if the created universe has no positive value whatsoever, then nothing in it has positive value. If parts of the universe had value, then, as the sum of its parts, the universe would have positive value. But if nothing in the universe has value, human life has no value. Nor could God have been right when He gazed upon various items in creation and perceived them to be good. But these conclusions are totally unacceptable from a Christian, or traditionally theistic, point of view. It is impossible that God be wrong in His perceptions, or judgments, and as created in God's image, human beings must be of value. Furthermore, if nothing in the universe has any positive value, what reason could God possibly have had to create it?

Either the universe has value or it doesn't. There is no third option. But either supposition seems to get us into trouble, yielding, as it does, some impossibility or other. We thus seem to be faced with a true dilemma. Let us refer to it as the *Dilemma of Created Goodness*. Some such line of reasoning has troubled many people who have reflected on the nature of creation. Fortunately, however, it is a problem which is easy to solve.

We must first clearly distinguish between a being, an entity, an individual, on the one hand, and any *state of affairs* which involves that individual. The distinction is a well-known, fundamental and quite simple one. I am an individual being, my Pelikan 800 fountain pen is an individual entity, and we are both involved in the state of affairs of *my writing this sentence with my Pelikan 800 fountain pen*. Likewise, we must carefully distinguish between the state of affairs of that fountain pen's existing and the object which is that fountain pen.

With this sort of distinction clearly in mind, we can clarify exactly what the central claim of Perfect Being Theology is: It is that God is to be thought of as the greatest possible *being*. And that is a claim that does not entail the separate proposition that the state of affairs of God's existing alone is the greatest possible state of affairs. This latter proposition is one that the Anselmian theist can deny. And it is one which the Christian theist will deny. Following the affirmations of the book of Genesis, and in accordance with some metaphysical or axiological principles connecting the goodness of God with the goodness of His creation, we can acknowledge that the state of affairs consisting in God's sharing existence with our created universe is greater than the state of affairs of God's existing in pristine isolation, or solitude. But from this, it does not follow that there is any being or individual greater than God. This would be the case only if God and the created universe could be thought of as parts of a larger object, God-and-the-world, which could be assigned a value as a distinct individual, additively derived from the values of its parts. And this is prohibited for at least two reasons. First, there is no natural principle of unity in accordance with which God and the created universe would together compose one object.⁴ Second, it is conceptually precluded by Perfect Being Theology that God ever be considered a part of a larger and more valuable whole, an entity distinct from, but partially composed by, God. With all this in mind, we can affirm the positive value, even the great positive value, of the created universe without thereby posing any threat to the conception of God as the greatest possible being and without any risk of contradiction arising in connection with that conception. With sufficient care in our thought about God and creation, the Dilemma of Created Goodness does not arise at all.

In creating our universe, most theists have supposed that God brought into existence goodness, or value, He was not obligated to bring into existence. That is to say, in creating He brought into existence good things, valuable things, which need not have existed. As productive of good, and as both freely and intentionally productive of good, the activity of creation itself is good.

What is it for creation to be rational? Part of what we can mean to convey when we characterize creation as rational is that it is *thoroughly intentional* in character. There is nothing "blind" about divine creation. God does not say "let there be something or other" and then look to see what has come into being. He is, rather, thoroughly superintendent over all the details of creation. There is nothing inadvertent or unintentional in God's bringing being into existence.

Further, it is part of the rationality of creation that it is *purposive*. It is directed toward some goal perceived to be of value. In particular, many theologians and philosophers have specified, God creates in order to share His being and His glory. What He creates, He creates to that end. Of course, in order to be rational, it is not enough that an activity be goal directed or purposive. Goal-oriented behavior can be stupid, clumsily devised and ineffective. In order to be thoroughly rational, a behavior or activity must be *teleologically efficacious*, effectively directed to the *telos* or end in view.

And finally, in order to be rational, the activity of creation cannot be thoroughly arbitrary. Creation cannot be, as some Hindu theology has it, the arbitrary, free play of the deity. In order to be rational, or reasonable, the activity of divine creation must be in some way *expressive* of God's character and nature. There must be some deep consonance or harmony between the nature of the act of creation and the character of the creator. For example, if God's purpose in creating is to share the value and joys of existence, and He is a perfect being, we would not expect creation to be in any way miserly or stingy. Instead, we would expect it to be liberal, magnanimous, profuse. Likewise, mirroring His perfection, we might expect a certain kind of efficiency in creation. Now, in one standard form of its usage, the word "efficient" connotes the careful husbanding of limited resources. But God, of course, is not limited in resources. There is, however, another closely related sense of "efficient," according to which the efficient person just acts in such a way as to attain the greatest possible ratio of ends to means: the greatest possible results are brought about with only the most modest means imaginable. This form of efficiency clearly can be connected with the property of being teleologically efficacious.

When we consider our universe, we find a vast profusion of being. There is not just a single form of existence. There is not just a single star system or a single galaxy. There is, rather, a bewildering, awe-inspiring quantity and variety of beings to be found in the universe. Moreover, this profusion of being seems to be the result of very few basic laws, perhaps only one. It would be difficult to imagine greater efficiency in this proportioning of means to ends. And this is clearly a universe conducive to life. Within the extraordinarily broad spectrum of apparently possible universes, only a tightly delineated range would be hospitable to the rise of life, sentient existence and conscious, intelligent beings capable of entering into moral and spiritual relations with each other and with a divine creator. From this perspective, our universe can appear purposive in just the way to be expected if

it is in fact a created realm. In short, our universe can reasonably be thought to resonate with just those qualities it would be expected to have if it were indeed the product of a divine act of creation properly described as rational.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition of reflection on matters theological, divine creation is also believed to be in some sense, free. At the most basic level, this means that the act of creation is not causally compelled or constrained by the action of anything existing independent of God. God did not merely form our current cosmos out of partially resistant, or even perfectly malleable, previously existent material. No such mere forming or designing would capture the absoluteness of origination meant to characterize the fundamental act of divine creation. Traditionally, theologians and philosophers have sought to make this point by insisting that God has created this world *ex nihilo*, "from nothing." There is nothing distinct from God which is used by God as raw material for the formation of this world. Nor is the created realm cut from the cloth of the divine being. It is produced strictly *ex nihilo*. If it were not, the act of production would not be free from the compulsion or constraint of previously existent being, nor would it be as great and dramatic an act as it is. God is not just a molder. He is an absolute maker. The freedom of His creative activity extends to this great an extremity.

Throughout the centuries, it has often been seen as central to the Christian conception of creation to affirm two other propositions about the scope of God's freedom with respect to the activity and products of creation:

- (1) God was free to refrain from creating any universe at all, and
- (2) In choosing to create, God was free to create some other universe instead of our universe.⁵

However, distinct beliefs about the goodness and rationality of both the Creator and His act of creation have been thought by some philosophers to create philosophical problems for each of these affirmations.

First, was God in fact free to refrain from bringing into existence any created beings? Could God have chosen to exist eternally without any creatures? Or was there some necessity about His creating something rather than nothing? As we shall see in the next section, an ontology, or theory of existence, can be developed according to which there are necessarily existing objects distinct from God which lack His aseity, such items as numbers, properties and propositions, abstract objects which are necessarily created by a divine intellectual activity. If there are such objects which depend on God for their necessary existence, He could not have refrained from creating them. His creation of them is necessary. But what about the creation of a universe of concrete individuals, of stars, planets, molecules and persons? Was God free to refrain from ever bringing into existence any such created realm as this? Was God free to refrain from creating any contingent objects, any objects which are individually such that any of them could have failed to exist? Some philosophers have thought not.

In the Middle Ages, a number of principles connecting being and goodness were widely endorsed by philosophically inclined theists. One of these we can refer to as the *Principle of Diffusiveness*:

(PD) Goodness is essentially diffusive of itself and of being.

What this means is, roughly, that it is of the essence of goodness to be shared, communicated or conveyed. Goodness does not remain bottled up; it expresses itself. It is diffusive of itself and it is diffusive of being. Goodness is neither inert nor destructive. It is creative and productive of existent manifestations of itself. The Principle of Diffusiveness claims that goodness naturally expresses itself by bringing things into existence, by thus sharing the wondrous status of being.

If this principle is true, if goodness is essentially diffusive of itself and of being, then, some philosophers have thought, God was bound to create some contingent universe or other. For God is perfectly good and perfectly powerful. He will thus seek to express His character by bringing things into existence, and nothing will prevent this manifestation of His goodness. He therefore *necessarily* will create contingent beings of some sort or other. And if this is true, He is not free not to create a contingent realm.

In a number of recent essays, Norman Kretzmann has brought this principle to our attention and has used it to argue that God's creation of some contingent universe or other is necessitated by His perfect goodness.⁶ Kretzmann's papers are models of historical care and theoretical philosophical argument. I find his case for the necessity of creation to be extremely attractive on a number of grounds. A necessary connection between God and the world, or at least between God and the *type* of world we live in, would simplify immensely the construction of a defensible and plausible cosmological argument for the existence of God, as well as that of a good design argument; it would clarify the ultimate modal equality of the two basic ways of defining or conceiving of God, Perfect Being Theology and Creation Theology; and it would make a defense against the argument from evil a good deal easier in some respects. But I must admit that I have serious reservations about the application of the Principle of Diffusiveness needed for establishing such a necessary connection.

What is the status of the Principle of Diffusiveness? It seems to have been an influential part of Neo-Platonist metaphysics, which has been found attractive by a number of great Christian thinkers. And it is natural to think of goodness as being, of its very essence, expressive of itself. It would be exceedingly odd to think of an individual as good, whose purported goodness was never expressed in any way at all. But is it necessary for perfect goodness to be manifested by the creation of contingent beings? It is hard for me to see how this interpretation of the principle could be thought compelling, or even very plausible, as it stands.

The moral goodness of a being is naturally expressed by what that being does. And many of the morally good things done by a person can be thought of as ways of passing along or sharing ("communicating," "diffusing") the resources of one's goodness. It may even be the case that an individual's goodness would be somehow truncated or incomplete unless there were some other person with whom to commune and to share. But Christians believe that God exists as three persons in one nature, eternally and necessarily. The eternally existing relations among these members of the divine *Trinity* are thought to encompass precisely the sort of communications of love, and sharings of goodness, that the legitimate insight behind the Principle of Diffusiveness requires. So, in order for divine goodness to be expressed in an interpersonal way, it was not, after all, necessary for God to bring about the existence of a contingent universe containing created persons. It is expressed quite naturally in intratrinitarian relations.

