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**AN UNTAPPED INHERITANCE:  
AMERICAN METHODISM AND WESLEY’S  
PRACTICAL THEOLOGY**

Randy L. Maddox

The title of this essay might seem rather eccentric to our larger project. What does a suggested neglect of Wesley’s “practical theology” have to do with contemporary United Methodism and its relation to American culture? Let me try to answer that question by sketching the connections that led me to this topic.

**I. The Contemporary Need  
for Recovering Practical Theology**

A recurrent theme in recent analyses of North American culture is the negative impact of pervasive individualism. This individualism is identified as a primary cause of the demise of authentic expressions of community in North American life, and such communal settings are judged essential to forming persons committed to interpersonal responsibility in the public arena.<sup>1</sup> Ironically, this individualism is a progeny of the Enlightenment values of individual rights and religious freedom—values that were central to the construction of cultural alliances and structures in eighteenth-century North America. These values have taken on a shape or power that now serves more to undermine truly communal culture.

Those diagnosing the current malady have often championed religious groups as one of the last hopes for providing microcontexts of true community that can begin to restore in their members a commitment to the good of our larger society.<sup>2</sup> However, individualism has made its way into contemporary religious life as well, fostering understandings of religious identity as simply a matter of individual choices and of religious community as mere associations of like-minded persons. Nowhere is this more evident than in the current splintering of

Christian communions into a variety of caucuses.<sup>3</sup> This means that contemporary North American Christian groups (including United Methodism) are not likely to make the desired contribution to public culture until they recover more authentic embodiments of character-forming communal life themselves.<sup>4</sup>

There is growing awareness that any adequate prescription for such a recovery in Christian groups must include a central theological dimension. This is because character is not a spontaneous achievement. Rather, the enduring basis of our sense of ourselves in relation to others—hence, of our actions—is a “life narrative” (or, more accurately, its implicit worldview and affectional dispositions) that we derive from our communities-of-influence. This narrative may be carefully transcribed into our being or haphazardly imbibed as we go along, it may have a coherent plot or be a collage of ill-fitting episodes from various storylines, it may be retained with little editing or be fundamentally rewritten; whatever the case, its life-orienting influence remains.<sup>5</sup> Precisely because of this influence, it is incumbent upon Christian communities to evaluate the adequacy of the narratives being instilled in their members, to shepherd the transcription of their defining narrative, and to support their members’ ongoing personal critique, clarification, and editing of life narratives. This task is central to what I am calling “practical theology.”

But this primal theological task is precisely where mainline North American churches, United Methodism included, are broadly judged as failing at present.<sup>6</sup> Part of this failure may be attributed to the way that political affirmation of the personal right to choice in matters of religion has indirectly undermined the ability of religious groups to call their members to theological or spiritual accountability. However, another significant factor is that the mainline traditions have acquiesced to a separation of serious theological activity from the life and practice of their churches, restricting it to specialized disciplines in the academy. The notion that theology is fundamentally a “practical” discipline of shepherding formation of Christian character in the community of faith has become increasingly foreign to both academy and church. As a result, pastors and people have turned instead to secular therapists and managers for the “wisdom” to run their lives and ministries. And this wisdom has served more to mediate the individualism rampant in culture into the church than to assist the church in forming persons who can discern and challenge this individualism.

Against this background, it is a sign of hope that there is a growing chorus of voices, both in the academy and beyond, calling for a changed understanding and practice of theology as a practical discipline.<sup>7</sup> One aspect of this call has been the search for prior models to inform the contemporary development of such a theology. I have suggested elsewhere that John Wesley could be one such informative model.<sup>8</sup> This suggestion was rendered problematic from the first by the fact that it has been common for critics to dismiss both Wesley and the movement that he founded as having no serious theological concern. Raising even more suspicion was the broad tendency for Wesley's professional theological descendants to dismiss him as a theologian. At the time, I simply offset both of these dismissals by the recognition that they were measuring Wesley unfavorably in terms of the model of academic theology that was itself now being questioned. It has since seemed to me that, if we are to recover something like Wesley's model of practical theology in our present context, it could be instructive to investigate more closely how and why his earlier American descendants left this inheritance largely untapped. That is the goal of this essay.

## **II. Wesley's Model of Practical Theology**

To appreciate the progressive divergence of American Methodist professional theological activity from the model of Wesley, it is necessary to have a brief sketch of his model in mind. And to understand Wesley's model, it is helpful to set it in historical perspective.<sup>9</sup>

Christian theological activity originated in the pastoral context of shepherding the formation of Christians for their lives in the world. In this pre-university setting, theology took the primary form of a practical discipline (*scientia practica*). This form involved a multi-layered understanding of the nature of theology. In the most foundational sense, theology was the (usually implicit) basic worldview that frames the disposition and practice of believers' lives. This worldview is not simply bestowed with conversion, it has to be developed. The concern to form and norm this worldview in believers constituted the next major dimension of theology as a practical discipline. This concern took most direct (i.e., first-order) expression in such theological activities as pastoral shepherding and the production of formative materials like catechisms, liturgies, and spiritual discipline manuals. These activities in turn frequently sparked second-order theological reflection on such issues as

the grounding for, or interrelationships and consistency of, various theological commitments. But even at this more abstract level early Christian theology retained a practical focus, ultimately basing the most metaphysical reflections about God on the life of faith and drawing from these reflections ethical and soteriological implications. Likewise, while there has been need for apologetic defense of the Christian faith from the beginning, it was initially supplemental to the more formative theological tasks.

Beginning in the twelfth century, the social location of theology in Western Christianity progressively shifted to the emerging universities. In this new location some began to reformulate the nature and task of theology in terms of the Aristotelian model of a theoretical science, which aims at assimilating rationally-demonstrated and -ordered knowledge *for its own sake*. This model of theology came to dominate the universities, and they came to dominate Western theological debate and pastoral training. In the process, preparation of comprehensive textbooks (*summae*) of doctrinal claims for university education came to be considered the most fundamental form of theological activity. Likewise, the dominant concern of this activity shifted from interacting reciprocally with the life and practice of the Christian community to achieving systematic coherence among the topics included in the textbook. Thus it was that Systematic Theology emerged as the standard of professional theological activity in the West. If it had a close rival, it was Apologetics, which strove to defend the intellectual integrity of Christian faith among the educated. This rivalry was usually overcome by subsuming Apologetics into Systematics. By contrast, “practical theology” was marginalized into an application discipline—reduced to relating the truths previously established by Systematics to the spiritual life, the moral life, or eventually just to the duties of pastors.

Such was the case, that is, with *continental* Western theology. Wesley’s Anglican setting differed in some significant ways from these continental developments.<sup>10</sup> This difference was grounded in the Anglican decision not to align with either Protestantism or Roman Catholicism, striving instead to embody a “middle way” (*via media*). Anglican reformers were convinced that this could best be accomplished by a recovery of the beliefs and practices of the undivided church of the first four centuries. Among the impacts of their resulting intensive study of Early Church writings was renewed influence of the assumptions of theology as a practical discipline. As a prime example of this influence,

the official Anglican doctrinal expressions took the form of confessions or creeds (The Thirty-Nine Articles), liturgies (the *Book of Common Prayer*), and catechetical sermons (The *Homilies*). Influence of the pre-university model is also reflected in the distrust Anglican theologians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries held toward “systems”; they were more concerned to develop the comprehensiveness of the creeds than to concentrate Christian doctrine into a unifying core. And finally, the greater prominence of theology as a practical discipline helped Anglican theology avoid the severity of the Orthodoxy/Pietism split prominent in continental Protestantism (or the Scholastic/Monastic split in Roman Catholicism). As a result, Wesley was trained in an academic setting that was somewhat more successful than its continental counterpart in retaining the interaction of doctrinal reflection and Christian life.

In light of his Anglican training, then, Wesley would not have understood the defining task of theologians to be developing an elaborate system of Christian truth-claims for the academy. This task was, instead, nurturing and shaping the worldview that frames the temperament and practice of believers’ lives in the world. Theologians will indeed engage in apologetic dialogues or in reflection on doctrinal consistency, but ideally because—and to the extent that—these are in service to their more central task. In keeping with its defining task, the primary (or first-order) literary forms of theological activity for Wesley would not have been Systematic Theologies or Apologetics, but carefully-crafted liturgies, catechisms, hymns, sermons, and the like. And the quintessential practitioner of first-order theology would not be a detached academic theologian, it would be the pastor/theologian actively shepherding a community of faith in the world.

It was precisely this role of pastor/theologian which Wesley adopted as he left the potential isolation of the academy to shepherd the people called Methodists. For the next fifty years he was immersed in the practical-theological task of struggling to discern the wisdom of the Christian tradition in light of the realities and needs of his people’s lives, and to nurture their maturation in this wisdom. This work was inevitably contextual and occasional, because of the primacy devoted to the praxis of the Methodist societies (as both the stimulus and the goal of his theological reflection). Yet this focus on praxis was at no expense to the integrity or rigor of the theological task.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the seriousness with which Wesley pursued this task is evidenced by the numerous practical-theological materials he left behind; besides his well-known

sermons, these include conference minutes, letters, controversial essays and tracts, disciplinary guides for Christian life, spiritual biographies, his own journal, and a range of edited creeds, liturgies, prayerbooks, bible study aids, hymnals, catechisms, and devotional guides.

In light of his precedent, one might think that Wesley's model of the goal and the primary forms of theological activity would have defined subsequent Methodist practice. As we shall see, this was not the case in professional circles, even if echoes can be discerned at a more popular level. It bears considering at this point whether there was something in Wesley's own practice that helps account for this fact.

One conceivable explanation for why Wesley's model of theological activity found few emulators among his Methodist descendants is that his authorial and editorial work might be assumed to be appropriate only for founders of new theological traditions. But, whatever his descendants may have come to believe, such was surely not Wesley's assumption! He insisted throughout his life that he was not trying to found a new tradition, only to renew Anglicanism. He surely believed that his many practical-theological activities were fitting for any Anglican priest. As he reminded his brother, the work of ordained clergy was much more than simply preaching, it was shepherding the spiritual transformation of those under their care.<sup>12</sup> And he stressed that, to meet this task, every clergyperson must accept and prepare for their role as a "divine" (theologian).<sup>13</sup> While this role may not always require producing *new* liturgies, catechisms, hymns, and so on, it would certainly involve theological discernment in the selection, revision, and use of such materials—along with careful preaching and pastoral care—as pastors seek to nurture authentic Christian character among those in their charge.

While this first explanation is questionable, there were two characteristics of the initial Methodist movement that more likely hindered Wesley's model of practical-theological activity from passing to his descendants. The first of these characteristics was the division of duties that Wesley was forced to make in his movement between priests, preachers, and pastors. Only a handful of ordained parish priests joined the Wesley brothers in their efforts to renew the Anglican church. As a result, John soon began to recruit and appoint traveling lay preachers to spread the Methodist work. While he staunchly defended the right of these unordained itinerants to preach, he conceded their exclusion from the sacramental (and most liturgical and catechetical) aspects of the ministry of the priest. The other limitation of the lay preachers was pre-

cisely that they were constantly traveling, which meant they could not provide regular pastoral care and supervision for the Methodist societies. Since the local Anglican priest was seldom sympathetic, Wesley developed an organization of lay “helpers” and class leaders to fulfill major components of this task of pastor. The combination of Wesley’s two innovations had the potential of helping to recover the shared role of the entire Body of Christ in ministry. But it also had the immediate effect of eliminating almost all candidates for him to mentor in the full range of the ministry of pastor/theologian that he saw as the standard for ordained clergy.

The second relevant characteristic is connected to the first. As laity, the majority of Wesley’s preachers lacked formal theological training. This created the danger of theological deviation in the movement. Wesley’s immediate response was to prescribe an ambitious course of study for all lay preachers. But he also led the Conference to adopt a rule that no preacher could publish books, hymns, or any other theological works, without Conference (i.e., Wesley’s) approval.<sup>14</sup> Viewed positively, this rule provided for discernment concerning which practical-theological materials would have formative impact on the Methodist societies. But there are also hints of the more questionable motive of censorship—to keep potential ammunition out of the hands of Methodism’s critics. In either case, the effect was to prevent most of Wesley’s “apprentices” from emulating his literary forms of theological activity.

In light of these two characteristics, it is significant that one of the few associates that Wesley did encourage to publish (besides his brother Charles) was John Fletcher. Fletcher had taken theological training in Geneva before immigrating from France to England and taking ordination as an Anglican priest.<sup>15</sup> Reflecting the continental model of his training, Fletcher’s theological writings were devoted almost entirely to rigorous apologetics for the Wesleyan Methodist positions on cooperant grace and entire sanctification. Wesley valued these apologetics as an important *supplement* to his own practical-theological activity. By contrast, American Methodists would soon make them the *standard* for serious theological activity, and judge Wesley’s works as inferior in comparison.

### **III. American Methodism and Wesley’s Practical Theology**

This point sets the stage for the central task of this paper—sketching the progressive divergence of dominant American Methodist assump-

tions about the primary purpose, forms, and social location of theological activity from the model of Wesley, and pondering the causes of this divergence. In keeping with the focus of our larger project, I will concentrate attention on those branches of Methodism leading into the present United Methodist Church. These include most directly the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC), Methodist Protestant Church (MPC), Methodist Episcopal Church South (MECS), and their later union into the Methodist Church (MC). The broader “Methodist” branches of the Evangelical Association (EA) and the United Brethren Church (UBC) will also be considered as appropriate.<sup>16</sup>

### ***A. Separation from an Anglican Context***

The beginnings of American Methodism are intricately intertwined with the extended ministry of Francis Asbury, from his appointment as the first superintendent in 1772 until his death in 1816. Asbury was without question the most immediate mentor of the first generation of American preachers. His influence in this capacity, in specific regard to Wesley’s model of theological activity, must be judged ambivalent.

