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The Wesleyan Theological Consortium exists to labour in the development of Wesleyan theological education, across the denominational spectrum. It is committed to bearing witness to that 'union between vital piety and sound learning' proposed by John Wesley.

Aldersgate Papers made its first appearance as the theological journal of the Christian Holiness Association (Australia) in October 1994. It contained two articles and did not proceed beyond a single issue in that format. In September 2000 it was resurrected, this time as the theological journal of Kingsley College, bearing a September 2000 date. The Wesleyan Theological Consortium first began meeting in 1999, following each Biennial Conference of the South Pacific Association of Bible College (SPABC). These meetings arose out of a recognition that Kingsley College (www.kingsley.vic.edu.au) and Nazarene Theological College (www.ntc.qld.edu.au) have much in common as Wesleyan educational institutions, and out of a desire to work together, rather than duplicating efforts, wherever possible. These times have included formal delivery of academic papers, as well as fellowship and casual conversation around common areas of passionate interest.

When the Consortium met in Sydney on July 4th, 2003 immediately following the 20th Biennial Conference of the SPABC, it was decided that *Aldersgate Papers*, should become the journal of the consortium, costs being shared by member institutions (at that time, Kingsley College and the Nazarene Theological College). This 5th number of the journal is the second under the new arrangement.

Though originally intended to appear twice a year the production schedule has been a little slow and a single issue a year has appeared in September of most years since. Somewhere along the line production schedule has slipped behind and the current issue, though appearing in September 2005, is actually marked as the 2004 issue. It is hoped that things will be brought up to date in the not too distant future.

Requests for subscriptions (AUD $60 for 2 volumes) should be addressed to Heidi Wright PO Box 125 Glenroy VIC 3046 hwright@kingsley.vic.edu.au. Back copies of vols. 3 and 4 of the journal are available for $20 each, payable to Kingsley College.

Submission of papers for publication should be addressed to the editor, Glen O'Brien PO Box 125 Glenroy VIC 3046.

Volumes 1-4 of this journal can be viewed on line at
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Involvement in the Wesleyan Theological Consortium is open to individuals as well as to institutions. Contact Glen O'Brien at the above address if you or your institution would like to be involved in the expansion of the Consortium.

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COVENANT ATONEMENT AS A WESLEYAN INTEGRATING MOTIF

R. Larry Shelton

In spite of the fact that Christian theology has found legitimate expression of the biblical emphasis on the atonement through a variety of theories, the Western Catholic and Protestant churches have tended to favor some form of a forensic penal view of the work of Christ. This has resulted in the replacement of the biblical interpersonal covenant understanding of a sacrifice as an obedient gift of love with an abstract forensic definition of a sacrifice as a justice-based penalty. This has tended to minimize the biblical portrayal of God's nature of holy love which brings new vitality to the divine-human relationship. The biblical view of reconciliation as a restoration of regenerative interpersonal fellowship with God, or covenant renewal, is the theological foundation of the New Testament emphasis on salvation as wholeness in love, not merely as payment for sins in order to gain heaven. Particularly since the rise of Fundamentalism in the late 19th and early 20th century has the penal view risen to nearly exclusive prominence, so much so that Bill Hybels, pastor of one of the largest churches in America can say, "The penal substitutionary view of the atonement that Christ died as the penalty for our sins is the evangelical position on this issue."[1]

The Wesleyan theological tradition has increasingly been influenced by numerous Reformed concepts. An example of this shift is the exclusive emphasis on the penal substitutionary atonement theory developed by John Calvin that has become nearly universal among popular evangelical Christians, both Reformed and Wesleyan. Such views tend to interpret the work of Christ only as a punishment which assuages God's wrath against humanity, thus releasing it from its death sentence for the treachery of Adam and his race. The thesis of this paper is that the use of a biblical covenant interpersonal understanding of Christ's work of salvation as covenant renewal and restoration of the divine image is a more satisfactory hermeneutic for understanding the atonement,

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[1] Daniel Brunner, Report of Willow Creek Seminar program to George Fox Evangelical Seminary faculty, 2001.

particularly from a Wesleyan perspective, than are any of the other historical theories taken in isolation. Wesley himself thought in terms compatible with covenant ideas, although he did not develop that perspective as the integrating motif of his theology. This author believes that the use of covenant interpersonal categories allows the constructive development of a Wesleyan theological perspective that overcomes the weaknesses of the Reformed penal substitution theory, the eclectic quasi-Anselmian atonement views of Wesley's satisfaction emphasis, as well as those in the Grotian governmental tradition. Furthermore, the pastoral problems of legalism, obsession with guilt, and spiritual disillusionment associated with the penal views call for different ways of presenting the atonement.

I. Influences on Wesleyan Atonement Theology

Wesley's associates tended to gravitate toward the Grotian governmental view. However, Wesley himself tended to become somewhat more eclectic in his approach, moving in the direction of a more Anselmian satisfaction position that views Christ's work as a payment of human indebtedness rather than as a penalty. It may be argued, however, that the divine requirement that moral indebtedness must be paid for by the death of an innocent God-Man amounts to the same thing as penalty. The first concern faced by Wesley and others who sought to adapt some form of the penal view to an understanding of Christ's work of salvation was how to maintain the balance between divine initiative and human accountability in salvation. While the penal views focused almost exclusively on the objective work of propitiating God's wrath so that the sinner might be released from the guilt and punishment of sin, a full biblical understanding of salvation should include an emphasis on both sanctification and growth in grace. Furthermore, the penal views focused on Christ's role in being the substitute recipient of humanity's capital punishment for its treachery in its disobedience of God's clear commands in the Garden. This penal emphasis that deals only with the consequences of sin often results in what Dallas Willard calls "sin management,"[2] rather than growth in grace. A Wesleyan view of atonement must ask the questions, "Can God do nothing with sin but forgive it? Can God not break its power as well?" The biblical and theological resolution of this concern rests

[2] Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), 36-37.

squarely in one's interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement of Christ.

A number of Wesleyan theologians have expressed concern over whether Wesley's modified Anselmian view of penal satisfaction is, in fact, adequate to support the soteriology he proclaims. While his associate, John Fletcher, held a more Reformed penal substitutionary view,[3] many other Wesleyan theologians since the 18th century have sought other alternatives because of the Trinitarian and Christological implications of the penal view.[4] H. Ray Dunning has argued convincingly that Wesley fought a continual battle against the implications of his atonement view.[5] Other Wesleyans were drawn to some version of the Governmental view or the *Christus Victor* idea of Christ's cosmic victory over the spiritual forces of Satan, thus liberating humanity from its enslavement.[6] However, these governmental views have tended to reflect some form of the penal interpretation of the atonement, since the payment of a judicial penalty is necessary for the restoration of cosmic governmental order.[7] Furthermore, a sobering number of Christians have chosen rather to abandon the idea of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ as the foundation of the reconciliation between a lost humanity and a saving God. The tendency has been to reject not only the penal theories of atonement as some form of divine

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[3] John Fletcher, *Checks to Antinomianism* (New York: Soule and Mason, 1819).

[4] Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes*, 2 vols. (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1856), p. II, 139; see also pp. II, 87-102; 113; 149-151; William Burt Pope, *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, 2 vols. (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1880), 2:265, 313, 314; John Miley, *Systematic Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1984), 2:186; see 123, 168: Miner Raymond, *Systematic Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Phillips and Hurt, 1880), 2:257-258; Wilbur F. Tillett, *Personal Salvation* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1930), 98-109.

[5] Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 334; note also his references to the unpublished Ph.D. dissertation on the topic by John Rutherford Renshaw, "The Atonement in the Theology of John and Charles Wesley (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1965).

[6] William Greathouse, "Sanctification and the Christus Victor Motif," unpublished address, Nazarene Theological Seminary, n.d.

[7] Ibid. Richard S. Taylor has attempted to revive a classical penal substitutionary position for Wesleyans in his book, *God's Integrity and the Cross* (Nappanee, IN.: Francis Asbury Press, 1999). Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Press, 1994), 108; Maddox argues that the Governmental concept is more moral influence in reverse, than it is forensic. Punishment is a deterrent that maintains moral order. However, it still requires punishment in order to normalize justice, and hence is forensic.

child or domestic abuse,[8] but to identify the penal theory with the violence associated with Christ's death, and abandon the entire concept of the atonement altogether, as Bishop Joseph Sprague and others, such as radical feminists Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebeccah Parker, have done.[9] Other non-Wesleyans in the pacifist tradition have attempted to develop, with problematic degrees of success, a non-violent concept of the atonement in an attempt to maintain its orthodox foundation in the death of Christ, but avoid the elements of violence that are associated with it.[10] One of the more successful of these attempts is the Incarnational Theory developed by Robin Collins. He emphasizes Christ's incarnational identification with humanity rather than his substitutionary absorption of the penalty for sin.[11]

The use of the forensic imagery of the law courts as a template for organizing the biblical data on atonement and salvation seems like a legitimate motif. And it is certainly true that somehow through the cross of Christ, God puts us in the right in relationship to himself. Whether this "putting right" through Christ's death can be most faithfully presented through Western Roman, or "Latin," forensic models of civil and penitential law or through the interpersonal categories of covenant Law is the critical issue.[12] Furthermore, making the theological and pastoral leap from the idea

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[8] Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* (Downer's Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 30; Green and Baker cite a significant list of articles and books by theologians who raise this issue, such as Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, eds., *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique* (New York: Pilgrim, 1989). Green and Baker present a wide-ranging call for the recovery of appropriate models of the atonement that avoid the penal substitutionary liabilities.

[9] C. Joseph Sprague, *Affirmations of a Dissenter* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002); Rebecca Ann Parker and Rita Nakashima Brock, *Proverbs of Ashes : Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

[10] J. Denny Weaver, *The Non-violent Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Phil Smith, "Atonement as Peacemaking," unpublished paper, George Fox University, 2002.

[11] Robin Collins, "Girard and Atonement: An Incarnational Theory of Mimetic Participation," *Violence Renounced*, ed. by Willard Swartley (Telford, PA: Pandora Press, 2000); this entire book represents an extensive study of the atonement from the perspective of the non-violence tradition in Christian theology. The research on sacrifice and pastoral application of the atonement theology in this tradition is very relevant for Wesleyans.

[12] Paul Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 61-82; R. Larry Shelton, "Initial Salvation," *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, ed. Charles W. Carter (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983).

of the penal death of Christ to spiritual formation and the sanctification process in the Christian disciple has also required an effort that has often been considered too great. This tendency to find the theological foundation for salvation in the various penal interpretations of the atonement is, I believe, in part responsible for the present sterility of holiness preaching in Wesleyan pulpits in America. It is not immediately apparent to the person in the pew (or the pulpit) that the death of Christ functioning to appease the divine wrath of God translates readily into living the Christlike life of love and peace and unconditional forgiveness. Instead, I believe the New Testament teaches that through Christ's redemptive participation in every distorted and chaotic consequence that sin has brought to bear upon creation, humanity's experience has been redeemed and transformed through its identification with Christ in his work of sacrificial covenant restoration of the image of God in the community of faith (Phil 2:1-11). In order to clarify the problems for Wesley's theology that may be created by reliance upon the forensic penal approaches to interpreting the Atonement and to suggest valuable resources for spiritual formation, a brief critical analysis of key atonement models is in order.[13]

A. Classical Christian Models

Recapitulation—Irenaeus

Writing scarcely a hundred years after the Apostolic Age, Irenaeus established the earliest framework for Christian theology through the exposition of the central ideas of the Christian faith. He understands Christ's work as identifying with and restoring humanity's relationship to God in Christ. In Latin, the term *recapitulatio* literally means "reheading," or "providing a new head," in the sense of providing a new source or origin.[14] Through his identification with humanity in his incarnation, Christ recapitulated, or "summed up in himself," all of humanity, so that what humanity had lost in Adam (the image of God) could be recovered in himself.[15] He says:

[13] Again, a much more comprehensive analysis is included in the author's unpublished manuscript, *Divine Expectations,* which is available by request.
[14] Roger Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology* (Downers' Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 74.
[15] Olson, *Story of Christian Theology*, 74.

> He entered into our death so that as he was raised from death, we would be alive in him (Rom. 6; Eph. 2:5)...He was identified with us in our death resulting from sin in order that we might become identified with him in his resurrection to new life. In other words, *he became like us that we might become like him*.[16]

In restoring humanity to the image of God, Christ recovers our destiny of the vision of God and communion with him.[17] Irenaeus says the entire redemptive work is accomplished by the Word *through* the humanity of Christ as his instrument, for it could not be accomplished by any power other than God himself. The obedience of Christ is thus not a human offering made to God from the human side, because from beginning to end God Himself is the effective agent who, through the Word of God incarnate, enters into the world and human experience, in order to reconcile it to himself. Atonement and incarnation are inseparably linked, as are the Father and Son, in this process.[18] There is much here that can enrich the foundations for Wesley's soteriology.

Christus Victor—Gustaf Aulén

Another prominent view of atonement that has more recently been attractive to some and which has its roots in ancient orthodox tradition is the dramatic, or classic, *Christus Victor* theory of Gustaf Aulén. Modifying the Latin ransom motif, he sees Christ in cosmic combat with the powers of darkness. Aulén sees the atonement not as a legal transaction or juristic sentence, as in the Latin and Swiss/German Reformed and Lutheran traditions, nor does he see Christ merely as an inspiring example of love, as in the Abelardian/Eastern Orthodox traditions. Instead, Christ is the cosmic champion who overcomes the evil forces that hold humanity in bondage. Christ has met the cosmic forces of evil on their own ground, in history where they were entrenched, in order to break

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[16] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book V, Preface Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1.* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 526.
[17] H.F. Davis, "The Atonement," *The Theology of the Atonement*, ed. John R. Sheets, S.J. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), 10-13; see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 2, 3, and 5, edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1.* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956).
[18] Aulén, "Christus," 33; see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III, 21.10; 22.4.

their power. Through his work we may sing, "In all this we are more than conquerors..." (Romans 8:37, KJV).[19] In Christ, God "having disarmed the powers and authorities...made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Col. 2:15 NASV). Church of the Nazarene theologian William M. Greathouse calls this theory "one of the most influential treatments of the atonement to appear in our time." He says further, "Aulén has done the church a service in rescuing the dramatic view of Christ's work and restoring it to its rightful place as a New Testament representation of the atonement."[20]

B. Forensic Models

The forensic models of the atonement grew out of the Latin theology of Tertullian, Cyprian and others who developed the theology of the penitential system of the transfer of merits that the Protestant Reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin objected to so strenuously.[21] It was from the categories of Roman law that Western theology, which boasted more than its share of lawyers, drew the conceptual categories of the sacrament of penance and the ideas of justice viewed in terms of punishment, merit, satisfaction, and absolution. Roman legal theory and practice provided the vocabulary of the Latin penitential system. Even though Christ alone, not the believer, presented those merits in the Protestant understanding, the satisfaction of a divine legal accounting process still underlies the penal substitutionary understanding of the atonement of Christ in the Protestant tradition. The idea of Merit is associated with the performance of that which is commanded, the observance of Law. The idea that superfluous merit can be transferred from one person to another comes in Cyprian, and the way is now prepared for the Latin theory of atonement (penal theory).[22]

Satisfaction—Anselm

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[19]Gustaf Aulén, *The Faith of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1948), 228.
[20]William M. Greathouse, "Sanctification and the Christus Victor Motif in Wesleyan Theology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 7, No. 1 (Spring 1972), 47-59.
[21]Aulén, *Christus,* 78, 81-100. See Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement,* 84-87.
[22] Driver, *Understanding the Atonement,* 82.

Working from this medieval understanding of "satisfaction," Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) developed the first substantially different approach to the doctrine of the atonement after the first millennium of Christianity's existence. God is presented as a feudal overlord with humanity as his vassals arranged in a socially stratified hierarchical system. Anselm saw the atonement as a restoration of God's offended honor by the meritorious and supererogatory obedience offered by Christ on behalf of humanity. The obedience of Christ's life had merit to make amends for the infinite dishonor brought upon God's name by sinful humanity.[23] Anselm defined sin in terms of a debt toward God, who is not free to leave sin unpunished because His justice requires its punishment. Humanity owes a satisfaction to restore God's honor, but because of the greatness of the offense against God, there is no human ability to repay a debt that is greater than all humanity's ability to satisfy. Furthermore, Anselm said that for God to forgive sins out of compassion without satisfaction or punishment is impossible:

> It is not fitting for God to pass over anything in his kingdom undercharged . . . It is therefore, not proper for God thus to pass over sin unpunished.[24]

That honor, then, that has been taken away from God must be repaid, or punishment must follow in order for God to be just to himself.[25] Anselm's attempt to present Christ's sacrifice as payment of a debt, rather than a penalty, so that the death penalty would not be unleashed on humanity is unsuccessful in differentiating debt from penalty. Someone dies either way. It is difficult to see how his medieval audience familiar with the Code of Chivalry would see that the payment of a ruinous debt instead of death in a duel with an aggrieved knight was not a penalty, even though it might not be physically violent. Anselm insisted that the sin that had dishonored God must either be punished or satisfaction paid. The dishonor perpetrated upon God must be restored by the compensation of Christ's obedience, which is propitiatory and meritorious. The issue is still one of taking the punishment of the guilty onto the person of

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[23]Anselm of Canterbury, *Why God Became Man, A Scholastic Miscellany*, Library of Christian Classics, vol. X, ed. & trans. by Eugene Fairweather (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), pp. 1789-181.
[24] Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, I, 12, *Saint Anselm: Basic Writings*, ed. S.N. Deane (LaSalle, IL: Open Court Publishing Co., 1962), 203.
[25] Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, I, 12, 206.

the innocent, which raises moral issues of rightness in itself, and establishes an imputational foundation for atonement that carries over into the issues of righteousness, justification, and sanctification in Reformed theology.

Using the Roman legal ideas of satisfaction derived from Tertullian, Cyprian, and the legal ideas of the penitential system that clearly have their basis in Roman juristic categories of justice, Anselm develops them into their fullest Scholastic forms. He attempts to preserve the unity between Christ and the Father by showing that Christ's satisfaction is a freely given act of obedience, rather than a penalty that is coerced.[26] However, it is difficult to see how he avoids presenting the atonement as a legal, transactional event based on a *quid pro quo* exchange of merits, in which the life of the Son of God is of such value that it outweighs the accumulated debt of human sin.[27]

In the focus on the objectivity of the honor of God, Anselm thus minimizes the subjectivity of the restoring of relationships between humanity and God.[28] His view tends to equate salvation with the remission of a debt, and overlooks the sense of participation in the experience of Christ and insufficiently emphasizes the love of God in forgiveness by treating it as a rational cause rather than a relationship.