But some philosophers seem to have thought that such an internal expression of divine goodness, internal to the divine Trinity, would not alone suffice to satisfy the full requirements of diffusiveness. This appears to be Kretzmann's view. Completeness would demand an expression of divine goodness outside the bounds of divine life. The first sort of expression of divine goodness possible outside the orb of deity would have to involve the creation of other entities. Thus, if there is to be an external as well as an internal manifestation of divine goodness, there must be divine creation.

It can be argued that if God necessarily creates numbers, properties and propositions and exists as a divine Trinity, any reasonable completeness requirement concerning the diffusiveness of goodness is satisfied. God's goodness is expressed internally by trinitarian relations and externally by the giving of being to these necessary abstract entities. It is expressed both personally and metaphysically.

It seems to me that, ultimately, the only way a diffusiveness theorist could plausibly insist upon the necessity of God's creating some contingent universe or other would be by insisting upon the truth of some sort of *Principle of Plenitude* as well:

(PP) Perfect Goodness necessarily expresses itself in as many ways as are possible, and produces as many kinds of good as it can.

The existence of human beings is a good thing. It is possible for human beings to exist. It is possible for God to manifest His goodness by creating human beings. Therefore, by (PP), God must create human beings. (PP) thus seems to entail the necessity not only of God's creating some contingent world or other, but much more specific results as well. In fact, it clearly entails too much.

It is possible for perfect goodness to express itself by providing me with many millions of dollars with which to do good, and perhaps to buy a Jaguar sedan and a beach house. By (PP), I can be assured that God, being all-

powerful as well as perfectly good, will diffuse His goodness in every way possible. Therefore, at some point, the check will be in the mail.

This, of course, is crazy. Yet (PP) is not an absurd principle. Like (PD), it attempts to capture in logically precise form an insight about goodness. (PP) is an attempt to present, as a morally precise, metaphysical principle, the liberality or generosity that characterizes true goodness. The problem is that it is exceedingly difficult to capture the essence of love or goodness in this sort of metaphysically exact form.

It is natural for a man and a woman who love each other, and who are good people, to want to bring into existence a child, or children, with whom to share that love and toward whom to express that goodness. But it is not necessary for marital love and moral goodness to be expressed in this way. A person physically or biologically prevented from having children of his or her own is not necessarily condemned thereby to an incomplete state of personal goodness. A person is not necessarily less loving or good for choosing to remain celibate. Bringing new life into existence is a natural expression of love and goodness. But it is not essential.

There is also no good reason to believe that maximization principles like (PP) actually succeed in requiring determinate tasks of an omnipotent being. First, there may be kinds of good, or forms of expression for goodness, that are noncompossible. So (PP) would have to be qualified accordingly. But even then, there is hardly any more reason to believe that there is a complete array, or a best complete array, of compossible forms of creatable good, or expressions of goodness, than there is reason to believe that there is any such thing as a highest possible number. And without this, the requirement of (PP), even suitably qualified, would be wholly indeterminate. But a wholly indeterminate principle cannot be taken to be an accurate articulation of any truth about reality. A wholly indeterminate principle does not succeed in specifying precisely anything in particular about reality, despite any appearances to the contrary. And whenever nothing in particular is successfully specified with any precision about reality, no truth is accurately conveyed. In particular, it cannot be true that "Perfect Goodness necessarily expresses itself in as many ways as are possible, and produces as many kinds of good as it can" if there are no determinate, definite upper limits to the number of ways in which the expression of goodness is possible, or to the number of kinds of good that can be produced by the only sort of being who, in a theistic worldview, can be considered perfectly good, namely, the God who is also perfectly powerful. So it is quite reasonable to reject (PP), and thus the interpretation of (PD) which it provides. And I can find no other compelling reason to endorse the view that God must have created some contingent universe or other.

With this conclusion, I believe we have secured our right to conceive of the scope of divine freedom with respect to the act of creation to be so extensive as to encompass the freedom to refrain from bringing into being any contingent creatures such as ourselves. And such a conception is clearly

consonant with a very natural interpretation of the overall thrust of Perfect Being Theology, when it is brought to bear on this topic. For it surely would seem greater for God to have the most extensive range of freedom we can imagine, consistent with His never acting in such a way as to violate His character or nature. And in addition, with the conception of God as free never to have created any contingent beings, we have secured the basis for another important insistence of Christian theologians that the very existence of a universe at all should be experienced and accepted by us as a free gift from God.

At the present time, I am convinced that God's creation is to be thought of as free in this most radical sense. And yet, it would be misleading for me not to admit that I feel the attraction of the necessitarian line, particularly as presented by Kretzmann—a philosopher whose work has proved time and again his uncanny instinct for sensing the deep insight behind apparently problematic or currently unpopular traditional views, whether they are majority or minority reports from the history of philosophical theology. In the present case, it seems to me, the power of the necessitarian view is tied up with the portrait of God to be found in the New Testament. Most theists concur in holding that God is perfectly good. The New Testament clearly presents that goodness as encompassing perfect love. The God of Jesus seeks to save the lost, as a good shepherd or a mother hen gathering her chicks together within the warmth of her presence. It is easy to imagine the boundless love of an infinite power as seeking to bring all possible creatures into the bright communion of actuality, leaving none to languish eternally in a netherworld of mere *possibilia*. Correspondingly, it is difficult to imagine a completely perfect God, who easily could share the joys of existence with creatures, deciding for all eternity that He would not.

Our imaginations, however, are so formed by the actual that it is sometimes difficult to conceive of the remotely possible. Under the dispensation of being and goodness vouchsafed to us by the divine, it is quite hard for many of us to entertain a convincing vision of eternal trinitarian solitariness mitigated only by the unchanging co-presence of a necessarily existent realm of abstract objects. We are tempted to ask how a perfect God capable of creating finite persons at no cost to Himself could nonetheless eternally resolve not to share the wonder of existence in this way. It is not as if there is a limited metaphysical space to share with a created universe, or a limited amount of power, some of which would be expended on such a project and thereby lost for other purposes.

But if this is our judgment on the cost of creating, we are focusing too narrowly on considerations concerning the being and power of God. Our created realm is marked by both beauty and blight. And, if anything like the polarity characteristic of traditional Christian eschatology is to be taken seriously, the full cost of creating free persons may be far beyond our power to imagine. Furthermore, it may also be the case that any need we might suppose there to be for the interpersonal flow of divine love and goodness to

spill beyond the bounds of intratrinitarian life reflects only our failure to grasp the magnificent completeness of that life, of which the Aristotelian conception of divine self-sufficiency is only the thinnest and most impoverished reflection. Intimations of such possibilities as these reinforce my sense that, as deeply attractive as the necessitarian line can sometimes appear, we are right to resist its strictures and insist on the fullest divine freedom with respect to the most basic issue of contingent creation.

There is, however, one remaining objection to the claim that God was free not to create a contingent world. It typically proceeds by way of an objection to the other proposition about divine freedom mentioned when we began our examination of the freedom of creation:

(2) In choosing to create, God was free to create some other universe instead of our universe.

Critics of this claim have typically maintained that, since God is a perfect being, God's creative products must be perfect as well, since effects resemble their causes, or creations manifest the skill and greatness of their creators. So, as the greatest possible being, God could create only the best possible world. He has created this world. Therefore, this must be the best possible world, despite any appearances to the contrary. But if our universe is the best possible universe, God was not free to create some other universe instead. Proposition (2) is thus false.

The great philosopher Leibniz (1646-1716) reasoned in this way, saying:

Now this supreme wisdom, united to a goodness that is no less infinite, cannot but have chosen the best. For as a lesser evil is a kind of good, even so a lesser good is a kind of evil if it stands in the way of a greater good; and there would be something to correct in the actions of God if it were possible to do better.⁷

He further elaborates:

Now God cannot will to do anything other than that which he does, because, of necessity, he must will whatever is fitting. Hence it follows that all that which he does not, is not fitting, that he cannot will to do it, and consequently that he cannot do it.⁸

Leibniz even boldly describes how God chooses what to create. First, God knows all possibilities concerning what might exist. But then:

The wisdom of God, not content with embracing all the possibles, penetrates them, compares them, weighs them one against the other, to estimate their degrees of perfection or imperfection, the strong and the weak, the good and the evil. It goes even beyond the

finite combinations, it makes of them an infinity of infinities, that is to say, an infinity of possible sequences of the universe, each of which contains an infinity of creatures. By this means the divine Wisdom distributes all the possibles it had already contemplated separately, into so many universal systems which it further compares the one with the other. The result of all these comparisons and deliberations is the choice of the best from among all these possible systems, which wisdom makes in order to satisfy goodness completely; and such is precisely the plan of the universe as it is.⁹

And, making it all the more impressive, God accomplishes all this, according to Leibniz, atemporally.

This is clearly a majestic conception of the nature of the divine activity in creating. It has an undeniable, initial attractiveness for anyone committed to the method of Perfect Being Theology. But its troubling result is to turn creation into something akin to a mechanical procedure. God does an immensely complex calculation, the result tells Him what world to create, and from that result he *cannot* deviate. He was not free to create any world different from this world in even the smallest respect—one more atom, or one less elementary particle. And, of course, by the same reasoning, He was not free to refrain altogether from creating a world. It was necessary that He create the best.

Critics of Leibniz have been quick to point out that this world certainly does not look like the best possible world. It is easy to think of many ways in which things could be improved. There are evils that could be eliminated. There are goods that could be increased. Leibniz's response is to argue that "the evil that occurs is an inevitable result of the best."¹⁰ From where we stand, it might seem as though the universe could be improved in a great many ways. We, however, fail to see the big picture. We are not in, and could not possibly be in, the best position to see how the many aspects of this world fit together into a whole and affect its overall value. Only God could occupy such a position. So appearances can be misleading, and should not alone cause us to reject the result of this reasoning. Such is the reply available to Leibnizians.