On the one hand, Asbury valued Wesley’s basic theological stance. He praised Wesley’s works for the spirituality they conveyed, and even called him the “most respectable divine since the primitive ages.”<sup>17</sup> Yet, as this quote suggests, Wesley’s theological writings were for Asbury more the “standards” provided by an esteemed founder than a model to be emulated. When this attitude is combined with his lack of formal theological education, it is not surprising that Asbury made little attempt to publish first-order theological materials himself. While he embodied some dimensions of Wesley’s model of pastor/theologian, he voluntarily renounced most dimensions that involved literary expression, and enforced on his American preachers the controls over publication that Wesley had established.<sup>18</sup>

Even more important to our story is the way that Asbury participated in the separation of early American Methodism from the theological context of its origin. The beginnings of this separation are epitomized in Asbury’s decision to ignore Wesley’s orders and remain with the American colonists during their revolt against British control. The political freedom from England won in that revolt was soon emulated by the organization of the Methodist movement in the new United States as a distinct denomination, severing all connections with Anglicanism. Even dependence upon Wesley was downplayed for a



while, reflecting the Americans' disappointment with his lack of support for their revolutionary cause.<sup>19</sup> Among the impacts of this process of cutting attachments was the devaluation of at least three forms of typical Anglican theological activity that had been central to Wesley's model.

**1. Liturgy.** No form of theological activity received more attention, or was the scene of more debate, in Anglicanism than the development of the standard liturgy in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Wesley valued the practical-theological role of this resource so highly that one of the few items he prepared specifically for the new American church was a carefully edited version, the *Sunday Service*. The American Methodists barely acknowledged this resource, laying it aside in 1792 in favor of a minimal order of worship that continued the "freedom" which had characterized their society meetings. While this "free" worship had an implicit liturgy, there is little evidence of careful pastoral consideration and crafting of its formative impact. Indeed, when there were suggestions in the MEC near the end of the nineteenth century of reappropriating Wesley's *Sunday Service*; the typical response could conceive of no benefit for true religion from liturgy, only its likelihood of stifling the "life" of the worship service.<sup>20</sup> Calls for recovering more formal liturgy in worship did increase with time, though the motivation was not always a conviction of its vital role in shaping Christian character (a common rationale was the concern that Methodists were losing their more sophisticated urban members to the Episcopalians!).<sup>21</sup> Only in the 1940s did the MC return to Wesley's precedent and engage in the practical-theological task of crafting a new *Book of Worship for Church and Home*.<sup>22</sup> The extent to which individual pastors have viewed their use (or neglect!) of this and subsequent resources as an exercise in practical-theological judgment remains an open question.

**2. Creeds.** A second major form of Anglican theological activity was determination of a creed that could adequately articulate their distinctive understanding of Christian faith and practice (i.e., the narrative they hoped to instill in their members). Once again, Wesley valued this resource enough to engage in the practical-theological work of producing an edited version for the new American church. Unlike the *Sunday Service*, the American Methodists adopted Wesley's proposed "Articles of Religion" with little question or alteration. Indeed, they established a stringent restriction on any attempt to revise the Articles at the 1808 General Conference. Whatever the benefits of this move, it has effec-

tively stifled the occasional stirrings among American Methodists to take up the practical-theological task of reworking their established creed to make it more adequate or appropriate.<sup>23</sup>

**3. Sermons.** The third relevant form of Anglican theological activity was production of a standard set of homilies, which stands in some analogy with the emphasis in the Early Church on catechetical sermons. The major difference was that the Anglican *Homilies* were designed primarily as templates for clergy who lacked sufficient training for reliable doctrinal preaching. Wesley bridged this difference in his activity of circulating his written sermons among his societies, since his purpose was to provide for the practical-theological sustenance and formation of both his lay preachers and the general membership.<sup>24</sup>

The required reading of Wesley's sermons conveyed to early American Methodist preachers some of his assumption that sermons were a serious form of theological activity. Thus, when the *Methodist Review* began publication in 1818, it included a section called "Divinity" that was typically devoted to a sermon. But this section was discontinued in 1830, an event foreshadowed by calls for more systematic study of theology in early issues of the journal.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps in protest of this discontinuance, an independent monthly publication of Methodist sermons to serve as expressions of "sound divinity" was launched the same year.<sup>26</sup> The fact that this venture folded within four years suggests that Abel Stevens was more representative of the emerging American attitude in his fiery 1852 series of essays exhorting Methodist preachers to continue the totally extemporaneous preaching of the Early Church, which (he believed) was freed from all "sham art" of Dogmatic Theology.<sup>27</sup>

Notably, Stevens never discussed Wesley's sermons in his series! Even a more sedate work by Daniel Kidder a decade later, which would become the first broadly-assigned text on homiletics for Methodist preachers, and which showed more appreciation for doctrinal discourse than Stevens, paid little attention to Wesley's sermons as models. Kidder commended Wesley's sermons only for their didactic value, while praising the more extemporaneous sermons of Fletcher as the model for a blessed ministry.<sup>28</sup> It was not far from Kidder to the next widely-assigned text on homiletics for Methodist preachers, which began with the motto: "In preaching, the thing of least consequence is the sermon."<sup>29</sup> The conception of preaching, or published sermons, as centrally concerned with theological formation was fading fast! Indeed,

by 1905 the reviewer of a book on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* found it necessary to say that his observation that the book was a series of sermons was not meant as a disparagement.<sup>30</sup>

### **B. Formation in the Crucible of Calvinist Debates**

If severing their Anglican connections distanced American Methodists from some forms of Wesley's practical-theological activity, their resulting independent status reinforced the tendency to disregard Wesley's model of theology. This is because the move to independence required them to interact even more with their pluralistic theological setting. Within this pluralism, most major non-Methodist voices inclined toward one form or another of the Reformed theological tradition. This was particularly true of voices prominent in the religious press and theological education. As a result, Methodist theological attention was increasingly focused on issues resulting from internal Reformed influence and external Reformed critiques. For example, the presence of Reformed alternatives helped fuel internal dissension over the decision to retain episcopal polity, provoking some of the first indigenous publications by American Methodists (and the eventual MPC split).<sup>31</sup> Even clearer is the way that Reformed critique provoked Methodist apologies for their message of God's universally-available saving grace and the vital human role in responding to that grace. The first doctrinal monograph by an American author published by the MEC book agents (in 1813) was devoted to this agenda, and it remained one of the most frequent subjects of publications through the next fifty years.<sup>32</sup>

Such prominence of controversial dialogue with their Reformed neighbors inevitably affected the development of nineteenth-century American Methodist theology. My focus remains on the ways that it affected the professional practice and forms of this theology. But to explain this affect, I need to point out a subtle change from Wesley in some basic assumptions of American Methodist theology, a change that arose directly through debates with the Calvinists.

**1. Change in Moral Psychology.** The change to which I am referring concerns the assumptions that one makes about how humans are motivated to make moral choices and are enabled to put those choices into action, issues discussed under the heading "moral psychology." Much of Christian tradition has been dominated by an intellectualist stance on

this issue—conceiving virtue as primarily a matter of reason suppressing the distractions of the (irrational) passions in order to effect morally free and correct acts of will. Such assumptions reigned in early Anglican moral thought, but the eighteenth century witnessed an aggressive challenge to them.<sup>33</sup> This challenge drew upon such diverse currents as the empiricist turn in English philosophy and pietist reactions to deistic reductions of religion to mere reverence for the truths of natural revelation and reason. What these diverse streams held in common was the insistence that reason alone was not sufficient to motivate or enable moral action (or spiritual life). Their alternative highlighted the indispensable role of our affections or passions in engaging our will and inclining it toward specific actions. Importantly, they insisted that these affections are not simply epiphenomena of rational choices, they are an independent aspect of the human psyche.

Wesley joined those who were turning from the reigning intellectualist moral psychology in preference of a model which had a deep appreciation for the contribution of the affections to human willing.<sup>34</sup> As one expression of this, his anthropology directly equated the human “will” with the affections. In their ideal form, on Wesley’s understanding, the affections integrate the rational and emotional dimensions of human life into a holistic inclination toward particular choices or acts. Moreover, while provocative of human action, the affections have a crucial receptive dimension as well. They are not self-causative, but are awakened and thrive *in response* to experience of external reality. In particular, it is only in response to our experience of God’s gracious love for us, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that the human affection of love for God and others is awakened. This grounds our holiness and salvation in God’s gracious prevenience. But it also leaves a place for our integrity, since our initial experience of God’s love awakens in us only the “seed” of every virtue. These seeds mature and take shape as we responsively “grow in grace.”

One way to describe such responsive growth is that our affections are progressively habituated into enduring dispositions. Wesley appreciated the way in which such habituated affections brought greater consistency to human action. Yet, he was also aware that some contemporary advocates of an “affectional” moral psychology (particularly David Hume) portrayed the impact of the affections on our actions as deterministic, thereby undermining human freedom. To avoid such implications Wesley carefully distinguished the human faculty of liberty from

the will. He understood liberty as our capacity to enact (or refuse to enact!) our desires and inclinations. This capacity allowed him to insist on the crucial contribution of the affections to human willing without rendering such willing totally determined.

Whatever it's merits, Wesley's response to Hume's determinism was destined to have far less influence than that of Thomas Reid. Wesley had developed an alternative form of affectional moral psychology, while Reid championed a repristinated intellectualist moral psychology.<sup>35</sup> Central to Reid's argument with Hume was the insistence that the psychological faculty of the will should not be identified with the affections, but was instead our unconstrained *rational* ability to choose between (or suppress) the various stimuli that motivate us toward action. The importance of Reid to our topic is the breadth with which his response to Hume was adopted in American circles to critique the theological expression of a deterministic affectional moral psychology in Jonathan Edwards. Even revisionist Calvinists turned to Reid in their search for a more "compatibilist" account of the relation of Divine foreordination and human action than that of Edwards.<sup>36</sup> This makes it less of a surprise that early American Methodist attempts to articulate their "noncompatibilist" defense of human integrity against all Calvinist camps also invoked Reid's intellectualist assumptions.<sup>37</sup> Opposition to determinism had become so identified with Reid's approach in their setting that they failed to recognize that Wesley's understanding of human action and liberty had been framed instead within an affectional moral psychology.<sup>38</sup>

**2. Intellectualist Model of Religion.** Whether conscious or not, the American Methodist rejection of Wesley's affectional moral psychology in favor of the intellectualist alternative had a critical impact on their other theological assumptions. The most relevant case is the nature of religion. In keeping with his psychology, Wesley understood religion to be most properly a matter of the affections; in particular, true religion was epitomized in holy tempers (i.e., dispositions) towards God and other persons.<sup>39</sup> To put an edge on this point, he once argued that "orthodoxy, or right opinions, is, at best, but a very slender part of religion, if it can be allowed to be any part of it at all."<sup>40</sup> This polemical claim must not be overplayed.<sup>41</sup> Wesley's contention was simply that *mere* intellectual assent will not lead to holy living, because human actions spring more properly from the affections. He was not intending to suggest a total disjunction between intellectual understanding and

the affections. In fact, he was quite willing to agree that right opinions *generally* help promote the development of holy tempers. What he rejected was any intimation that *only* right opinions can contribute to this development, or that proper affectional disposition is a simple *reflex* of proper intellectual belief.

It was precisely such intimations that became increasingly common among Wesley's American descendants. In keeping with their adopted moral psychology, nineteenth-century theologians broadly portrayed the affections as inherently irrational, needing regulation by the more primary human faculty of the understanding. On these terms, the essence of religion became the intellectual truth that it delivers. Likewise, proper affectional disposition and correct action became mere reflexive functions of being intellectually persuaded of this truth.<sup>42</sup>

One can easily wonder how early American Methodist theologians could appropriate this intellectualist model of religion so broadly, in the face of Wesley's pointed critiques of it. Part of the answer is to recognize that these critiques were contextualized in Wesley himself. His overall view of reason is quite positive. Far from portraying it as demonic, he continually praised the benefits that reason brings to the religious life. He simply insisted that one must also acknowledge its limits.<sup>43</sup> As such, the move from Wesley toward an intellectualist emphasis was one of degrees, not total reversal; proponents had only to diminish the limitations of reason.

This move was made easier for American Methodists by the fact that John Fletcher was already sounding a more intellectualist note (perhaps reflecting his continental training). While Fletcher could repeat Wesley's affectional language, he more typically gravitated to a model of the will as the power of rational self-determination, exercised to control the affections and other irrational motivations.<sup>44</sup> The corollary of this was that Fletcher identified intellectual belief as the ultimate principle of all human action, and contended that if we can change a person's assent from a lie to the truth, that person's dispositions and actions will automatically follow suit.<sup>45</sup> The importance of Fletcher to our story is that his writings were given a place directly alongside those of Wesley from the beginning in American Methodism. In fact, they took on greater prominence than Wesley's works in the specific debate with Calvinism.<sup>46</sup> Thereby, they legitimated the intellectualist model of religion as "Methodist."

If Fletcher's lone voice threatened to offset Wesley's affectional model

of religion, imagine the impact of a chorus of voices in agreement with Fletcher! That is exactly what the typical Methodist preacher encountered in his theological training as the nineteenth century progressed. Various components contributed to this chorus, but its core was the textbooks for the nineteenth-century discipline of moral philosophy that were assigned reading. These texts unanimously adopted, and systematically defended, the intellectualist moral psychology of Reid and his disciples (with its attendant implications for the nature of religion).<sup>47</sup> It was understandably hard for the affirmations of an affectional model scattered through Wesley's various practical-theological writings to be heard over the regimented harmony of these texts.