Anselm thus allows the issues of legal satisfaction to overshadow the truth that the love of God is objective and "persists in spite of all that sin can do, and has for its end nothing less than the reconciliation of sinful men with God in the harmony of a restored mutual love," says Vincent Taylor.[29] Instead, his rationalist approach deduces the rational necessity of the death of Christ, since logical necessity requires that God be reconciled with creation. It is a law-based theory, but the law is expressed in terms of the Latin forensic penitential system infused with the feudal perspective of power and hierarchy, rather than the biblical covenant understanding of law based in the relationship between the covenant community and God. This Western view of law has continued even after the Reformation, and as Driver says, "Protestantism has often preceded more in the spirit of Western law than in the gracious

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[26] Colin Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 124-25.
[27] Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement*,92*;* see Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo,* (I, 21; II, 4 and 16).
[28] Fiddes, *Past Event,* 99.
[29] Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice*, 300.

spirit of biblical covenant, which is revealed most fully in the saving work of Christ."[30]

Even with these shortcomings, Anselm's satisfaction theory became immensely popular in the later medieval period, and with some modifications became the main theory advanced by the Protestant Reformers in the form of the penal substitution theory of atonement. With the rejection of rationalistic Scholasticism by the Reformers and their emphasis on salvation by faith alone, another articulation of the atonement was called for.[31]

Penal Substitution—John Calvin

Apparently, the Western European legal tradition and Latin theological orientation of the Protestant theologians was so deeply rooted that they were unable to reconceive theology in any alternative way to the forensic understanding. The conception of merits of righteousness offsetting the demerits of sin in humankind made it necessary for the Reformers, and particularly the later Protestant orthodoxy, to formulate their conceptions of salvation around the economic idea of a substitutionary payment of penalties for transgressions against God based on the merits of Christ. Since justice is served only when the accounts balance, the doctrine of limited atonement was submitted to allow justice to quantify the amount of merit needed in order to balance the celestial books by using the merits contributed by the death of Christ. The other alternative to a particular atonement doctrine was universalism, since Christ's merits were infinite, and therefore, all of humanity's penalties would be paid.[32]

This seems radically out of step with the Old Testament system of sacrifice offered as a gift of obedience to make atonement to maintain the covenant community in relationship to God.[33] The OT sacrifices were not construed as payments of penalty for sin, since an animal sacrifice was certainly not the equivalent in value of a

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[30] John Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1986), 60-61.
[31] See the extensive treatment of H.D. McDonald, *The Atonement of the Death of Christ: In Faith, Revelation, and History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1985), 163-173; also, an excellent exegesis of Anselm's theory is provided by Arthur Pollard, "Anselm's Doctrine of the Atonement An Exegesis and Critique of Cur Deus Homo," *The Churchman*, 109/4,1995.
[32] McDonald, *The Atonement*, 192-93, and "Appendix."
[33] Vincent Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice* (London: The Macmillan Co., 1959), 50.

transgression against the God of the covenant. Furthermore, it does not appear that the forensic tradition has based its interpretations of legal metaphors on the Hebrew covenant relationship foundations that were central to Paul's theology, but on the penitential system of forensic accountability that found its fullest expressions in the Latin medieval system of penitential merits. This minimizes the interpersonal covenant accountability that was present in the Hebrew covenant law version of forensic expression found in the OT, the rabbinic tradition, and the theology of Paul.

Governmental Theory—Hugo Grotius

In response to the penal substitutionary views of atonement, effective criticisms were made that shook the very foundation of the penal views. Critics pointed out that satisfaction and pardon are incompatible. Furthermore, the critics said, Christ's suffering does not meet the demand of satisfaction, because sinners deserve eternal death, and Christ did not suffer eternal death, but temporal death.[34] Anselm would have rejected the latter critique, because even temporal death for the divine Son of God more than compensates for the eternal death of all humanity. In the face of the increasingly effective attack on the penal theory by the Socinians, Hugo Grotius altered the penal theory by defining justice as a need for orderly government in a moral universe, rather than as the internal need for God to administer retributive penalties upon the offending parties. The governmental view reflects an Arminian concern to understand the atonement in a way that does not necessitate a limited atonement, as in the penal substitutionary model of Calvin, nor require a penitential maintenance of spiritual graces, as in the Anselmian version. However, this view maintains the necessity of a previous satisfaction of God's wrath as a prerequisite for the forgiveness of sins.[35] For Grotius, Christ's suffering is penal, but voluntary, and the example of Christ's passion deters sinners from continuing in a path which disrupts moral order by the moral influence of fear.[36] This view amounts to a moral influence theory in reverse.

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[34] Grensted, *Short History*, 284, 285; Shelton, "Initial Salvation," 502.
[35] L. W. Grensted, *A Short History of the Doctrine of the Atonement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, reprinted 1962), 291-297; Shelton, "Initial Salvation," 502-3; Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness*, 337.
[36] Frank H. Foster , "A Brief Introductory Sketch of the History of the Grotian Theory of the Atonement," in Preface to Hugo Grotius, *A Defense of the Catholic Faith*

The Arminian and Wesleyan theologians tended to follow Grotius' governmental theory with some changes. The Arminian Curcellaeus emphasized the idea of sacrifice rather than satisfaction of wrath through punishment, thus describing the priestly work of Christ as propitiatory, but not penal. He says, "Christ did not therefore . . . make satisfaction by suffering all the punishments which we had deserved for our sins." This modified the strict governmental approach and emphasized the priestly work of Christ as propitiatory, but in the sense of a sacrificial gift.[37]

Modified Penal Satisfaction—John Wesley

In Wesley's view, Christ is the Second Adam who represents all mankind, makes himself an offering for sin, bears the iniquities of the human race, and makes satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. His *Notes on the New Testament* also show that Wesley understood Christ's death as a punishment due to us because of our sins.[38] Death is the penalty of the old covenant (more or less) on all mankind. Wesley speaks of Christ purchasing humanity's redemption and that his life and death involve a "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction" for the sins of all humanity. Furthermore, says Collins, Wesley interprets the *hilasterion* language in Romans 3:25 as "propitiation," rather than "expiation," and he took issue with William Law for the latter's use of "expiation" and claim that God does not have wrath or anger toward humanity that must be appeased.[39]

Although Wesley did not equate divine anger with human wrath or vengeance, he did see God's anger as being motivated by love for the sinner and as a foil that enables humanity more fully to appreciate God's love.[40] And while Wesley did believe that humanity has contracted a debt to God that it is unable to pay, he rejected the implication that satisfaction was made to the divine law, because he objected to the personification of law as a "person

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Concerning the Satisfaction of Christ, Against Faustus Socinus, tr. Frank H. Foster (Andover: W.F. Draper, 1889).

[37] R. Larry Shelton, "Initial Salvation," 503.

[38] John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament* (London: The Epworth Press, reprinted 1966), 837.

[39] Collins, *Scripture Way*, 81-83; he cites Wesley's use of the language of the Book of Common Prayer in his liturgical and preaching resources in n. 64 and 65 on p. 81.

[40] Collins, *Scripture Way*, 84, 85.

injured and to be satisfied."[41] Christ is the Second Adam who represents all mankind, makes himself an offering for sin, bears the iniquities of the human race, and makes satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. The complete and ongoing nature of Christ's work is emphasized in Wesley's emphasis on the totality of salvation in Christ's roles as Prophet, Priest, and King.[42]

None of the penal models presented by Anselm, the Reformers, or the Governmental model provide adequate basis in the Atonement for the transformation of the image of God and growth in sanctification and holiness in this life. The concern of a forensic model is the removal of guilt, not the transformation of relationship and restoration of moral likeness to God. A. S. Wood is in agreement with William R. Cannon and Albert Outler in noting that while Wesley held a penal view of atonement, he did not set the atonement inside a legal framework "in which God is made subject to an eternal, unalterable order of justice."[43] This is what makes Wesley's view problematic, for the penal theories by definition set the atonement within a legal framework of "unalterable justice." It is logically difficult to make the penal explanation work without the "unalterable justice" concept in place.

Anselm's satisfaction model, as well, though it uses the medieval Code of Honor as its background, is built upon the Catholic penitential system that is inherently forensic and Latin. That is why the satisfaction and substitutionary implications are incompatible with the biblical covenant understanding of the Law as the interpersonal, loving, framework of God's boundaries of covenant fellowship, reconciliation, and accountability. The Western abstract forensic justice views of the law, as has been shown, tend to obscure how God's wrath toward sin is based on his loving desire to protect the covenant community and to prevent his creatures from violating the divine expectations in the covenant Law. The forensic tradition with its substitutionary understanding of sacrifice, invariably expresses the outcome of Christ's saving sacrifice in imputational

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[41] Collins, *Scripture Way*, 85; he cites Wesley's "The Principles of a Methodist," see n. 83. In this section on "The Atonement," Collins has usefully cited numerous relevant quotations on the topic from Wesley's works.

[42] John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960), 74, 165; Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 110-114; Collins, *Scripture Way*, 44ff.; Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and* Holiness, 367-390.

[43] A.S. Wood, *The Burning Heart* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), 237f. See also William R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), 209-211; and Albert Outler, *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 273, 276, 287-288.

terms. This leads them, Wesley thinks, to ignore attention to holiness, which involves conformity to the law of God.[44] It is at this point that the substitutionary and transference understanding of the sacrifice of Christ falls short of Wesley's soteriological goals. A covenant-based understanding of the sacrifice of Christ as sacrificial *identification* with humanity in absorbing the effects of the deadly results of sin avoids the liability of the imputational penal models which depict Christ as obeying the law as a substitute for humanity and imputing his own merits to them for their salvation. This provides a strong basis for a view of salvation that understands Christ's work as a sacrificial atonement of covenant renewal in which the entire Trinity participates, and which involves the believer in a vital incarnational union with Christ and the restoration of the divine image that is foundational for holiness and is grounded in the theology of the New Testament.[45] This restored covenant relationship *is* righteousness. The imputation-impartation debate becomes irrelevant when the biblical model of salvation as renewed covenant relationship is restored and the Western Latin penitential forensic model is seen appropriately as a Western cultural contextualization. It tends to divorce salvation from the interpersonal relational ideas of the covenant community and replace them with Roman forensic language which evolves through the penitential system into an economic penitential and merit-based understanding of salvation *a la* Tertullian, Cyprian, Anselm, and Aquinas.[46]

An atonement theology that is consistent with Wesley's biblical emphases on both justification and sanctification of heart and life by faith would provide a more adequate basis for these benefits of the work of Christ.

II. The Biblical Concept of Atonement

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[44] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 104, see fn. 63; Maddox notes that Wesley rejected the imputation of Christ's active righteousness or obedience to believers because it discouraged the seeking of holiness. He speaks to this in his sermon on "The Lord Our Righteousness," *Works*, I:449-65.

[45] This conclusion is thoroughly documented in the author's book manuscript, *Divine Expectations: Interpreting the Atonement for 21st Century Mission*. Documentation and manuscript are available upon request.

[46] Aulén, 84-87.

Perhaps the most central theological integrating motif of Scripture is the concept of covenant.[47] Barth, for example, views the divine covenant with humanity to be the "internal basis of creation."[48] While specific covenants such as those with Moses, Abraham, and David are presented, it is in the generic context of covenant interpersonal relationships that God's fellowship with Israel is most clearly defined.[49] Israel's obedience to the ancestral covenant obligations enabled them to avoid the sense of arbitrariness often found elsewhere, and every breach of the covenant expectations was a personal offense against God.[50] The covenant Law formula served in the OT to give authenticity to the expectations God placed on Israel to enable them to maintain the covenant relationships. Although the etymology of *berith*, or "covenant," is not thoroughly clear and its usage is controversial, as seen in numerous scholarly discussions, the frequency of its usage indicates its importance in Old Testament theology.[51] Davidson notes that the term *berith* occurs nearly 300 times in the Old

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[47] R. Larry Shelton, "A Covenant Concept of the Atonement," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Vol. 19, Number 1 (Spring 1984); Jacob Jock, *The Covenant: A Theology of Human Destiny* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968).

[48] Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, III/1, trans. Harold Knight, G.W. Brimley, J.K.S. Reid, R.H. Fuller (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1960), 267.

[49] Dwight Van Winkle, "Christianity and Zionism," *Journal of the Irish Christian Study Centre*, Vol. 2 (1984), 38-46. The Wesleyan tradition has consistently interpreted the covenantal language in conditional and interpersonal rather than in juristic and unconditional terms. As Van Winkle's exegesis shows, the covenant with Abraham and Moses in Gen. 15 and 17 and in Lev. 18:24-28 is conditioned upon Israel's obedient response to its conditions. In Exod. 19:5, the declaration is "*if* (emphasis mine) you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Obedience is the condition of covenant maintenance (see Van Winkle, "Christianity and Zionism," 42-43); Bruce Birch, Walter Brueggemann, Terence Fretheim, and David Petersen, *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 151.

[50] Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 1:75; E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 92-97.

[51] The discussion grows out of the thesis that the concept of covenant does not reflect the traditional connotation of pact or mutual agreement, but rather an obligation imposed upon one party by another. Primary contributions to this discussion are: Ernst Kutsch, *Verheissung und Gesetz (Beihaft zur Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 131; Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1973); M. Weinfeld, "*Berit*-Covenant vs. Obligation," *Biblica*, 56 (1975), pp. 120-128; James Barr, "Some Semantic Notes on the Covenant," *Beitrage zur alttestamentlichen Theologie: Festschrift fur Walther Zimmerli zum 70, Begurtstag*, ed. by H. Donnor, R. Hanhart, and R. Smend (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1977), 23-38.

Testament in addition to many allusions to the concept of covenant.[52] The phrase "cutting a covenant" apparently refers to the preparation of the animal sacrifice with which the parties of the covenant formalize and give expression to a set of existing arrangements and relationships.[53] It provides a particularly apt metaphor for the relationship between God and Israel. The Mosaic Covenant in Exod. 19-24 and the covenant in Josh. 24 are examples. Particularly at Sinai, the covenant metaphor is used to describe a divinely initiated agreement that is ratified by Israel's response (Exod. 24:4-8), and conditioned upon Israel's obedience. Indeed, the conditionality of covenantal fellowship with God is explicitly stated in Lev. 18:24-28; Deut. 4:25-26; Jer. 4:1-2; and Ezek. 33:23-29.[54] These sacrifices were not performed as a result of any penalty, which had been applied, but rather they were used as the expression of an oath, which validated the promises and guarantees of the substance of the covenant. In the ancient world, the ratification or solemnization of a covenant was accomplished by the ceremonial sacrificing of an animal. In Jer. 34:18-20, the prophet describes such a ceremony:

> The men who have violated my covenant and have not fulfilled the term of the covenant they made before me, I will treat them like the calf they cut in two and then walked between the pieces. The leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the court officials, the priests and all the people of the land who walked between the pieces of the calf, I will hand over to their enemies who seek their lives.

Eichrodt says: "There is emphatic indication that the covenant cannot be actualized except by the complete self commitment of man to God in personal trust. Hence the obedient performance of the rite of circumcision takes on the character of an act of faith."[55] Faith in God's grace and obedience to God's command are moral

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[52] A. B. Davidson, "Covenant," *A Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1898), 509; G. E. Mendenhall, "Covenant," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 715.

[53] William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 16-17. Also see, D. J. McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant: A Survey of Current Opinions* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1972), 19. Also, D. J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978).

[54] Van Winkle, "Christianity and Zionism," 42-43.

[55] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:228.

issues. Thus, faith-obedience is required for Israel to fulfill its covenant obligations.[56]

In the canonical narrative of the Sinai covenant, God promised to continue the divine assistance and faithfulness, while Israel's behavior was subjected to specific standards. Although it was Yahweh's covenant and the conditions were his, it took on the aspect of mutuality only when the people responded by accepting the terms and promising to be obedient.[57] God thus forbade that behavior which abolished the relationship created in His covenant with the elect nation. Every breach of this Law was a personal offense against this God whose concern and love had been so explicitly expressed.[58] The covenant was both initiated and maintained by obedience to its stipulations, and the expression of this obedience and covenant communion with Yahweh was mediated through the ritual of the sacrificial system.[59] Because of this specifically defined relationship, the fear of arbitrariness in God was excluded from Israel, and in this atmosphere of covenant security, Israel found its strength.[60] This mutuality resulted in a deep sense of personal experience in Israel's relationship with Yahweh. Indeed, from Israel's perspective, the ancestral covenant grounded Israel's future in God's unconditional commitment to them, not in their resolve to be faithful. John Bright notes, "The Genesis picture of a personal relationship between the individual and his God, supported by promise and sealed by covenant, is most authentic."[61] Thus, the canonical understanding of the church ultimately has seen only in Jesus Christ the resolution of this tension of covenant faithfulness as he embodies both God's perfect grace and humanity's perfect agreement in the obedience of faith.

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[56] The sin offering sacrifices are not equal in value to the offenses for which they are offered. They are tokens of obedience, not *ex opere operato* bribes, as one finds in the surrounding pagan culture. Furthermore, the sin offerings, which were the only type of sacrifices which could be construed as being penal in nature, were efficacious only for inadvertent sins, not the removal of sins which violated the Ten Commandments. For these, only a penitent spirit and the grace of God could bring forgiveness and restoration. The sacrifice is not a payment of penalty to placate God. It is an act of renewal of the covenant relationship as an act of obedience to God's command to do so. It is an obedient response to God's directions.

[57] John Peterson Milton, *God's Covenant of Blessing* (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Press, 1961).

[58]Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:75.

[59] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 92-97.

[60]Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:38.

[61] John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 2000), 91.

Covenant as Relationship

For the purposes of the present discussion, the concept of "covenant" will be used in the sense of an interpersonal relationship of commitment between God and persons. The concept of covenant is not a document, but a relationship reflected in a document(s). The reality of a covenant relationship predated the actual formulation of a specific covenant, such as the one God made with Abraham, and the general concept of covenant relationship pervades the Old Testament. The reality of covenant relationship is observed even where the word "covenant" does not appear in the biblical text, such as with Adam and Eve, or with Job, or in the Prophets. The important role given by God to humans in the world, created in the image of God, is indicative of this covenant-type of relationship. Karl Barth extends the covenant idea to cover "Adam, the Patriarchs, Abraham and the people of Israel." He understands the covenant with humanity to be the "the internal basis of creation."[62] From the very beginning, humanity has stood in covenant relationship with God because of the divine origin and the endowment of the divine image. With the inbreathing of divine life into humanity, God reveals the depths to which he has identified with the life of the creation. God's very self has been breathed into humanity. In spite of their sin, they are called upon to be co-creators with God, stewards of Creation with responsibility and accountability for care-giving (Gen. 3:22-24; 9:6).

It is on the foundation of this general covenant relationship and what it reveals about God that the Old Testament faith is built, and it is this foundation that gives authenticity to the specific covenants, such as those with Abraham and David. The Law, or Torah, is the moral pattern of behavioral expectations that God gives to guide Israel in maintaining the "divine expectations" of the covenant. The most extensive treatment of covenants is in Deuteronomy. Particularly in chapters 26:16-30:20, the book discusses various rituals and affirmations which accompanied the ratification of covenants in Israel. The particular concern for this study is to demonstrate how the image of covenant, which forms a distinctive context for understanding the biblical doctrine of the atonement in the Bible, is a theological integrating motif that will be useful in communicating the gospel to the contemporary 21st century culture.

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[62] Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics,* III/1, trans. Harold Knight, G.W. Bromiley, J.K.S. Reid, R.H. Fuller(Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1960), 267.

The important issue, then, is how God's judgment against sin can be averted and a loving covenant relationship restored. Sacrifice, repentance, or some other means such as prayer, expiates sin and removes the cause of judgment because the covenant has already been renewed by the penitence and obedience of the worshipper. This removal of sin and the corresponding repentance and obedience of the person as expressed in the sacrifice results in the removal of the wrath of God. God is no longer wrathful because his intention was to maintain the covenant fellowship in the first place. Whatever makes possible the restoration of that fellowship with God, whether it be sacrifice, prayer, or the destruction of the guilty party, reconciles humanity and God. This restoration of covenant fellowship is the key to spiritual restoration in the OT. Thus, the personal repentance of the sinner resulted in the personal forgiveness of God and the restoration of the relationship of covenant love between God and the penitent. The offering of a sacrifice is simply the overt expression, or seal, of the worshipper's repentance and renewed commitment to the covenant relationship.

Through the sacrificial ritual, then, the penitent expressed repentance and submission to the will of God. By conformity to the ritual prescribed by God's grace, the sinner acted in such a way as to show personal surrender to God, and because this obedient action indicated repentance and confession for the sin, the broken covenant fellowship was restored. Obedience to the Law thus expressed love for Yahweh who had established the covenant community. But it was the personal repentance of the sinner and the personal forgiveness of Yahweh that restored the broken relationship. The basic element in the restoration of this relationship was love of Yahweh as it was expressed practically in a personal surrender to the Law (Deut. 6:4f) and the corresponding divine grace. Hartley notes, "Because it is disobedience of a law given by God, a sin places a person's relationship with Yahweh in jeopardy. If a sin is committed against another, it, of course, damages the relationship between the parties involved. Any sin is detrimental to the community's welfare and solidarity."[63] Thus just as transgression threatened to disrupt the present order, love upheld it because love was the essence of fellowship with God, which was the purpose of the covenant order.[64] "Here love," says Eichrodt, "the miracle of free affection, is seen to be the basis of the whole

[63] Hartley, *Leviticus*, lxxi.
[64] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:256.

relationship of God to man, and it calls for personal surrender as the living heart of any obedience to law...."[65] How does this all work for reconciliation and forgiveness?