In a highly influential article entitled "Must God Create the Best?" Robert M. Adams has resisted the Leibniz view in a different way.¹¹ Adams suggests that God could create a less than best possible world without wronging anyone and without treating anyone, all things considered, unkindly. He maintains that God has no obligation to anyone to create only the best, and so God is free to graciously create good worlds which fall far short of being the best possible. But suppose Adams is right about God's having no such obligation. Do we expect manifestations of great goodness to be restricted to contexts of obligation to some particular person or other? Could the mere fact that no one need necessarily be wronged by an inferior creation suffice to justify God's creating less than the best? Adams does not rule

out there being principles governing perfect goodness, truths constitutive of perfection, which would still generate Leibniz's conclusion.

But is it at all plausible to think that, among all the possibilities for creation, there is a single best possible world? Leibniz thought that if there were no such world, God would not have created at all. But refraining from creating would have resulted in the circumstance of there existing nothing but God alone, a circumstance or state of affairs with great value, but, as we have seen earlier, a state of affairs with less overall value than that of God's existing along with a created universe. Leibniz, however, seems to have thought that God would never, and indeed could never, act without a fully sufficient reason for every aspect of His action. If there were no best possible world, and refraining from creation would not itself be a mode of divine action, God would have no sufficient reason to create any possible world, and so would refrain from creating anything, thereby refraining, in this regard, from acting.

The first point that must be made here is that we often think of ourselves as refraining from action in a certain regard only on account of reasons we have for so refraining. But if refraining from creating falls within the scope of possible reason giving, or the having of reasons, it is hard to see how Leibniz's argument here can go through, from his own point of view. God would have no sufficient reason to satisfy Himself with the state of affairs of His existing bereft of any contingent creatures.

But there is a deeper problem with Leibniz's argument on this point. If God is truly free, it can be argued that He can act without a completely sufficient reason for every aspect of his action. This is just what the fullest possible range of freedom involves. This point blocks Leibniz's reasoning here and also counts against another related Leibnizian conviction that if there were a class of best possible worlds, each surpassed by no other world but all tied in maximal value, then again God could not create at all, since He would have no sufficient reason to select one of those maximal worlds over the others. If He were truly free, however, He could just pick one.

Thus, from the perspective of a robust conception of the range of God's freedom, it does not seem to be the case that in order for God to create at all, there must be a single best possible universe He could bring into existence. And this is surely a good thing, since it is extremely difficult to suppose that there is a single scale of value on which all possible creations could be ranked, with one and only one surpassing all others with respect to degree of overall value. There are all sorts of values which different sorts of creatures might exemplify. And there is no good reason to believe that all these creaturely values are commensurable or comparable on the same scale of measurement. Some world *A* might be better than a rival world *B* in some respects, but with *B* surpassing *A* in some others, and the relevant values not such that they could be summed over and compared overall. There is no reason to suppose that things are as tidy as the Leibnizian perspective requires.

Furthermore, as many philosophers have pointed out over the centuries, for any world composed of a certain number of good creatures, or exemplifying a certain number of goods, n , there is always conceivable a greater world with $n + 1$ goods, or good creatures. So, on the simplest, barest grounds of additive value alone, it seems impossible to suppose that there can be a single best possible world. And without this, Leibniz's overall argument collapses.

If creation is to be good and rational, it must be consonant with the moral character of God. But if we are to think of it as truly free, we should be very wary of metaphysical principles whose effect would be to straightjacket the activity of God in this regard. If we have no good reason to think that there is or could be any such thing as a single best possible world creatable by God, and we have no good reason to suppose that there must be a sufficient reason for every single aspect of God's activity, then we have no good reason to follow Leibniz in believing that only a single world falls within the range of God's freedom to create. We can thus endorse both of the traditional affirmations that God was free to refrain from creating and free to create something other than what He did choose to create.

In rejecting Leibniz's conclusions, however, we do not have to reject all his insights. Surely it is fair to expect excellence of workmanship in any divine creation. Even if the perfection of the Creator cannot be manifest in a single perfect creation alone, God's surpassing greatness will surely manifest itself in His creating only worlds of tremendous value. It is even natural to suppose that, with respect to whatever aspects of creation can be maximized, say, in certain kinds of efficiency, any world God creates will be the best possible in those respects. But this is far from supposing that there is a single best possible creation which alone God can bring into being. God will express Himself in His activity. But His freedom of expression is vast.

CREATURELY DEPENDENCE

We have been exploring the idea of God as a free, rational and good creator. In this section, we shall examine a bit more the way in which all things thus depend upon God for their existence. All things distinct from God stand in a dependence relation to God, a relation which is both *direct* and *absolute*.

It is never the case that some created object x depends upon God only in the sense of depending for its existence upon some other created objects y and z , which in turn directly depend upon God. Every created object depends upon God directly for its existence. There is no indirectness about any such dependence relation. It is not just that my body depends on air and water and other physical substances for its existence, and these in turn depend upon God. Metaphysical or ontological dependence upon God, dependence for *being*, is, rather, in every case direct.

Such dependence is also absolute. God does not launch things into existence and allow them subsequently to persist on their own. He does not

support an object's existence in only some of the circumstances in which it exists. The dependence is thorough and continuous. To convey this idea, many philosophers and theologians have spoken of God's activities of *creation* and *conservation* with respect to the world. God does not bring things into existence and then take a hands-off approach to them. This is the error known as *deism*. God continually supports things in existence, moment to moment, throughout the entirety of their careers on the stage of reality. Divine conservation is thought to be so absolute a requirement for existence that, if God were to withdraw His support for our contingent universe for even an instant, it would all cease to be. To stress the importance of the divine activity to the continuous existence of any created object, some theologians have spoken of *continuous creation*. The idea is, roughly, that just as God creates an object at its first moment of existence, He recreates it at all subsequent moments at which it exists. Yet, as the term "continuous" indicates, this is not to be thought of as involving a staccato repetition of numerous, discrete creative acts. There is a continuity to the activity of divine creation which can be conceptualized either as conservation or as continuous creation. The important point is that at each instant of the existence of any created thing, it stands in a relation to God of absolute dependence.

There is another feature of absoluteness manifested by the most exalted version of a metaphysical doctrine of creation. Absolutely everything distinct from God depends on God for its existence. This is a foundational claim for any thoroughly theistic ontology. If God is the greatest possible being, a maximally perfect source of existence, then He is not just one more item in the inventory of reality. He is the hub of the wheel, the center and focus, the ultimate support, of all. The difference between theism and atheism is thus not just a disagreement over whether one entity of a certain description exists or not. It is a disagreement over the origin, and thus the ultimate nature, of everything.

God is often said to be *omnipresent*, or to have the property of *omnipresence*. He is present everywhere in the realm of His contingent creation. But His presence is not best understood as something akin to physical location. It is rather to be thought of as a function of His knowledge and power. God is thought to be present everywhere in the sense that His perfect knowledge and power extend over all. There is nothing outside the scope of His awareness or independent of the exercise of His creative power. He can act anywhere, and interact with anyone at any place. That is because He is ever-active and ever-aware at every place. All contingent physical objects, all contingent nonphysical objects, and all external relations which hold between and among them depend on God's activity of creation. Absolutely nothing in the realm of contingency exists independent of Him.

But what of the realm of necessity? Are there necessarily existent entities distinct from God, such as properties and propositions or numbers? And if so, how do they relate to God? Following Plato, many philosophers over the centuries have believed that there are such abstract objects, that they do nec-

essarily exist, and that it follows from this that they exist independently of any exercise of divine power.

It is difficult, though, to conceive of what the existence of such independent objects might amount to. For, following Plato, abstract objects are not thought of as existing anywhere in the physical universe. They are instantiated, or exemplified, are true or false, or obtain, within the space-time realm. But they themselves have a more ethereal existence. Various human beings, for example, may be more or less just in their dealings with others. But justice itself—the property, the abstract entity—does not dwell in the land in any other than a metaphorical sense.

Abstract objects existing in their own realms of being are also typically thought of as standing outside any causal relations whatsoever. But then the existence of such things does look *sui generis*, different from anything else imaginable, and very strange. For what is the difference between a thing's existing and its not existing? In all clear and relatively uncontroversial cases of existence, it seems that for a thing to exist is for it to have a place in a causal nexus, and thus to be capable of interacting with other existing things. If a tree exists outside my door, there is something out there I can bump into. There is something there which can cool me with its shade. Now, clearly, there are many things we can't just bump into, but their existence causally impinges upon us in other ways. For example, there are things whose existence is manifest only due to their abilities to causally affect sensitive detection devices. But to say that something exists utterly outside any causal context at all is to break away from our clearest paradigms of what existence amounts to in a most decisive way.

Because of these and other worries, some philosophers have denied that there is any robust sense in which abstract objects really exist at all. And if the position of these anti-Platonists is true, if there really are no necessary, abstract objects existing distinct from God, then from God's being the creator of all contingent things alone it would follow that there is nothing distinct from God which exists independent of Him. But it is difficult to construct a metaphysically satisfactory world-view without acknowledging some objective reality for numbers, properties, propositions and the like. So a great number of theistic philosophers have found the severe anti-Platonist move unacceptable. They have wanted to endorse the reality of numbers, properties and propositions, and have seen a way of avoiding the problems which attend the conception of these entities as abstract objects existing autonomously, wholly independently in their own realms of reality. To this end they have taken up and developed St. Augustine's suggestion that these things be thought of as ideas in the mind of God. The *divine ideas tradition*, as this way of thinking is referred to, maintains that it is an ontologically efficacious divine intellectual activity which is responsible for the existence of these things which we customarily classify as abstract objects. They are ideas which God thinks, eternally and necessarily. And the creative efficacy of His thought gives them being. They are caused to exist by being thought.

And they are as they are in virtue of being thought of, or conceived, as they are by God.

This is a powerful metaphysical perspective: God is the creator not only of contingent reality, but also of all those necessities which comprise the modal framework of reality. All possible worlds exist in God as thoughts in the infinite divine mind. He is the creator of possibilities, the eternal upholder of necessities. God necessarily gives being to the realm of abstracta, *the framework of creation*—so called because all the possibilities and necessities resident in the divine mind structure all the available avenues of creative production, and thus all the ways the world can be.