**3. Emergence of Methodist Scholasticism.** How did the moral psychology that American Methodist theologians were appropriating through their debates with the Calvinists reinforce the tendency to dismiss Wesley's model of practical theology? The current intellectualist model of religion included certain assumptions about the forms and methods of theological activity necessary for providing the requisite rational assurance that one's beliefs are true. A good indication of these assumptions can be gained by considering a Calvinist critique of initial American Methodist theological publications. In an address to the 1852 Presbyterian General Assembly, E.P. Humphrey argued that Methodist theology was unworthy of serious consideration because it

... has yet to be reduced to a systematic and logical form. ... We have its brief and informal creed in some five and twenty articles; but where is its complete confession of faith, in thirty or forty chapters? ... Where is its whole body of divinity, from under the hand of a master, sharply defining its terms, accurately stating its belief, laying down the conclusions logically involved therein, trying these conclusions, no less than their premises, by the Word of God, refuting objections, and adjusting all its parts into a consistent and systematical whole?<sup>48</sup>

What Humphrey was here assuming as the standard against which Methodist theology came up short is a scholastic theology—i.e., a textbook that provides a comprehensive and carefully organized survey of a tradition's truth claims, defends any controverted claims polemically, and provides rational grounding for the whole. Wesley had not provided such a work for his Methodist people. His American descendants could have taken this as warrant to question the preeminence being given this specific form of theological activity by their critics, but

few did so.<sup>49</sup> Their adopted intellectualist model inclined most instead to consider the lack of such a resource a major deficiency in Methodist theology.<sup>50</sup>

It was not long before some brave souls set out to fill this deficiency. The trailblazer was Richard Watson, who published his multi-volume *Theological Institutes* in 1825–28.<sup>51</sup> While Watson was a British Methodist, he is relevant to this study because his *Institutes* was the most common theology text on the course of study for elders across the breadth of American Methodism from its introduction in 1830 through most the remainder of the nineteenth century.<sup>52</sup> Part of the reason for this enduring place was that Watson resonated with the intellectualist conviction spreading in American Methodism. He too had opted for an intellectualist moral psychology (apparently drawing on Reid) when searching for an alternative to Edwards' deterministic account of the affections.<sup>53</sup> The resulting scholastic character of his theology is evident already in the subtitle: "A View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity." The drive for comprehensiveness is obvious. Also striking is the leading role for "evidences." The work opens with a rational apologetic for belief in God and acceptance of Christian revelation, clearly assuming that these foundations must be established before consideration of the Christian worldview itself can begin. Finally, the work is punctuated throughout with polemic defenses of disputed Methodist claims.

While Watson was rapidly and broadly embraced in American Methodism, there were a few who expressed reservations. For example, there was some debate whether Watson's "evidences" leaned too heavily on providing rational justification for accepting Christian scripture as revelatory, or not heavily enough.<sup>54</sup> There was also an occasional complaint about the amount of polemical argumentation in such a scholastic theology, preferring the simple positive exposition of doctrinal beliefs.<sup>55</sup> It is quite revealing, however, that the only voice in a Methodist publication protesting the very enterprise of developing a comprehensive survey—rather than sticking to creeds and other first-order forms—was a guest editorial by a Protestant Episcopal (i.e., Anglican) bishop.<sup>56</sup>

The more typical complaint about Watson's *Institutes* was that the work's length and labored argumentation made it inaccessible to laypersons and beginning candidates for ministerial orders. This concern sparked the first American ventures in survey texts of Methodist



theology: in 1840 Amos Binney published a brief *Theological Compend*, which was aimed at use by families and Sunday-schools (but made its way onto ministerial courses of study at times!); and Thomas Ralston contributed a somewhat longer survey of the *Elements of Divinity* in 1847, geared specifically to beginning candidates for ministry.<sup>57</sup>

Though he showed no awareness of them, these two “popular” surveys would have been ridiculed in Humphrey’s estimation of Methodist theology even more sharply than he had dismissed Watson for being insufficiently comprehensive and lacking systematic organization. Often in direct response to this dismissal, most American Methodist writers after 1852 focussed their energies on providing a more rigorous “scholastic” text than Watson.<sup>58</sup> The prime example is Samuel Wakefield’s *Complete System of Christian Theology*, published in 1862.<sup>59</sup> This text was explicitly a reworking of Watson, partly to provide a less labored style. But its main agenda is evident in its title and its additions to the subtitle; Wakefield’s version claimed to provide “A Concise, *Comprehensive and Systematic* View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals and Institutions of Christianity.” American Methodist Scholasticism had reached its stride!

It is no accident that Wakefield’s editing of Watson included giving greater clarity and prominence to the intellectualist moral psychology present in the original.<sup>60</sup> This psychology, and its correlated model of religion, propelled the growth of Methodist scholasticism. It also fostered a significant narrowing of Wesley’s model of theological activity. Wesley’s model embraced the range of activities that awaken, strengthen, and shape Christian character. On his terms, the crafting of structures like the class meetings was as much an exercise of practical-theological judgment as was editing of a doctrinal catechism. But under the terms of an intellectualist model, “theology” was equated more exclusively with doctrinal instruction and apologetics. When such theology was pursued according to strict scholastic assumptions, it sought to provide a comprehensive survey of timeless truths, all rationally demonstrated. And even in those rare cases in the second-half of the nineteenth century where some of the scholastic assumptions were questioned, the intellectualist focus of Methodist theologies on formal doctrinal instruction and apologetics remained.<sup>61</sup>

### ***C. Institutionalization of Ministerial Education***

A third major factor that impacted American Methodist understandings of theology during the nineteenth century was the increasing insti-

tutionalization of theological education. Some of the directions chosen in this process further displaced Wesley's model of practical theology.

**1. Transitions in Ministerial Education.**<sup>62</sup> Given their lay status within Anglicanism, there were no formal academic prerequisites for the initial generation of American Methodist preachers. The training that they received was mainly through apprenticeship. Each recruit was teamed for a period with a seasoned itinerant—to benefit from the veteran's model of effective exhorting, his advice on means of discipline, and his introduction to reliable sources of food and shelter. In addition to gaining a grounding in these basic skills of itinerant ministry, there was also some expectation of the fledgling preacher to engage in independent study of theological works like Wesley's sermons and Fletcher's apologetics. During the founding period of Asbury's leadership, however, there was little accountability for this expectation, and even less pressure for reading beyond these standard works.

Concern to provide more direction to the independent study of fledgling preachers became public immediately following Asbury's death. While this concern encountered some resistance, it led to the adoption of an official course of study for candidates for elder's orders in each of the direct branches of Methodism during the second quarter of the nineteenth century (and the UBC and EA shortly later).<sup>63</sup> Though more explicit in its listings, this course was still designed for independent study, to be pursued over a series of years in the midst of ministerial apprenticeship and practice. At its initiation, there were few stipulations for supervision and examination of candidates. Moves to formalize this process multiplied toward the end of the nineteenth century, eventuating in standardized exams by the early twentieth century.

The other way to formalize independent study, of course, is to shift it into academic institutions. There was strong peer pressure for Methodists to move in this direction, matching the practice of many of their denominational competitors. But while this option for education of Methodist ministers had scattered proponents from the beginning, there was widespread resistance to contend with initially. Among the common fears were that any move to require formal academic training of prospective ministers would 1) encourage erroneous doctrinal speculation, 2) unduly eliminate as ministerial candidates some who had a divine call, 3) create a shortage of available itinerants, and 4) produce elders unable—or unwilling—to minister to the lower classes.<sup>64</sup> It is also clear that many of the initial generation of traveling preachers viewed

the mounting call for more academic training as an implicit devaluation of the contribution that they had made to the church.

Whatever their source, these hesitations about ministerial education did not reflect a Methodist rejection of education in general. In fact, few were more prolific than Methodists in creating colleges during the nineteenth century. But unlike their earlier New England counterparts, Methodist colleges did not originate primarily for ministerial education. They were designed for the moral, cultural, and vocational education of all Christian citizens. It was in fulfilling this larger goal that they contributed to the sense of need for more formal education of ministers. There was increasing concern that Methodist preachers were losing the ability to relate to (and the respect of) their academically-trained congregations!<sup>65</sup> In response it became common by the mid-nineteenth century for the various Methodist groups to encourage (though not require) their prospective ministers to attend colleges as part of their preparation. With the emergence of specialized theological institutes or seminaries in the latter part of the century, there was also wide adoption of the policy of allowing graduation from such a formal program to satisfy the requirement of the course of study. Even so, the course of study technically remained the standard route for ministerial education until 1956, when the MC decided to make seminary education the required standard (continuing course of study only as a very restricted optional route).

Thus, the saga of Methodist ministerial education led from almost exclusive reliance on apprenticeship to being largely confined to a formal academic setting. There is at least room to question whether this move involved distancing of theological reflection from the praxis of the Christian community, in direct contrast to Wesley's practical theology. Daniel Curry raised this suspicion with characteristic vigor in 1886, charging that pursuing formal theological education detracted ministers from the work of preaching the pure and simple gospel to common folk, replacing it with "bookish" concerns and academic ambitions.<sup>66</sup>

**2. Adoption of Continental Fourfold Curriculum.** Curry appears to have assumed that seminary education per se inappropriately separates theology from the daily praxis of the Christian community. While this broad charge is insupportable, the specific curricular form adopted by the emerging Methodist seminaries has proven liable to this tendency. Virtually all earlier seminaries and divinity schools founded in North America had organized around the fourfold curriculum currently advo-

cated in the continental European discussion of “theological encyclopedia” (i.e., Biblical Theology, Historical Theology, Systematic Theology, and Practical Theology).<sup>67</sup> In their drive to catch up, Methodists followed suit. Indeed, one of the ironies of nineteenth-century theological education is that the “backwards” Methodists played a prominent role in popularizing this continental curricular model.

This irony is explained in part by a connection the American Methodists had formed with the foremost arena of continental theological debate—Germany. While natural roots for this connection lay in the EA and UBC, the MEC was prominent in the initial contacts.<sup>68</sup> This was because the MEC had been fortunate enough to attract Wilhelm Nast, a native German who had studied for the Lutheran ministry before immigrating to the United States. Nast took leadership in MEC ministry among Germans, including an 1850 mission to start Methodist work in Germany itself (the same year as EA contacts). John McClintock accompanied Nast to scout this project, and came home convinced of the preeminence of German theological training. He subsequently helped entice William Warren and John Hurst to pursue post-collegiate studies in Germany. These two ascended quickly to the presidencies of the schools of theology at Boston and Drew respectively, and standardized the preference for faculty prospects to have studied in Germany.

On a broader scale, McClintock was committed to upgrading the level of theological scholarship in America—to match the German standard. His main venture in this regard was launching a multi-volume encyclopedic survey of biblical, theological, and ecclesiastical scholarship.<sup>69</sup> The articles were prepared by American (and a few British) scholars, but highlighted German contributions in the area of theological method. Notably, the article on the discipline of theological encyclopedia lamented the lack of a proper book of this genre in English, citing this as part of the reason for the neglect of English theological work in Germany.<sup>70</sup> A first attempt to address this lacuna was the posthumous publication in 1873 of McClintock’s own inaugural lectures on theological encyclopedia at Drew.<sup>71</sup> Then in 1884 John Hurst teamed with George Crooks to publish through MEC auspices the first English translation of the most influential German theological encyclopedia, supplementing each section with a bibliography of relevant English works.<sup>72</sup>

With all of this interest in the fourfold theological encyclopedia, it is little surprise that this curricular structure defined the seminaries emerging throughout the Methodist family and came to dominate even

the course of study by the end of the century.<sup>73</sup> The problems inherent in this structure also progressively permeated Methodist theological education. While the identification of distinct theological interests like biblical studies or pastoral care is hardly illegitimate, the tendency of this specific model was to fragment theological education by striving to establish clear disciplinary borders between each interest and urging that these borders not be crossed. The theological status of the resulting disciplines was also called into question when theology “proper” was identified as only one of the four (Systematics).<sup>74</sup>

The impact of this structure can be illustrated by contrasting the discipline of Practical Theology with Wesley’s “practical theology.” In Wesley’s case we were not dealing with a specific discipline, but with the overall character of his theological activity. He kept consideration of Christian praxis at the center of theological reflection, integrating his interaction with the whole range of theological interests around this touchstone. By contrast, Practical Theology was rendered an “application” discipline in Methodist theological education—i.e., it was reduced to applying to Christian life the truths previously established by Systematics, and limited at first largely to technical considerations of preaching and evangelism.<sup>75</sup> While its focus of application broadened somewhat over time to include pastoral care and social action, its derivative theological status has only recently been seriously challenged.<sup>76</sup> It has thus served as a graphic symbol of a growing dichotomy between “theory” and “practice” in American Methodist theological education.

**3. The Professional Systematic Theologian.** A major factor contributing to this increasing dichotomy was the professionalization of the office of theologian that took place in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This office had been initially defined by Wesley, who integrated doctrinal reflection with pastoral oversight of his Methodist movement. While Francis Asbury laid claim to this “episcopal” teaching office in the American church, his focus on administrative issues set a precedent that marginalized the teaching role in later episcopal practice. The teaching office effectively passed to the book stewards and journal editors, who could define Methodist doctrine by their publication decisions.<sup>77</sup> The most successful editors were those skilled in confessional apologetics—e.g., Nathan Bangs, Albert Bledsoe,<sup>78</sup> and Daniel Whedon. Their move to prominence elevated a model of “theology” that, admitting its importance in its place, lacked the first-order forms and formative focus of Wesley’s practical theology.