While the case for "expiation" cannot be fully presented in this setting, the most consistent theological meaning of "atonement" seems to be an expiation that restores a right relationship to God through grace, as Hartley, Birch, Brueggemann and others affirm.[66] At issue is whether there is a need to bribe or appease God in order to induce Him to forgive the sinner. The key to this interpretation is in the nature and meaning of the sacrifice in the OT cultic ritual. The Priestly theology presents God as the one who provides the sacrificial system and takes the initiative in reconciliation through the covenant formula at Sinai. The text does not say that God needs to be reconciled. It is the sinners who need to be![67] Through *identification* with the sacrifice in laying on of a hand and presenting it to the priest, the offerer changed in his attitude to God from disobedience to obedience and repentance. The animal is thus not a *substitute* penalty for the sinner, but the representative of him.[68]

The meaning of the laying of the offerer's hand (or hands), *semikah*, on the sacrificial animal's head has been interpreted in two main ways. One approach is to see the laying on of hands as an expression of the *transference* of sins to the animal in something of a concrete way. The other sees it as an expression of the involvement of the offerer in the atonement that is accomplished by the sacrifice by *identification* of the offerer's life (*nephesh*) with the

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[65] Ibid.

[66] John E. Hartley, "Expiate, Expiation," *International Standard Biblical Encyclopedia*, Vol.2 (Grand Rapids:Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.: 1982), 246-247; C. L. Mitton, "Atonement," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 310; C.H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935), 88-93; Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eardmans Publishing Co., 1965), 149; Bernhard Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 120.

[67] H.H. Rowley, *The Meaning of Sacrifice in the Old Testament* (Manchester: John Rylands Library, 1950), 87; Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997), 666; see Lev. 6:30; 16:20; Matt. 5:24; Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:20.

[68] Hartmut Gese, *Essays in Biblical Theology* Translated by Keith Crim (Minneapolis, 1981), 105,106. The laying on of hands is thus not seen as a transfer of sins to the animal (as in the scapegoat in Lev. 16:21f.), but as an identification, or "inclusive substitution," of the offerer's life with that of the animal. It is the life of the animal, not its death that is offered to God (Lev. 17:11), and it is the life of Christ acting obediently on behalf of humanity that is offered to God.

animal. A very prevalent interpretation of the laying of hands on the animal views the act as a transference of the sins of the offerer to the sacrificial animal, thus making the animal a substitute bearer of one's sins. This transference theory takes the passage in Lev. 16:21-22 (the scapegoat passage), as the primary proof-text for its position, although the other sacrifices also mention the laying on of hands (Lev. 1-7). The understanding is that in the laying on of both hands, Aaron the priest facilitates the literal transfer of the sins of the nation upon the goat as a substitute for the people.[69] The problems with this explanation are: (1) the animal that is slaughtered as a sacrifice at the Day of Atonement is not the one upon whose head the hands are laid; (2) the transferal of sins at the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16-17) is a separate procedure than the laying on of one hand (*semikah*) in the rest of Leviticus, and confession of sins while laying on the hand is not a part of the individual sin offering ritual in Leviticus 4-7; and, (3) atonement is not made by the killing of the animal, but by the fulfilling of the entire cultic ritual performed by the priest in the Tent or Temple (Lev. 16:6-19).[70]

This laying on of the hand is instead described by Hartmut Gese and Otfried Hofius as an act of *identification* of the offerer with the sacrificial animal in the normal sacrificial activities of Israel. This has significant implications in how the NT references to Jesus' sacrificial death are interpreted, whether as an act of penal punishment for humanity's sins, or as an act of sacrificial identification with humanity. Those who by Christ's identification with them are able to re-identify with God through faith-identification with Christ are restored to the divine image in covenant renewal. This also has significant implications for understanding the work of sanctification as identification with the person of Christ through the Spirit in the Wesleyan theological interpretation.

This explanation shows that the laying on of the hand (*semikah*) effects the identification of the life (*nephesh*) of the sinner with the animal's *nephesh*, which then is taken into the sanctuary where it comes into contact with that which is holy. Rowley notes that this

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[69] Hartley, *Leviticus*. Hartley's development of this ritual brings out a critical issue. The laying on of one hand, as in Lev. 1-7 indicates the identification with the offering, while the laying on of two hands, as in the priest's laying hand on the scapegoat in Lev. 16, indicates the transference of a substance or virtue, such as sin. The penal interpretation tends to universalize the second meaning and interpret all instances of the laying on hand(s) as indicating transference.

[70] Gese, *Essays on Biblical Theology*, 104-106; Hartley, *Leviticus*, 53.

identification with the animal symbolizes that in its death, the offerer also dies spiritually, for the death of the victim denotes the offerer's death to sin, or to anything that stood between himself and the surrender of himself to God in thankfulness and humility.[71] Furthermore, the atonement is accomplished not only by the animal's death, but by the commitment of its life representing the sacred life of the offerer. This seems to be the most consistent interpretation of Lev. 17:11, "For the life (*nephesh*) of the creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for your souls (*nephesh*-plural) on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life (*nephesh*)." Thus, by identifying with the animal, the collective lives of the nation are symbolically offered up and incorporated into the holy so that they now have community with God. The ceremony of sprinkling the blood on the altar and on the people consecrates them both and renews the covenant binding together of God and Israel. Sins are not simply wiped away nor is capital punishment inflicted to pay for them. Instead, in an identification symbolized by the laying on of a hand, the *nephesh* is dedicated to the sanctuary and consecrated to the holy. Gese says, "In the inclusive substitution by means of atoning sacrifice, this ritual brings Israel into contact with God."[72]

The sacrifice becomes the sinner in self-offering to God in repentance as a response to God's invitation. This forgiveness is thus not a positional righteousness in which God looks at humanity through the sacrifice, but it results in the actual righting of the interpersonal relationship between God and humanity. The real sacrifice the offerer brings is himself as the true self-offering, and the animal is accepted by God as the token of his reception of the offerer who has identified himself with it, and thus forgives the sinner of his or her offenses. The significance of this understanding of sacrifice and covenant renewal is seen in its application to the NT presentation of the cross as God's story of incarnational loving redemption in Christ.

Atonement

In the covenant relationship, the alienation resulting from violations of its expectations has the character of sin. As an obstruction to the covenant community, these sins had to be atoned

[71] Rowley, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, 88.
[72] Gese, *Essays on Biblical Theology*, 106; also see 106-109.

for by the exercise of repentance and faith obedience as reflected in the obedient offering of sacrifice. For those sins covered by sacrifice, the person who has violated the covenant obligations must avoid God's wrath by a proper use of the sacrifice. However, the issue of the translation of *kipper* as "propitiation" or "expiation" is of major importance in understanding the atonement. What occurs in the process of avoiding wrath is the essence of atonement, or *kipper*. Much controversy surrounds the meaning of *kipper*. It can mean "make expiation," "wipe away," "forgive," "appease," or "propitiate," as well as a number of other nuances. The term *kipper* has several nuances of meaning. Its Akkadian roots render it as "wipe off, smear," with reference to buildings, people, and other objects purified by magical rites. The Old Testament usage can convey a similar idea of ritual purification of worship-related objects. More common, however, is the idea that an act that "expiates" removes pollution and counteracts sin. The idea is that God had purged or removed the sin so that the person finds forgiveness (Ps. 65:4; 78:38; Ezek. 16:63). In other words, "expiation" describes the action of the removal of sin and the effects of sin on the person or nation. It purges the impurity released by a sin, and removes the sinner's guilt by granting forgiveness.[73]

The debate over the proper translation of *kipper* relates primarily to whether atonement means "expiation," "propitiation," or both. "Propitiation" suggests that God, who is angered by sin, requires that something be done to neutralize, or appease, that anger before forgiveness can be offered the sinner. Whether the offended character of God must be appeased, as in the pagan cultus, or simply that His desire to restore normalized relationships must be addressed is also an issue in defining the usage of "propitiation." The question to be answered here is whether the sacrifices are intended to appease God (propitiate) or to remove sin (expiate). The issue depends upon the contextual usage of the term. Hartley notes that "expiation" focuses on the removal of the sin that has obstructed the expression of God's love, and this is usually done through sacrifice.[74] C.H. Dodd notes that the biblical writer portrays God as the one who initiates forgiveness rather than as a capricious and vindictive deity who must be bribed back into a good mood by sacrificial gifts. Thus,

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[73] Hartley, *Leviticus*, 64, 65.

[74] John E. Hartley, "Expiate; Expiation," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Col, 1982), 246-247; C. L. Mitton, "Atonement," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 310.

expiation better represents the nature of the sacrifice that removes or annuls the sin so that God can forgive with integrity because the cause of his anger has been removed.[75]

Furthermore, Birch, Brueggemann and others emphasize that the object of the verb *kipper* is sin, never God. The action of expiation affects the forgiveness of sin, not the appeasement of God. By definition, the expiation of sin does not involve a penalty. The focus is on the saving aspects of the ritual.[76] Bernhard Anderson agrees that the "expiation" translation reflects that the obstacle to right relationship with God is in the sin of the sinner and God initiates a way to restore that relationship through grace.[77] The concept of appeasement of God's anger to precipitate forgiveness is inconsistent with the Priestly theology, which presents God as the one who provides the sacrificial system according to the formula given at Sinai. God is the one who forgives (2 Chron. 30:18) and the subject of the verb "to forgive" (Ezek. 16:63; Deut. 21:8; Ps. 78:38). He is the one who provides forgiveness at the calling of Isaiah (Isa. 6, 7). It is God who takes the initiative to cancel the consequences of sin, and this is also Anderson's interpretation of Isaiah 53:10, in which the Servant's sacrifice is a sin offering which restores the covenant relationship with God.[78]

Furthermore, the problem with interpreting *kipper* as "propitiation" in its biblical usage is that it is very difficult to show from the text that because God is first reconciled to sinful humanity, therefore humanity may then be reconciled to God (Lev. 6:30; 16:20; Matt. 5:24; Rom. 5:10;2 Cor. 5:20). In fact, the *opposite* is true. It is sinful humanity that must be propitiated and reconciled. It was not God who violated the covenant in the first place. In fact, God initiated the procedure for atonement and reconciliation. The action of God is always to restore the covenant relationship. It is sinful humanity who must be turned back toward God, to be propitiated. "Expiation," the removal of the sin that alienates from the covenant relationship, is what the sacrificial system is intended to accomplish, so long as the sinner accompanies the sacrifice with the spirit of repentance, humility, and an attitude of obedience toward God. The

[75] C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935), 88-93.
[76] Birch, *et al.*, *TIOT*, 159, 160.
[77] Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 120.
[78] Ibid., 121.

sacrificial acts were not effective unless they were accomplished by true repentance.[79]

Note that the Bible does not say God is reconciled. *It is the sinners who are!* Brueggemann also emphasizes that the restoration of relationship, as seen in Lev. 16, is the point of the sacrificial ritual. He writes, "The astonishing claim of these texts, and of the vehicle to which they witness, is that *Yahweh has granted to Israel a reliable, authorized device whereby Israel can be restored to full relationship to Yahweh.*" [80]

Not only must atonement involve something that changes the sinner's relationship with God (propitiation), but something must also change the sinner's attitude toward sin (expiation). Thus, the personal repentance of the sinner resulted in the personal forgiveness of God and the restoration of the relationship of covenant love between God and the penitent. It is imperative to understand that the sacrifice was in no way a means of placating God. God does not break his part of the covenant relationship, even when Israel is sinful. Israel may take itself out of the covenant blessings by its disobedience, but God does not change his covenant love. It is God who takes the initiative in providing an invitation and a means to restore the covenant relationship. Even though the sacrifice was made to obtain forgiveness of sins, one must remember that the real sacrifice of self-surrender and repentance had to be made by the sinner. In offering the sacrifice and identifying with it by laying on of the hand, the sinner changed in his attitude toward God. He turned back to God and repented. "The gift-sacrifice which we bring to God is ourselves," as Snaith phrases it.[81] In response to the offerer's repentance and self-offering, God accepted the animal sacrifice as a token of his reception of the offerer who had identified himself with it and forgave the sinner of his offenses. In this forgiveness God did not merely look upon the sinner as if he had offered himself, but he looked upon him as a true self-offering. It was not merely the sacrifice that changed God's attitude toward humanity, because God had already extended the invitation, but it changed humanity's attitude toward God wherein the atonement took place. This forgiveness did not result in a positional righteousness in which God looked at humanity through the

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[79] Rowley, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, 87.
[80] Brueggemann, *TOT*, 666.
[81] Norman Snaith, *Mercy and Sacrifice: A Study of the Book of Hosea* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1957), 118.

sacrifice, but it resulted in an actual righting of interpersonal relationships between humanity and God. The symbol was the animal; the reality was the changed relationship between God and humanity.

The acts of external sacrifice thus were not effective unless they were accompanied by a penitence that resulted from true conversion.[82] The sacrifice is not the payment of a penalty in order to placate God. It is an act of renewal of the covenant relationship as an act of obedient response to God's command to do so. It is an obedient and faithful response to God's directions. The restoration of the covenant is the purpose of OT sacrifices—they are a tangible act of recommitment to the terms of the covenant. They are not just a sin offering, but praise, thanks, remembrance, etc. And the blood is not magic, but is symbolic of the giving of life, which validates the covenant—it is not a penalty, but a validation of the terms of the covenant of redemption. The blood serves as a synecdoche for covenant obedience to the radical point of death, as in Christ. The word "blood" stands for the entire work of atonement, not just the death of Christ itself. And Christ's death is not just a continuation of the OT sacrifices, but an actual acting out of the perfect pattern of covenant obedience. Faith enables the believer to participate in Christ's obedience as his/her own, and to share in his renewal of Yahweh's covenant with humanity.

Since this kind of covenant love was the essence of fellowship with God, the covenant relationship was normalized and the purpose of the covenant order was restored as the believer obeyed.[83] Entrance into the covenant was by faith in God and obedience to divine law as sealed by circumcision (Gen. 17:11, 12). Maintenance of the covenant was thus contingent upon faith, love, and moral obedience to its stipulations, including repentance for sin through its sacrificial provisions.

The atonement of Jesus Christ, as it is interpreted according to the biblical model of covenant sacrifice, therefore, involves a profound understanding of his Incarnation in becoming fully human to the point of taking upon himself all the experience of the fallen human race, even the perception of the death resulting from sin. He thus takes upon himself the identification of humanity and becomes its sacrificial offering to God. In this identification with humanity through his divine love and grace, Christ as the Second Adam is able

[82] Rowley, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, 87.
[83] Ibid., 2:445; 1:256.

to act for humanity and in participation with it in its destiny of death, sharing its sufferings (I Pet. 3:13-22). However, since he participates in humanity's death, humanity also participates in his resurrection (Rom 6; I Pet. 1 and 3). As the God-Man, he represents humanity in leading it back to repentance, obedience, and reconciliation with God, and through his sacrificial obedience to God's will (of which he is a part), humanity thus reflects the covenant obedience God desires and is brought back into covenant fellowship with God through its faith-union with Christ. Through its participation by faith in Christ's own covenant self-sacrifice, humanity is restored to its covenant relationship with God and is reconciled and restored to the divine image through the Holy Spirit's regenerating presence and activity. It is this Spirit-energized, covenant-based foundation for Christ's atonement that results in growth in grace and Christlikeness consistent with Wesley's vision of holiness of heart and life, while avoiding the spiritual and psychological problems associated with the unresolved guilt and legalism of the penal model. And it is a concept that can be utilized as the redemptive narrative that communicates the redemptive interpersonal story of Christ to a postmodern community that is unfamiliar with and resistant to the traditional penalty-based understanding of salvation.

Identification vs. Transference

The sacrificial rituals functioned to restore the vitality of the covenant communion. The renewing of covenant relationship was effected through obedience to the Law's commands to effect the atoning nature of the rituals. Birch, Brueggemann and others point out:

> Thus, in the offering the worshipers submit *themselves* to God. The sacrifice is thus a *tangible sign of faith*, a concrete way in which one offers the self to God.[84]

In offering the sacrifice and in identifying oneself with it, the sinner changed his attitude toward God. As the offerer turned back to God and repented, it was himself that was the gift-sacrifice to God.[85] In response to human repentance and self-offering, God

[84] Birch, *et al.*, *TIOT*, 160.
[85] Snaith, *Mercy and Sacrifice*, 118.

accepted the animal sacrifice as a token of his reception of the offerer who had identified with it and forgave the sinner of the offenses. In this forgiveness God did not merely look upon the sinner *as if* he had offered himself, but He looked upon him as a true self-offering. This is the critical distinction between the transference and the identification understandings of the laying on of hands. Because of the commitment of the offerer's life to what is holy, God did not simply consider the offering *as if* it were the offerer; it *really was* the offerer. The reality of ritual identification is not simply a fictional "let's pretend" action, but a genuinely realistic portrayal of the relational reality that was represented by the identification between the subject (offerer) and the object (offering). It was not simply the sacrifice that changed God's attitude toward the sinner, but it changed the sinner's attitude toward God as well. This forgiveness did not result in a positional righteousness in which God looked at humanity through the sacrifice, but it resulted in an actual righting of interpersonal relationships between humanity and God. The symbol was the animal; the reality was the changed relationship between humanity and God. The offering really made things right with God, because presenting the offering in an attitude of obedience and repentance was what God had commanded in the covenant expectations in the first place. The sin offering resulted in forgiveness, because that is how God told Israel to express its repentance. Covenant renewal and salvation is about restoring health, or *shalom*, to the relationship between God and Israel.

So, the biblical sacrifice is a gift given to God by a sinner who by that gift expresses obedience to the Creator God of the covenant, and who desires intimate interpersonal spiritual fellowship, and who seeks the forgiveness which restores that covenant fellowship with God for which humanity was created.

Conclusion

The covenant story is thus the framework in which all biblical metaphors of salvation function.[86] The story of covenant relationship is God's love story of faithfulness to His promises and

[86] Limited space prevents inclusion of the author's analysis of "Rigteousness and Justification." These, too, are interpersonal concepts in Paul's usage, based on the covenant background of the terms as relational, rather than simply forensic. See documentation in manuscript in progress, *Divine Expectations: Interpreting the Atonement for 21st Century Mission*, by this author.

presentation of divine expectations for us human creatures. All in all, however, the concept of covenant reflects a relationship that is interpersonal rather than an objective, impersonal statement of law. So, the biblical sacrifice is a gift given to God by the sinner who by that gift expresses obedience to the covenant Creator God, and who desires intimate interpersonal spiritual fellowship with God through renewed inclusion in the covenant community. The significance of this understanding of sacrifice as a gift is seen in its application to the NT presentation of the cross. This interpersonal, love-based understanding of atonement is more readily interpreted and communicated to a relationship-oriented and experience-based postmodern culture than are the more traditional models. It should also be more useful in communicating interculturally in missiological settings such as in indigenous cross-cultural contexts that are not steeped in Western rationalistic modernity. In some non-Western contexts evangelism has suffered from the perception that Christ's death as interpreted by the penal model is seen as the foundation of a violent religion. Indeed, a Native American Christian recently told me of many examples in which the hellfire and brimstone penal substitutionary message had been interpreted in the indigenous culture in the United States as spiritual abuse.

The *Covenant Atonement* motif thus interprets the atonement of Christ in biblical covenant terms that reflect the loving interpersonal nature of the divine-human relationship. It seeks to provide exegetical, theological, and historical resources that enable Christians to communicate the work of Christ to the postmodern culture with more relevance than the traditional guilt-based forensic penal substitutionary terminology. The biblical Covenant concept more effectively serves as a hermeneutical bridge to the 21st century mind than the other traditional atonement theories which use metaphors from cultural situations that reflect more legal, medieval, transactional, and abstract impersonal models for atonement. It is also more consistent with a Wesleyan understanding of salvation as interpersonal relationship and renewal in God's image rather than as an imputational penal view that infers an election by divine decree that is economically wed to a limited atonement view that Wesley completely rejected. And, finally, the Covenant view employs a central covenant metaphor that is inductively derived from scripture and that tends to be understood in virtually all known cultures.