It is not that God brings such things into existence at a time prior to which they have not existed. If they are eternal objects, He must eternally have been creating them. If they are necessities, He creates them, or gives them being, in every possible situation. But if they owe their being to God, as they must on an absolutely thorough-going theism, their necessity does not entail their aseity or ontological independence. Necessity is compatible with created-ness. Only God is both necessary and independent.

If properties, propositions and the like depend on God for their existence, they can be thought of as standing in a causal nexus—they are caused to be by God. And the realm of their existence is clarified—it is God's mind. So the troublesome worries of standard Platonism are avoided, but without the cost incurred by strict anti-Platonism. And, at the same time, we have a view which is clearly consonant with a thoroughly theistic ontology. All things, including these things, depend on God.

The theoretical benefits of such a view are great. When in seeking to understand the scope of omnipotence we find we must admit that God cannot do the logically impossible, we are freed from having to think of God's activity being restricted by logical principles that have objective reality and force completely independent of Him. The principles that structure His activities are ideas or thoughts in His mind whose existence derives from Him. Likewise, when in coming to appreciate the full stature of divine goodness, we say that God necessarily acts in accordance with moral principles, we do not have to think of objective moral laws as somehow existing "out there," independent of God, constraining His activity from above. They also are thoughts in the divine mind, existing as entertained by God, true as affirmed by Him, necessary as endorsed by Him in all possible worlds.

The creation of necessarily existent abstract objects by God is interestingly different from His creation of a contingent universe in many ways, and this should not be overlooked. The activity responsible for this realm will not be characterizable as "free, rational and good" in precisely all the same senses as the divine activity productive of a contingent world. It will be free only in the sense of being uncompelled and unconstrained by anything independent of God. Its rationality will be essential, and of the most fundamental sort possible. Its goodness will consist precisely in giving rise to being which in turn gives rise to all the possibilities for contingent good.

With necessities, there is no selection. There is no alternative. But there can still be a dependence on God, a dependence which is both direct and absolute.

This is a fairly esoteric realm of divine creation, but it was important to consider, however briefly, because it is important to see how the theist can subsume all things distinct from God under the umbrella of divine creation. The greatest possible being will be the most thorough source of reality imaginable. Everything will testify to His greatness. Nothing will escape His domain, not even abstract objects.¹²

Notes

1. Genesis 1:1.
2. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Compendium of Theology*, tr. Cyril Vollert (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1948), p. 63.
3. Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31.
4. To illustrate the presence and absence of a natural principle of unity, consider a purported object consisting of: one drawer of my desk, my Pelikan pen, my left foot and Notre Dame's Golden Dome. This is clearly a "cooked up" entity for which there is no natural principle of unity. It is thus not to be considered a real individual composed of those named individuals. By way of contrast, there is a natural principle of unity according to which my desk drawer can be thought of legitimately as one entity.
5. For convenience these propositions are stated in the past tense. Atemporalists will want to restate them tenselessly. It must be said, however, that it is a bit trickier to explain and justify these commitments from an atemporalist perspective since, on that view, there is no time before the creation of this world when God has real creative options, any one of which He can then go on to take. It should also be noted that I use the term "universe" here to denote any created object or collection of such objects, whether physical or nonphysical, insofar as that object, or collection of objects, is all that exists distinct from God.
6. See Norman Kretzmann, "Goodness, Knowledge, and Indeterminacy in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Sup. to 80 (October 1983): 631-649; "A General Problem of Creation: Why Would God Create Anything at All?" in *Being and Goodness*, ed. Scott MacDonald (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 208-228; and "A Particular Problem of Creation: Why Would God Create This World?" *Being and Goodness*, pp. 229-249.
7. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy*, abridged, ed. Diogenes Allen, *The Library of Liberal Arts* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966), p.35.
8. Leibniz, p. 101.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
11. *Philosophical Review* 81 (July 1972): 317-332, reprinted in Thomas V. Morris, ed., *The Concept of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 91-106.
12. For more on this, see my *Anselmian Explorations* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), chapter 9. See also Christopher Menzel, "Theism, Platonism, and the Metaphysics of Mathematics," *Faith and Philosophy* 4 (October 1987): 365-382.

Book Reviews

Miller, Patrick D. *Deuteronomy. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990. 253 pp. ISBN 0-8042-3105-2.

This is a well-written, clear and stimulating commentary on the book of Deuteronomy by Patrick Miller, professor of Old Testament theology at Princeton Theological Seminary. This work is, in many parts, a compilation of the author's classes, lectures and publications and has therefore been developed over an extended period of time. It is interesting to note that Patrick Miller is not only the author of the Deuteronomy volume, but also the Old Testament editor of this series of commentaries. Consequently, one might expect that this particular volume should be a model meeting the expectations and the objectives set forth for the series.

The intention of this commentary is that it will be a primarily theological exposition for the church catholic. Its purpose is not to supplant the historical, critical or homiletical commentaries and aids; rather, it is intended to be a supplemental resource for the ultimate goal of preaching.

As a result, the brief introduction (scarcely seventeen pages) reflects this aim and does not lay out any apologetic for a particular position regarding historical-critical issues, i.e., authorship, date, and so on (cf. Craigie's *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT). The author does, however, reveal his own position from a traditional historical-critical point of view. Miller maintains that since the composition of Deuteronomy has taken place over several years, then the question is not who wrote the book, but rather, what circles or groups of persons were responsible for collecting and editing.

Miller posits three major proposals for the source of Deuteronomy. The first proposal is that it has arisen from prophetic circles. He cites E. W. Nicholson as identifying a relationship between Deuteronomy and the prophets. The second proposal is that Deuteronomy originated in Levitical priestly circles, a position that he claims is advocated by Gerhard von Rad. The third proposal is that its source is from the wisdom and scribal circles, a position that he perceives is taken by Moshe Weinfeld. Miller's conclusion to this search for authorship is that for one to be able to identify a particular author is not as important as the information that one uncovers during the process of investigation.

Miller claims that Deuteronomy fits its literary context, picking up the narrative where Numbers concludes. At the same time, however, he admits that it does not so easily fit. He accounts for Deuteronomy's distinctiveness by indentifying material of a different genre (which he calls "speech") from the preceding books which are primarily carried by "narrative." This new genre, along with the repeated material from the Pentateuch, and the distinctive character of the language and style of Deuteronomy compared with the preceding books and its similarity with the succeeding books, leads Miller to conclude that Deuteronomy should be understood as a "boundary" book both in its literary and its presumed historical setting. On the one hand, it is shaped and understood by the preceding material. It serves as closure for what has already happened. At the same time, it is instruction for the future, inherent in the book's homiletical nature.

Miller suggests three clues to understanding Deuteronomy. First, he emphasizes the explicit literary structure of a series of speeches by Moses. These are indicated by four editorial superscriptions introducing the material to follow. This structure emphasizes the preaching character of the book and the role of Moses. Second, Miller proposes a recognition of the substructure of Deuteronomy as covenant document. This perception of the book, Miller states, adds a political trait to the hermeneutical and homiletical nature of the book. It focuses on issues of allegiance and loyalty. The third clue that Miller proposes to understanding Deuteronomy is found in the theological structure identified and capsulized in the Shema (Deut. 6:4-5) and the Decalogue (chap. 5). This is the hub of Deuteronomy. The whole book could be capsulized in these statements and specified with its implications. The author concludes that these characteristics are particular to Deuteronomy and signal the import and intention of this book, i.e., to give the reader an understanding of the past, to direct the reader in the future, to call the reader into covenant with God "this day," and to choose life.

When one reads this commentary, one is impressed by the theological prowess of the author. Although the author admits his theological presuppositions (a privilege which should not be denied), one finds within his exposition a flexibility for understanding. Miller does not suppose his understanding is the only legitimate one. His comments, posited in an expository essay format, provide a substantial theological synthesis of the text being considered. After reading *Deuteronomy*, one discovers that the author meets his objectives in producing a theological exposition of the literary units within the book. Although one might wish for more detailed material concerning textual, literary and historical aspects, one must acknowledge one's indebtedness for this comprehensive theological treatment of a book perhaps central to Old Testament theology.

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Klein, Lillian R. *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series, 68/Bible and Literature Series, 14. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988. 260 pp. ISBN 1-85075-100-5.

The acceptance of synchronic analysis within OT studies has opened up the substantial interpretative resources of literary criticism and comparative literature to biblical scholarship. The subject of irony, for example, has received extensive systematization. Here Lillian R. Klein analyzes the role of irony in the book of Judges. Klein does not attempt a comprehensive reinterpretation of the book, but defines the role of irony in shaping its structure. The author also employs plot theory, particularly as understood by Meir Sternberg (*Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1978]) to establish a general literary structure within which to analyze the role of irony. She thus understands 1:1-3:11 as "exposition" and 17:1-21:25 as "resolution," with the intervening material understood to explore the judges in light of the two paradigms, major judge and minor. The role of irony in the narrative is progressive. The exposition section is virtually free of irony, but establishes the framework within which irony can move. The resolution sections are deeply ironic. The intervening material displays an ever-deepening ironic structure. The book of Judges, according to Klein, is a "tour de force of irony" (p. 20).

The hopes one brings to a book such as this are quickly and consistently disappointed. Instead of a disciplined analysis of the incidence and kinds of irony found in the book, one finds exegesis of an extremely questionable sort. Problems are immediately foreshadowed in the preface where the author names as "standard" Hebrew lexica the work of Brown-Driver-Briggs and Benjamin Davidson. The latter is an analytical lexicon used by students who have trouble parsing their verbs! This fateful choice reverberates through the rest of the book. The author tends to work with "root" meanings of words, often playing alleged translational alternatives (usually derived from Davidson) against one another and against the context. Often the philology is simply wrong, such as referring to *wēyēš* in 6:13 as an example of the *waw* conversive (p. 53), or worse, in the discussion of Judges 9:22 where the verb *wayyāšar* is said to derive from the root *šûr* which is said to mean, *per* Davidson, primarily "contend, strive" and secondarily "to be prince, have dominion." Abimelech is then shown to have both contended and ruled, which is said to be ironic (p. 70). The verb, however, is simply derived from the noun *šar* which means "prince" in West Semitic dialects and "king" in East Semitic dialects. The artificially generated verbal "root" is actually *šārar*. The usage, however, is, in fact, ironic! Abimelech pretends to be a king (*melek*) but when the narrator generalizes about him, he says Abimelek "acted as prince." This typical example could be multiplied.