As the newly-founded seminaries subsequently gathered steam, they garnered an increasing share of the *de facto* teaching office. Since they were devoted to training for pastoral ministry, these institutions seemed promising arenas for recovering a model of theology that reintegrated doctrinal reflection with Christian praxis and formative pastoral concern. This promise was heightened by the fact that the initial professors of doctrinal theology at these schools typically came to teaching (mentoring) late in life, bringing with them extensive pastoral experience.<sup>79</sup> Unfortunately, this potential for integration would soon dissipate. The countervailing pressures of the lauded continental model of the academic theologian proved too strong.

One of these pressures was for scholars to train specifically for an academic vocation and to devote their entire career to it. The second generation of doctrinal theologians in Methodist seminaries were already approximating this pattern.<sup>80</sup> By the third generation, many considered it self-evident that spending one's entire career in teaching was superior to "coming to theology" (*sic*) late in life from the parish!<sup>81</sup> If early American Methodists had been prone to distrust those who spent time in the academy, Methodist theologians were now prone to dismiss those who spent too much time outside of it.

Alongside this progressive isolating of the theology professor within the academy, the continental model also pressed—as noted earlier—toward the isolation of the four major areas of theological concern from one another. The impact of this pressure in American Methodist circles was signaled by the shift from producing scholastic compendiums (which could include biblical and historical sections) to observing the disciplinary restrictions of Systematic Theology. Major theology texts across the spectrum of the movement that were published in the thirty years following the appearance of McClintock's theological encyclopedia all adopted this narrower focus.<sup>82</sup> From this point on, only the most gifted scholar would dare teach or write in more than one area of the theological curriculum, and even these exceptional folk (like Henry Sheldon) carefully observed the disciplinary boundaries within their various published works.<sup>83</sup> Protests against the separation of doctrinal theology from biblical studies, and revisionist attempts to bridge this gap, were both quietly ignored.<sup>84</sup>

The fragmentation went further yet. The fourfold model technically included the areas of dogmatics, polemics, apologetics, and ethics in Systematic Theology. But with professionalization came the pressure for

each of these to become a separate specialty. Thus, many of the systematic theologies just mentioned purposefully restricted themselves to dogmatics or doctrinal theology.<sup>85</sup> Separate volumes of apologetics were left to other specialists.<sup>86</sup> And Christian ethics began to enter the curriculum as a distinct theological discipline.<sup>87</sup> This latter development was the most significant (in comparison to Wesley) because theologians were now theoretically trying to separate consideration of what Christians believe from consideration of how they should act.

A final pressure of the continental model that deserves attention is its demand for systematization in doctrinal theology itself. Concern with establishing systematic connections between doctrines was not unique to the continental model. Nineteenth-century British and American theologians emphasized this role as part of their argument that theology qualified as a (Baconian) science. Methodists were no exception.<sup>88</sup> But through the influence of Schleiermacher and Hegel, a distinctive approach to systematization came to characterize the continental model. It was no longer enough simply to show that the various Christian doctrines were congruent. The goal became to demonstrate that they were all entailed in (or derived from) a single Idea or principle. The introduction of this conception of systematization into American Methodist theology is easy to locate. Upon completing his studies in Germany, William Warren was invited to remain and teach at the theological institute Methodists had established in Bremen. In 1865 he published the introductory volume of a planned systematic theology to use in his teaching. This volume mapped out his proposal that Methodist theology should be unified by organizing all doctrines around the systematic principle of perfect love—i.e., the distinctive Methodist conception of the interrelationship of God and humanity.<sup>89</sup> While Warren's project was never completed, being interrupted by his return to take the presidency of the school of theology at Boston in 1867, his proposal proved influential on the direction of subsequent American Methodist theology.<sup>90</sup> There was an increased focus on the internal consistency of the System, often at the expense of reciprocal interaction with the (messy) life and issues of the community of faith in the world.

It must be admitted that each of the developments that we have been considering had benefits. The professional Methodist theologian could bring more time, more precise focus, and greater scholarly resources to his or her reflection. But these benefits came with the tradeoffs of specialization. One obvious tradeoff was the reshaping of “theology” into

an academic product, distinguished sharply from those forms of literary activity that most directly awaken and shape spiritual life (e.g., hymns, sermons, and liturgy).<sup>91</sup> It became increasingly rare for theologians to write for the laity; they wrote for the academy. Of course, pastors-in-training were part of the academy, so one might assume that academic theologians addressed congregations indirectly through their pastoral “apprentices.” But the reality is that the division of labor broadly assumed in the academy mitigated against apprenticeship. Professional theologians were considered to cultivate theology as a science for its own sake, while pastors simply applied the results of this science to the congregation.<sup>92</sup> There was little rationale for training pastors in the “science” of theologizing, and little reason to assume that theologians had the experience to mentor in application!

The defining characteristic of Methodist theological education at the end of the nineteenth century was how seldom these tradeoffs were noticed, let alone lamented. It is small wonder that by mid-twentieth century the seminaries (and professional systematic theologians) had lost any *de facto* role that they held earlier in the teaching office of the church.<sup>93</sup>

**4. Impact on Wesley as Theological Mentor.** It is also small wonder that by the turn of the century academic theologians hardly knew what to make of Wesley as a theologian. On the fourfold model most of Wesley’s theological productions would fall within the application discipline of Practical Theology, which is precisely the realm to which a few restricted his interest and abilities.<sup>94</sup> Others rejected this narrow classification, allowing that Wesley combined aspects of the professional theologian with those of the practical Christian teacher.<sup>95</sup> But this concession only heightened the problem. What serious theologian would overlook these boundaries? And why did Wesley never undertake the central theological task of a Systematic Theology? Some of his academic descendants were inclined to excuse Wesley on the basis of his misfortune of training in the methodological backwaters of Anglican theology.<sup>96</sup> Others appealed to a supposed principle of historical development—that revivals of Christian life inevitably focus on immediate ministry, while creative epochs of theological science necessarily follow and consolidate these revivals.<sup>97</sup> In either case, the departure of later Methodist theologians from Wesley’s model of theological activity was neatly justified; after all, Wesley had not been a “real” theologian!

With an attitude such as this, it is little surprise that Wesley’s *Notes*



and *Sermons* were disappearing from the course of study by 1900.<sup>98</sup> The result was that Methodist pastors (and future theologians) were exposed less and less to Wesley as a mentor even in doctrinal claims, let alone in theological method. By 1909 Olin Curtis—who had been teaching Systematic Theology for twenty years in Methodist seminaries—could concede that he had only recently examined the fourteen volumes of Wesley’s *Works* and had been astonished by the level of Wesley’s doctrinal concern!<sup>99</sup>

#### **D. Coming of Age in Twentieth-Century North America**

As the example of Curtis suggests, North American Methodist theologians were in a very different situation entering the twentieth century than they had been a hundred years before. Any perceived restrictiveness of loyalties to past theological voices and models had been neutralized. They were free to embrace the latest currents in culture and theology. And they were quick to take advantage of this freedom. Methodists assumed leadership roles in the range of innovative programs and reactions that have characterized twentieth-century North American theology.<sup>100</sup> Methodist theology had “come of age”!

But had it also become captive to the “spirit of the age”? With the benefit of what perspective we can have on such recent developments, it seems that this was too much the case. By the turn of the century the Enlightenment assumptions that permeated North American culture, and had been creeping into Methodist theology for some time, were broadly championed by Methodist theologians. The experience of North American churches through the twentieth century would evidence that some of these assumptions (such as the individualism noted in the introduction) were inimical to Christian faith.<sup>101</sup> I want to draw attention to how some of them also have mitigated the likelihood of recovering Wesley’s practical theology through most of the century.

A fundamental assumption of the Enlightenment was the superiority of modern knowledge and methods over traditional truth-claims. This assumption was blithely endorsed by Randolph Sinks Foster (a former theology professor and current MEC bishop) when he began a multi-volume series of *Studies in Theology* in 1891 with the claim that “We know more today than our fathers a hundred years ago. We have truer beliefs than they had.” It is little wonder that Foster almost never interacts with Wesley in his series!<sup>102</sup> His precedent would be widely emulated in twentieth-century Methodist liberalism.

Another relevant Enlightenment emphasis was optimism about humanity. In psychological terms this entailed the inherent goodness of human nature. Moral failures reflected simply the inadequate use of reason to control our passions and appetites. Enduring moral defects were accounted for as the product of negative experiences and habits, or as reactions to the imposition of repressive social constraints upon the individual. An indication that these themes were penetrating Methodist theology by the turn of the century is provided by Henry Sheldon's insistence that while the church may have some effective instrumentality in nurturing Christian character, it has no sovereign prerogative in its production—that belongs to the individual.<sup>103</sup> This helps explain why twentieth-century Methodist theology has largely undervalued the role that Wesley assigned to the church in shaping (imposing?!) holiness in individuals' lives through its communal support and first-order forms of practical-theological activity.<sup>104</sup>

In historical terms the optimism of the Enlightenment involved a conviction of the evolutionary progress of humanity, not only physically but socially and morally as well. The presence of this conviction within early twentieth-century Methodist circles can be illustrated by James Mudge's choice of motto for a book on Christian Perfection: "Progress is the law of life, man is not man as yet."<sup>105</sup> To be sure, such a bald assertion would not pass unchallenged in the broader Methodist community. But the very attempt to reject it contributed to its impact on the form and agenda of twentieth-century Methodist theological activity. This is because Enlightenment critics, assuming the progress of humanity as a self-evident norm, had begun to judge the value of cultural expressions by their contribution to (or debilitation of) that progress. When this test was applied to religion it called forth a distinctively modern form of apologetics. Respondents tried to demonstrate that certain religious convictions were fundamental for establishing the value of human life and for driving the progress of human culture. Many also vied to convince that their particular religious tradition was the most beneficial in this regard. American Methodists began dabbling in this modern apologetic enterprise as early as 1881, when Daniel Dorchester justified the rejection of scholastic forms of theology (whether compendiums or Systematics!) by some progressive Protestants on the grounds that they were simply removing the obscuring husks of dogma and allowing the pure Christian faith in *humanity*, God, Christ's divinity, and *ethical order* to shine through.<sup>106</sup>

Dorchester's claim can serve to mark the emergence of a major transition in the focus of professional American Methodist theological activity.<sup>107</sup> This focus had earlier been primarily internal to the faith community, seeking to clarify the Methodist doctrinal stance among its adherents and to defend this stance against the attack of other Christian traditions. But now the focus was broadening to incorporate an external concern, the defense of religion before its "cultured despisers" in modern society. As Dorchester had hinted, this change in focus had direct implications for the form of theological productions. Henry Sheldon can serve again as a pivotal example. After issuing *System of Christian Doctrine* in 1900, Sheldon's next publication on doctrine was *The Essentials of Christianity*.<sup>108</sup> The echoes of Adolf Harnack were not accidental! Sheldon had become convinced that the present setting had less need of a comprehensive system than of a shorter "interpretation" of Christianity that could demonstrate its positive value for human individuals and society (i.e., a modern apologetic).

Sheldon was not alone in this decision. With the turn of the century the production of major Systematic Theologies virtually ceased among mainline American Methodists.<sup>109</sup> Those assigned to teach Systematic Theology turned to producing introductions and interpretations of Christian belief (or of individual doctrines), all with a modern apologetic slant.<sup>110</sup> What differences there were between these various projects revolved around disagreements over which methods and emphases were most appropriate for this apologetic agenda.

**1. Liberalism: The Turn to Experience.** The largest chorus of voices on such issues at the turn of the century gathered under the banner of "liberalism."<sup>111</sup> Liberals were convinced that Methodists had avoided for too long a rethinking of their doctrinal beliefs in light of the advances of modern learning. They tried to initiate this process by introducing modern methods and conclusions into the curriculum of Methodist colleges and seminaries. The response was often quite heated. A particular flashpoint concerned the application of modern historical-critical methods to Scripture. There was also the infamous debate over evolution. For present purposes, however, the most interesting point of contention was the passing appeal to Wesley by some Methodist liberals precisely to endorse the Enlightenment assumption of the superiority of modern knowledge and methods over traditional truth-claims. As one proponent put it: "Back to Wesley is forward into the spirit of what is best in the twentieth century!"<sup>112</sup>

To understand this claim, it helps to note that the specific weakness that Enlightenment critics decried in traditional approaches to knowledge was their identification of truth as conformity to particularistic authoritative canons. In contrast to such “confessionalism,” Enlightenment thinkers insisted that truth-claims should be based on criteria that are available to any person at any time—with reason and empirical experience being the most broadly accepted examples. The appeal to experience drew the particular attention of Methodist liberals. They saw correlations with the emphasis on experience by both Wesley and later Methodists. They began to tout as a virtue of Methodism that, unlike other confessional movements who forced ill-fitting traditional dogmas *upon* present experience, Methodists had allowed their theology to flow naturally *out of* religious experience.<sup>113</sup>

Building on this supposed precedent, many Methodist liberals championed a modern “empirical” approach to theology.<sup>114</sup> The most influential advocate was Harris Franklin Rall (son of an EA pastor and professor of theology at Garrett).<sup>115</sup> Rall insisted that Christian theology was not meant to be the master of religious life, but its servant; it was not meant to determine from external sources like Scripture or dogma what religious experience ought to entail, but to set forth what is implicit in Christian religious experience itself and then develop the theological conceptions that this experience entails. Rall was confident that the outcome of this process would accord with the essential teachings of the Bible. More importantly, he believed that it was the most effective way to make evident to modern persons how Christian faith addressed their needs.<sup>116</sup>

What Rall and others were advocating as the model for theology was, of course, a *Glaubenslehre*—a phenomenological description of the convictions of the present religious community. In their claim that this model was characteristically Methodist, they were reading Wesley too much through the eyes of Schleiermacher (or his progeny, Ritschl).<sup>117</sup> Wesley would share their contempt for a dogmatic theology imposed upon people without consideration of their specific needs and situation. But he would not be content with an alternative where doctrine is derived unilaterally from Christian experience. This is because Wesley would not share the apparent assumption that Christian life emerges “naturally” into authentic forms, an assumption often expressed by Methodist liberals in specific disparaging contrast with any who would maintain a necessary role for formative disciplines or institutions.<sup>118</sup> As

long as this assumption reigned, there could be little hope of these theologians appreciating or recovering the formative interaction of Christian tradition with present experience that characterized Wesley's practical theology.