John Wesley taught a gospel that was centered on love and modeled after the loving example of Christ's sacrificial life. His

concern for a message of full salvation that involves the incarnational transformation of life through the atonement of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit is better served by the biblical model of covenant and incarnational relationship based in the gracious love of God than in the penal transactional models that address primarily the neutralization of guilt but not the transformation of the self. The core of the Wesleyan message is the incarnational love that transforms the person, refocuses the will, and reorients the self in love toward God and others. It calls for the realization of salvation in the here and now, not only in the age to come. To my mind, no metaphor, biblical or otherwise, more effectively incarnates that message and grounds it in the love of God than the covenant model of God's relationship to Creation.

In conclusion, Wesleyan theology can be strengthened in its presentation of full salvation by integrating the incarnational relationship idea of covenant and atonement as covenant-renewal, which is shown to be a central biblical motif, with its understanding of the transforming work of grace through the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

CONVENTIONAL OR REVISIONARY? SITUATING THE DOCTRINES OF SIN AND THE WORKS OF GRACE WITHIN CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGICAL PARADIGMS

Jonathan P. Case

Introductory

Conventional Wesleyan theology analyzes sin usually in terms of broad categories such as: original sin, inherited depravity, estrangement, sin versus sins, ongoing sin in the life of the believer, and so on. The works of grace then said to apply to such needs are drawn from the traditional *ordo salutis*: awakening, justification, regeneration, entire sanctification, etc or from less informal jargon: forgiveness, cleansing, empowerment for service, etc.

These all are important themes. However, we should be wary of beginning any exposition of God's gracious works with a discussion of sin (or sins) and human needs. Indigence - our needs - should not constitute the tail that wags the theological dog. It is not that the human subject is unimportant, but if there is one lesson to be drawn from modern theology, it is this: If you begin with the human subject - its sin, finitude, needs, desires, etc - you rarely get around to God, and if you do, then the Almighty usually has been trimmed to fit 'what you need'.

The danger of proceeding this way, especially in a western consumer-driven culture at once individualistic and hyper-conformist, is apparent: I have my needs, and God (or the church) is there to meet them. I need forgiveness, I need to have my emotional wounds healed, I need to be freed from my addiction, I need a meaningful worship experience, I need fellowship, I need divine guidance and provision, I need comfort in times of sorrow, I need a place of service. God is said to be of paramount importance – desperately so - insofar as God is necessary to fill my needs. And the church on this score more often than not is taken to be a kind of 'one-stop shopping' spiritual mega-mart. This may be good

marketing, but it is lousy theology. My basic warning is this: we should not base a theology on human indigence. Rather, our first instinct should be to indwell the story of what God has been up to, and find out what our needs should be, given that narrative. With that caveat in mind - on doing theology in the contemporary west's cultural quagmire - we can move on to the material considerations of this paper.

Doctrines and Paradigms

Doctrines like "sin" and "works of grace" function and have their significance only in relation to larger theological frameworks, and those contexts must be made plain in order to grasp what is at stake in those doctrines. In what follows, I attempt a thought experiment - I aim to sketch the contours of two theological paradigms that can be found among Wesleyans today: what I am calling the dominant paradigm (or theology A), which operates in most congregations, and an alternative paradigm (or theology B) that is largely still inchoate but steadily emerging.

My construal of these paradigms proceeds somewhat intuitively and is admittedly a work of *bricolage* – I have cobbled Theology A together from theological fragments that seem to recur in many American and Australian congregations. Theology B is assembled from dialogic fragments culled from conversations with those involved in house-church networks, the emerging church movement and the return to classical forms of liturgy, and also seeks to incorporate insights from some important recent work in systematic theology that several theologians in the Wesleyan theological stream have also engaged. It is not in any sense the result of a closer reading of Wesley or an attempt to repristinate Wesley; it is more of an attempt to articulate rumblings that can be heard in our midst.

What follows is not the articulation of systems, but paradigms - that is, loose collections of ideas that seem to have overarching thematic connections. No attempt has been made to tie up all loose ends or settle longstanding doctrinal disputes on particular points, and I realize that not all proponents of Theology B, especially, would agree with me. I am merely taking a systematic stab at making theological sense of, or giving a coherent voice to, fairly fluid ideas and discussions. Now within these paradigms I have given particular attention to the doctrines of justification and sanctification – the two foci in thinking about the works of grace - although I hasten to add that the entire drama of salvation is a work

of grace as is it the story of the redemptive transformation of God's good creation.[1]

Theology A

In my judgment, the dominant theological paradigm in most Wesleyan congregations is the result of three, unequally weighted, traditions converging: a dollop of John Wesley, a bit more of the American holiness tradition, and a great deal of contemporary pop evangelicalism (what in a moment of theological whimsy I have called Neo-Gnostic Pragmatic Anabapticostalism – of the sort that lurks on the shelves of many Christian bookstores). This dominant theology runs close to the following extended (!) summary:

The prevailing doctrine of God in this paradigm is drawn from what one might call "conventional" metaphysics. I mean that if you were to ask the average Sunday School teacher for a basic definition of God, he or she might well reach for the dictionary (how often is Noah Webster quoted in our Sunday School classes!?) and find the following definition, or something similar, ready at hand: "the supernatural being conceived as the perfect and omnipotent and omniscient originator and ruler of the universe; the object of worship in monotheistic religions" (from *WordReference.com* dictionary) – a definition that owes more to our pagan Hellenistic philosophic heritage than one might guess at first glance.

If we were to press people on what exactly is meant by "supernatural" being, after a bit of philosophical waffling at least a few folks would land upon the notion of eternity: the very essence of God is to be eternal. God is said to live in an eternal present, unsullied by the muck and mire characteristic of creation in time.

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[1] Theology A and Theology B are not conceived as diametrically opposed or mutually exclusive. Where there is disagreement, it sometimes tends to be a matter of emphases, exaggeration or minimization. I also do not mean to imply that one of these theologies is 'always right' (although my leanings will be clear enough); there is room enough for healthy debate and mutual edification. But, on the whole, the different orientations, emphases and questions held by proponents of Theology B do provide a kind of alternative paradigm for understanding the *ordo salutis* and hence spiritual transformation. Those who have been following the rollicking (and sometimes nasty) arguments among contemporary evangelicals will find some similarities in the following discussion to the evangelical / postconservative debate – but that particular debate, in my judgment, has not addressed the question of 'conventional' v. 'revisionary' metaphysics in an adequately Trinitarian vein. Nor, of course, has that particular debate addressed the issue of sanctification with Wesleyan concerns in mind.

God, in other words, is transcendent, but – depending on your religious tradition — God is also said to be somehow immanent, mysteriously close to creation. The relationship between God's transcendence and immanence, however, cannot be adequately addressed without addressing the relation between eternity and time – but because this latter relationship remains something of a conundrum, a number of fault lines are set to run throughout Theology A.

In our standard definition, this God also is said to *do* things like originate (or create) and rule the universe. In other words, God does things like someone who creates or rules, only supremely so, like the Big Man or "The Donald" (Trump!) Upstairs. In sum, the popular conception of God is that of an individual who possesses an interior subjectivity and attributes similar to human beings, only in God's case the divine subject has an eternal essence or being and those attributes are elevated to the nth degree. Given this conception, it is relatively easy to see the force of Feurbach's critique.

In this paradigm, then, usually the first move in getting a "handle" on God is to try to sort out God's essence and attributes – what *Godness* is and what attributes God possesses. A number of hidden assumptions about subjectivity, agency, power and eternity are appropriated uncritically, however, with the result that many people would have no problem with the proposition that, at the end of the day, we monotheists all worship the same God. If we think about God's *identity* at all in terms of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, then this tends to happen subsequently, with God's attributes and essence already largely in place. In other words, Theology A operates for the most part with a default doctrine of "God in the abstract" first, then tries to work out how this God can be triune – usually with considerable mental constipation: how can three be one and one be three? and so on (the math, so we are told, is difficult). But in proceeding this way, the dominant paradigm succumbs to a number of neo-Gnostic and modalist pitfalls, which will become apparent in this exposition.

Moving to theological anthropology, we affirm that the eternal God has created humankind in the divine image, and has invested in each one of us an immortal soul. The image of God and the soul are closely related; one might even venture that the *imago Dei* is the form given to the soul-ish substance. On account of Adam's fall, we bear the damnable results of original sin and the damning burden of inherited depravity, so that the sin which mars Adam's helpless race –issuing in all manner of sins—separates us from God. The point of

salvation, on this score, is largely a matter of being saved from this corruption so that we can live forever with God in heaven, i.e., in eternity. The immortal soul must get ready to meet its eternal Maker.

The eternal God at critical times attempted to create a redemptive beachhead in this fallen world, especially through the giving of the Law and the Prophets. But the problem lay much deeper than what a legal code could touch; in fact in retrospect we see that point of the law was to reveal just that. Saying "Be good!" – even in a loud voice from Sinai - was not enough. In our sinful state we were never able, through our own effort, to "be good," to meet the standards of righteousness whereby we might restore and maintain fellowship with the eternal God.

The sin problem was indeed so intractable that the eternal God himself had to invade the historical pitch, which he did by sending his son, Jesus Christ. By leading a blameless life and offering himself as a perfect sacrifice for sin (of which the Old Testament sacrificial system was merely a foreshadowing), Jesus took our justly deserved punishment upon himself and bore the brunt of God's wrath. Through faith in Jesus and his work on the cross, when we repent we are "justified" –i.e., acquitted. The familiar forensic image is perhaps that of an offender standing alone before a judge who slams the gavel and pronounces him or her "Not guilty!"

But the effects of sin run deeper than the need for forgiveness and reconciliation. There are other "dimensions" to the problem of sin, namely, human nature remains weakened and depraved on account of the Fall and original sin. Hence we also need empowerment and cleansing, so that the Christian life will not be drudgery. Spiritual foot-dragging is not part of God's wonderful plan for your life. God wants us to *want* to obey him and be *able* to obey him. So he has given his Holy Spirit to inhabit us. And as Christians walk in the Spirit and become increasingly set apart from the world to follow Jesus, we are in process of being sanctified and of being "fitted" for heaven.

But now, of course, comes the Wesleyan rub. My sense is that a majority of our pastors, if asked about the peculiar Wesleyan contribution to understanding sanctification, would answer along the following lines: "God has promised and provided for our full sanctification in this life, and in a moment of crisis [i.e., an experientially discrete moment in time] can sanctify a person 'entirely.' This means that the Spirit can 'take away your bent to sinning' - can cleanse your heart of even the desire to do wrong or

violate God's laws - and enable you to love your neighbor "perfectly" (i.e. perfect in intention and without ulterior motive)." Wesleyans have always been careful, however, to emphasize that this work of grace does not commit us to the position of "sinless perfectionism" - the entirely sanctified can and do commit errors of judgment (do they ever!), continue to have character flaws, need to rely constantly on Christ, and so on. In short, we may be entirely sanctified but tend to shy away from claiming, with a straight face, that we are entirely sinless.

By way of an aside, it should be noted that, in many Wesleyan churches, this more or less traditional understanding of entire sanctification (conceived as a divine act in which the Spirit sanctifies the believer) has been slowly eroded and replaced by expositions of, or testimonies to, the human work of entire consecration. One frequently hears testimonies of the order: "For several years Jesus was my savior, but was not really Lord of my entire life. And so one day I came to the point where I realized that I needed to give myself completely over to him." This total surrender to the lordship of Christ is taken by many to be the experience of entire sanctification. Of course the notion of receiving Christ as savior but – somehow and for some reason - not confessing him as Lord is foreign to the New Testament. Those who share such testimonies are confessing, in effect, that they were not fully converted.

But to return to my exposition: Turning to ecclesiology, in the dominant paradigm the church is conceived as an association of like-minded individuals who happen to be converted and bound for heaven, but who meet with other creatures here below for worship, discipleship, equipping for evangelism and mission, fellowship etc. Christians need to worship, have fellowship, be discipled and empowered, etc., so there is the church. Frequently, however, the results of operating with an understanding of the God of conventional metaphysics come home to roost. I mean that, an irremediable relation between God's eternity and human time often results in a romanticized, immanental Jesus (as can be evidenced in, e.g., 'Jesus as my boyfriend' or 'heaven is in my heart' choruses). A default "immanentalist" pietism is the almost predictable backlash against those things "too far above us." Speculative theology cannot be trusted (too difficult); time and history are of little value where the eternal God is concerned – so what place is left for Jesus except that in my heart? (But what place remains for Christ the Pantocrator?)

Sacramentally speaking, Theology A operates with a kind of theological minimum. Baptism is almost always a wholly Anabaptist affair – the believer declares his or her intention to follow Jesus, "no turning back, no turning back." Rebaptism is hardly ever denied, since infant baptism was administered before conversion and happened oh-so long ago that it hardly seems meaningful to the new convert. In the Lord's Supper, the believer pauses to remember Jesus' atoning work and pledges himself or herself further to the Master. Memorialism more or less carries the day. The diremption between God's shiny, happy eternity and the perishability of earthly elements renders the Lord's Supper an eminently cerebral affair: It is not that God works "in, with and under" these elements – rather, the believer takes the bread and cup and remembers, i.e., thinks about, the work of Jesus.

And finally, eschatology in Theology A is for the most part a matter of a premillennial diary. Generally speaking, passages from the prophets (especially Daniel), the Olivet Discourse and the book of Revelation are cobbled together to form a sequence of events comprising the 'end times.' The unthought relation between eternity and time is again evident in the rhetoric of rapture and heaven. By and large little thought is given to the implications arising from the nail-scarred flesh of the risen Christ, the resurrection rhetoric of 1 Corinthians 15, or the notion of a new heaven and new earth. I suspect that, given much of our funeral consolations and 'end times' speculation, eschatology has come to refer to our upcoming escape to a disembodied and timeless existence. In sum, in the dominant paradigm eschatology is not used as a theological category in the precise sense, and consequently, it bears little relation to either justification or sanctification.

Theology B

Instead of beginning with 'conventional' metaphysics, the alternative paradigm I am delineating can be characterized by attempts in a variety of theological quarters –and undertaken for a variety of reasons—to develop what one might call a "revisionary" metaphysics. In general, one might include Robert W. Jenson (Princeton CTI), Eberhard Jüngel and Jürgen Moltmann (Tübingen), and Michael Welker (Heidelberg) as examples, despite their differences. By "revisionary" I mean a way of thinking that challenges several cardinal assumptions about God, which have been inherited from our pagan Hellenistic philosophical heritage (chief

among which is the notion of God as a single subject, immutable, leading an unruffled life in timeless eternity).

In this paradigm, and in contrast to Theology A, we turn first not to a discussion of God's eternal essence or attributes, but to the identity of God as revealed in the biblical story of salvation. So if you were to ask, "What do you mean by God?" the answers would be of the order: "I mean whoever rescued Israel from Egypt" or "Whoever raised Jesus from the dead" or "Whoever poured the Spirit out upon the church."[2] In other words, God's identity comes first, God revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit on the basis of the biblical story – and *then* we try to work out what we mean by things like divine essence and attributes.

In this paradigm, what happens in revelation is not considered ancillary to the deity of God but belongs both to God's identity and essence, so God cannot be determined in advance, as it were, by recourse to conventional metaphysics of the sort one might find in standard theological textbooks, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* or Noah Webster. Finding out the *who* and *what* of God is like putting a composite sketch together from a story, or series of stories. As Robert W. Jenson puts it, God's identity is established in "dramatic coherence."[3]

It is not that the eternal God remains aloof from our time and only occasionally makes incursions into it on account of his salvific "to do" lists. The three divine identities comprehend our time; they actively shape it and work within it, so there is no *competition* between God's eternity and our time, but rather *transformation* as God the Father opens the divine life through his Son Jesus Christ, and enables us to share in that life through the power of the Spirit.[4] As God is *what happens* between these relations, there is no part or

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[2] In what follows, I am hugely indebted to Robert W. Jenson's doctrine of God. See his *Systematic Theology*, 2 Volumes (Oxford and New York: OUP, 1997, 1999). Hereafter *ST*.

[3] Jenson, *ST* 1, 64.

[4] As Jenson develops his doctrine of the Trinity, the three divine identities are said to bracket our time. In this regard it may be helpful to think about the Father who retains the past and preserves the creation from falling into nothingness, the Son who occupies the specious present, and the Spirit who brings about God's own future - which is to say that God is not awaiting any future into which he must peer; rather, God creates God's own future. God's eternity means that God is always surpassing himself, always creating new possibilities, so that nothing can keep up with the horizon of his own life. In other words, God is *infinite*. Because God's infinity is motored particularly by the Spirit, who brings about the divine future, eschatology remains essentially a theological category.

dimension of God that is not defined by the triune persons. So Trinitarian dogma is a summary statement of who God is, based upon the biblical narrative.

Putting the matter this way has four revisionary effects upon the way we ordinarily do theology: To begin, God's eternity and our time are seen not as polar opposites, but rather God's own eternal life is understood to be expansive or capacious and inclusive of created time, to use Jenson's way of putting things. Secondly, on account of this capacious life of God, which the church as the body of Christ inhabits - extended throughout time and space - our theology should listen to voices beyond our parochial American boundaries. The polyphony of the triune community should be reflected in the way we undertake to talk about this God.[5] Thirdly, mission is not something *principally* undertaken by the church; mission is primarily God's doing. It is the Father's sending of the Son, the sending of the Spirit by the Father and Son, and our being sent to follow in the "wake" of these sendings. Our participation in mission, then, is coterminous with God's own triune life. And finally, on account of the blessed Holy Spirit who brings about God's own future, replete with possibilities that surpass all that we can even imagine, eschatology in this paradigm is a predicate of the doctrine of God proper – and not merely an "end times" itinerary.

So proponents of this alternative paradigm try not to think of God "in the abstract" - God as a supernatural individual possessing certain attributes - but rather, God irreducibly as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I do not mean to imply that Theology A ignores the doctrine of the Trinity. It is there in our articles of religion, in our baptismal formula and in some of our benedictions and worship music. But the doctrine of the Trinity remains for most congregations a mathematical mystery of the eternal God, instead of the revealed mystery of our salvation. The fact that, as a "confessional" church we do not confess the Athanasian or Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed serves only to reinforce my point. (One might even hazard the judgment that any purely hypothetical symposium daring to treat the works of divine grace without showing their organic connection to the Christian doctrine of God would be theologically irresponsible.) We would do well to remember Basil of Caesarea's dictum: Every act of God is initiated by the Father, executed by the Son and perfected in the Spirit. It will

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[5] See David S. Cunningham, *These Three Are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology* (London: Blackwell, 1998).

not do at all to say that God is triune, *really* triune - all the way down, so to say - and then go off and talk about justification and sanctification, for example, in very un-trinitarian ways.

As our particular interest in this discussion is in the works of grace through which God declares us righteous and makes us righteous, the question cannot be avoided: What does it mean to understand righteousness as a *theological* concept? In other words: If God is righteous in making us righteous, what does that righteousness tell us about God's own life? Broadly speaking, recent theological work emphasizes understanding righteousness as a relational concept. For example, Eberhard Jüngel says that righteousness signifies a well ordered relation, through which a group of relations is ordered in such a way that all persons included in these relations come into their own right, without needing to seize it for themselves. To this extent righteousness is that ordering of diverse relations of persons who are distinct, yet who exist with one another and must rely on one another.[6]

Righteousness therefore is a matter of the being of God, i.e., God is intrinsically righteous in the self-relations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus difference is affirmed in God. "The Father, Son and Holy Spirit affirm each other in their mutual personal otherness [*Anderssein*], and precisely in this way they form the most intimate communion, the Trinitarian communion of mutual otherness."[7] Only on account of this - that God is antecedently righteous as the triune God - is God able to declare and make *us* righteous.

When we turn to theological anthropology, then, Theology B's Trinitarian orientation leads to an emphasis on the traces of the Trinity (*vestigia trinitatis*), not only in terms of traditional theological anthropology but also in terms of understanding the *imago Dei* in a relational or intersubjective context. As God is a community of persons, so the image of God is most adequately represented and reflected in a community of mutually enriching relationships, in which people trust, serve and reciprocally depend on each, even as the divine persons do.