The interpretation usually becomes highly speculative and fanciful. For example, the author notes that the spirit of Yahweh does not come upon Deborah, and that the name "Deborah" means "honey bee." So far, so good. She then suggests that the OT's paucity of references to bees derives from the fact that bees are a society dominated by a female who castrates the one male who is allowed to impregnate her, and that the bee figures heavily in Cretan paganism. Thus the OT's male bias and pagan associations of bees make it impossible for the spirit of Yahweh to be brought into contact with Deborah (pp. 41-42, 216-217, n. 11; pp. 129, 227-228, nn. 37, 38).

At other times Klein appears simply not to have read the text. At least five times (pp. 65, 69, 89, 125, 180) the author claims Ehud was not "raised up" by Yahweh, and this observation is important to the argument. But the text of Judges 3:15 clearly states: *wayyāqem yhw h lāhem mōšīa' 'et 'ēhūd* ("and Yahweh raised up for them a savior, Ehud..."). Similarly, the author claims Tola does not deliver Israel, flatly contradicting 10:1 which says he did (p. 101). A more complex chain of error emerges in the discussion of Samson. The author uses the reference to renaming the Judean city Kiriath-Jearim as "Camp of Dan" (18:12) to suggest that, since the spirit is said first to stir Samson "in the camp of Dan" (13:25), Samson is therefore depicted ironically as outside his inheritance from the beginning. But here the author has not read the text at 13:25 correctly. There the "camp of Dan" is placed explicitly "between Zorah and Eshtaol," towns only a mile or so apart and within Danite territory. A similar geographical lapse causes Klein to identify the city of Dan in the far north with Shiloh, 90 miles to the south (p. 189).

Most impressive is the author's analysis of the annunciation story in Judges 13. She rightly compares and contrasts it with other OT annunciation stories, but argues that, in these accounts, "an intercourse—a wonderworking deed, a graciousness—between divinity and man seems implicit. It is important to note an active, if nonspecific verb, *as'* [sic] 'to do' enacts a wonder that renders a barren woman pregnant" (p. 112-113). After noting the Bible's tendency to assume that failure to conceive points to female infertility, the author suggests that, in fact, Abraham is infertile in Genesis 21. Of course, concubinage normally enabled the ancients to rule out male infertility, and Abraham's fertility is clear from his having had a child by Hagar, and later, several by Keturah. Nevertheless, Klein moves on to imply that Manoah was not just infertile, but impotent: "...it is not too far-fetched to interpret him [Manoah] as 'unmanned' as well" (p. 114). This is very far-fetched.

This book also suffers from inadequate editing. There are many typographical errors (e.g., Gideon's name comes from the root *gd'* not *gdy*, p. 54) and the Hebrew transliteration is inconsistent, often with no distinction being made between 'ayin and 'aleph, and often omitting these consonants within words (e.g., *šor'āh* is transliterated *šorāh*). At other times the transliteration is inexplicable (*kh'rt* for *krt* on p. 54).

It is sad that such an important subject has received such poor treatment, and that in such a distinguished series. We still need a rigorous analysis of irony in the book of Judges. We shall have to wait.

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Webb, Barry G. *The Book of Judges: An Integrated Reading*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series, 46. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987. 280 pp. ISBN 1-85075-034-3 (hardbound), ISBN 1-85075-035-1 (paper).

This revised 1985 Sheffield doctoral dissertation directed by David Clines with support from the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical and Theological Research admirably contributes to studies on the book of Judges. Although scholars have long focused on the book's diachronic, traditio-historical problems, its synchronic literary problems remain inadequately addressed. Webb's study brackets out questions of sources and redaction in order "to understand the work as an integrated whole" and "to demonstrate...that the work in its final form is a more meaningful narrative work than has generally been recognized." He defends treating Judges as an integrated, distinct whole and briefly defines his own approach (chap. 1), moving next directly to a discussion of the Jephthah story, which he considers a "sounding" (chap. 2). Webb finds here confirmation of his basic methodological principles, spelled out on pages 76-78 in slightly greater detail than previously. The next three chapters take up 1:1-3:6 (chap. 3), 3:7-16:31 (chap. 4) and 17:1-21:25 (chap. 5). These three sections are understood structurally, along a musical metaphor, as "overture," "variations" and "coda" respectively. The "overture" states the essential theme of the book: Israel's failure to possess the whole land, despite Yahweh's sworn promise to Israel's ancestors, is due to apostasy. The central section (3:7-16:31) develops this and other related themes at length, drawing them all to a climax in the Samson narrative (Judges 13-16). The last five chapters "resonate with these themes, and, by picking up elements from the introduction, form the work into a rounded literary unit" (p. 208). A final chapter gathers together the conclusions and develops a few of the study's implications for further research. A bibliography of works cited, Scripture and author indices round out the book.

This first monographic treatment of the literary structure of the book of Judges is an excellent one, despite occasional significant gaps. Webb's analy-

sis is a straightforward quest for the plain grammatical and literary sense of the text with ideology and theory taking a secondary role to setting out the text's structure. Webb often productively rethinks familiar passages and offers suggestions which are usually convincing. Where needed, the author provides diagrams to clarify his proposals. There is much solid literary exegesis in the four central chapters of the book. His analysis of 1:1-36, for example, unearths coherence where scholars have normally spoken in terms of archival fragments. Whatever one thinks of his music analogy, Webb has moved beyond the dysfunctional structural nomenclature of "fragmentary preface," "main body" and appendices" so characteristic of the commentaries.

This excellent study almost succeeds in distracting the reader from the contemporary debate over method and hermeneutic. The brief methodological discussion is disappointing. The sample questions to be asked of the text (pp. 39-40) and the supplemental suggestions on pp. 76-78 do not provide adequate parameters and controls for interpretation. What is needed is not a metaphor and questions, but a precise, comprehensive taxonomy of the phenomena and logical relationships, explicit and implicit, which constitute essential structure. More serious is the avoidance of the contemporary question of whether the coherence inheres in the text or is an act of construal by the reader.

The book's procedure is also curious. Following the introduction is a "sounding," a preliminary study of the Jephthah narrative (10:6-12:7) which provides a microcosmic portrait and, presumably, a defense of the approach. So many points in the Jephthah narrative derive their meaning from their place in the progressive movement of the book that one wonders how fruitful it is to begin the presentation here. It would be better to begin where the reader begins, with the hotbed of textual, literary, redactional and historical problems in 1:1-3:6. A method capable of sorting out this difficult passage would be a candidate for dealing with the rest of the book.

The author's initial division of the book needs greater discussion. Most commentators, proceeding redaction-critically, see 2:6-3:6, with its quasi-cyclical pattern and explicit mention of *šôpêṭîm*, as an early introduction to the "main body" of the book. A later editor is thought to have added 1:1-36 as a preface to the whole with 2:1-5 as a transition, thus giving a "double" introduction to the book and a problem to interpreters: Should the first book-level division occur after 2:5 or 3:6? Webb's analysis of 2:1-5 and the literary relationship between 1:1-2:5 and 2:6-3:6 contributes substantially to redactional analysis. Unfortunately, the possibility of interrelating redactional and rhetorical interpretations of 1:1-3:6 in a truly integrated reading is not realized. One wishes Webb engaged in more dialogue with diachronic critical analysis.

A further problem comes with the designation of the last five chapters as "coda," suggesting primarily mere thematic resonance, not substantial thematic and discursive development. This does not advance far beyond the

"appendix" nomenclature. Moreover, the book is left with a "climax" (the Samson narrative) occurring with a quarter of the book yet to come. The relationships between chapters 1-16 and 17-21 need deeper probing. Is it possible that the climax of the book comes, as we would expect, at the end? The relationship between these two sections could have been clarified by a form- and redaction-critical analysis of the refrain at 17:6, 18:1, 19:1 and 21:25, particularly its temporal function. This, however, would entail diachronic and comparative analysis, which lie outside the purview of a strictly synchronic literary study.

Failing to see substantive thematic advance in chapters 17-21 is also related to Webb's dismissal of claims that Judges expresses a programmatic position regarding the monarchy. It is striking that the first sixteen chapters of the book show a deteriorating Israel and the steady collapse of the role of judge, while the last five chapters deepen the portrayal of Israel's deterioration and point out the absence of a king. Much in chapters 1-16 is best construed as foreshadowing advocacy of the institution of dynastic Judean monarchy. Webb's approach reflects the ahistorical character of a purely synchronic method. The text is not seen in the concrete context of Israel's struggle to understand its mutation from tribal confederation to monarchic state in the light of its covenantal traditions, particularly the failure of premonarchic Israel to inherit the whole land.

This book provides the best literary analysis of the book of Judges to date. On the other hand, the flattening which results from avoiding questions of sources, editing and historical context raises serious questions about the book's subtitle.

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Metzger, Bruce M. *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987. 326 pp. ISBN 0-19-826180-2.

This volume is the third in a trilogy of works written by Bruce Metzger dealing with various facets of the origins of the New Testament. It follows his treatments of the text and of the early versions of the New Testament.

The present volume is divided into three parts. In Part I Metzger surveys the literature on the canon, tracing scholarly discussion on the canon from the mid-seventeenth century to the present. Metzger identifies almost every work that deals directly with the New Testament canon, and thus provides a storehouse of bibliographic data. In opting for this exhaustive ap-

proach, however, Metzger is unable to present the main lines of development in this history of investigation into the canon or to give much attention to the most significant contributions. The works of von Campenhausen and Childs, for example, receive a mere sentence or two.