**2. Boston Personalist Philosophy of Religion.** The most prominent school within Methodist theology through the first half of this century, and the one that Methodists were most identified with in other circles, was Boston Personalism. This school was part of the larger liberal chorus, but placed a special emphasis on the philosophy of religion. Whereas many Methodist liberals distrusted philosophical speculation and limited themselves (in theory!) simply to describing Christian experience, Borden Parker Bowne—the father of Boston Personalism—saw such empirical work as preliminary to the crucial task of providing metaphysical justification for Christian faith. What Bowne is best known for is his defense of a type of neo-Kantian idealism, which he named “personalism,” as the metaphysic that is most appropriate to Christian faith and most adequate by modern standards.<sup>119</sup> While this metaphysic itself would fall into disfavor by mid-century, two of the implications for theology that Bowne and his followers drew from their philosophical work merit our attention, partly because of their continuing influence in Methodist circles.<sup>120</sup>

One of the defining characteristics of Boston Personalism is the way that their neo-Kantianism reenforced the rationalism and individualism already present in much Methodist theology. This effect was purposeful, in that personalists self-consciously built their theology upon (neo-Kantian) psychology. On these terms, religious formation was basically equated with moral education, with religion having at most the extra benefit of a more powerful intellectual motive for obedience (viewing the moral law as the will of God) and some added emotional warmth.<sup>121</sup> But religion as traditionally understood and practiced also had many features that were considered to threaten its moral potential. As such, a major theme in Boston Personalism was the need to rationalize and moralize modern religion by purifying it of all mystical and ceremonial overlays.<sup>122</sup> Among these “overlays” were many of the first-order activities and forms so central to Wesley's practical theology! It is little wonder that personalists found it hard to value Wesley's concern for these matters.

This difficulty was reinforced by a shift in the identification of the most essential aspect of theological activity. With personalists the

emphasis moved from doctrinal theology itself to “meta-theological” issues of the philosophical grounding for both religious belief and doctrinal claims.<sup>123</sup> This shift was at the root of their dissatisfaction with the approach of other liberals like Rall. Personalists insisted that the (apologetic) theological task should not be limited to articulating Christian experience, the most crucial dimension of this task was the use of reason to construct “foundations” for that experience.<sup>124</sup> For Albert Knudson this ultimately meant the identification of the task of Systematic Theology as the construction of a philosophical theism.<sup>125</sup> On such a definition, Wesley’s first-order work would inevitably come across as characterizing at best an evangelist, hardly a theologian.<sup>126</sup>

**3. Neo-Orthodoxy and Neo-Wesleyanism.** The apologetic strategy of Boston Personalism, like that of Methodist liberalism in general, was explicitly revisionist. In order to demonstrate the value of Christian faith to modern persons, it was often judged necessary to adjust traditional Christian commitments to fit the constraints of current thought.<sup>127</sup> But this assumed that current thought was fully compatible with the essentials of Christian faith. Through the initial decades of the twentieth century a significant minority challenged this assumption. This minority multiplied dramatically as the warning sirens of continental Neo-Orthodoxy found resonance in North America between the World Wars.

The best representative of the Neo-Orthodox agenda in its North American Methodist guise is Edwin Lewis. A survey of his works makes clear that he was as concerned as anyone in his day to offer a modern apologetic. He was simply convinced that traditional Christian commitments to such things as the reality of a supernatural order addressed the needs of modern persons more adequately than any revised alternative could.<sup>128</sup> The true apologetic task, for Lewis, was finding ways to proclaim these traditional commitments so that it is more evident how they answer the questions that modern persons are asking (i.e., the best apologetic was a good dogmatic!).

In its broader expression Neo-Orthodoxy was characterized by a renewed interest in the theology of the Magisterial Reformers (especially Luther and Calvin). As Methodists jumped in, they naturally developed a parallel Neo-Wesleyan interest.<sup>129</sup> But this did not foster an immediate recovery of Wesley’s model of theological activity. The reason is that the major agenda of the studies of Wesley at this point was to emphasize his similarities to the Magisterial Reformers. Those pressing this agenda found it necessary to concede at the outset that Wesley was

not a “real” theologian—like, say, Calvin!<sup>130</sup> Their desire to recover Wesley’s *doctrine* to proclaim, distracted them from the suggestion of Wesley’s theological *practice* that awakening and nurturing Christian life requires much more than proclamation.<sup>131</sup>

It bears adding, however, that the neo-orthodox interest in Protestant roots was part of a larger concern with confessional identity and connections stirred by the emerging ecumenical dialogue. It was out of this broader dialogue that some theologians, notably Albert Outler, began after mid-century to encourage their fellow Methodists to recover their Wesleyan tradition in its own right, not filtered through a standardized Protestant screen.<sup>132</sup>

**4. Process Theology.** Before tracing further Outler’s suggestion, a development in philosophical theology deserves brief notice. As the personalist metaphysic faded from favor at mid-century, a new philosophical theism built on the metaphysic of Albert North Whitehead assumed its place of prominence. While this “process theology” has not been as closely identified with Methodism as was Boston Personalism, it is striking how many Methodists have played a significant role in it—beginning with Schubert Ogden and John B. Cobb, Jr.<sup>133</sup> Sparked in part by the renewed concern to connect with tradition, many of these Methodist participants have reflected on the similarities between their Wesleyan roots and their process commitments.<sup>134</sup> For one stream of process theologians (epitomized by Cobb) these similarities have grown to include an emphasis on renewing practical theological reflection in the church.<sup>135</sup> For the other major stream the defining task of a modern (apologetic) theology remains the construction of a philosophical metaphysic.<sup>136</sup>

**5. The Challenge of Contextual Theologies.** Their concern to construct such a metaphysic places the latter stream of process theologians in tension with what has emerged as the dominant trend in North American theology over the last thirty years. This trend is the insistence upon the inescapable contextuality of all theological reflection, in direct challenge to the earlier Enlightenment desire that all truth-claims be universally demonstrable and universally applicable. This Enlightenment desire has itself been contextualized, and its desirability called into question.<sup>137</sup>

One impetus toward the more positive valuation of the contextuality of theology was the ecumenical dialogue, as it struggled to discern the authentic relation of the various Christian traditions to one another. The

most significant impetus, however, has been the entry of “other voices” into the enterprise of academic theology—which was previously a European and Euro-American male stronghold. This entry was accompanied with predictable ferment, which at times has served to exacerbate the separation of academic theology from the ongoing life of Christian communities.<sup>138</sup> But overall, as noted at the beginning of this study, the impact has been to cause a rethinking of the essential nature of theology, looking for ways to relate it more integrally to the praxis of specific communities of faith.

As the reigning model of academic theology has been called into question, Methodist theologians have been freed to reconsider earlier forms of theological activity. At least one, Thomas Oden, has seen the eclipse of the Enlightenment as justifying a return to producing a lengthy Systematic Theology.<sup>139</sup> By contrast, Albert Outler found this transition a fruitful time for reappraising Wesley’s model of theological activity. At first, this meant only defending Wesley’s “folk theology” as a legitimate supplement to academic theology.<sup>140</sup> Eventually, Outler was insisting that Wesley’s theological model was an authentic and creative form in its own right, that need not be compared negatively to academic theology.<sup>141</sup> Some others have gone further yet, suggesting that Wesley’s model should be valued (and recovered!) as a more primary expression of theology than what characterizes present reigning academic models.<sup>142</sup>

#### **IV. Lessons Toward a Recovery of Practical Theology**

With this renewed interest of professional theologians in Wesley’s model of theological activity our historical investigation has come full circle. My remaining task is to suggest a few lessons from the saga just sketched for those hoping to recover something like Wesley’s practical theology.

The first lesson is simply that we Methodists need to overcome a persistent bad conscience about our theological identity. For too long we have been preoccupied with winning theological respect by conforming to the academic expectations of Reformed Scholasticism, or continental Systematic Theology, or German liberalism with its *Glaubenslehre*, and so on. There are undeniably benefits that we have gained, and continue to gain, from dialogue with these and other theological movements; but we have typically failed to see (or offer!) what valuable insights we might bring to such dialogue ourselves.



As an example of such an insight, the second lesson that I would suggest Methodists should draw from their history is the importance of continually affirming that the life of the Christian community in the world (which includes the academy!), rather than the academy per se, is the proper arena for defining the nature and task of theology. This identification would certainly not rule out such activities as defenses of theological methodology, apologetic dialogue with modern science, or construction of philosophical metaphysics; but it would resist the current tendency in the academy to identify theology almost exclusively with these undertakings, devaluing traditional first-order activities aimed at nurturing and shaping the Christian worldview in believers' lives.

There is another lesson that I believe the distinctive saga of Methodist theology can offer to the entire Christian community. Wesley's emphasis on first-order activities that form the Christian worldview in believers' lives was integrally connected to his affectional moral psychology. As this moral psychology faded in American Methodism, so did the concern with many of these first-order activities. Under an intellectualist moral psychology it often seemed that all that was needed to "make" Christians was a cogent rational summary of the Christian faith. And under the optimistic (indeed, romantic) psychology of the Enlightenment, this could be reduced further to merely a reflective account that raises consciousness of the native faith within each of us. If contemporary North American Methodist churches—and their Christian siblings—are to provide the character-forming influence that our culture so badly needs, I am convinced that they must challenge these optimistic and intellectualist psychologies that continue to permeate this culture.<sup>143</sup> We need to recover the insights into human nature embedded in an affectional moral psychology like that of Wesley. Some progress in this regard can be discerned in the renewed interest in character ethics, but there is still much work to be done.<sup>144</sup>

The final lesson that I would mention relates to the structures of professional theological education. I am obviously sympathetic with the current calls for theological education to focus more on producing "practical theologians." The preceding historical survey should make it clear that this shift in focus will necessarily involve changes in instructional curriculum and structures. For example, the current fragmentation in the self-understanding of the various theological disciplines can only be overcome by curricular changes that encourage individual faculty members to interact across the range of disciplinary concerns and

the corporate faculty to teach in integrative situations.<sup>145</sup> Likewise, the distance between the academy and the church can be bridged only as the dimension of apprenticeship is made more integral to the structure of theological education. In part this will mean cooperation between schools and churches, as local congregations and pastors help mentor theological students.<sup>146</sup> But it should go further than this. Instructors in theological disciplines ought to be mentors in first-order theological activities as well. Their involvement in some form of first-order ministry is desirable for nurturing their sensitivity to the practical-theological dimension of their specialized discipline. Undoubtedly, many faculty have such involvement “on the side.” But as long as it remains ancillary to the expectations and reward system, it is not likely to transform the underlying self-understanding of the theological academy. I believe that it is time to talk seriously about such notions as partial-load assignments and/or fully-supported sabbaticals for theological faculty in parish and other ministry settings.<sup>147</sup> Maybe then we can counterbalance the current academic emphases with Wesley’s emphasis on the pastor/theologian actively shepherding a community of faith in the world!

## Notes

1. See Robert Bellah, *et al.*, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper, 1985); and Reginald W. Bibby, *Mosaic Madness: The Poverty and Potential of Life in Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1990).
2. Bellah *et al.* had suggested this possibility in their first book. It is much more central to their sequel: *The Good Society* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), esp. 16–17, 217–18. See also Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).
3. See the analyses of Wade Clark Roof & William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton

- University Press, 1988); and Philip E. Hammond, *Religion and Personal Autonomy: The Third Disestablishment* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 1992).
4. Cf. Steve Tipton's chapter (dealing with United Methodism), "The Public Church," in Bellah, *et al.*, *The Good Society*, 179–219; Reginald W. Bibby, *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1987); and Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey: Support Groups and America's New Quest for Community* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 340, 360–66.
  5. The role of character in human actions has been broadly acknowledged in recent work in ethics; cf. the overview in Terence R. Anderson, *Walking the Way: Christian Ethics as a Guide* (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1993). For one Methodist application of this insight to the mission of the church, see Stanley Hauerwas & William Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989).
  6. For some recent complaints about the need for greater theological formation of laity (and clergy!) in United Methodism, see Earl Hunt, *A Bishop Speaks His Mind* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 83–101; James W. Holsinger, Jr. & Evelyn Laycock, *Awaken the Giant: 28 Prescriptions for Reviving the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), 122, 142; and William J. Abraham, "The Revitalization of United Methodist Doctrine and the Renewal of Theology," in James Logan, ed., *Theology and Evangelism in the Wesleyan Heritage* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1994), 35–50.
  7. For a survey of these calls and discussion of the characteristics of such a theology, see Randy L. Maddox, "The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 650–72.
  8. Randy L. Maddox, "John Wesley – Practical Theologian," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23 (1988): 122–47.
  9. For more details and documentation of the following summary, see Maddox, "Recovery of Theology."
  10. For documentation of this summary of Anglicanism, see Maddox, "Wesley – Practical Theologian."
  11. Demonstrating this is central to Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994).
  12. Letter to Charles Wesley (25 March 1772), in *Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, edited by John Telford (London: Epworth, 1931) 5:314. See also "Large Minutes," Q. 23, *Works* (Jackson) 8:309. These definitions of the role of clergy must be read in light of Wesley's therapeutic understanding of what "salvation" involved; cf. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 141ff.
  13. See his "Address to the Clergy," *Works* (Jackson) 10:480–500, esp. 482.