Sin effects a rupture in relationships – with the divine identities, with human persons and society, and with the wider creation. Its

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[6] Eberhard Jüngel, "Leben aus Gerechtigkeit. Gottes Handeln – Menschlichen Tun." *Wertlose Wahrheit. Zur Identität und Relevanz des christlichen Glaubens. Theologische Erörterungen III* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1990) 351. See also Jüngel, *Justification - The Heart of the Christian Faith: A Theological Study with an Ecumenical Purpose* (Edinburgh and New York: T&T Clark, 2001).

[7] Jüngel, "Leben aus Gerechtigkeit," 353.

effects derive from a refusal to trust God to be God, and from the attempt to seize for oneself the power to have one's way at any cost - in short, to be The Big Donald Upstairs. Hence the lack of faith at the root of all idolatry, especially self-idolatry. And hence human society after the Fall becomes a *dis*-trustful struggle for what is claimed for my ego, family, clan, tribe, and so on. In other words, human activity becomes a flight from love – and creation suffers on account of our unbelief. The only possible result of living under such an arrangement is that we should suffer the wrath of God, the effects of being handed over to our unrighteousness.

As we saw in the first part of this paper, the great temptation for Theology A at this point is to say that God must therefore "fix" the human soul: forgive and renew the individual, etc. The problem in the dominant paradigm is the lack of an articulated relational context in which this rescue mission takes place. This is a direct reflection of the dominant model of God: because God is eternal and metaphysically simple, and the soul is immortal and metaphysically simple, the works of grace are understood to apply to the interior depths of the human soul ("when Jesus came into my heart" and so on) – so that the body, the community of faith and the creation are all of secondary or ancillary concern. But if the doctrine of God in Theology B is on the right track, it is surely bootless to talk about the works of grace apart from the people of God.

So, for example, the giving of the Law cannot be understood in separation from the creation of a people in which the righteousness of God - in the sense delineated above - can be embodied. The Law is an expression of God's love and mercy, the faithful following of which incarnates God's righteousness within the life of God's people. Israel is the servant of YHWH in which his saving righteousness is to be enshrined and exemplified. In Christian perspective, however, the story of Israel reveals the truth about humanity as a whole: our lack of trust and the unrighteousness that results is too deeply embodied to be addressed adequately by the heteronomy of Law (in other words, how the Law functions).

A renewal of the web of divine and human relationships must take place.[8] And so God does invade the pitch, but the story of Jesus

[8] This is not to say that Theology A is concerned with the individual and Theology B is concerned with the corporate. For in this alternative paradigm, the individual understands himself or herself only *indirectly* - one's identity is always mediated through a larger narrative, or series of narratives, with many characters and twists and turns in the plot. To borrow from Paul Ricoeur: the human subject is never fully given at the start, nor is it a matter of sheer change. See Paul Ricoeur, "Life in Quest

is not the story of a metaphysical problem that God must overcome (How does the eternal God broach temporality?). God does not have a "problem" with time or materiality; God is opposed to sin. Nor does Jesus die because God, upset at our behavior, must hurl invisible quantities of wrath at someone (poor Jesus!) so that he may be appeased – as though God himself were not at stake in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The only way the wrath of God can be fully executed (and understood) is if God himself gets involved in that tangled web we have woven. The Passion of the Christ is theologically intelligible when we dare to talk about the Passion of the Triune God.

Recalling what was said earlier about divine righteousness, the mystery of God's righteousness is that God takes the curse of our sin -- the godless and reckless drive away from divine righteousness - upon himself in the person of Jesus. He exposed himself in our place to the relationless effects of our sin, in order to make a new beginning where sinful life must end: in death. And as he bears in himself the deadly curse of sin, the richness of divine relations which circumscribe and define his own being prevails upon us in such a way that we are made justified sinners.[9] So 'in our place he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.' (2 Cor 5.21) And so Luther's 'joyful exchange.'

Juengel says that from this theological perspective it makes sense to say that God is righteous when he justifies the sinner by grace alone – i.e., by externalizing and extending the community of difference which he is as the triune God.[10] God's being, as we have said, is capacious. Justification, on this reading, is less strictly a discrete forensic act and has more to do with the union of the believer with Christ and the new community in which he or she receives a new identity.[11]

The more deeply we are implicated in the life of God, the more we are enabled to trust this God above all self-righteous grasping of

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of Narrative," in David Wood, ed., *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991); Paul Ricoeur, "Narrative Identity," *Philosophy Today* 35 no. 1 (Spring 1991), 73-81.

[9] Eberhard Jüngel, *op cit*, 356.

[10] Ibid, 354.

[11] See, for example, Toumo Mannermaa, *Der Im Glauben Gegenwärtige Christus* (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1989), and Carl Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *Union With Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Cambridge and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

our own, and the more we come to reflect the self-giving love that is the inner dynamic of the triune life. And as we are comprehended in this love, within the capacious network of relations divine and human, we come to resemble "transcripts of the Trinity." That is, the triune life of God comes to be reflected, as Randy Maddox says, in a lived "grammar of responsible grace" so that the narrative contours of our own lives are shaped by the Father's original design for us to bear the image of God, the Son's sacrificial death and resurrection to restore us to fellowship, and the Spirit's ongoing transformative work in us, conforming us to the image of God in Christ.[12] The image of God renewed in sanctification is therefore a Christological and ultimately eschatological reality.

Testimonies to the experience of entire sanctification raise some interesting questions when heard within the acoustics of this alternative paradigm. Conventional Wesleyan discourse is usually carefully circumscribed so as to avoid "sinless perfectionism," to stress that continual growth in grace follows the critical moment of being entirely sanctified (growth which is sometimes said to lead to other 'crisis moments') and to stress the believer's continual need of the merits of Christ's redemptive work. Yet proponents of Theology B might well ask a couple of questions: For example, wouldn't a consideration of a "crisis moment" within a process of growth and a series of other crisis moments lead more naturally to a description of spiritual transformation as a *sanctification narrative*, coextensive with the narrative shape and 'flow' of our lives?

Further, conventional Wesleyan testimony emphasizing the purgative or "cleansing" dimension of entire sanctification lays heavy emphasis on sins of commission - the Spirit has so cleansed my heart of unrighteous desires and empowered me so that I do not willfully transgress God's laws. With respect to the more active dimension of being "perfected in love," this love is frequently conceived of as a love with pure intention, expressed towards both God and neighbor.

But, while to say that the Spirit has cleansed my heart so I have no desire to flagrantly flout God's ordinances and so my intentions are good may be true enough, it is our ongoing involvement – our passive complicity - in the web of unrighteousness that remains problematic. Sins of omission are still sins, after all. With respect to purity of intention, this reading of Christian love remains somewhat

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[12] Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood / Abingdon, 1994).

dull to our social and intersubjective contexts. (And besides, we all know what the road to hell is paved with.) With these concerns in mind, Ted Runyon respins the notion of perfection as follows:

> Perfection is not so much for the self or for our own sakes as for the fulfillment of the vocation to which we are called, to image and reflect to others what we have received and are receiving from God. Our sanctifying is linked to and directed towards the sanctifying work of the world, and as such is an ever-beckoning, never-finished project, even though the love we direct is complete as it comes from the divine source.[13]

To compress Runyon: sanctification is never merely *my* sanctification. If it is, I might add, then it may come to function as a holiness *fetish*.

In this paradigm, ecclesiology becomes of signal importance. The church is not an afterthought, a pleasant addendum that promises opportunities for worship, fellowship and so on for individuals of like-minded persuasion. In its strictest sense, the believer's status in Christ cannot be separated from the body of Christ, enjoying the fellowship of the Father and the Spirit. In such fellowship, and in the righteous ordering of its own life, the church should reflect, as Miroslav Volf argues, the image of the Trinity.[14] Through the ministry of the Word, the story of God is recounted and the promise of the Gospel proclaimed, inviting all to share in the life of God and to live in fellowship with those who are the righteousness of God in Christ.

Proponents of Theology B are suspicious of any *ordo salutis* that remains abstracted from church life and practice, as though the participating in the life of God exists apart from the life of the covenant people of God. As Telford Work puts it: "In the New Testament, hearing the Word in faith, being baptized, and participating in the body and blood of Christ are not just external means or aids of the order of salvation. They *are* the order of salvation – the necessary embodiments of conversion, justification and sanctification."[15] Apart from this embodied life, justification and sanctification threaten to dissolve into the interior passivity of

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[13] Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 225.
[14] Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Cambridge and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).
[15] Telford Work, "Reordering Salvation: Church as Proper Context for An Evangelical *Ordo Salutis*," http://www.westmont.edu/~work/articles/reordering.html.

the believer's soul (a la Romanticism) or remain in theology textbook discussions (a la Rationalism) – but no one was ever justified through personal sincerity or sanctified by reading a text on holiness.

Hence a fine analytical distinction but no real separation can be made between the believer coming to share in the life of God via the divine works of justification and sanctification and participating in the righteousness of God as it exists in the communion of saints. If this notion were taken seriously or pushed far enough – that the salvation of individuals does not belong in categories of justification and sanctification abstracted from social relationships but belongs in the church – we would see a significant revision within the way evangelical theology is usually articulated. It would mean, as Work maintains, that "ecclesiology should be the category within which the *ordo salutis* is treated"[16] –and I should rearrange much of the second half of this paper!

Consistent with the ecclesiology I have been describing is a theological retrieval of the sacraments – baptism and the Lord's Supper are means through which God comes to meet us as God does nowhere else, and opens his capacious fellowship to us. In Theology A, the implicit rift between God's eternity and temporality/ materiality often has the effect of chasing God from the earthly elements in the sacraments. In this alternative paradigm, God's capacious embrace of creation means that God is no stranger to materiality. Even as through the incarnation and bodily resurrection of Jesus flesh and blood is sanctified and brought to share in the life of God, so the Spirit continues to work through the mundane mediums of water, wine and bread, sanctifying both it and - by embodied extension - us, that we should share in God's triune life. To put the matter succinctly: *our* sanctification is linked to the Epiklesis.[17]

Eschatology in Theology B is treated as a theological category, insofar as the Spirit who is poured out upon us as a sign of the coming kingdom is always expanding the realm of God's grace. As Jenson says, on account of the Spirit nothing can keep up with, let alone outpace, the expanding horizon of God's infinite life. Inasmuch as our final conformity as the people of God to the image

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[16] Ibid.

[17] We are not thereby committed to a 'change' in the elements, but we do recognize that the sacraments first of all are the means through which God extends grace to us – God is the subject—and only on that basis are we enabled to remember the passion and death of Jesus for our sakes, pledge ourselves to him, etc.

of the Son is inextricably linked to the fullness of the kingdom -when God will be all in all- so we look forward not to a disembodied heavenly retirement village but to the day when the "spiritual body" is raised. In view of the promise of that coming kingdom, and in the power of the Spirit, our present life as the people of God should be characterized by a love for the world that draws upon the ever-creative, surprising and renewing energy of God's own love. From Ted Runyon again:

> When we focus on divine perfect love and make it genuinely available in today's world, we tap into the energy which...renews creation...Indeed, the greatest strength of the Wesleyan doctrine of perfection may lie in its ability to mobilize believers to seek a more perfect future that surpasses the present. It turns the Christian life into a project constantly open to new possibilities.[18]

New possibilities of grace! A doctrine of grace that holds out for such possibilities is congruent with the doctrine of God as it is understood within this paradigm.

[18] Runyon, *op cit*, 227-228.

JOHN WESLEY'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: A DOCTRINAL ANALYSIS OF WESLEY'S THIRTEEN DISCOURSES ON THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Tik-Wah Wong

In the long history of discussion of the homilies on the Sermon on the Mount (SM)[1], much attention has been devoted to John Chrysostom's (c. 350-407) and Martin Luther's (c. 1483-1546) works.[2] However, as Albert C. Outler has pointed out, John Wesley's series of discourses on SM have not been discussed much by contemporary scholars. [3] His thirteen discourses on SM were written in the years between 1748 and 1750, which falls at the end of the first decade (1739-1749) as well as the beginning of the second decade (1749-1759) of his revival ministry. Through these discourses, together with the other sermons written in the first decade of his revival ministry, Wesley attempted to provide pastoral care, Christian nurture and discipline to his converts and those of his brother, Charles. As such, they capture Wesley's vision of the Christian life which had been taking shape gradually since 1725.[4]

This paper seeks to analyse Wesley's thought on the Christian life in these discourses. It seeks to explore and answer the following questions: What is the importance of these discourses in Wesley's thinking? What is the nature of his understanding of the Christian

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[1] Hereafter, SM is the abbreviation of the Sermon on the Mount.

[2] See Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* in *Hermeneia-A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1995), 11; Jaroslav Pelikan, "Divine Rhetoric: The Sermon on the Mount as Message and as Mode," in *Augustine, Chrysostom and Luther* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000) , 67-96.

[3] Albert C. Outler, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 53.

[4] In this year, Wesley read Bishop Taylor's *Rules and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying*. This was followed by Kempis's *Christian Pattern* in 1726 and William Law's *Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call* a year or two after. These shaped his vision of the Christian life which shone forth after 1738.

life ? How is his understanding of help to Christians who are on their pilgrimage in the earth? Since this exploration is based on Wesley's thirteen discourses on SM, it is an initial, not exhaustive, exploration.[5]

1. The Invitation of the Kingdom of God

Wesley begins his discourses by expounding Matt. 5:3, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.' What is this Kingdom of Heaven to which the Sermon on the Mount points? This is the 'Kingdom of Heaven' or 'Kingdom of God' which consists of two continuing dimensions, namely the Kingdom of Glory and the Kingdom of Grace.[6] What, then, are these two dimensions of the one Kingdom? How do they link to each other? In what way does the Christian relate to this Kingdom?

1.1 The Kingdom of Glory

Based on biblical teachings, Wesley points out that the Kingdom of Glory is God's everlasting Kingdom in Heaven. It is the continuation and perfection of the Kingdom of Grace on earth.[7] It is a new heaven and a new earth which only the righteous can dwell in (Isa. 55.17; 2 Pet. 3.13; Rev. 21.1-4). The old has passed away and the absolute newness has begun. "In the new earth, as well as the new heavens, there will be nothing to give pain, but everything that the wisdom and goodness of God can create to give happiness."[8] It is in this newness that God will be with His people eternally and the righteous enjoy the perfect happiness in seeing the face of God.[9] The beauty of the Kingdom of Glory is beyond human description. It could be explained only by eternity.[10]

What does this eternal newness imply? What kind of invitation does this eternal newness extend to those who are still on their

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[5] Throughout this paper, Wesley's language usage is left as expressed in his sermons. Where non-inclusive language is used in the original, it is retained, and where God is referred to as a male person, that too is retained.
[6] Wesley expounds this in his discourse VI of SM (1748) on the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6: 1-15). John Wesley, Sermon 26, 'SM- VI,' *Works*, 1: 531-549.
[7] Wesley, Sermon 26, 'SM-VI," § III. 8., *Works*, 1: 581-2.
[8] John Wesley, Sermon 60, 'The General Deliverance,' § III. 4, *Works*, 2: 446.
[9] John Wesley, Sermon 15, 'The Great Assize,' § III. 5 , *Works*, 1: 370; see also 'The New Creation,' § 18 , *Works*, 2: 509.
[10] John Wesley, Sermon 64, 'The New Creation,' §8, *Works*, 2: 503.

pilgrimage on the earth? These questions lead us into the inquiry of Wesley's view of the Kingdom of Grace.

1.2 The Kingdom of Grace

What is the Kingdom of Grace? On "The Way to the Kingdom" (1746), Wesley first defined what it is not. The Kingdom of Grace is neither meat and drink nor any outward thing, such as forms or ceremonies.[11] It is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14.17).[12] It is the nature of true religion. It presents in the human hearts when persons repent, believe in the name of Christ and receive Him as their king. It is just as a grain of mustard seed first sown in the heart, but eventually puts forth the fruits of righteousness.[13] It is God's gifted remedy for fallen human beings that they may resume their lost righteousness, to be renewed and grow as better stewards of creation. It is spiritual and invisible. It could only be discerned through the conversion of sinners and the healing of the blind, the deaf and the lame.[14] It is 'the Kingdom of God begun below, set up in the believer's heart.'[15] Wesley further defines it:

> It is termed "the kingdom of God," because it is the immediate fruit of God's reigning in the soul. So soon as ever he takes unto himself his mighty power, and sets up his throne in our hearts, they are instantly filled with this righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is called "the kingdom of heaven," because it is (in a degree) heaven opened in the soul.[16]

Coming to this point, we should not misinterpret Wesley's understanding of the Kingdom of God as a loose one. To him, "the kingdom is both a state on earth and a state in heaven."[17] Hence, the terms Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven could be used interchangeably. We should also bear in mind Wesley's distinction between the Kingdom of Grace and the Kingdom of Glory. The

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[11] John Wesley, Sermon 7, 'The Way to the Kingdom,' §§ I.1-2, *Works*, 1: 218.
[12] Wesley, Sermon 7, 'The Way to the Kingdom,' §§ I.1, 4, *Works*, 1: 218.
[13] John Wesley, Sermon 33, 'SM- XIII,' § I.4, *Works*, 1: 690.
[14] John Wesley, Sermon 66, 'The Signs of the Times,' §§II.3-4, *Works*, 2: 526.
[15] Wesley, 'SM- VI' § III.8, *Works*, 1: 581.
[16] Wesley, 'The Way to the Kingdom,' § I.12, *Works*, 1: 224.
[17] John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology: An Interpretation* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960), 127.

Kingdom of Grace is the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven which rests in human hearts. It is the spiritual locality where the Kingdom of Glory casts its light. The Kingdom of Glory or the fullness of the Kingdom of God will only take place in eternity. However, when the two are taken together, they are one kingdom.

With this background, we can further discuss the implication of the eternal newness of the Kingdom of Glory for those who are still on their pilgrimage on the earth. Since the Kingdom of Grace is where the Kingdom of Glory casts its light, the eternal newness could also be experienced by those upon whom the Kingdom of Grace rests. It is the eternal newness in the present. It provides the eschatological hope for those who are still on their pilgrimage towards the Kingdom of Glory.

In fact, as we read through these thirteen discourses, we can discern an eschatological optimism flowing through most of the discourses. This presents a strong sense of hope promised by the coming of the Kingdom of Grace. Those upon whose souls the Kingdom of Grace rests will experience the filling of righteousness, joy and peace by the Holy Spirit together with holiness and happiness.[18] This is part of the experience of the eternal newness which we discussed in the previous section. And this is also the eternal promised goal of human life which will be perfected in the Kingdom of Glory.

The Kingdom of Grace, therefore, could also be understood as a kingdom of hope, which invites human beings to be pilgrims on a journey towards the Kingdom of Glory. However, those on their pilgrimage, although in the kingdom do not yet possess the kingdom in its fullness.[19] They are on the journey of the Kingdom of Grace on earth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as well as walking in the light of the Kingdom of Glory. They are to live out the eternal newness in the present, that is the righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, while they are heading towards the fullness of the Kingdom of Glory with anticipation.

2. The Beginning of the Kingdom's Life

When does this begin? When human beings seek the Kingdom of God. To seek the Kingdom of God means to seek the sole dominion

[18] Wesley, "The Way to the Kingdom," § I.12, *Works*,1: 224.
[19] John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology: An Interpretation*, 127.

or the rule of God as the primary concern of the Christian's life. Wesley explains:

> Before ye give place to any other thought of care, let it be your concern that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...may reign in your heart, may manifest himself in your soul, and dwell and rule there, that he may "cast down every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."[20]

Wesley maintains that seeking for God's Kingdom is the essential path for all human beings who wish to begin their kingdom life. But how can they seek the Kingdom of God? 'Take heed and obey the Sermon on the Mount which Jesus Christ preached,' was Wesley's reply.