Part II tracks the development of the New Testament canon in the Church. Here Metzger deals, in turn, with the apostolic fathers, the various influences that led to the development of the canon, the emergence of the canon in the east and west, the Christian apocryphal literature, early lists of New Testament books, and the closing of the canon in the east and west. This is probably the most careful, complete and balanced presentation of the New Testament canon to be found anywhere in English. Although most of the influences which Metzger identifies as standing behind the canon are rather predictable (Gnosticism, Marcion, Montanism), he does give some attention to influences not often cited, for example, the role of persecution, the emergence of the codex, and the appearance of other types of canonical lists (in addition to the Hebrew scriptures, he identifies lists of Greek poetry and even texts dealing with magic).

In Part III Metzger turns from a historical orientation to a more theoretical one. Here he discusses various types of problems the Church confronted in the process of establishing the canon: the criteria the Church employed for canonicity, the relationship between inspiration and canonical authority (the Church regarded as inspired many books and persons beyond the biblical books and their authors, so that the canon was not grounded in a view of unique inspiration), the problem of four different Gospels, and the tension between the historical specificity of the Pauline epistles and their use as canon within the large Church.

Metzger also addresses several theological questions the canon raises for the Church today. To the question, "Which form of the text is canonical?" Metzger answers that there was no concern in the early Church to link canonicity to the best text; the fathers tended simply to assume the text they had. This leads Metzger to conclude, for example, that although the "long ending" of Mark did not originally belong to that Gospel, "the passage ought to be accepted as part of the canonical text of Mark." He does not raise the possibility that the Church's appeal to apostolic authorship may imply that canonicity must be linked to the best text (the one that came from the hand of the apostle, or the apostolic representative, as in the case of Mark). To the question, "Is the canon open or closed?" Metzger answers that although the canon is theoretically open (if, say, a fourteenth genuine epistle of Paul should suddenly appear), it is so unlikely that any serious challenge to the present contours of the canon should emerge that we can safely say that, for all practical purposes, the canon is closed. To the question, "Is there a canon within the canon?" Metzger responds that such a notion robs the New Testament of the richness of its diversity and is unnecessary, since no real contradictions or insurmountable tensions exist within the New Testament. To the question, "Is the canon a collection of authorita-

tive books or an authoritative collection of books?" Metzger argues for the former. Here he espouses the traditional Protestant view that these books had an inherent authority that the Church, in fixing the canon, simply recognized and affirmed. In this connection, Metzger argues for overruling providence. In fact, he goes so far as to say that this providence is seen in the fact that the Church sometimes accepted the right books for the wrong reasons, as when the Church accepted the book of Hebrews on the basis of an erroneous assumption of apostolic (Pauline) authorship. Although one might agree with Metzger's conclusion regarding the inherent authority of canonical books, his discussion on this point illustrates a recurring tendency to pass over some of the more difficult theological issues involved. Here, for instance, he fails to recognize the seriousness of the problem of dissonance between the principle employed in canonical selection (apostolicity) and the legitimacy of the selection itself (appropriately canonical, but not apostolic).

The book ends with appendices dealing with the history of the word *kanon*, variations of the sequence of New Testament books, the role of titles of New Testament books, and early lists of New Testament books.

As one would expect from a scholar of Metzger's stature, his book is a most significant contribution to the study of the New Testament canon. Metzger is, however, stronger in working with historical matters than he is in dealing with the theoretical and theological issues.

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Dunning, H. Ray. *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1988. 671 pp. ISBN 083-411-2191.

A central task of theology is to interpret and communicate the kerygmatic content of biblical revelation in ever-changing contexts. *Grace, Faith, and Holiness* is a Wesleyan systematic theology that seeks to attempt to dialogue with contemporary religious and philosophical thought. H. Ray Dunning, professor of religion and philosophy at Trevecca Nazarene College, was commissioned by the Church of the Nazarene to write this work. Building on the foundation of H. Orton Wiley's three-volume *Christian Theology*, Dunning moves beyond dogma to interact with modern theological positions outside his tradition.

The title reflects the theological orientation of the book by positing Wesley's *ordo salutis* as foundational. Although a traditional trinitarian structure is adopted, the author does not relegate other doctrines (i.e., theological anthropology and biblical eschatology) to an addendum, but rather, integrates them into the whole. Fundamental to his theological explication is

a preference for relational ontology, in contrast to Aristotelian emphases on substantial modes of thought. Dunning grounds this approach to ultimate reality in biblical revelation, positing humanity's essence as being constituted by an internal relation to God.

In part one, "Prolegomena," the author investigates the nature and scope of theology, with special attention given to discovering the hermeneutical norm for interpreting biblical revelation. Dunning presents justification and sanctification by faith in the context of prevenient grace as the basis for doing theology from a Wesleyan perspective. Soteriological, ontological and epistemological dimensions of prevenient grace are explored in the author's quest to maintain a balance between grace and holiness. Sources of theology are discussed in relation to the Wesleyan quadrilateral. Dunning finds legitimacy in Wesley's paradigm, distinguishing between Scripture as the authoritative source, and tradition, reason and experience as subsidiary sources.

Part two, "Our Knowledge of God," examines the doctrine of revelation in relation to God's transcendence, His personal nature, and the fallenness of humankind. The author sketches the historical tension between theologies of transcendence and immanence, and posits the need for balance in speaking of God as hidden, yet self-disclosing. Knowledge of God is not abstract, but mediated through relationship, which is made possible by prevenient grace and the restoration of the *imago Dei*. Thus, universal prevenient grace, epistemologically understood, forms the basis for a doctrine of general revelation. Dunning is careful, however, to distinguish between general and special revelation. The latter is not a mere addendum to the former, but is presented as the hermeneutical key for understanding the truths of general revelation.

Part three, "The Doctrines of God the Sovereign," deals with divine attributes, the Trinity and the doctrine of creation. The author grounds his discussion of the attributes of God in biblical categories. Appellations of "living" and "holy" thus reflect God's immanence and transcendence. The moral attributes of truth, righteousness and mercy are qualified by the activity of God in history. Of chief importance to Dunning, however, is the attribution of holiness. In fact, he claims that holy love, as the essential nature of God, qualifies all other attributes. The author restricts himself to evaluating soteriological perspectives of Trinitarian doctrine, with little attention given to ontological concerns. Theological exegesis is the starting point for Dunning's treatment of the doctrine of creation. The author interprets the creation narrative as poetic history, carefully distinguishing this from a mythological hermeneutic. The theological implications of *creatio ex nihilo* are investigated, especially in relation to the issues of theodicy, providence, eschatology and ethics.

In part four, "The Doctrines of God the Savior," Dunning treats the problem of sin and the solution found in the person and work of Jesus

Christ. A discussion of the *imago Dei*, understood relationally, forms the basis of the author's treatment of soteriology. Original Sin involves the loss of the divine-human relationship. In contrast to the Reformed position that allows for a relic of the image in fallen humankind, Dunning posits a restoration of the lost relationship by prevenient grace. The interpenetration of christological and soteriological concerns is reflected in the author's treatment of the Incarnation. New Testament functional Christology is emphasized as foundational to the emerging awareness of Jesus' ontological significance in the Early Church. Christological development through Chalcedon is briefly surveyed, as are the classical theories of the Atonement. Dunning critiques the penal substitution theory, proposing a Wesleyan model in its stead. Functional Christology is employed soteriologically as the author applies the work of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King to the doctrines of justification and sanctification.

Part five, "The Doctrines of God the Spirit," covers not only pneumatology, but also ecclesiology and sacramental theology. The author deals with the Spirit's activity from the perspective of "the synergism of grace" in both the preparation for salvation (awakening, repentance and faith) and the process of salvation (witness of the Spirit, regeneration and entire sanctification). In stressing holiness theology, Dunning makes a case for viewing the Wesleyan position as a synthesis of Roman Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Christian thought. Since sanctification is understood as renewal in the image of God, Christ as the true image is held out as the paradigm of holiness. The restored image is characterized by the love of Christ dwelling in the believer by faith, with both vertical and horizontal theological implications. Emphasizing the restored image as the goal of life, the author deals with ethical concerns from a teleological perspective. His treatment of the doctrines of the Church and the means of grace reflects the general tendency within the holiness movement to subordinate ecclesiology and sacramental theology to pneumatological priorities.

Two appendices follow, one on "Speculative Eschatology," and the other on "Hermeneutics." A bibliography of works cited and a good, two-tiered index conclude the work. Overall, *Grace, Faith and Holiness* is a well-written, contemporary articulation of the Wesleyan-holiness perspective. Dunning's intentional de-emphasis of speculative philosophical issues, his lack of historical precision, and his avoidance of certain contemporary theological trends may frustrate some readers. Nonetheless, this is a competent one-volume systematic theology, of particular value for undergraduate theological studies within the Wesleyan tradition.

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The sect type, as Ernst Troeltsch established, will often progress sociologically into the church type. Nourishing this development, and beholden to it, is an accompanying theology that is no longer merely self-referential but risks engagement with the modern world. For nearly half of a century, H. Orton Wiley's three-volume *Christian Theology* defined the landscape for those owning the "Wesleyan-Arminian" covenant. Rich in holiness tradition, and valuable for pastor, layperson and student, Wiley's work plowed familiar fields and at appropriate points polemicized against modernity and the dread Calvinism. In vain, however, does one look for any critical addressing of the burgeoning neo-orthodox theology, let alone existential thought. Barth and Tillich are completely absent, as is Brunner, a mild surprise in light of his perceived compatibility with John Wesley.

H. Ray Dunning's *Grace, Faith, and Holiness* blows a new wind, not of doctrine, but of theological sensibility and sophistication. While this ponderous volume frequently seems lost as to its readership, whether seminary professor or small-town preacher, one thing it knows: its readers are modern people asking modern (or even postmodern) questions. The very title, while firmly grounded in Wesley, sounds vaguely like Tillich's "method of correlation," for grace, faith and holiness are all terms of mediation, of the soul's connectedness to God through the Holy Spirit. Dunning's insistence, furthermore, that biblical revelation is personal and not propositional could not have been more forcefully put by the dialectical theology of neo-Orthodoxy.

For its shunning of narrow intramural theology, Dunning's work is to be applauded and esteemed and its spirit imitated. One cannot imagine Wiley, whom Dunning quotes almost as often as Wesley, ever citing a Roman Catholic theologian to good effect, but the philosophically astute Dunning finds much to like in Karl Rahner. After all, Wesley was a man of catholic breadth, if seldom Roman Catholic inclination. Even a postmodern thinker such as Langdon Gilkey is quoted by Dunning with clinching regularity.