14. Cf. 1765 *Minutes*, Q. 24 (p. 51); 1781 *Minutes*, Q. 25 (p. 151); 1782 *Minutes*, Q. 34 (p. 158); and 1788 *Minutes*, Q. 22 (p. 224) in *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, from the First, held in London, by the Late Rev. John Wesley, A.M., in the Year 1744*, Vol. 1 (London: John Mason, 1862).
15. For discussion of the question of how much theological training Fletcher actually received in Geneva, see Patrick Philip Streiff, *Jean Guillaume de la Flechere* (Frankfort am Main: Peter Lang, 1984), 44–45.
16. For a more detailed survey of developments in the EA and UBC, see William H. Nau-  
mann, “Theology and German-American Evangelicalism: The Role of Theology in  
the Church of the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Association” (Yale  
University Ph.D. thesis, 1966).
17. See respectively, *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, ed. Elmer T. Clark  
(Nashville: Abingdon, 1958), 1:263; and *The Doctrines and Discipline of the  
Methodist Episcopal Church in America. With Explanatory Notes by Thomas Coke  
and Francis Asbury* (Philadelphia: Henry Tuckniss, 1798; reprint: Rutland, VT:  
Academy Books, 1979), 7.
18. Cf. the 1787 *Discipline* of the MEC, 22, 44 (reprinted in *Methodist Disciplines,  
1785–89* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1992]).
19. See in this regard Richard Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory* (Nashville: Kingswood,  
1989), 189–204.
20. See the quote from the 1892 debate in Edwin Voigt, “Worship in American Method-  
ism,” *Encyclopedia of World Methodism* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing  
House, 1974), 2606–07; and Charles Giffin, “More Liturgy or More Life?” *Methodist  
Review* 84 (1902): 71–79. Thomas Summers introduced an abridgement of the  
*Sunday Service* in the MECS in 1867, but it was not widely used. For a detailed study  
of this period, see William Nash Wade, “A History of Public Worship in the  
Methodist Episcopal Church and Methodist Episcopal Church, South from 1784 to  
1905,” (University of Notre Dame Ph.D. thesis, 1981).
21. E.g., Daniel Goodsell, “Is it a Good or a Bad Inheritance?” *Methodist Review* 85  
(1903): 177–92.
22. Cf. the helpful historical surveys in James F. White, “Methodist Worship,” in  
*Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox,  
1989), 150–70; and White, “A Short History of American Methodist Service Books,”  
*Doxology* 10 (1993): 30–37.
23. Note, for example, the reflections of Albert Outler on the decision not to develop an  
integrated creed in the 1968 merger of the MC and EUB, in *Albert Outler: The  
Churchman*, edited by Bob Parrott (Anderson, IN: Bristol House, 1995), 92, 370,  
460ff.
24. Cf. J. Steven Harper, “Wesley’s Sermons As Spiritual Formation

- Documents,” *Methodist History* 26 (1988): 131–38; and Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory*, 174–88.
25. Cf. *Methodist Review* 2 (1819): 161–62; and the absence of this section starting with volume 10 (1830). Note: I am following the convention of using *Methodist Review* to refer to the theological journal of the MEC (which had a fluctuating name) and *Methodist Quarterly Review* for the journal of the MECS.
  26. *The Methodist Preacher; or, Monthly Sermons from Living Ministers*, Volumes 1–4 (1830–33). Shipley Wells Willson describes his purpose for launching the series in 1:iv.
  27. Abel Stevens, *Essays on the Preaching Required by the Time and the Best Methods of Obtaining It* (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1855), see 19–24, 59–60.
  28. Daniel P. Kidder, *A Treatise on Homiletics*, revised edition (New York: Carlton & Lanahan, 1864), esp. 192, 274, 456. Kidder was on the MEC course of study from 1864–92, and the MPC course from 1880–1908.
  29. Namely, John A. Kern, *The Ministry to the Congregation: Lectures on Homiletics*, second edition (New York: W.B. Ketchan, 1897). The motto is on the title page, see also p. 233. Kern replaced Kidder on the MEC course in 1904 and stayed through 1912. He was on the MECS course from 1898 to 1942.
  30. C.M. Bishop, “A Modern Statement of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 54 (1905): 332–39, see 338.
  31. Cf. James O’Kelly’s challenge against episcopal authority in *The Author’s Apology for Protesting Against the Methodist Episcopal Government* (Richmond, VA: John Dixon, 1798); and the response in Coke and Asbury’s notes appended to the 1798 *Discipline* (which was printed in the very first year of the MEC book concern).
  32. Cf. Asa Shinn, *An Essay on the Plan of Salvation* (Baltimore: Neal, Wills & Cole, 1813); Nathan Bangs, *The Errors of Hopkinsinianism* (New York: Totten, 1815); Bangs, *The Reformer Reformed* (New York: Totten, 1818); Willbur Fisk, *Calvinistic Controversy* (New York: Mason & Lane, 1837); Francis Hodgson, *An Examination of the System of New Divinity* (New York: Lane, 1840); Shinn, *On the Benevolence and Rectitude of the Supreme Being* (Philadelphia: James Kay, Jr. & Brother, 1840); Albert Bledsoe, *A Theodicy: or, Vindication of the Divine Glory* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1856); Daniel Denison Whedon, “Arminian View of the Fall and Redemption,” *Methodist Review* 43 (1861): 647–66; Whedon, “Doctrines of Methodism,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 19 (1862): 241–74; and Whedon, *The Freedom of the Will* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1864).
  33. The following summary draws on two helpful studies that place Wesley in this context: Robin W. Lovin, “The Physics of True Virtue,” in *Wesleyan*

- Theology Today*, ed. Theodore H. Runyon (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1985), 264–72; and Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660–1780* (Cambridge: University Press, 1991).
34. This point has been demonstrated conclusively by Richard B. Steele, “*Gracious Affections*” and “*True Virtue*” According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1994); and Gregory S. Clapper, *John Wesley on Religious Affections: His Views on Experience and Emotion and Their Role in the Christian Life and Theology* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1989). For further discussion and documentation of the following summary of Wesley’s anthropology, see Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 65ff.
  35. Cf. Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (Edinburgh: John Bell, 1788; reprint, New York: Garland, 1977), 59–60, 75–76, 88, 117–19.
  36. The best survey of these debates is Allen C. Guelzo. *Edwards on the Will: A Century of American Theological Debate* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989).
  37. See the explicit appeal to Reid in Shinn, *Plan of Salvation*, 109, 334; and Nathan Bangs, *Letters to Young Ministers of the Gospel, on the Importance and Method of Study* (New York: Bangs and Emory, 1826), 84–85. Bangs even reissued Reid’s works through MEC channels: *The Works of Thomas Reid*, 3 vols., edited by Dugald Stewart (New York: Bangs & Mason, 1822).
  38. The first clear recognition that Wesley identified the will with the affections, while American Methodist theologians do not, is in Thomas Summers, *Systematic Theology* (Nashville: MECS Publishing House, 1888), 2:66.
  39. Cf. Letter to Richard Morgan (15 Jan. 1734), *Works* 25:369; Sermon 91, “On Charity,” §III.12, *Works* 3:306; and Sermon 120, “The Unity of the Divine Being,” §16, *Works* 4:66.
  40. “Plain Account of the People Called Methodists,” §I.2, *Works* 9: 254–55.
  41. For a detailed discussion of the following summary, see Maddox, “Opinion, Religion, and ‘Catholic Spirit’: John Wesley on Theological Integrity,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 47.1 (1992): 63–87.
  42. For a few examples, see Shinn, *Plan of Salvation*, ii, vi; Fisk, *Calvinistic Controversy*, 197–98; Shinn, *Benevolence of Supreme Being*, vi; A.A. Jameson, *Notes on the Twenty-Five Articles of Religion, as Received and Taught by Methodists in the United States; in which the Doctrines are Carefully considered, and supported by the testimony of Holy Scripture* (Cincinnati: Applegate & Co., 1855), 394; and (Bishop) E.M. Marvin, *The Doctrinal Integrity of Methodism* (St. Louis: Advocate Publishing House, 1878), 56–57, 128. For evidence of the same move in the EA and UBC, see Naumann, “German-American Evangelicalism,” 9, 141ff, 181, 222.

43. Cf. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 40–42.
44. See esp. *The Works of the Reverend John Fletcher*, 4 vols. (Salem, OH: Schmul, 1974), 1:90–91; 1:545–48; and 2:186–92.
45. Fletcher, *Works* 1:545–46.
46. A perusal of the works cited in note 32 above will demonstrate that Fletcher is cited or drawn on much more frequently than Wesley. See also the review of the third American edition of Fletcher’s *Checks* in *Methodist Review* 11 (1828): 413–20, which begins by saying that the present doctrinal struggles with Calvinism require that more preachers avail themselves of this resource.
47. Texts for each tradition [with years on the course of study] are as follows. **MEC**: Thomas Upham, *Elements of Mental Philosophy*, 2nd ed., (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1840–41) [1864–80]; Francis Wayland, *The Elements of Moral Science*, 2nd ed., (Boston, 1837) [1864–80]; and Noah Porter, *The Elements of Intellectual Science* (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1871) [1880–92]. **MECS**: Laurens Hickok, *Empirical Psychology* (Boston: Ginn & Co, 1854) [1878–82]; Hickok, *A System of Moral Science* (New York, 1853) [1878–82]; Richard Rivers, *Elements of Mental Philosophy* (Nashville: MECS Publishing House, 1862) [1878–86]; Rivers, *Elements of Moral Philosophy* (Nashville: MECS Publishing House, 1871) [1878–86]; and Porter, *Intellectual Science* [1882–98]. **MPC**: James Beattie, *Elements of Moral Science* (Edinburgh: A. Constable, 1817) [1834–58]; Upham, *Mental Philosophy* [1880–1920]; Wayland, *Elements of Moral Science* [1880–88]; Henry Calderwood, *Handbook of Moral Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1881) [1888–1920]; Hickok, *Empirical Psychology* [1888–1920]; Mark Hopkins, *Lectures on Moral Science* (Boston: Gould & Lincoln, 1862) [1888–1920]; and Noah Porter, *The Human Intellect* (New York: Scribners, 1877) [1888–1920]. **UBC**: Upham, *Mental Philosophy* [1853–65]; and Wayland, *Moral Science* [1853–73]. There are no lists for the **EA** during this period.
48. E.P. Humphrey, *Our Theology and Its Development* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1857), 68–69.
49. The most significant case is Nathan Bangs, “Scholastic Divinity,” *Methodist Review* 14 (1832): 367–88; and Bangs, “Theological Education,” *Methodist Review* 17 (1835): 85–105.
50. See [John Emory], “Review of Watson’s *Theological Institutes*,” *Methodist Review* 12 (1830): 272–307, p. 273; and the quote attributed to President Stephen Olin of Wesleyan University in B.F. Tefft, *Methodism Successful* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1860), 168.
51. The first American edition was Watson, *Theological Institutes: or, A View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity* (New York: Emory & Waugh, 1830). Watson’s agenda in producing the *Institutes* is summarized in



- Thomas Jackson, *Memoirs of the Life and Work of the Rev. Richard Watson* (London: John Mason, 1857), 274.
52. Watson was on the MEC course of study 1833–92; MPC, 1830–1920; MECS, 1878–1906; UBC, 1841–93; and is reported as used in the EA from 1843 (no official course until much later).
  53. See Watson, *Theological Institutes*, 1:278–79, 2:9–11, 2:439–42.
  54. Compare the arguments in William McKendree Bangs, “Observations on Watson’s Theological Institutes,” *Methodist Review* 19 (1837): 332–46, 20 (1838): 80–89; Benjamin F. Cocker, “The Metaphysics of Watson’s Institutes,” *Methodist Review* 44 (1862): 181–207; and John Levington, *Watson’s Theological Institutes Defended* (New York: Barnes & Burr, 1863).
  55. The most significant example is Asbury Lowrey, *Positive Theology: Being a Series of Dissertations on the Fundamental Doctrines of the Bible; the Object of Which is to Communicate Truth Affirmatively in a Style Direct and Practical* (Cincinnati: Methodist Book Concern, 1860); note his disparaging description of “systematic divinity” like that of Watson on 15–16.
  56. [Bishop of Protestant Episcopal Church], “Review of [Ralston’s] Elements of Divinity,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 3 (1849): 533–45.
  57. See Amos Binney, *Theological Compend: Containing a System of Divinity or a Brief View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity, Designed for the Benefit of Families, Bible Classes, and Sunday-Schools*, revised by Daniel Steele, (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1875); and Thomas Neely Ralston, *Elements of Divinity: or a Course of Lectures, comprising a clear and concise view of the System of Theology, as taught in the Holy Scriptures* (Louisville: E. Stevensen, 1854). The only prior work that approached a full survey text by an American Methodist was Ara Williams, *The Inquirer’s Guide to Gospel Truth; or Doctrinal Methodism Defended Against the Assaults of its Enemies, by Scriptural Proofs and Rational Arguments* (Buffalo, NY: Steele & Faxon, 1832); Williams drew heavily on Watson in his attempt to defend those Methodist doctrines currently under attack by Deists, Calvinists and Universalists.
  58. For Humphrey’s rejection of Watson see the footnote in *Our Theology*, 69. A.A. Jameson makes specific reference to Humphrey as motivating his production of *Notes on the Twenty-Five Articles of Religion* (see p. viii).
  59. Samuel Wakefield, *A Complete System of Christian Theology: Or, A Concise, Comprehensive and Systematic View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals and Institutions of Christianity* (Pittsburgh: J.L. Read and Son, 1862). A later similar revision of Watson for the MECS was Thomas Summers’ *Systematic Theology* (1888).
  60. See esp. Wakefield, *Complete System of Theology*, 314–16.