2.1 Listen to the Sermon on the Mount

To Wesley, SM is of crucial eschatological importance for it is Christ's loving revelation of the Father's will to human beings and their future generations. It describes the nature of godly righteousness with which human beings could see the Lord personally. It is 'the whole counsel of God with regard to the way of salvation,'[21] and it is ultimately 'the path to heaven below and heaven above.'[22] Thus, it concerns the present and the future state of the whole person.

For those who take heed and obey SM are the wise who build their house on the rock (Matt.7:24-25). They see the sound direction in securing and maintaining this house on the rock. This right decision affects their eschatological future. The End is always in Wesley's mind.

> He indeed is wise, "who doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."...His soul is athirst for nothing on earth, but only for God...He knows himself...as a stranger and sojourner, in his way to the everlasting habitations; and accordingly he uses the world as not abusing it, and as knowing the fashion of it passes away...He sees, clearer than the light of the noon-day sun, that this is the end of man, to glorify Him who made him for himself, and to love and

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[20] John Wesley, Sermon 29, 'SM- IX,' §20 , *Works*, 1: 642.
[21] Wesley, Sermon 33, 'SM- XIII,' §1, *Works*, 1: 687.
[22] John Wesley, Sermon 21, 'SM- I,' §8 , *Works*, 1: 474.

> enjoy him forever. And with equal clearness he sees the means to that end, to the enjoyment of God in glory; even now to know, to love, to imitate God, and to believe in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.[23]

2.2 Receive the Gift of Righteousness

Other than seeking the Kingdom of God, the wise will also pray for the coming of the Kingdom of God. This is important for the Kingdom of God comes with its promised free gift of righteousness for human beings. Wesley elucidates:

> It is meet for all those who love his appearing, to pray that he would hasten the time; that this his kingdom, the kingdom of grace may come quickly, and swallow up all the kingdom of earth; that all mankind, receive him for their king, truly believing in his name, may be filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy, with holiness and happiness, till they are removed hence into his heavenly kingdom, there to reign with him for ever and ever. For this also...we pray for the coming of his everlasting kingdom, the kingdom of glory in heaven; which is the continuation and perfection of the kingdom of grace on earth.[24]

What is this righteousness that comes together with peace and joy? Wesley explains that this righteousness is the fruit of God's reigning in the hearts of human beings. It presents through right disposition of heart, good character, and holy actions. It is 'the life of God in the soul.'[25] It is Christ's righteousness imputed to every Christian which follows by the impartation brought by the Holy Spirit. Through this work of the Holy Spirit, the image of God in all Christians will be renewed after the likeness of God.

Wesley holds that righteousness is of fundamental eschatological importance for this is the single requirement to pass through the narrow gate and heading towards the singular pilgrimage of universal righteousness and eternal glory.[26]

How can human beings receive this godly righteousness? It could not be received through abstaining from outward sin, doing good or using the means of grace, such as going to the church or

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[23] Wesley, SM- XIII, §§ II.1-2, *Works*, 1: 691-2.
[24] Wesley, SM-VI, § III.8, *Works*, 1: 582.
[25] Wesley, Sermon 21, SM-I, §I.11, *Works*, 1: 481.
[26] John Wesley, Sermon 31, SM-XI, §§ II. 2-3, III.4-6, *Works*, 1: 668, 672-4.

attending the Lord's Supper. It is received through thirsting for righteousness and being filled freely by the Triune God. Here, we see Wesley's connection of obeying the Sermon on the Mount and experiencing the work of the Triune God. Obeying the Sermon on the Mount without experiencing the work of the Triune God is merely observing the outward forms of religion. It is of no help in receiving the free gift of the righteousness of God.

In order to preserve this righteousness, Wesley urges Christians to observe the way which the Lord has ordained, that is to search the Scripture, to listen and meditate on His word, to fast, to pray, and to partake of the Lord's Supper.[27] However, he also cautions Christians to beware of the parent-sins: enmity against God, pride of heart, self-will, and love of the world; [28] and other sins which are derived from these such as: levity and thoughtlessness, anger, impatience, discontent, being judgmental, wickedness, zeal of ignorance, and negligence of prayer, for these are the hindrances of holiness.[29] Furthermore, Wesley asserts that the Christian's righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees in terms of its extent, its purity and spirituality and its fulfilling of the spirit of the law.[30]

3. The Continuation of the Kingdom's Life

3.1 Serving God with Single Eye

Wesley maintains that the only business of Christians in the world is to serve God with a single eye. What does he mean by the expression: 'serving God with single eye' ? It means serving God with the purity of the intention of the soul according to the scriptural manner. Wesley explains:

> The eye is the intention: What the eye is to the body, the intention is to the soul. As the one guides the motions of the body, so does the other those of the soul. This eye of the soul is then said to be single... when we have no other design, but to "know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent,"...to serve God (as we love him) with all

[27] John Wesley, Sermon 30, 'SM-X,' §18, *Works*, 1: 659.
[28] Wesley, Sermon 31, 'SM-XI,' §I.3, *Works*, 1: 665.
[29] John Wesley, Sermon 22, 'SM- II,' §II. 1, *Works*, 1: 495; Wesley, Sermon 30, 'SM-X,' §§4, 15, 18, *Works*, 1: 651ff.
[30] John Wesley, Sermon 25, 'SM-V,' §§ IV.10-13, *Works* 1: 567-71.

> our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; and to enjoy God in all. And above all this, in time and in eternity.[31]

Elsewhere, Wesley points out that to believe,[32] to love, to imitate,[33] to obey[34] and to glorify Him are the foundations of serving God in spirit and in truth.[35] For those who serve God wholeheartedly, their minds will be opened 'to see the glorious love of God.'[36] They will be full of true divine knowledge and be filled with holiness as well as happiness. To serve God thus, with a single eye, is the weighty direction for the pilgrimage of Christians on the earth.[37]

In the pilgrimage of serving God with a single eye, Christians will be renewed to grow in the eight characteristics of being in the Kingdom of Grace. These characteristics are poverty of spirit, godly mourning, Christian meekness, thirsting after righteousness, Christian mercy, purity in heart, peace making and endurance in persecution for the sake of righteousness.[38]

Wesley considers that poverty of spirit or humility is the foundation of these characteristics. It 'is a just sense of our inward and outward sins, and of our guilt and helplessness.'[39]It is also a just sense of yearning for repentance 'which is previous to faith in Christ.'[40] It is, hence, 'the first step we take in running the race which is set before us.'[41]

How should Christians sharpen the focus of their single eye in order to complete the race ahead? By quoting the example of Cornelius (Acts 10: 4ff.), Wesley maintains that it is through fervent

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[31] John Wesley, Sermon 28, 'SM-VIII,' §2 , *Works*, 1: 613.
[32] To believe in God implies to trust him as our strength, our shield, our happiness and even our end. For more discussion see John Wesley, Sermon 29, 'SM- IX,' §4 , *Works*,1: 634.
[33] Wesley, Sermon 29, 'SM-IX,' §6 , *Works*, 1: 635.
[34] To obey God is 'to glorify Him with our bodies, as well as with our spirits, to keep His outward commandments, to avoid whatever He has forbidden , to perform the ordinary actions of life with a single eye and a pure heart and to offer them all in holy, fervent love, as sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ.' Wesley, 'SM-IX,' §7, *Works*, 1: 636.
[35] John Wesley, Sermon 24, 'SM-IV,' §III.4, *Works*, 1: 543.
[36] Wesley, Sermon 28, 'SM-VIII,' §4 , *Works*, 1: 614.
[37] Wesley, 'SM-VIII,' §§6-9, *Works*, 1: 615-6.
[38] For detailed discussion see John Wesley, Sermons 21-23, 'SM- I-III,' *Works*, 1: 469-530.
[39] Wesley, 'SM-1,' §I.7, *Works*, 1: 479.
[40] Wesley, 'SM-1,' §I.4, *Works*, 1: 477.
[41] Wesley, 'SM-1,' §I.7, *Works*, 1: 479.

prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Fasting is a help for prayer that the souls of those who pray will be lifted up and be focused on God. It is also a means which God uses to increase the tenderness of conscience, deadness to the world, holy affection and godly chastity.[42]

3.2 Love is all in all

It is undeniable that the root of Christian faith lies in 'the union of the soul with God, and the life of God in the soul of man.' However, as Wesley argues, if 'this root be really in the heart, it cannot but put forth branches.'[43] Here we see Wesley bringing together Christians' vertical relationship to God (inward righteousness) and their horizontal relationship to human beings in society (outward righteousness).[44] To him, loving God will eventually lead to loving others in the world. In defining what love is, Wesley expounds 1st Cor. 13:4-7 under the heading of 'be merciful to others' and exhorts Christians to love others with such godly love.[45]

> The Lord God fill thy heart with such a love to every soul, that thou mayest be ready to lay down thy life for his sake! May thy soul continually overflow with love, swallowing up every unkind and unholy temper, till he calleth thee up into the region of love, there to reign with him for ever and ever.[46]

For this reason, Christianity is essentially a social religion and it is impossible to conceal it just as the city upon the hill and the lit candle in the house cannot be hidden.[47] Therefore Christians cannot withdraw from society and still claim that they are living the Christian way of life. To Wesley, to be Christian is to be with God as well as to be with others in society. Christianity could not subsist without God. Likewise, it could not subsist without society.

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[42] John Wesley, Sermon 27, 'SM-VII,' § II.6, *Works*, 1: 600.
[43] Wesley, Sermon 24, 'SM-IV,' § III.1, *Works*, 1: 541.
[44] Wesley considers the separation between inward and outward righteousness as the device of Satan. John Wesley, Sermon 26, 'SM-VI,' §1, *Works*, 1: 572.
[45] For detailed discussion, see John Wesley, Sermon 22, 'SM-II,' §§ III.4-18, *Works*, 1: 499-509; Wesley, 'SM-XIII,' § III.10, *Works*, 1: 697.
[46] Wesley, Sermon 22, 'SM-II,' § III.18, *Works*, 1: 507.
[47] Wesley even goes to the extent of considering that the thought of withdrawal from the world is a deception of Satan. Wesley, Sermon 24, 'SM-IV,' §§4-5, II.7, *Works*, 1: 532-3, 541.

Christians are called to share their hope and love with others, to live out their uniqueness and thus attract others to join the pilgrimage towards the kingdom of God. This is the locality where Christian holiness shines forth its radiance.
Wesley notes:

> "Ye are the salt of the earth." It is your very nature to season whatever is around you. It is the nature of the divine savour which is in you, to spread to whatsoever you touch; to diffuse itself, on every side, to all those among whom you are. This is the great reason why the providence of God has so mingled you together with other men, that whatever grace you have received of God may through you be communicated to others; that every holy temper and word and work of yours may have an influence on them also. By this means a check will, in some measure, be given to the corruption which is in the world, and a small part, at least, be saved from the general infection, and rendered holy and pure before God.[48]

How shall Christians become the salt of the earth? Wesley's reply is: (i) to live in the world; (ii) to endeavour to shine forth the light of Christian holiness among others; (iii) to be a good steward of every gift of God: to cut off unnecessary expense of time and food, and (iv) to enlarge our abilities of doing good: feeding the hungry and clothing the naked.[49] The ultimate aim of doing these is that everyone who witnesses them may glorify our Father who is in heaven.

Coming to this point, it is appropriate for us to revisit Wesley's discussion of Christian meekness, Christian mercy, and peace-making in order to achieve a better understanding of his expression of shining forth the light of Christian holiness among others.

Wesley sees Christians who love God as the meek who obey His will with a calm mind, are patient and content within themselves and mild and gentle toward others.[50] They are zealous for God but 'their zeal is always guided by knowledge, and tempered, in every thought, word, and work with the love of man, as well as the love of God.'[51] They will be merciful, [52] compassionate and tender hearted

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[48] Wesley, 'SM-IV,' § I.7, *Works*, 1: 536.
[49] Wesley, 'SM-IV,' §§ III.7-IV.4, *Works*, 1: 545-9.
[50] This included the evil and the unthankful. John Wesley, Sermon 22 'SM-II,' § I.4, *Works*, 1: 489; Wesley, 'SM-XIII,' § III.8, *Works*, 1: 696.
[51] Wesley, Sermon 22, 'SM-II,' § I.7, *Works*,1: 491.

for those who are yet to hunger after God. Hence, they will be 'angry at sin, but love the sinners.'[53]

Furthermore, they are peace-makers. To Wesley, the definition of peace determines the nature of peace-making.[54] Peace-makers concern the holistic needs of human beings. They will treasure the time, seek any opportunity, employ any means or talent to promote reconciliation, increase good-will among people, and bring blessing to others.[55] Wesley discusses this further:

> The peace maker [is] an instrument in God's hand, preparing the ground for his Master's use...According to the measure of grace which he has received, he uses all his diligence, either to reprove the gross sinner...or to "give light to them that sit in the darkness"...or to "support the weak, to lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees" or to bring back and heal that which was lame and turned out of the way. Nor is he less zealous to confirm those who are already striving to enter at the straight gate...that they may "run with patience the race which is set before them"...to exhort them to stir up the gift of God which is in them, that, daily growing in grace, "an entrance may be ministered unto them abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.[56]

Christians are concerned about the real needs of others and finding means to fulfil them. They are called the children of God if they do so in faith, hope and love.

3.3 Endurance in Persecution

Will the children of God who practice peace-making find peace in the world? No; instead they will be persecuted for the sake of righteousness. The reply might appear stunning. Yet it is a fact. Wesley suggests four reasons why this is so: (i) the evil spirit which opposes the work of God instigates those who are of the world to oppose the children of God;[57] (ii) the mystery of iniquity works

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[52] 'Be merciful' is the term which Wesley employs to sum up the characteristics of those who love their neighbours as themselves. Wesley, 'SM-II,' § III.1, *Works*, 1: 499.
[53] Wesley, 'SM-XIII,' § III.8, *Works*, 1: 696.
[54] Wesley understands 'peace' (ειρηνη) as 'all manner of good; every blessing that relates either to the soul or the body, to time or eternity.' Wesley, 'SM-II,' § II.2, *Works*, 1: 495.
[55] John Wesley, Sermon 23, 'SM-III,' §§ II.3-7, *Works*, 1: 517-20.
[56] Wesley, Sermon 23, 'SM-III,' § II.6, *Works*, 1: 519.
[57] Wesley, 'SM- III,' § III.4, *Works*, 1: 522; Wesley, 'SM-IV,' §4 , *Works*, 1: 532.

strongly;[58] (iii) those who are of the world, including those who chose to walk through the wide gate[59] and the deceptive false prophets,[60] who submit themselves to the instigation of the evil one and become the instruments of deception and persecution;[61] (iv) God's permission as 'a judgement mixed with mercy; an affliction to punish, and yet a medicine to heal the grievous backsliding of his people.'[62]

Could Christians try to escape from persecution? Wesley maintains that Christians, on the one hand, should not bring the persecution upon themselves; on the other hand, they should try to avoid it without injuring their conscience or giving up the cause of righteousness.[63] However, if they cannot avoid it, they should endure it, forgive and bless the persecutors. Furthermore, they should even stand in the gap to serve as the prophets or the watchmen of the world for this is part of the calling to be Christian and thus part of Christian discipleship.[64]

3.4 Stewardship of Riches

In order to realise the vision of loving God and loving others in society, Wesley maintains that Christians are to 'lay aside all thoughts of obeying two masters, of serving God and mammon.'[65] But, what is mammon? What does it mean to serve mammon? And why cannot Christians serve God as well as mammon? We need to spend some time to examine this for this is a recurring theme in the sermons of the 'Late Wesley.'[66]

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[58] Wesley, 'SM-III,' § III.5, *Works*, 1: 523.
[59] Wesley discusses the difference between choosing to walk through the narrow gate and the wide gate in his eleventh discourse on SM. John Wesley, Sermon 31, 'SM-XI,' *Works*, 1: 664-674, see especially §§ II.4-10.
[60] Wesley discusses the false prophets in his twelfth discourse on SM, Sermon 32, 'SM-XII,' *Works*, 1: 675-86.
[61] Wesley, 'SM-III,' §§ III.4-5, *Works*, 1: 522-5.
[62] Wesley, 'SM-III,' § III.5, *Works*, 1: 523.
[63] Wesley, 'SM-III,' § III.9, *Works*, 1: 526.
[64] Wesley, 'SM-III,' §§ III.7-12, *Works*, 1: 525-8,; Wesley, 'SM-II,' §§ III.3, III.17, *Works*,1: 499, 506; Wesley, Sermon 32, 'SM-XII,' §2 , *Works*, 1: 675.
[65] John Wesley, Sermon 29, 'SM- IX,' §15, *Works*, 1: 639.
[66] Current Wesley scholarship distinguishes Wesley's theological convictions into three classifications: the "early Wesley" (1733-38), the "middle Wesley" (1738-65), and the "late Wesley" (1765-91). However, Randy Maddox's call for consideration of the *whole* Wesley should be noted too because Wesley's "mature" position on many issues coalesced long before 1765. Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 20-21.

According to Wesley, mammon could be understood as riches, money or all that may be purchased.[67] Thus, serving mammon means trusting such things, trusting them as our strength as well as our help. Trusting mammon, in turns, implies that Christians love the world, trust in the world of happiness, are conformed to and even obey the world. By doing this, Christians are, in fact, thinking highly of the increase of their own wealth and making the world the ultimate end of many of their undertakings.'[68] Serving mammon is, therefore, 'the care of the heart' which hurts either the soul or the body.[69] Wesley warns:

> This care is not only a sore disease, a grevious sickness of soul, but also a heinous offence against God, a sin of the deepest dye. It is a high affront to the gracious Governor and wise Disposer of all things; necessarily implying, that the great judge...does not know what things we stand in need of...does not provide those things for all who put their trust in him.[70]

Could Christians, then, serve both mammon and God? Wesley maintains that we should not and could not because serving mammon is a contradiction to serving God. Eventually, it will cause Christians not to aim singly at God and thus bring destruction, unhappiness and darkness upon them.[71] Christians need to decide either to crucify themselves to the world or to conform themselves to it. However, they cannot choose both for they would have 'no peace either in God or the world.'[72] Wesley's argument illustrates this vividly:

> Does not every man see, that he cannot serve both *consistently* with himself?...He is indeed "a sinner that goeth two ways" one step forward and another backward. He is continually building up with one hand, and pulling down with the other. He loves sin, and he hates it: He is always seeking, and yet always fleeing from, God...He is a motley mixture of all sorts of contrarieties; a heap of contradictions jumbled in one...[73]

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[67] Wesley, Sermon 29, 'SM-IX,' §4 , *Works*, 1: 634.
[68] Wesley, 'SM-IX,' §8 , *Works*, 1: 636.
[69] Wesley, 'SM-IX,' §17, *Works*, 1: 640.
[70] Wesley, 'SM-IX,' §17 , *Works*, 1: 640.
[71] John Wesley, Sermon 28, 'SM-VIII,' §§8-9, *Works*, 1: 616-8.
[72] Wesley, 'SM-IX,' §12, *Works*, 1: 637.
[73] Wesley, 'SM-IX,' §13, *Works*, 1: 638.

In view of the above discussion, we need to ask a crucial question: how should Christians manage their riches on earth? Wesley's charge is: 'Be wise stewards of the earthly riches in good works, especially in feeding the hungry and clothing the naked.'[74] His advice in the Discourses could be summarised as following : (i) trust not in riches for help and happiness, (ii) practice 'the care of the head' by proper planning and management,[75] (iii) do not waste money, (iv) owe no man anything, (v) provide for your own needs, (vi) provide for the present as well the future immediate needs of immediate family members, (vii) lay up (or invest), from time to time, for the above-mentioned purposes, (viii) give to the poor with single eye, (ix) seek not to increase earthly treasures without right purpose, and (x) lend all that remains to those who are in need with preference to the household of faith.[76]

4. The Contemporary Implications

This paper has only explored Wesley's thirteen discourses on the Sermon on the Mount. I am fully aware that these discourses are only part of the writings which record Wesley's understanding of the Christian life. However, these discourses do present to us an initial yet vivid portrait of Wesley's rich vision of the Christian Life. They were written not only for the people in his societies, but also for us who determine to live a responsible life in the contemporary world. They are therefore relevant and of value for contemporary living.