Yet the true burden of *Grace, Faith, and Holiness* is read in its subtitle: *A Wesleyan Systematic Theology*. Judged by this more exacting criterion, Dunning's work is a large disappointment, one whose correction we hope will appear in much less than the fifty years between Wiley's work and Dunning's. Recently deceased Wesley interpreter Albert C. Outler said it best in his christening of Wesley as "folk theologian." Despite his organizational acumen, it may be a "category mistake" to put "Wesley" and "systematic" in the same sentence; he may be unable to bear the ontological weight of a systematic theology.

In fairness to both Dunning and Wesley, "ontological weight" could be an arbitrary noose around systematic theology's neck. Every systematic the-

ology can seemingly determine its own point of departure, its own first principles. Dunning is clear throughout what his will be: the order of salvation. The *ordo salutis* can fuel a revival and inspire a songwriter, but can it launch a systematic theology?

In his *Wesley's Christology*, John Deschner freely admitted that the christological material is embedded, one might say deeply, in soteriological affirmations. Dunning's much more ambitious project of a full-course systematic theology faces this problem in compounded form, and it is not clear that he conquers it. His repeated use of "prolegomena" suggests that he may also doubt soteriology's ability to sustain a systematic theology. Philosophy, largely alien to Wiley but pliable in Dunning's hands, is often marshalled to fill the gaps.

The radically pluralist situation of today's theology brings into question the very possibility of systematic theology on any terms at all. Of the three Protestant progenitors—Luther, Calvin, Wesley—the latter's children are arguably the most theologically various of all, especially the United Methodist Church. This could mean that a theology which is authentically Wesleyan and responsibly systematic is impossible.

One hopes, however, that it means a reinvigorated search for the center of Wesley's thought, a center colored but not exhausted by soteriology. Systematic theology today is obliged to wrestle massively with hermeneutics, which issue Dunning postpones to the book-ending second appendix. If John Wesley is best remembered as a preacher, and if from first to last hermeneutics informs the task of preaching, future investigators could well begin where Dunning ended, namely, with hermeneutics and theological method.

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Stegner, William Richard. *Narrative Theology in Early Jewish Christianity*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989. 141 pp. ISBN 0-8042-0265-6.

This book is *not*, the author is quick to point out, a study in "narrative criticism," at least not in the sense in which that term has come to be applied by contemporary literary critics. Rather, it is an extension of form criticism, a conscious application of a method devised by Birger Gerhardsson to four pericopes considered representative of Christianity's earliest social matrix.

Gerhardsson developed his method, which he called "genetic analysis," in his 1966 study of the temptation narrative (*The Testing of God's Son*, Lund:

C. W. K. Gleerup). The method entails three steps: (1) discovery of words used in the pericope that come from passages in the LXX; (2) analysis of Jewish tradition regarding the latter passages; (3) explanation of how the Jewish Christians might have used the Old Testament passages and the Jewish tradition concerning them to explain and defend their faith. Obviously, such a method will work only with regard to what Gerhardsson called "Christian midrash" (Stegner avoids the term), that is, New Testament narrative developed with conscious reference to previous Old Testament accounts.

Stegner believes he has found four such narratives in the Gospels. The story of the baptism of Jesus in Mark 1 develops with reference to the story of the binding of Isaac in Genesis 22. The Matthean account of Jesus' temptation (Matt. 4:1-11) draws on the accounts of Israel's testing in the wilderness, especially as described by Moses in Deuteronomy. Mark's story of the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:35-44) is patterned after the story of the manna in Exodus 16. Mark's story of the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8) is built on stories about Moses on Sinai in Exodus 24 and 34.

In his application of Gerhardsson's first methodological step, Stegner cites numerous words in each of these Gospel accounts that are also found in the corresponding passages from the LXX. This part of the study was, for me, the least interesting and the least convincing. Citation of word statistics might have helped, so that we could have some basis for evaluating the significance of the parallel word choices. For instance, the mere fact that the Greek word for "eating" (*phagein*) is used in both Exodus 16 and Mark 6 does not prove that Mark derived the word from the Exodus account. The word is extremely common and both accounts are, after all, about meals.

Stegner's application of the second step proves much more fruitful. Even if some of the supposed word parallels are overdrawn, it is not hard to accept that parallels do exist between the Gospel texts and the Old Testament passages that Stegner has selected. Granting this, it is surely important to know how those Old Testament passages had come to be viewed in Jewish tradition by the time of the New Testament period. Dating of Jewish traditional materials is, of course, difficult, but Stegner draws convincingly on a wide variety of sources (Qumran scrolls, targums, apocryphal books, Pauline epistles) to indicate trajectories of interpretation. More than once, he notes that the relevant Old Testament materials had come to be regarded as eschatologically significant. In the great coming day of deliverance, people would again eat manna, the power of Satan would be broken, an apocalyptic revelation of the future would occur on Mt. Sinai, and so on.

Moving to the third step of Gerhardsson's methodological program, Stegner attempts to summarize the manner in which early Jewish Christians appear to have drawn on Old Testament accounts to interpret their own faith stories. Three conclusions are significant: (1) the early Jewish Christians took the Exodus/Sinai/Wilderness traditions as their starting point for understanding God's new work of salvation in Jesus; (2) the early Jewish

Christians were preoccupied with Christology, emphasizing in their adaptations of traditions that Jesus had succeeded where Israel had failed, that Jesus' identity as "Son of God" marked him as unique, and so on; (3) the early Jewish Christians preferred Old Testament stories that tradition had already marked as eschatologically charged because they viewed themselves as an eschatological community-in-waiting.

In drawing these conclusions, Stegner does not go beyond what is warranted by his most secure evidence. Such caution leaves many questions about this "lost chapter in church history" unanswered, but provides a stable nucleus of information, which Stegner invites others to assist him in expanding.

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Davies, Rupert E., ed. *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design*. The Works Of John Wesley, vol. 9, gen. ed. Richard P. Heitzenrater; textual ed. Frank Baker. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989. xvi, 607 pp. ISBN 0-687-46214-2.

Each new volume of the bicentennial edition of *The Works of John Wesley* is a welcome addition to this definitive project. For some time, students of John Wesley have used the fourteen-volume Thomas Jackson edition of *The Works of John Wesley* (1829-1831, revised 1872). The 1872 edition has been reprinted in facsimile by various publishers. Jackson's edition was confined to selection and arrangement of texts, and he did not offer commentary on Wesley's works. For commentary, students have relied upon Nehemiah Curnock's eight-volume *The Journal of John Wesley* (1909, reprinted 1938); E. H. Sugden's two-volume edition of *The Standard Sermons of John Wesley* (1921), and John Telford's eight-volume *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.* (1931). The new bicentennial edition of Wesley's *Works*, when completed, will become the standard and definitive edition. The other works mentioned above will continue as permanently valuable, of course.

The completion of this new edition of Wesley's works has been slower than anticipated (the work was planned in 1960). In 1984, Abingdon Press agreed to continue the publication of these volumes after Oxford University Press regretfully withdrew from the enterprise due to severe economic problems. This new "Wesley project," when completed, will contain all of John Wesley's original or mainly original prose works, with a volume devoted to his 1780 *Collection of Hymns*. An additional volume will focus on Wesley's extensive work as editor and publisher of extracts from the writings of others. Also, an essential feature of this project will be a bibliography

detailing the historical settings of the works published by John and Charles Wesley. The bibliography will offer full analytical data for identifying each of the two thousand editions of these 450 pieces published during Wesley's lifetime, along with a directory of their locations. Each volume is, of course, indexed, and a General Index for the entire edition is planned.

As the title states, this present volume deals with the Methodist Societies. The documents included principally pertain to the goals, polity and practices of the societies, bands and classes. Some of the pieces tell the sort of Christians Wesley wanted the Methodists to become (*The Character of a Methodist*, pp. 31-46; *The Principles of a Methodist*, pp. 47-66; *Advice to the People called Methodists*, pp. 123-131). Wesley defends the Methodist organization as the best prudential means to minister effectively to the people to whom God led him (*A Plain Account of the People called Methodists*, pp. 253-280; *A Short History of Methodism*, pp. 367-372; *A Short History of the People called Methodists*, pp. 425-503). A repeated theme is Wesley's firm conviction that a society belongs within the church and schism ranks among the gravest of sins (*Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England*, pp. 332-349; *Farther Thoughts upon Separation from the Church*, pp. 538-40). This volume also contains Wesley's response to criticism and to persecution of himself and of the Methodist people. These short, polemical tracts help give perspective. (I learned, for instance, that Wesley's detractor, "Philaethes," was The Rev. Mr. Bailly of Cork.)

This volume's editor, Rupert Davies, is a noted British Methodist scholar and leader who formerly served as the principal of Wesley College, Bristol, England. Davies' scholarship is impressive. His work is balanced, clear and always presented with an economy of words. He achieves the aim of the series which is "to enable Wesley to be read with maximum ease and understanding, and with minimal intrusion by the editors." Davies' references to secondary literature will be easily recognized by Wesley scholars (who among them could not add scores of additional titles to the works mentioned in the footnotes?). A major strength of Davies' work as editor is his deft and accomplished ability to set the stage for each piece and his concise commentary, always apropos. The variant textual readings at the back of the book will interest primarily those specialists who wish to trace the evolution of the text of one of Wesley's pieces which was reprinted over several years in new editions. This volume contains a splendid index.

A future volume (vol. 10) will continue the focus on the Methodist Societies, containing material from Methodism's governing body, the Conference. In the meantime, those interested in the history, nature and design of the Methodist Societies will find volume nine a rich source of valuable material. For generations, this scholarly accomplishment will benefit students of John Wesley.

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Erb, Peter C. *Pietists, Protestants, and Mysticism: The Use of Late Medieval Spiritual Texts in the Work of Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714)*. Pietist and Wesleyan Studies, No. 2. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1989. 329 pp. ISBN 0-8108-2281-4.