61. The most interesting case is Luther Lee, *Elements of Theology: or, An Exposition of the Divine Origin, Doctrines, Morals and Institutions of Christianity* (Syracuse, NY: Wesleyan Methodist Publishing House, 1865). Lee stressed (p. iii) that theology is a human enterprise that addresses timely issues of the day, not just timeless truth, and remains fallible in its claims (one is left with the distinct impression that a major reason for this insistence is that Lee was writing from a camp of American Methodism that rejected Wesley's endorsement of an episcopal form of government!). Even so he keeps the same structure as Watson and supplemented his theology text with an apologetic: Lee, *Natural Theology; or, The Existence, Attributes and Government of God* (Syracuse, NY: Wesleyan Methodist Publishing House, 1886).
62. The best surveys of this matter are Gerald O. McCulloh, *Ministerial Education in the American Methodist Movement* (Nashville: Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 1980); Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Intellect: The Aims and Purposes of Ante-Bellum Theological Education* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), pp. 393–436; and Russell E. Richey, "The Early Methodist Episcopal Experience," in *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. D.G. Hart & R.A. Mohler Jr. (Grand Rapid: Baker, 1996), 45–62.
63. On the course of study in Methodism, see Louis Dale Patterson, "The Ministerial Mind of American Methodism: The Courses of Study for the Ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and the Methodist Protestant Church" (Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1984. For UBC and EA, see Naumann, "German-American Evangelicalism," 31–49, 78ff; and Paul Eller, *Evangelical Theological Seminary, 1873–1973* (Naperville, IL: ETS, 1973), 11–25.
64. Cf. David Meredith Reese, "Brief Strictures on the Rev. Mr. Sunderland's Essay on Theological Education," *Methodist Review* 17 (1835): 105–18; Benjamin Harrison Nadal, "Educational Qualifications for Ministry," *Methodist Review* 49 (1867): 221–36; and Neal Fisher, "Context and Concern," in *Truth & Tradition*, edited by N.F. Fisher (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 13–36.
65. E.g., Daniel Smith, "On the Importance of a Well-Instructed Ministry," *Methodist Review* 21 (1839): 267–75, esp. 273.
66. Daniel Curry, "Ministerial Education," *Methodist Review* 68 (1886): 586–90. See also the irenic response from a Garrett professor, Charles Bradley, "The Best Training for Our Ministry," *Methodist Review* 68 (1886): 911–16.
67. Cf. Lefferts A. Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1983), 150–60.
68. Cf. Paul F. Douglass, *The Story of German Methodism* (Cincinnati: Methodist Book Concern, 1939).

69. *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, 12 vols., edited by John McClintock & James Strong (New York: Harper, 1867–87).
70. McClintock, *Cyclopedia*, 3:190.
71. John McClintock, *Lectures on Theological Encyclopedia and Methodology*, edited by John T. Short (Cincinnati: Hitchcock & Walden, 1873).
72. George Richard Crooks & John F. Hurst, *Theological Encyclopedia and Methodology* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1884), based on Karl Rudolf Hagenbach's *Encyklopädie und Methodologie der theologischen Wissenschaft* (Leipzig, 1833). The only earlier American translation of a German theological encyclopedia was the publication of the oral lectures of Friedrich August Gottreu Tholuck by Congregationalist Edward A. Park as "Theological Encyclopedia and Methodology," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 1 (1844): 178–216, 332–67, 552–78, 726–34.
73. Histories of the seminaries are listed in Kenneth E. Rowe, *United Methodist Studies: Basic Bibliographies* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 78–80. On the course of study, see Patterson, "Ministerial Mind," 77.
74. See the critique of this curriculum in Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).
75. Cf. William Warren, "Review of C.B. Moll's *Das System der praktischen Theologie*," *Methodist Review* 46 (1864): 159–61; Daniel Whedon, "Ministerial Education in Our Church," *Methodist Review* 54 (1872): 246–67, esp. 251; McClintock & Strong, *Cyclopedia*, 8:463–64; Crooks & Hurst, *Theological Encyclopedia*, 472ff; and Jonathan Weaver, ed., *Christian Doctrine: A Comprehensive View of Doctrinal and Practical Theology* (Dayton, OH: United Brethren Publishing House, 1890), 7.
76. Compare Mark Michael Pruett-Barnett, "'Be Thou My Vision' – Theology, Pastoral Care and Culture in the Methodist Episcopal Church 1848–1939" (Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1991); the discussion of pastoral theology in *Religion in Life* 28 (1959): 483–525; and the discussion of Practical Theology in *Perkins School of Theology Journal* 35.3 (1982): 1–38.
77. Cf. Russell E. Richey, "The Legacy of Francis Asbury: The Teaching Office in Episcopal Methodism," *Quarterly Review* 15 (1995): 145–74.
78. From 1867–77 Albert Bledsoe's *Southern Review* (Baltimore) was a semi-official replacement for the *Methodist Quarterly Review*, which had been disrupted by the Civil War.
79. John Dempster was 61 when he started teaching at Garrett (MEC) in 1855. His successor in 1864, Miner Raymond, was 53. Randolph Foster brought thirty years of pastoral ministry to Drew (MEC) in 1868. John Miley was already 60 when called from the pastorate in 1873 to succeed Foster (who had been elected

- bishop). Thomas Summers was 63 when made inaugural professor of theology at Vanderbilt (MECS) in 1875. James Ward brought twenty-five years of pastoral experience to his position at the new Westminster Theological Seminary (MPC) in 1884. And Lewis Davis was 57, with extended service as pastor and bishop, when he helped open Union Biblical Seminary (UBC) in 1871.
80. Henry Sheldon spent three years in the pastorate before beginning a forty-six year teaching career at Boston in 1875. Wilbur Tillett came to Vanderbilt in 1886 after only six years in pastoral ministry, to spend fifty-four years teaching. Olin Curtis also had six years of pastoral experience when he succeeded Miley at Drew in 1896. Charles Forlines' thirty-eight years at Westminster (1905–43) was preceded by only five years in the pastorate. And Augustus W. Drury had only three years ministry experience when he began a fifty-four year career at Union in 1880.
  81. Cf. Albert Cornelius Knudson, "Henry Clay Sheldon—Theologian," *Methodist Review* 108 (1925): 175–92, esp. 190–91.
  82. For the **MEC** this included Miner Raymond, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1877–79); John Miley, *Systematic Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1892–94); Henry Clay Sheldon, *System of Christian Doctrine* (Cincinnati: Jennings & Pye, 1900); and Olin Alfred Curtis, *The Christian Faith Personally Given in a System of Doctrine* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1905). In the **MECS** there was Thomas O. Summers, *Systematic Theology: A Complete Body of Wesleyan Arminian Divinity*, 2 vols., ed. by J.J. Tigert (Nashville: Publishing House of the MECS, 1888). The **MPC** produced no native publication, but added Raymond and Summers to their course of study in 1888. Pressures to systematize their doctrine led in the **UBC** to the initial attempt in *Christian Doctrine: A Comprehensive View of Doctrinal and Practical Theology*, ed. Jonathan Weaver (Dayton, OH: United Brethren Publishing House, 1890). Perceived shortcomings in this attempt were addressed by adding Miley to their course of study in 1897. The **EA** fostered similar attempts at systematization in Anton Hülster, *Die Christliche Glaubenslehre vom Standpunkt des Methodismus* (Cincinnati: Cranston & Stowe, 1888); and John Jacob Escher, *Christliche Theologie: Eine Darstellung biblischer Lehre vom Standpunkt der Evangelischen Gemeinschaft*, 3 vols. (Cleveland: Thomas & Mattill, 1899). From 1888–1909 they also had on their course of study a work by the German Methodist Arnold Sulzberger, *Christliches Glaubenslehre*, 3 vols. (Bremen: H. Neulsen, 1875–78).
  83. In addition to *System of Christian Doctrine*, Sheldon published such works as *History of Christian Doctrine*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Bros., 1886); *History of the Christian Church*, 5 vols. (New York: T.Y. Crowell, 1894); and *New Testament Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1911). His commitment to the fourfold curriculum is evident in *Theological Encyclopedia* (Cincinnati: Jennings & Graham, 1911).

84. See the protest in Daniel Curry, "Ministerial Education," *Methodist Review* 68 (1886): 586–90. Two major attempts to refocus doctrinal theology as an inductive study of scripture were published at the turn of the century: Nathanael Burwash (a Canadian Methodist), *Manual of Christian Theology on the Inductive Method*, 2 vols. (London: Horace Marshall & Son, 1900); and Milton S. Terry (professor of theology at Garrett), *Biblical Dogmatics: An Exposition of the Principle Doctrines of the Holy Scriptures* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1907). Neither of these was ever placed on a course of study.
85. In particular: Curtis, Gamertsfelder, Miley, and Sheldon. Note the specific praise of Miley for excluding apologetics and ethics in John Wesley Etter's review in *United Brethren Review* 3 (1892): 374–78.
86. Two of the more influential early examples were Benjamin F. Cocker, *Lectures on the Truth of the Christian Religion* (Detroit: J. M. Arnold & Co., 1873) and Charles Wesley Rishell, *The Foundations of the Christian Faith* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1899).
87. Cf. the article on ethics in McClintock & Strong, *Cyclopedia*, 3:319–25; and John J. Tigert, "Ethics: The Science of Duty," *Methodist Quarterly Review* 47 (1898): 582–90, 49 (1900): 97–101. These programmatic pieces help explain the abrupt switch from earlier works in the (Anglo-American) discipline of moral philosophy to works on Christian ethics in both the MEC and MECS course of study about 1890. **MEC**: C.F. Paulus, *The Christian Life: A Popular Treatise on Christian Ethics* (Cincinnati: Curtis & Jennings, 1890) [1892–1900]; Newman Smyth, *Christian Ethics* (New York: Scribners, 1892) [1900–16]; James Seth, *A Study in Ethical Principles* (New York: Scribners, 1907) [1908–12]; and Thomas Hall, *Social Solutions in the Light of Christian Ethics* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1910) [1912–16]. **MECS**: Mark Hopkins, *Law of Love and Love as Law; or, Christian Ethics* (New York: Scribners, 1886) [1886–1906]; Noah K. Davis, *Elements of Ethics* (New York: Burdett, 1900) [1906–30]; and David Stowe Adam, *A Handbook of Christian Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1925) [1934–39].
88. Cf. John James Tigert, "Theological Method," *Methodist Quarterly Review* 21 (1884): 444–48; James Strong, "Theology as a Science," *Methodist Review* 71 (1889): 518–23; and Job S. Mills, "The Essence of Christianity," *United Brethren Review* 6 (1895): 35–36.
89. William F. Warren, *Systematische Theologie, einheitliche behandelt*, Erste Lieferung: Allgemeine Einleitung (Bremen: Verlag der Tractathaus H. Neulsen, 1865); see esp. 140–41. Note the emphasis on a unifying (*einheitlich*) approach in the title.
90. John McClintock immediately published a translated digest of the book: "Warren's Introduction to Systematic Theology," *Methodist Review* 48 (1866): 100–24 (see his praise of the proposal on 105). Note the continuing attention

- to Warren in Milton Terry, "Scope and Methods of Christian Dogmatics," *Methodist Review* 77 (1895): 190–206.
91. Cf. the contrast between theology and religious literature in Wilbur Fisk Tillett, *Personal Salvation: Studies in Christian Doctrine Pertaining to the Spiritual Life* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1902), 504, 508–9.
  92. Note this contrast in Crooks & Hurst, *Theological Encyclopedia*, 46.
  93. Richey, "Legacy of Francis Asbury," 160.
  94. See the extended argument to value Wesley as a preacher but not a model theologian in Tillett, *Personal Salvation*, 510–14. Note also that the only references to Wesley in McClintock's *Theological Encyclopedia* are in the section on practical theology.
  95. The best example is Crooks & Hurst, *Theological Encyclopedia*, 47.
  96. Note how Anglican theological activity is specifically dismissed in Warren, *Systematische Theologie*, 87fn1. Importantly, Warren never directly discusses Wesley in this book!
  97. The suggestion of McClintock in "Warren's Introduction," 102–4.
  98. Wesley's *Notes* was dropped from the course of study in MEC in 1864; MPC, 1878; and MECS, 1906. The MPC also dropped the *Sermons* in 1878. The MEC initially dropped the *Sermons* in 1916, but protest led to their restoration 1920–36. The MECS brought the *Sermons* into the 1939 merger, at which time the MC opted to list only *Selections of Writings of John Wesley*, edited by Herbert Welch (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1901), and this only as collateral reading.
  99. Olin Curtis, "Professor Denney's Irenic Attempt," *Methodist Review* 91 (1909): 694–707; see 703.
  100. Demonstrating this point is a special interest of William McCutcheon. Cf. "Praxis: 'America Must Listen'," *Church History* 32 (1963): 452–72; and "American Methodism and the Theological Challenge of the Twentieth Century," in *Forever Beginning, 1766–1966*, edited by Albea Godbold (Lake Junaluska, NC: Methodist Historical Society, 1967), 156–65.
  101. An influential early analysis of the negative impacts of the Enlightenment on North American churches was Langdon Gilkey, *How the Church Can Minister to the World Without Losing Itself?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964). The most vigorous recent analysis is Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*.
  102. The quote is from Foster, *Studies in Theology*, Vol. 1: *Prolegomena: Philosophic Basis of Theology; or, Rational Principles of Religious Faith* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1891), vi–vii. The only passing reference to Wesley I have found is in Vol. 6: *Sin* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1899), 179–81.