We are living in an age which is full of confusions, anxieties, poverty, fear, hatred, and violence caused by the misuse of riches and power. There are some constant cries which can be heard in the contemporary world: Who can do justice to the poor and suffering? How can we have peace with those who humiliate or persecute us? Do we have a future in a world which is threatened by violence and terrorism? How can we contribute in renewing this world for the betterment of tomorrow?

In the midst of all these queries, Wesley's discourses on SM serve as an evangelical counsel which invite us to focus on the Triune God while we live out responsible living in the contemporary

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[74] Wesley, 'SM-VIII,' §§24-26, *Works*, 1: 628-9; Wesley, 'SM-IV,' §§ III7-IV4, *Works*, 1: 545-9.
[75] Wesley, 'SM-IX,' §16 , *Works*, 1: 639.
[76] Wesley, 'SM-II,' § III.12, *Works*, 1: 504.

chaotic world. Wesley's attempt to bring together being and doing, the inward and the outward, intention and performance, is 'a call for decision and action.'[77] It serves as a strong motivation as well as a sound caution. It is a strong motivation for it enables us to understand our pilgrimage on the journey to the Kingdom of Glory. However, it is also a sound caution because it helps us not to fall under the prophetic judgement of 'Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin !'[78]

[77] Dale C. Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount: Inspiring the Moral Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 4.
[78] "You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting." (Dan. 5: 25-28 NIV)

KARL BARTH AND BEN WITHERINGTON ON ROMANS 7:1-14

Jenny Ong

Karl Barth's influential commentary, *The Epistle to the Romans*, was first published in 1918, and has been likened to "a bomb bursting in the playground of the theologians."[1] In it he contradicted the prevailing liberal theologians of his time who considered Scripture as no more than an account of human religious experience. Throughout his commentary, Barth did not appear to regard historical-critical research into the Roman church of Paul's time as essential and his extensive work on Romans is empty of any historical-cultural reference to the early church and consideration of first century Judaism. In his Preface to the First Edition, Barth acknowledges the validity of the historical-critical method of biblical investigation but states that if he were forced to choose between it and the "doctrine of Inspiration" which does not confine itself to any historical-critical tools, he would adopt the latter.[2] His entire object in interpreting Paul was to "see through and beyond history into the spirit of the Bible."[3] Witherington, on the other hand, provides an extensive introduction in his book on Romans[4], viewing the entire epistle though the lenses of the historical and cultural context of first century Judaism and the infant Christian church. "Text without context is just pretext", he announces.[5]

The most striking difference between Barth's and Witherington's approaches to Romans 7 is enshrined in Witherington's title of his work. Witherington maps out the whole

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[1] Cited in lecture notes by Glen O'Brien from *MA101 Research into Biblical Studies*, Kingsley College, Glenroy, 2005.
[2] Karl Barth, *Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1968.
[3] Ibid, 1.
[4] Ben Witherington III with Darlene Hyatt., *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1-29.
[5] Adapted from notes taken from a lecture by Ben Witherington on "A New View on Romans 7,"
http://baptistnsw.asn.au/ministry/Resources/CMS_files/Romans_7_Lecture.mp3

of Romans with socio-rhetorical insights into the text.[6] Socio-rhetorical interpretation is a multi-dimensional approach and Witherington has produced a commentary that uses social and rhetorical strategies of interpretation within a historical theological hermeneutic.

Based on an understanding of Greco-Roman rhetoric, that is, the ancient art of persuasion, Witherington considers Paul to be a master of rhetoric who uses the whole range of persuasive devices in use in antiquity. Witherington believes that Paul's audience in Romans was in the majority illiterate and that theirs was not a text-based culture. Rome was regarded as the rhetorical centre of the Roman Empire and coupled with the fact that the epistle to the Romans was originally meant to be presented orally, Paul intended to utilize this rhetorical basis in this passage. Accordingly, one cannot treat Romans like the rest of the New Testament as Romans was an oral proclamation, a sermon Paul would have preached had he been in Rome.[7]

Witherington develops the idea that Paul employed the common rhetorical forms of the day within this passage, namely the particular devices of impersonation or speech-in-character and personification.[8] The speech-in-character form of rhetoric is where one assumes the identity of another person. The “I” when used is not the speaker but speech-in-character offered of somebody else. A sub-rhetorical device of impersonation is where one takes an abstract quality (eg. fame, virtue, sin) and gives it human character such as in 7:11.[9] Thus, the “I” of Romans 7, Witherington posits, is a personification of “Adam” first identified in Romans 5. The “I” in Romans 7 is not an autobiographical struggle of Christian living. Rather, it is Adam's narrative of his own experience.[10] The reference in Romans 7:8 to “commandment” can hardly be a reference to the Mosaic Law in general, which Paul regularly speaks of as “a collective entity.”[11] Rather, “the commandment” refers to the single commandment given to Adam before the Fall, regarding coveting. Then there is the presence of the

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[6] Examples include Witherington's view that in 2:1-16 (Ibid, 75) he is engaging in the ancient practice of diatribe and in 2:17-3:20 (Ibid, 85-97) Paul addresses an imaginary interlocutor.
[7] Witherington, *Romans*, 179.
[8] Witherington, “A New View on Romans 7.”
[9] Ibid.
[10] Witherington, *Romans*, 190.
[11] Ibid, 189.

personification of sin, especially in v.11, which recalls the temptation in the Garden. Witherington's analysis of Romans 7 is that it is not about the struggle of the Christian life but is instead a story told by Christians (in this case, Adam) about the pre-Christian experience when Adam was awakened to the consciousness of sin upon hearing the first commandment, "Thou shalt not covet."[12] Witherington describes the law in relation to sin as a goad whereby sin used a good thing, the law, to create evil desires in Adam which consequently led to the Fall and separation of humanity from God.

Barth's commentary on Romans 7 comes from an entirely different approach. European theology in Barth's time had become anthropocentric so that to speak about God was to speak only about humanity and its religious experience of piety.[13] "God was in danger of being reduced to a pious notion: the mythical expression and symbol of human excitation oscillating between its own psychic heights or depths, whose truth can only be that of a monologue."[14] For Barth, "the law" is used interchangeably with "commandment" in Romans 7:8 to mean any system of pious religious orderings such as regulations, prohibitions, or codes of conduct.[15] He refers to these "religious orderings" as those that one practices in order to attain good standing with God. Barth interprets Paul's "law" as religious law in the broadest sense and not just the Mosaic law of the Jews – indeed, as religion itself and all its accompanying "moral and legal ordering."[16] To Barth, the "I" in Romans 7 is not Adam retelling his story but is a very present cry of collective humanity against the illusion of religion offering any salvation in itself. Sin is not being personified here, rather "the union between men and God [has been] broken."[17] In fact, according to Barth, Adam and Eve in the primal state before the Fall did not have any preconception about the possibility of the fallen state. Religion has a purposeful meaning in that it uncovers the true human condition; that we are dead on the inside and are

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[12] Witherington on "A New View on Romans 7."
[13] Glen O'Brien, lecture notes.
[14] Clifford Green, ed. *Karl Barth: Theologian of Freedom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 48.
[15] Barth pictures a plethora of such moral and legal orderings in the "emporium of religion and ethics" from which store we cannot escape as those living in this world, Ibid, 230.
[16] Barth, *Romans*, 232. He entitles these sections of his commentary "The Frontier of Religion" (7:1-6) and "The Meaning of Religion" (7:7-14), Ibid, 229-240, 240-257.
[17] Ibid, 250.

powerless to save ourselves no matter how we try.[18] Thus, Barth's interpretation of Roman 7 in terms of religion brings us to the acknowledgment of our need for redemption outside of our own efforts, to the saving grace of Christ.[19]

Witherington and Barth, then, take two divergent approaches to Romans. One, guided by historical, cultural and rhetorical context, proposes a Romans 7 that retells Adam's experience. Sin manipulated the law to create evil desires in Adam and in that we see that sin is potentiated in the presence of law. The other reaches through and beyond history to carry "the mighty voice of Paul" forward to us today to proclaim the meaning of religion so that we see that freedom is inexorably potentiated in the presence of the law.

Many Jews in Paul's time regarded the Mosaic Law as God's great and good gift and believed that through obeying and keeping the law, sin would be overcome and salvation could be attained. In such a context, Paul's words in Romans 7:1-14 are disturbing. Indeed, throughout this epistle, he has continually maintained that the law cannot justify nor sanctify and that salvation is independent of keeping the law.

In 7:1-6, Paul writes of being released from the law using the illustration of marriage where death discharges a spouse from his or her marital vows. Accordingly, what has discharged Christians from the law is our death in Christ. Since we are dead in Christ, we are no longer bound under the written code but we live in the new life of the Spirit. This does not mean however that the law is invalidated and that now we are free to live however we choose. Freedom in Christ does not lead us to live in ways that contravene the law. The law of God is now written on our hearts and we live by the Spirit in obedience to the law of Christ. The law is not invalidated but now, the Spirit writes the law on our hearts which leads to freedom to bear fruit for God.

As we have seen, for Barth, "religion" refers to any system of regulations, codes of conduct and prohibitions that we practice and adhere to in order to attain good standing with God. It is in this way that humanity strives to enter into communion with God on its own terms, and it is here that "the supreme competence of

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[18] Ibid, 246, 248, 253.

[19] "The moment we become aware of ourselves and our position in the world through the commandment of God which meets us in the known uncertainty of our present existence, we are led onwards to the final possibility of religion." Ibid, 255-256.

human possibility attains its consummation and final realization."[20]

Far from grandeurising it, Barth has stinging comments about religion. He charges religion with being an insidious opiate on people that "acts upon them like a drug which has been extremely skillfully administered," and tranquilises us into "an alternative condition of pleasurable emotion" by imagining that we can know God and justify ourselves by our own efforts.[21] Barth's view of religion is that in the end, far from being the "loftiest pinnacle of all human achievement," it is instead "the most radical dividing of men from God" for it is the antithesis of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ who came to humanity as an act of grace.[22]

Until verse 6, Paul is marginalising the law by reinforcing its limitations with regard to salvation.[23] In verses 7-14, he now argues for the benefits of the law, beginning with the rhetorical question, "Is the law sinful?" (7:7) The purpose of law is to reveal sin as sin and that we are indeed sinners. Left to ourselves, we will never admit we are sinners and have fallen short of the glory of God. The law also bring us to the end of ourselves. There was a time when Paul himself by his own efforts, ensured that he was in good standing with God, justified and secure in his salvation by acting "religiously."[24] Ultimately, the law has its goal in Christ. Notwithstanding that it is limited in that it cannot deliver us from the sinful condition it reveals to us, it ultimately drives us to God for mercy as revealed in Christ.

Suppose I made an attempt to walk across the Nullarbor from Melbourne to Perth. Along the way, the signs inform me of my position in relation to my destination, whether I am near or far or lost. Not only do they keep me on the right track and keep me from going the wrong way, some signs can even alert me to danger. None of these signs has any power in itself to bring me to Perth because my human physical condition makes it impossible

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[20] Ibid, p.236

[21] When a person acts "religiously...it is widely supposed that he does well, and is thereby justified and established and secure. In fact, however, he merely establishes himself, rests upon his own competence, and treats his own ambitions as adequate and satisfactory." (Ibid, 236)

[22] Ibid, 234; 241; 240.

[23] Barth has been unrelenting in his critique of religion vis a vis the law thus far as well.

[24] Paul acted "religiously" before his conversion and thus the opiate effect of religion that Barth describes is seen in Paul as he "supposed that he does well, and is thereby justified and established and secure." Barth, *Romans*, 236 and footnote 6.

for me to get there on foot. But they are not invalid for the purposes described earlier. Likewise the law is a signpost, first telling us our sinful condition, alerting us to our sin and then pointing us to God's goodness. The law can tell us what we ought to do but it does not enable us to do it. It is powerless in itself to save us; however it is good because it reveals our sin and has its goal in Christ.

Despite his earlier stinging critique of religion, Barth now dredges meaning from it. According to Barth, "it is precisely in religion that men perceive themselves to be bounded as men of the world by that which is divine. Religion compels us to take the perception that God is not to be found in religion. Religion makes us know we are competent to advance no single step."[25] "What is the meaning of religion?" he calls out. "[T]hat our whole concrete and observable existence is sinful. Through religion, we perceive that men have rebelled against God. We are now driven to the consideration of that freedom which lies beyond the concrete visibility of sin – the freedom of God which is our freedom."[26]

So, to follow Paul's rhetorical question "Is the law sin?" we chorus emphatically "By no means!" "The law is holy, and the commandment is righteous and good," (7:14) since it does exactly what God sent it into the world to do, which is to show us that we are truly sinners and to uncover our aching need for redemption in Jesus Christ.[27] The wonder and beauty of our relationship with Jesus Christ is that it is not a relationship based on regulations and rules but on grace and grace alone.

So what do we learn from Barth's approach to this passage? Indeed, we must take care that any attempt to develop a practice of our faith or a discipline in our spirituality does not become in itself a "religion" lest we lock ourselves into legalistic rules and prohibitions that have nothing to do with our relationship to God. In our zeal to be good Christians, we may set and strive for good standing in God for ourselves which borders on this "religion" of Barth. We may even be lulled into a false sense of spiritual superiority and mesmerise ourselves into thinking we become

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[25] Ibid, 242.
[26] Ibid, 246.
[27] Barth is congruent with Paul here as he says "...religion is without doubt holy because it points from humanity to divinity. it is without doubt righteous, because it is correlated with the will of God and parallel to it and it is without doubt good, for it is that concrete, observable, mediated experience which bears witness to the immediacy which has been lost." Ibid, 254.

better Christians by our adherence to instructions, prohibitions and codes of conduct. This is not to say that we should live under no moral law, code of behaviour or spiritual discipline. One difficulty with Barth's approach to the law as "religion" is that he does not seem to provide any concept of a religionless way to live the Christian life. As soon as practices, methods and regulations of a "religionless Christianity" are specified, we form yet another set of moral and legal ordering. Specifying that we must live without code becomes a code in itself and we fall again into this abyss of Barth's "religion." Barth concedes this difficulty in his concept of a religionless religion in some measure by declaring that oversimplification of "any war against religion" is only "pseudo-radicalism."[28]

A measure of order in our Christian living will always be needed. Law is good but we do not develop and pursue such ordering for its own sake. Laws, regulations, codes or discipline are impotent to change our hearts, due to our spiritual condition. We can only keep the moral law of God by an inward motivation and an inward power which Jesus Christ alone can produce in us through His life by having a deeper communion with Him and by living this relationship daily and consciously. For Karl Barth, the good news of the Christian gospel is that God saves humankind from religion by the act of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. There is a wonderful reconciliation of Barth's concept of religion with the redemptive work of Christ when he states that "all human possibilities, including the possibilities of religion have been offered and surrendered to God on Golgotha. Golgotha is the end of law and the frontier of religion."[29] When we come to Christ, we begin a spiritual, living relationship with Him. We have a union with Him through grace, and it is only as we draw upon this union and experience His life, by the Spirit, that we can live the law that is written on our hearts. It is in this free grace of God as revealed in Christ and received in faith that the "law" of Paul transcends legalism and the "religion" of Barth takes us beyond the frontiers of religion into freedom.

[28] Barth, *Romans*, 241.
[29] Ibid, 233.

ART AND THE CHURCH[1]

Gary Baxter

Most artists who have encountered the evangelical tradition have found a glaring absence of art in the church. I speak as a Christian who also happens to be an artist, someone who has wandered through the evangelical church for many years, looking for something that just doesn't seem to be there. There is a sense in which everyone is an artist. Each and every of us has been given the responsibility of making something beautiful out of our lives. We are to create a masterpiece, to run the race as well as we can. This doesn't mean that we become a beautiful work of art in the physical sense of the word. On the contrary, by the time we are finished giving and sacrificing and working and loving we are quite likely to look like a wreck on the outside - like the wild and scribbled abstract paintings of William DeKooning that appall most of us the first time we see them. So there is a sense in which we are all artists, and we are all art objects, working in concert with God, as He shapes our lives into something beautiful.

I want to deal here with the specific gift that not everyone has, the gift of conceptualizing in the mind and then using the body (especially the hands and eyes) to give aesthetic order and symbolic meaning to mere raw materials. This can include something as traditional as the potter shaping clay, or it can be as modern as the process of shooting a movie and editing it on a computer, or as huge as the undertaking of a church building.

It has been said in reference to literature, "our thoughts become disentangled as they pass through our fingers."[2] I think this applies equally well to the visual arts. Art is when our hands give substance to our thoughts. So these are two separate things: We are all becoming a masterpiece, with God's help, and some of also make art.

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[1] This paper is the substance of an address given in the Kingsley College chapel during Semester II, 2004. Several of its ideas are modified from those that Pope John Paul II presented in his "Letter to Artists," given as his Easter Sunday address from the Vatican in 1995. http://tcrnews2.com/art.html

[2] Dawson Trotman cited by R. W. Freeman, in "Dynamics of Christian Formation," *The Annual Ridgway Lecture in Pastoral Theology*, Melbourne: Kingsley College, October 13, 2004.

Every culture on earth has produced art. Even the most primitive nomadic peoples made designs on their bodies or clothing or baskets or pottery, for no apparent practical reason. Art seems to be a universal need among people. I have found that as an artist who is also a Christian, it is only in the process of making art that I am able to experience the fullness of life, and realize my God-given mission on earth. Those who cannot find a way to use their gifts become frustrated and feel unfulfilled. So I want to ask why the artist *needs* to make art, and why frustration and a lack of fulfillment result when he or she cannot.

When the Fine Arts Center at Houghton College was nearing completion a few years ago, the President of the college asked the art faculty for a passage of scripture or a quotation to be placed on a dedication stone outside the building. We thought long and hard, and finally settled on the phrase, "In the beginning God created." (Genesis 1:1) This short, half-verse, seemed to sum up the things we were thinking about, and was also very brief, *so* short that it focuses most readers on just two words: "God" and "created." A fundamental part of how we experience and understand God is as Creator. So, at the very beginning of God's written revelation to humanity, we see the process of creation. In the verses of Genesis that followed, God undertook a series of creative acts, and one of the things He made was humanity. In these few opening verses of scripture, we see the act of creating raw materials, we see the process of conceptualizing (the Spirit of God was "hovering" over the waters – v. 2), and we see that God was inspired. He was inspired by his own character to make humanity in his own image. Psalm 19:1 reminds us that the skies proclaim the work of his hands; a clear day is a spectacular picture of God shaping and forming.

This combination of creating through thinking, speaking and doing is analogous to the creative process human artists use. Some of us "need" to create for the simple reason that God is a creative being who has made us in his creative image. So what does it mean for the artist that God made humanity in his image? Does it mean that God and human artists create equally? God in his wisdom enabled people to share in his creative power, and yet at the same time, there is an infinite distance between God's creativity and human creativity. As Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa said, "creative art, which it is the soul's good fortune to entertain, is not to be identified with that essential art which is God himself, but is only a

communication of it and a share in it."[3] In other words, between God's art and human art there lies an infinite gulf. We cannot simply say that it is merely a quantitative difference: that is, we cannot merely say that God creates a lot or totally, while we create only a little or partially, although this is certainly true. We must also say that the difference between the way God creates and the way we create, is a qualitative and a profound one. Andy Goldsworthy can arrange the flowers he found on the ground into a beautiful composition, but only God could make air and water and soil and sunshine, and then combine them to make the leaf.

God creates actual substance from nothing, the ultimate act of creativity. We, on the other hand, merely manipulate already existing matter. We order and give meaning and form to something that already exists. As the artist creates, she mirrors the image of God. God *is* creativity; we merely reflect that creativity. Where the human artist comes closest to mirroring God's gift of creativity, is in the conceptual or design process. In this arena the artist uses previous experience and ideas and artistic skills, combining them into something that approaches newness and originality - as close as a person can ever hope to get to creating something out of nothing, yet a very long way from how God creates.