Professor Erb is well known to readers and scholars who are familiar with the study of Protestant spirituality in Europe. Now serving as professor of English and religion and culture at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, as well as associate director of the Schwenkfelder Library, Pennsburg, Pennsylvania, Erb has made a major scholarly contribution in his translation, editing and publication of important sources for the study of European Protestant religious expression. Probably best known of these publications are his contributions to the Paulist Press series, *Classics of Western Spirituality*, for which he has edited volumes on Jacob Boehme, Johann Arndt and Pietism. The present volume is the second to appear in a Scarecrow Press series, *Pietist and Wesleyan Studies*, edited by Professors David Bundy and J. Stephen O'Malley, both of Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky. This work focusing on the Pietist church historian Gottfried Arnold is an updated revision of Dr. Erb's Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Toronto (1976). Gottfried Arnold, largely neglected by English-speaking scholars, offers an intriguing challenge to late-twentieth-century interpreters of Christianity. Erb provides a substantial introduction to the context and career of this important figure.

Erb presents the impact of late-medieval mysticism upon early Lutheranism and Pietism in general and Arnold in particular. He is interested to depict the significant impact of writers like Tauler and Ruusbroec on Protestant figures from Luther and Caspar Schwenckfeld onward. At the same time he drives home the transformation of the medieval mystics' intent as their writings were translated, edited, published and interpreted by their Protestant admirers. Erb shows how the Catholic mystics were being "Lutheranized" as Arnold and his fellow admirers were subjecting themselves to potent doses of late-medieval mystical thought and practice.

In this volume we have an excellent introduction to the role played by late-medieval mystical writings in the emergence and development of the sixteenth-century Reformation, directing attention in particular to Luther and the so-called Radical Reformers. The author continues his well-researched and lucid account through the period of Protestant Scholastic Orthodoxy and onto the stage of German Pietism at the turn of the eighteenth century. Erb traces Gottfried Arnold's thought in its development through the evolution of his unfolding massive scholarly production. The presentation is exact and accurate and the analysis acute. Arnold's thought is exceedingly complex in its progress. Following Erb's account is a formidable challenge even to readers for whom the titles and chronology are somewhat familiar and to whom their archaic German is at least a casual acquaintance. For many readers the patterns will prove very difficult to nego-

tiate. The trip is, however, well worth the fare. Erb demonstrates a masterful command of the sources and the data. The greatest delight to the scholar in the field is the way in which the author deals not only with the sources for Arnold's thought but also with the very translations and editions with which he was working.

Erb is not deceived by Arnold's laudatory references to the mystical writers in question but ferrets out the specific sources for these references in the texts from which Arnold was working, whether primary or secondary. Arnold's progress from a hearsay awareness of these writers to an immersion in their texts is carefully chronicled in Erb's pages. We have here as masterful a piece of intellectual biography as one is likely to find. From beginning to end Erb restrains any impulse to make Arnold into a medieval Catholic mystic or those mystics into Arnold. At no point is resort made to a simple influence or causation with regard to Arnold in his engagement with the mystics. Erb pronounces and defends Arnold's identity as a Lutheran throughout and shows the ways in which he therefore transforms the mystics in his use of their reputations and writings. The importance of this differentiation between Arnold and the late-medieval mystics in the midst of their connection is demonstrated most strongly by the unfortunately rather "inconclusive" conclusion of the book. The final narrative chapter is a detailed and pointed demonstration of the connection and difference in question which ends rather abruptly, with no argument or even statement of the historic significance of the matter. One is here forced to suspect that the hard hand of abridgment is to blame for this infelicity in an otherwise pleasing production.

The volume is graced by an excellent bibliography and a very helpful index. As useful as these will prove, they pale in the presence of the seventy-five pages of learned endnotes that support the text. These notes alone provide an unexcelled treasure for the student of late-medieval and early modern Christian spirituality. It can only be regretted that they are "endnotes" and not "footnotes," as their arrangement by chapters at the end of the text minimizes their usefulness and maximizes the frustration of the reader. If footnotes are impossible, why not carry at the head of each page of endnotes, the numbers of the pages covered by those notes?

This book, written by one of the few scholars capable of producing it, provides a long-needed introduction of the progenitor of truly critical Church history, Gottfried Arnold, to the English-reading public. True, many have no doubt heard of Arnold's *Non-partisan History of Church and Heresy*, and some may have been aware of his depiction of primitive Christianity in his *The First Love*. But even accomplished historians of Protestantism seldom could muster more than a few slogans about his asceticism and separatist tendencies.

We may thank Professor Erb and others involved with this publication for bringing a seminal and exciting as well as profoundly learned historic figure out of the shadows at last. To be sure, only one side of his personal

makeup has been dealt with—and as the author points out in the introduction, that only very partially—omitting any treatment of the role of Arnold's ancient mystical mentors. From this beginning, however, it is to be hoped that other historians will engage the massive literary corpus of Gottfried Arnold.

The reviewer has long been puzzled at the general neglect of Arnold by feminist historians. Beyond his preoccupation with *Sofia* as against *Logos*, one will find a very thorough engagement and an enthusiastic appreciation for the role of women in Christian history in the writings of this scholar from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Even should others take up the study of this Pietist historian, for whatever purpose, it is still devoutly to be wished that Peter Erb himself may at last get back to his expressed desideratum of a full-orbed intellectual biography of this most learned of the Pietists and most creative of the historians—Gottfried Arnold.

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Rack, Henry C. *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989, xvi, 656 pp. ISBN 0-334-01378-X.

Henry C. Rack, a Methodist minister and lecturer in ecclesiastical history at The University of Manchester, England, has produced a major achievement. *Reasonable Enthusiast* contains the results of Rack's research on Wesley mined over a lifetime of professional study. Wesley scholars will note with appreciation that this new biography contains the results of fresh research which draws upon material seldom or never used in prior studies of John Wesley.

Rack's work does not pretend to be as detailed a personal biography as Luke Tyerman's three-volume *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley* of nearly 1,900 pages (1870), although Rack's book earns its place in the rare bracket of such superior works. Tyerman quoted generously from Wesley's journal, letters and sermons, as well as anti-Methodist authors—thus leaving the reader to draw her or his own conclusions (notwithstanding Tyerman's scarcely veiled polemical mission). By contrast, Rack summarizes Wesley's views and seeks to balance *historical narrative* with *critical analysis*, at times revealing his onerous awareness of the difficulty of achieving good symmetry. The author avoids some of the tendencies of earlier Wesleyan propagandists.

Rack knowledgeably discusses persons and movements contemporary to John Wesley, thereby giving us fuller insight into the people and forces which helped shape Methodism's founder. The work discusses, with equal competence, the historical, cultural and theological aspects which pertain to the development of John Wesley as a person and to the movement he founded and led. A major contribution of Rack's book is its attention to the larger British culture of which Wesley was a part, a society whose changes deeply affected Methodism. His division of the work into distinct historical periods illustrates this concern. Also Rack shows how people influenced Wesley, even as Wesley influenced people.

After his introduction and prelude, Rack arranges the book under three divisions: (1) "Primitive Christianity": The Young John Wesley (1703-38); (2) John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism (1738-60); and (3) John Wesley and the Consolidation of Methodism (1760-91). The year 1738, of course, marks the beginning of the Wesleyan revival in England. By the year 1760 British Methodism's basic geography had been established, its main problems had been faced and its structures had been formulated. Part I deals with the traditional themes in Wesley's pre-Aldersgate development. In part II Rack's discussion of John Wesley includes the eighteenth-century history of Welsh, Scottish and Irish Methodism. In the final division of this biography the author incorporates some discussion of early American Methodism—although the major focus of the book appropriately concentrates on England. One can scarcely think of a pertinent Wesley topic which is not treated; the book contains sixteen well-developed chapters that cover almost every theme of interest to students of Methodism's founder. The "Interludes" which separate the divisions deal with the nature of revival and the relationship between revival and the contemporary culture. The "Postlude" deals with John Wesley's personality and piety along with a summary of his achievements and legacy. The documentation is superb.

Other books on Wesley have emphasized particular aspects of Wesley in greater depth, because they are, by intention, more focused, and accordingly more limited. To illustrate, Rack does not offer the breadth of ecumenical reference as did Maximin Piette's *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism* (1937). Nor does Rack claim this goal as a part of the purpose of his book. Vivian H. H. Green's *The Young Mr. Wesley* (1961) and *John Wesley* (1964) continue as precise and concise factual biographies, again not the sole purpose of Rack's work. Rack's study understandably lacks the continental dimension and sometimes tedious detail of Martin Schmidt's three-volume *John Wesley* (1962). A. Skevington Wood's *The Burning Heart: John Wesley Evangelist* (1967) masterfully stressed Wesley's evangelistic message and passion; Rack's work does not so concentrate its focus. Richard Heizenrater's two-volume *The Elusive Mr. Wesley* (1984) seeks to correct legends about Wesley by probing contemporary documents of Wesley along with those who supported and opposed his work. Once more, *Reasonable Enthusiast* targets a different goal.

The major thesis of Rack's book is that John Wesley lived as a man of reason and a man of the Spirit; a cool head and a warm heart made the man. Rack takes no particular pleasure in debunking the sometimes glowing accounts of Wesley's life which present him as a stained-glass figure (as Wesley sometimes presents himself in his *Journal*). But the book paints us a realistic picture of Wesley—a leader with weaknesses and strengths. As a title, *Reasonable Enthusiast* fits the book.

This monumental biography of John Wesley joins the relatively small cluster of superior works which rank at the top of the numerous biographies of Methodism's founder. If one had to choose only one biography of Mr. Wesley (perish the thought!), this book is probably the one to choose.

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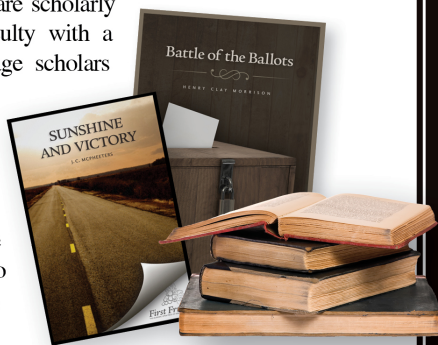
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