103. Sheldon, *System of Doctrine*, 479. See also the discussion of the move from “sinful man” to “moral man” in Robert Chiles, *Theological Transitions in American Methodism, 1790–1935* (New York: Abingdon, 1965), 115ff.
104. Cf. Randy L. Maddox, “Social Grace: The Eclipse of the Church as a Means of Grace in American Methodism,” in *Methodism in its Cultural Milieu*, edited by Tim Macquiban (Oxford: Applied Theology Press, 1994), 131–60.
105. James Mudge, *The Perfect Life in Experience and Doctrine* (Cincinnati: Jennings & Graham, 1911), 6.
106. Daniel Dorchester, *The Problem of Religious Progress* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1881), see 41, 115, 124. My emphasis is intended to capture Dorchester’s stress on human value and ethical progress. Note as well in this connection Milton S. Terry, *The New Apologetic: Five Lectures on the True and False Methods of Meeting Modern Philosophical and Critical Attacks upon the Christian Religion* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1897), esp. 157ff.
107. Although Dorchester was not himself an academic theologian, he was a very influential liberal MEC pastor and his book was placed on the MEC course of study from 1896–1904. William Warren had forecast this transition in “Impending Revolution in Anglo-Saxon Theology,” *Methodist Review* 45 (1863): 455–74, 579–600; see esp. 580.
108. Henry C. Sheldon, *The Essentials of Christianity* (New York: George Doran, 1922), note esp. 24, 283, 297–302.
109. Admittedly, Curtis’s *Christian Faith Personally Given in a System of Doctrine* was published in 1905, but the title itself suggests that he was transitional from pure Systematics to a more interpretive approach (cf. ix, 183–84). It should also be noted that Sheldon remained on the MEC course of study until 1932, and the MECS to 1939; with Curtis on the MEC to 1916, MPC to 1936, and MECS to 1939. The production and assignment of systematic theologies would continue longer in the EA and UBC: esp. Samuel J. Gamertsfelder, *Systematic Theology* (Cleveland: C. Hauser, 1913); and Augustus Waldo Drury, *Outlines of Doctrinal Theology* (Dayton, OH: Otterbein Press, 1914).
110. The major examples through mid-century, most of whom made it on the course of study, would include: L. Harold DeWolf, *A Theology of the Living Church* (New York: Harper and Row, 1953); Georgia Harkness, *Understanding the Christian Faith* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1947); Albert Cornelius Knudson, *The Doctrine of God* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1930); Knudson, *The Doctrine of Redemption* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1933); Knudson, *Basic Issues in Christian Thought* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1950); Edwin Lewis, *Jesus Christ and the Human Quest* (New York: Abingdon, 1924); Lewis, *A Manual of Christian Beliefs* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1927); Lewis, *God and Ourselves* (New York: Abingdon, 1931);

- Lewis, *The Faith We Declare* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1939); Franklin Nutting Parker, *What We Believe: Studies in Christian Doctrine* (Nashville: MECS Publishing House, 1923); Harris Franklin Rall, *The Meaning of God* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1925); Rall, *A Faith for Today* (New York: Abingdon, 1936); Rall, *Christianity: An Inquiry into its Nature and Truth* (New York: Charles Scribners, 1940); Rall, *Religion as Salvation* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953); Gilbert Theodore Rowe, *The Meaning of Methodism: A Study in Christian Religion* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1926); Gilbert Theodore Rowe, *Reality in Religion* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1927); and Tillett, *Personal Salvation*.
111. There was even some openness to liberalism in the EA and UBC early in the century, though it was soon quelled by a broader and more sustained reaction than in the mainline Methodist traditions; cf. Naumann, “German-American Evangelicalism,” 197ff.
112. Frank Wilbur Collier, *Back to Wesley* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1924), 5.
113. A classic example is the response to fundamentalism by (MECS bishop) Edwin D. Mouzon, *Fundamentals of Methodism* (Nashville: MECS Publishing House, 1923), 8. See also Harris Franklin Rall, “Making a Methodist Theology,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 74 (1925): 579–86; and Rall, “Do We Need a Methodist Creed?” *Methodist Review* 89 (1907):221–30.
114. See (again a forerunner) Randolph Sinks Foster, *Philosophy of Christian Experience* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1891), esp. 2–8; John J. Tigert, “The Theological Situation,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 50 (1901): 906–9; John C. Granbery, “Method in Methodist Theology,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 58 (1909): 230–43; John Wright Buckham “Experiential Theology,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 66 (1917): 279–85; and Clifford G. Thompson, “Prolegomena of Empirical Methodist Theology,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 71 (1922): 230–39.
115. Rall describes his method in “Theology, Empirical and Christian,” in *Contemporary American Theology*, edited by Vergilius Ferm (New York: Round Table, 1933), 2:245–73. The major examples of his method are *The Meaning of God*, *A Faith for Today*, *Christianity: An Inquiry into its Nature and Truth*, and *Religion as Salvation*. He won the esteemed Bross Prize for *Christianity!*
116. This is most evident in Rall, *What Can I Believe* (Chicago, IL: Commission on Men’s Work, Board of Education, MEC, 1933).
117. Note the specific suggestions of correlations between Schleiermacher and Wesley (with a lament that Methodism has yet to develop these enough) in J.A. Reubelt, “Schleiermacher: His Theology and Influence,” *Methodist Review* 51 (1869): 211–28; and Granbery, “Method in Methodist Theology,” 235. See also the



- argument that Rall was a key initial voice in introducing Ritschl to America in William J. McCutcheon, *Essays in American Theology: The Life and Thought of Harris Franklin Rall* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1973).
118. The most provocative example is Rowe's *Meaning of Methodism*, a running contrast between Methodism's emphasis on experienced salvation and all sacramentalism, institutionalism, and intellectualism.
119. Bowne's major philosophical works include: *Metaphysics* (New York: Harper, 1882), *Philosophy of Theism* (New York: Harper, 1887; revised as *Theism* [New York: American Book Co., 1902]), and *Personalism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1908).
120. For an interpretive survey of Bowne and his tradition, see *The Boston Personalist Tradition in Philosophy, Social Ethics, and Theology*, edited by Paul Deats & Carol Robb (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986). The most influential second-generation personalists at Boston were Edgar Sheffield Brightman, Albert C. Knudson and Francis L. Strickland. Interest in Boston Personalism within the UBC is evident in the various issues of *United Brethren Review* (in print from 1890–1908). For an EA appropriation, see George J. Kirn, *Religion: A Rational Demand* (Cleveland: Thomas & Mattil, 1900).
121. See Francis Strickland, *The Psychology of Religious Experience* (New York: Abingdon, 1924), 106 & 89 respectively. The individualism and rationalism of Strickland is further evident on 56, 98, 107ff.
122. Cf. Borden Parker Bowne, *The Immanence of God* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1905), 146–47; Bowne, *Studies in Christianity* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), esp. vi, 337, 345–46; and Bowne, *The Essence of Religion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910), esp. 36–41, 73–74, 216–21.
123. The roots of this change would go back once more to Randolph Foster! In the first volume of his *Studies in Theology*, titled *Prolegomena: Philosophic Basis of Theology; or, Rational Principles of Religious Faith* (1891), Foster distinguished doctrinal theology from a “higher” science of theology that discusses philosophically the preconceptions of revelation (286).
124. Cf. Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *The Finding of God* (New York: Abingdon, 1931), 11; Albert C. Knudson, *Basic Issues in Christian Thought* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1950), 45; Knudson, *Doctrine of God*, 64; and Francis L. Strickland, *Foundations of Christian Belief: Studies in the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Abingdon, 1915).
125. See Albert C. Knudson, “A Personalistic Approach to Theology,” in *Contemporary American Theology*, edited by Vergilius Ferm (New York: Round Table, 1933) 1:219–41, esp. p. 228.

126. Note this explicit contrast in Albert C. Knudson, *Principles of Christian Ethics* (New York: Abingdon, 1943), 258.
127. Cf. Bowne, *Studies in Christianity*, v, 378.
128. See especially Edwin Lewis, *A Christian Manifesto* (New York: Abingdon, 1934), 206–7. Even his earlier works, like *Jesus Christ and the Human Quest* or *God and Ourselves*, give a more prominent role to traditional convictions in their apologetic structure than was typical in Methodist liberalism.
129. Note the entire issue of *Religion in Life* 29.4 (1960), which is devoted to the topic of “Neo-Wesleyanism.”
130. The most relevant example is Robert Burtner & Robert Chiles, *John Wesley’s Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1954), 7. See also John Alfred Faulkner, “Shall We Leave Wesley for Ritschl?” *Methodist Review* 98 (1916): 447–59.
131. It is very revealing to compare in this regard Edwin Lewis, *The Practice of the Christian Life* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1942) to Wesley’s conception and pattern of the means of grace (best analyzed in Henry Knight III, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* [Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1992]).
132. Cf. Albert Outler, “The Current Theological Scene: A View from the Beach at Ebb Tide,” in *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Methodist Conference*, edited by Lee Tuttle & Max Woodward (New York: Abingdon, 1967), 157–67.
133. E.g., Schubert Ogden, *The Reality of God* (New York: Harper, 1963); John B. Cobb, Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology, Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965); Harvey Potthoff, *God and the Celebration of Life* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1968); Delwin Brown *et al.*, *Process Philosophy and Christian Thought* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971); John B. Cobb, Jr. & David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976); and Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *God, Christ, Church: A Practical Guide to Process Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).
134. E.g., Schubert Ogden, “Process Theology and the Wesleyan Witness,” *Perkins School of Theology Journal* 37.3 (1984): 18–33; Sheila Greeve Davaney, “Feminism, Process Thought and the Wesleyan Tradition,” in *Wesleyan Theology Today*, edited by Theodore Runyon (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1985), 105–16; Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, “Coming Home: Wesley, Whitehead, and Women,” *Drew Gateway* 57.3 (1987): 31–43; and John B. Cobb, Jr., *Grace & Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995).
135. See esp. John B. Cobb Jr., *Becoming a Thinking Christian* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993); and Cobb, *Lay Theology* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1994).
136. This stream carries on the emphases of Charles Hartshorne’s appropriation of Whitehead. For a Methodist representative, see Schubert Ogden, *On*

- Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 1, 69–93, and 94–101 (his definition of the specialty-discipline of Practical Theology).
137. See esp. Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (New York: Free Press, 1990).
138. Note this worry in Robert E. Cushman, “A Case-Study in Ecumenism: Fifty Years of Theology at Duke,” *Duke Divinity School Bulletin* 42.1 (1977): 3–22, pp. 19–20.
139. Thomas Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (San Francisco: Harper, 1987–92). It should be noted that Oden’s is purposefully an ecumenical (or “generic”) Systematics, so Wesley is rarely mentioned, least of all in terms of method.
140. See Albert C. Outler, “Towards a Re-appraisal of John Wesley as a Theologian,” *Perkins School of Theology Journal* 14 (1961): 5–14.
141. Albert C. Outler, “A New Future for ‘Wesley Studies’: An Agenda for ‘Phase III,’” in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, edited by M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 34–52, see p. 48.
142. E.g., Neal F. Fischer, *Context for Discovery* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981); M. Douglas Meeks, “John Wesley’s Heritage and the Future of Systematic Theology,” in *Wesleyan Theology Today*, edited by Theodore Runyon (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1985), 38–46; D. Stephen Long, *Living the Discipline: United Methodist Theological Reflections on War, Civilization, and Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 11; and Randy L. Maddox, “Wesleyan Resources for a Theology of the Poor,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 49.1 (1994): 35–47.
143. For an account of how these psychologies have undermined Wesley’s specific conception of sanctification as character-formation in later American Methodism, see Randy L. Maddox, “Holiness of Heart and Life: Lessons from North American Methodism,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 51.1 (1996): 151–72.
144. It is fitting that Stanley Hauerwas, one of the leading advocates of recovering character ethics, is a Methodist. See especially his *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1975); and Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*. But note as well the criticism that Hauerwas’s character ethic undervalues the role of the emotions (Wesley’s “affections”) in Patricia B. Jung, “Sanctification: An Interpretation in Light of Embodiment,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 11 (1983): 75–95; Paul Lauritzen, *Religious Belief and Emotional Transformation* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1992), 7; and Paul Lewis, “‘The Springs of Motion:’ Jonathan Edwards on Emotions, Character, and Agency,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 22 (1994): 275–97, esp. 287–91.
145. The most promising proposal in this direction of which I am aware is

- Joseph C. Hough, Jr. & John B. Cobb, Jr. *Christian Identity and Theological Education* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), esp. 95ff.
146. This dimension is well discussed in Marjorie Suchocki, “A Learned Ministry?” *Quarterly Review* 13.2 (1993): 3–17.
147. There are some hints in this direction in Donald Messer’s chapter “Publish and Parish” in *Calling Church and Seminary Into the 21st Century* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 101–12.