So does all of this talk of the supremacy of God's creativity mean that the creative work of humanity is unimportant and insignificant? Yes and no. The works done using the creative gifts from God can be profound, because they come from God. They are Spirit-breathed and point towards God. On the other hand, the creative work of the Almighty surpasses all understanding. We must always bear in mind that infinite gulf between the two. One relies upon other things for support; the works from God are self-generated, self-sustaining, and essential.

So the question remains, does art deserve a place in the church? The statement from Genesis 1:26 that "the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the water", has a close affinity between the "breath" of life we find elsewhere in Genesis, and the idea of "inspiration." To inspire means to "breathe-in" and to infuse. This is a powerful picture of the mystery of God's creative process. When God creates, we see the supernatural. When artists create under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, even human art can take on a supernatural dimension. Many of us have experienced this supernatural moving

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[3] *Dialogus de Ludo Globi*, lib. II: Philosophisch-Theologische Schriften (Vienna 1967), III: 332, cited at http://tcrnews2.com/art.html

of the Spirit while listening to a great sermon or choir. Fewer of us have experienced it while listening to a violin solo, or looking at a marble sculpture. I'm afraid that some of our senses have gone numb. One thing that allows some people's artistic awareness to fall asleep, is that we're suspicious of the human presence in art. In a way that seems to border on the miraculous, the artist's personality actually makes its way into the work itself. We shouldn't be afraid of this; we should celebrate it. God has created the model: His personality has made its way into his work by imbuing all of us with creativity as well as other of his attributes, such as love, peace, mercy and patience. We should rejoice whenever we see God's good gifts enmeshed in the human experience. God is forming of each of us into a masterpiece and in this lifelong process artwork becomes an expression of one's spiritual growth. This gives new meaning to the idea of "the mature artist." In the work of many great artists, both those who made overtly Christian art and those who didn't, we can see a correlation between spiritual and artistic maturity. It is this presence of the Holy Spirit in us and in the artist that argues for art in the church.

So how did art make its way into the church? And more importantly, how did it make its way out of the church? As already suggested, there is an affinity between the creative spirit of God and the spiritual interests of the church. Art speaks (to those who are willing to listen) through feeling and emotion more than through logic and analysis. Art, like faith, is a different kind of language. It functions at the level of mystery, combining what the senses perceive, and reaching beneath physical reality, even though art has a physical dimension. One aspect of the creative gift God gives to artists is an alertness to beauty and epiphany. Because the work of Christ is the ultimate act of beauty and epiphany, it was inevitable that artists would be drawn to the gospel and to the church as a source of images, and for inspiration. Art is a search for truth, and the gospel is the unlimited source of truth. Consequently, the church is a natural fit for artists.

How then was art lost to the church? In the early church there was considerable reliance upon the classical artistic heritage of Greece and Rome. For example, in the ancient catacombs under the streets of Rome we find images of shepherds remarkably similar to sculptures of Greek athletes such as the discus thrower and pagan gods such as Dionysus. But the shepherd was a symbol of relationship to Christ, and it wasn't long before other symbols began to appear. The fish, the loaves, the shepherd's crook, the two-

fingered gesture of deity, to name but a few. These were powerful, symbolic images. After 313AD when the edict of Constantine was issued, art rapidly became a powerful means of spiritual expression within the church. So the artistic heritage of the Greco-Roman tradition was rapidly expanded to fit the needs of the growing Church. For example, the Roman basilica that had been the Roman courthouse became the church. Gifted architects gradually evolved a building style that started with the basilica, progressed to the Byzantine and the Romanesque, and culminated in the grandest of the Gothic Cathedrals, capable of holding an entire community.

The anthropologist Jacques Maquet has suggested that every culture has an aesthetic locus from which each culture's motivation to produce great art, and its artistic criteria radiates.[4] For example, in late 16th century Japan, this was the tea ceremony. Lacquer ware, furniture, painting, ceramics and architecture were all inspired by the tea ceremony. In 12th century Europe, that aesthetic locus was Christianity. The 11th century monk Raoul Glaber said "all the world is putting on a white mantel of churches."[5] There are a couple of fine examples of inspired architecture in downtown Melbourne. Although they are not as grand as the great European cathedrals, they are beautiful examples of the Gothic Revival style. I was deeply moved by both St. Paul's and St. Patrick's cathedrals. Even though they are modern revivals of former styles, their very bricks and stones reach beneath physical reality and touch the inner person. This can happen because the Holy Spirit had a hand in their inspiration.

Now I know that I am talking about things many evangelicals would prefer to leave behind. I have heard and read several accounts by Christians who have visited Chartres or Notre Dame who said they felt cold and empty and dead. But that was not my experience at all. For me, the Gothic vaulting that is meant to soar the worshipper's thoughts to a higher heavenly realm does just that. The colorful light coming through the stained glass windows, penetrating the darkness, is meant to be a metaphor for the presence of Christ - the light of the world - in the midst of our earthly experience. But we can only hear the music if we listen. It's not the cathedral that is cold and dead; it's the closed mind. The way these

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[4] Jacques Maquet, *The Aesthetic Experience: An Anthropologist Looks at the Visual Arts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).
[5] *Quinque libri*, 3.3.13, ed. 116 cited in Richard Landes, "Giants with Feet of Clay: On the Historiography of the Year 1000," http://www.mille.org/scholarship/1000/AHR9.html

700-year-old buildings can still stir the soul, is a powerful testimony to the power of the gospel. A couple of years ago one of my students told me that she was considering Catholicism because of its use of art in worship. So what is one to think of a church that ignores the creative gift and denies the supernatural work of the Spirit through a human artist?

What happened to art in the Protestant church? Music seems to have survived, provided there are words. And maybe some would even say that art has survived in the form of banners and bulletins. But is that the kind of art the Spirit can use to probe the depths of the human soul? There are those who will argue that the scriptures are enough to probe these depths. But many artists work closely with scripture, and with scriptural narrative, and the scriptures themselves point to nature, and to much of human experience, as a means to probe the spiritual depths. What is the person who knows she has been gifted as an artist supposed to do about ministry within a church that says we don't need you, or your ministry is no longer appropriate? I think it is reasonable that an artist would not want to waste her talent, but rather to develop it and see it put into service. That's just good stewardship. I rub shoulders with many artists, and I fear that many of them have shaken the dust from their sandals and left the evangelical church behind. This is not the way God intended for the church to function.

Another part of the answer to the question of why art has become an endangered species inside the evangelical church has to do with literacy. In the early church many of the biblical narratives, and the principles God was conveying through them, were most readily taught to a largely illiterate congregation through visual images-paintings and relief sculptures, sculpture in the round and stained glass. I have had the privilege of visiting many cathedrals and churches and 'listening' to the great Bible stories told again by way of visual imagery. I think of the stories from the life of Christ brilliantly illustrated in the rich mosaics of San Vitale in Ravenna, or the scenes from the Old Testament carved from wood into high relief in Chartres Cathedral. I still remember the power of those stories as the flickering candlelight dramatically illuminated and brought them to life. I was astounded by what I learned from these stories that I thought I knew so well, told in a new and visual way. These were not mere illustrations; rather, they were personal interpretations inspired by the Spirit of God and formed with God-given artistic talent. I know this the same way I recognize the Spirit in a sermon or a piece of music - because of the power with which it stirs and

enlightens me. Literacy is a good thing, but overcoming illiteracy doesn't eliminate the need for art.

Others argue that the arts are too readily used for evil purposes; and it's true that they can be. This is surprising, but there is such a thing as pornography that is also very high quality fine art. I know this sounds like a contradiction in terms, but unfortunately, an image can be both. And the same is true of idols and graven images. In Deuteronomy 27:15 God curses the craftsman who makes an idol and sets it up in secret. God is not to be worshipped as an idol or image. No sculpture or image can substitute when it comes to representing the ineffable qualities of God. And yet in Exodus 35:35 we see that God has filled Bezalel and Oholiab with skill to do all sorts of work as master craftsmen and designers, weavers and embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, along with the ability to teach others. So is Deuteronomy to be interpreted in such a way as to say that Michaelangelo was wrong to portray God when he painted the Sistine chapel ceiling? He certainly didn't like all the politics. He didn't like to paint because he didn't think he was any good at it, and he especially didn't like painting the chapel ceiling because he was miserable the whole time. Here is Michaelangelo's account of painting while laying on his back:

I've grown a goiter while lying in this den-
As cats from stagnant streams in Lombardy,
Or in what other land they hap to be-
Which drives the belly close beneath the chin:

My beard turns to heaven; my nape falls in,
Fixed on my spine: my breast-bone visibly
Grows like a harp: a rich embroidery
Bedews my face from brush-drops thick and thin.

My loins into my paunch like levers grind:
My buttock like a crupper bears my weight;
My feet unguided wander to and fro;

In front my skin grows loose and long; behind,
By bending it becomes more taught and straight;
Crosswise I strain me like a Syrian bow:

Whence false and quaint, I know,
Must be the fruit of squinting brain and eye;
For ill can aim the gun the bends awry.

Come then, Giovanni, try
To succour my dead pictures and my fame;
Since foul I fare this painting is my shame.[6]

This poem demonstrates the struggle and the physicality of the artistic process. Art is where spirit, mind and body work in harmony. I believe Michaelangelo was blessed and affirmed by God precisely because he was not making a portrait of God. Rather, he was interpreting and designing a visual narrative. He was not creating an idol for worship. He was showing how a mere mortal might imagine things looked when God breathed the breath of life into Adam, or when he gave the angel a sword to keep fallen humanity out of the garden. Michaelangelo was not creating an object to worship. Rather, he created an environment to enhance the process of worship. He was contextualizing the Gospel. Michaelangelo knew very well the admonition of Acts 17: 24, 29 that "God does not dwell in shrines made by human hands," and "we ought not too think that the deity is like gold or silver or stone, a representation by human art and imagination." Michaelangelo was not interested in representation; he used art to probe the depths of what it means to be a person reconciled to God, and I have a deeper understanding of reconciliation because of his work.

So, why is this experience not a possibility in my own church in Castile, New York? Why is my visual experience limited to an over lit, white shell of a room with a banner that says "God Bless America" during the month of July and a quaint, gutless picture of a white church by a brook, most of the rest of the year? When I was in the Sistine Chapel I saw images of the ungodly being judged and tormented, alongside images of believers entering paradise. Some of the images are very beautiful, and some of them are hideous, but it was important to see the pleasant and the unpleasant side by side. While in Egypt several years ago, I went to the Coptic Church at Abu Mina. This is the oldest church in Africa, established some time in the late second century. There were Egyptian Christians weeping and praying over an altar rich in visual imagery. I watched as a businessman took a letter from his briefcase and touched it to an icon painting of a New Testament saint. Some might accuse this man of superstition or even idolatry, but it was one of the most humble and disciplined acts of worship I have ever witnessed. Abu

[6] Michaelangelo, "On the Painting of the Sistine Chapel," trans. John Addington Symonds. http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Delphi/7086/msistine.htm

Mina is a large church with a functioning monastery, new construction going on and lots of busses in the parking lot that had brought Egyptian Christians so they could worship. These people were on pilgrimage. And I suppose I was too, in a sense. I was actually hoping to find the original building from the second century. I was quite surprised to see a relatively new building and all this activity. After searching for an hour, I found someone who spoke English that pointed me out into the desert (which really wasn't very helpful since we were already in the middle of the desert). But I drove off in my borrowed jeep in the general direction he had pointed. And after several kilometers over a road-less stretch of desert, I found blocks of beautifully carved stone scattered over an acre or two of sand. I had the place completely to myself. Eventually, I rolled over a block of stone to have a better look, and there was a piece of paper with a prayer written in Arabic. Every stone had prayers tucked beneath them. After 1800 years this church is still alive - what a testimony. If I hadn't already been a Christian, I think I would have converted on the spot. And now I think of my own church with its glaring white walls and emptiness. To me it is a miracle that anyone is ever drawn to God in that sterile environment. And I suppose it *is* a miracle, and a tremendous witness to the power of the Holy Spirit.

There have been other difficult times for art, even in the Catholic Church. During the iconoclast crisis, the role of images in the church was violently challenged. In 787, the Second Council of Nicaea finally settled the matter in favour of icons, reasoning that when Jesus was "born of a woman" (Galatians 4:4), he became an image of God that we could *see*. Jesus was the bridge between the invisible and the visible. It was deemed reasonable that artistic portraits of Jesus and the saints were analogous to this mystery and to this bridge. Today the role of art in worship is once again threatened, especially within the mainstream, evangelical church of the developed world. The artless church is not a place that holds very much interest for me. I know many Christian artists whose faith is closely tied to their art - they're rapidly losing interest in the church. (Of course the church will survive. None of us is indispensable.) When I was an undergraduate at a large state university, I had a world religions professor who said "the main reason I might consider becoming a Christian, is because Christianity has survived." In other words, he was saying that if people were ultimately responsible for the life of the church, it would not survive; therefore, it has to be God. This is another tremendous,

though somewhat negative, testimony to the power of the Church. With or without art, without theatre, even without music, the church will survive. But this misses the point about fullness of life and how deeply we need to worship.

To conclude on a more positive note, the evangelical church has made some progress more recently. I have a friend who serves on the art acquisition committee of a large church in Michigan. They *actually use a portion of the offering* to purchase sculpture and painting, and install it in the sanctuary as an aid to worship. Mark Driscoll who is a pastor at the Mars Hill church in Seattle, Washington explains the approach of his congregation to the arts.

> We need to recover beauty as an attribute of God. Dance, video, and music all need to be redeemed. At Mars Hill, we take that redemption seriously. That's why we have candles everywhere. It's why we feature paintings by the professional artists in our community. It's why we burn incense, hitting all the senses for a full experience. Everything in the service needs to preach: Architecture, lighting, songs, fellowship, the smell, it all preaches. Being creative is tough work, but we believe art is that region between heaven and earth that connects the two. To *experience* God often is the highest form of knowing and the entire worship experience must be more than a presentation about God.[7]

God gave us our senses to use and to enjoy and to celebrate the fullness of life. He gave us artistic gifts to further His work, and to help us "do Church" better. If we would let the Holy Spirit use the arts again, the worship experience for all Christians could be enhanced and the testimony of the church greatly expanded.

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[7] Quoted in Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendricksen, 2003), 103.

AN ADDRESS TO ART STUDENTS[1]

Peter Breen

I once wanted to be a sign writer but that didn't go anywhere and when I wanted to do art at school my very practical father thought that art meant too much art history – so I didn't do art at school. But as all of us are artists, every day I do creative things. In my day to day job [as a radiographer], my brush is an x-ray tube, my canvas a piece of x-ray film and my subjects are the sick and sometimes winging mass of people wanting a diagnosis for their ills. Nothing comes close in black and white beauty and contrast, not even Max Dupain, to the picture of someone's bowel filled with barium and gas - a beauty to behold! X-rays are still to find their place in the galleries of the world. Trying to name the exhibition would be fun. Maybe "Black and White impressions of a partly filled colon"!

When I say "graffiti," what springs to mind? Invariably when I ask the average group this question there are one or two whose blood pressure rises to dangerous levels and a few dear souls who suddenly get Tourette's syndrome! I am part of an exciting arts space in Fortitude Valley called *Jugglers*, which incorporates a huge graffiti or street art space, seven art studios, and two galleries, one of them being Fox Galleries owned and curated by Michael Fox.[2] This place has been going for less than two years and it has all been funded by a few friends who are mad enough to want to experiment with new ideas and concepts in art and visual art. Part of that organic growing place and space is *graffic* – a pilot mentoring program which aims to mentor a select group of street artists towards positive employment and positive life outcomes, involving the artists in the studios as part of the mentoring program.

One of the last lines of Simon and Garfunkel's haunting song *The Sounds of Silence* is "The words of the prophets are written on

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[1] This paper originated as an address to graduating art students at North Brisbane Institute of TAFE on 2 December 2004 in formally declaring open an exhibition of the students' work.

[2] http://www.cafejugglers.com/

the subway walls."[3] What is art, what is visual art, if at some point it is not prophetic, if it does not disturb us, if it does not irritate us, if it does not start a riot, if like Andy Warhol it does not lead us to challenge mores, stereotypes and comfort? But the sounds and sights of clean and clinical predictable conservatism are everywhere, screaming loudly for our acquiescence, and artists are most vulnerable to falling into marketing rather than creativity.

I had lunch with Archibald Prize winner Cherry Hood last year in Sydney and talked with her about being an artist and being great with a pencil. She told me, "Art is more than copying, design and illustration. I was good at drawing but I did not really become an artist until I began doing my Masters 15 years after my primary degree, then I realized what art was, what creativity was. I estimate that half the great artists are not great at drawing and drafting. Art is in the heart, a way of seeing." Of course I am not despising skill and technique. As conservative art critic Giles Auty has said in *The Weekend Australian*, the missing skill that young artists are not taught is a fine drafting skill. But along with skill and technique must be the fire of creativity lit in the heart, catching the spark of the spirit of the creative.

At *Jugglers* we have a four-pronged focus – creativity expressed in the visual arts and music, a growing community, projects that address social justice issues, and spirituality. We are convinced that life and art talk to each other, that neither the spiritual element nor social justice, nor community can be separated from life or from art. Even though the creative act – particularly for painters and sculptors - is done in private, the value of community for feedback, critique, support, and affirmation, is indispensable to growth.

But let's get back to that prophetic voice, the voice for and from the hurting and the marginalized: That voice and the prophetic voice for them in our society, the reflection of the pain and the cry of the marginalized, is best seen not in legislation or words but in film, in the play house, in graffiti, in painting, in sculpture. Who hasn't been moved by *Fight Club* or *American Beauty* or Glenn Morgan's *Banjo's Funeral*? How can anyone truly paint or sculpt and be separated from their own emotions, much less what they feel about the world? Beautiful pictures and bowls have their place to create beauty and peacefulness and a sense of restfulness and are essential as part of the disciplinary process of learning, but don't be satisfied with drawing, copying and producing marketable pieces. Stretch

[3] Paul Simon, 1964.

yourself within your chosen medium to speak of your own deep self and to learn to see below the underbelly of our culture.

Andy Warhol and his Factory – to which someone likened *Jugglers* just this week - was hardly known for his work with the marginalized or for his spirituality. But Warhol attended Mass several times a week and served dinner in the soup kitchen at the Church of The Heavenly Rest on all major holidays. He created the largest series of religious art by an American artist and at his funeral at St Patrick's Cathedral in 1987 art Historian John Richardson said: "Hidden from all but his closest friends was his spiritual side...and despite the fact that many knew him in circumstances that were the antithesis of spiritual, that side existed in Andy and was the key to the artist's psyche."[4] Explore and grow your art in community, through spirituality and with some kind of exposure to issues of social justice, poverty and war. If it doesn't make you a millionaire it will give you a following and make you influential!

Brisbane is an exciting place to be an artist at the moment but it wasn't always like this, particularly in the Bjelke-Petersen days. You don't know how lucky you are! Talk about the words of the prophets being written on the subway walls! The arts were largely underground in the 70's and 80's! But Brisbane is now on the art map thanks to people like [former Brisbane Lord Mayor] Jim Soorley and [Brisbane City Councilor] David Hinchcliffe. In June last year that indispensable South Australian art magazine *Art Link* themed Brisbane under the title *Critical Mass: the New Brisbane*. In the editorial Ian Hamilton wrote: "Art schools have developed innovative courses and arts education for young people is being taken seriously. These efforts are refreshing attempts to inculcate an appetite for contemporary art among young people and to involve them in the public life of the city."[5]

Whatever you do, never stop creating, painting, sculpting, potting, drawing. Let the fire that has begun continue to excite you. Be stimulated, stop everything else, sell everything you can to paint, to sculpt to draw, and do it for the passion and for the sake of being creative not for the marketing, for if it comes from your heart with refined skill they will come from around the world to buy it.

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[4] Rose Marie Berger, "A Holy Fool: The Spiritual Vision of Andy Warhol," in *Spirit of Fire: Faith Art and Action* (Washington, DC: Sojourners, 2003).
[5] "Critical Mass: the New Brisbane," *Artlink* vol. 23 no. 2 (June 2003), 15.