Editorial
Bringing Good News to the Poor .............................................. 225

ISSUE THEME:
Wealth, Poverty, and Economy in God's World

Living Faithfully in the Global Economy .................................. 227
Rob van Drimmelen

The New Moral Context of Economic Life ................................. 239
Max L. Stackhouse

Being Human in the Market Society ......................................... 254
M. Douglas Meeks

When Generosity Is Not Enough ............................................ 266
Ellen T. Charry

The Bishops Initiative on Children and Poverty:
Its History and Future ...................................................... 279
Pamela D. Couture

Outside The Theme

On Taking the Method Out of Methodism .................................. 292
Philip R. Meadows

The Church In Review

Holy Communion
Mark W. Stamm ................................................................. 306
E. Byron Anderson ............................................................. 306
A Word on The Word

Lectionary Study
  Donald Senior, C.P. ....................................................... 313

Issues In: Pastoral Care and Counseling
  Carrie Doehring .......................................................... 322

Book Review

Worship Matters: A United Methodist Guide to Ways to Worship (Volume I)
Worship Matters: A United Methodist Guide to Worship Work (Volume II)
ed. by E. Byron Anderson (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1999) .... 328
Reviewer: Robin Knowles Wallace
Bringing Good News to the Poor

HENDRIK R. PIETERSE

Most of us know Jesus’ announcement of his mission in Luke 4:18 by heart: to “bring good news to the poor ... release to the captives ... recovery of sight to the blind, [and] to let the oppressed go free.” The terms poor, captives, blind, and oppressed are closely related—indeed, they mutually imply one another. The poor of the world experience daily the oppressing shackles of lack of adequate food, shelter, and financial resources and the pain of limited opportunities for advancement for themselves and their loved ones. Grinding poverty decimates the bodies of thousands, young and old, around the world every day. And daily many more experience the crushing power of blindness brought on by the lack of access to knowledge and opportunity and by the death of once-vibrant hopes. Van Drimmelen’s account of poverty around the globe is sobering indeed.

In an important sense those of us living in affluent countries are poor, captive, blind, and oppressed, too. We may have plenty of money, things, and opportunities; but so often we are poor in generosity, charity, and concern for others. More often than we’d like to admit, our captivity to the demands of a consumer culture blinds us to the needs and struggles of poor persons in our midst. And the logic of an acquisitive marketplace brings with it its own kinds of oppression: the agonizing tension between material gain and self-esteem; the incessant summons toward upward mobility; the ceaseless desire to acquire more as we drown in a sea of plenty. For Christians living in such societies, Jesus’ articulation of his mission comes as both judgment and promise. It rebukes our bondage to the personal, social, and economic gods of the age. It also promises the renewal of our disciple-ship, lived now in the radical freedom of God’s reign.

Following Jesus today requires that the church face squarely the extent of its captivity to the principalities and the powers and the degree of its
blindness to the imperative to "bring good news to the poor." Pamela Couture asserts in her article that for United Methodists to make the poor a priority will require nothing less than a fundamental shift in the church's "assumptive world." And there are opportunities to do this, not the least of which is the Bishops Initiative on Children and Poverty—an effort that seeks to transform the church through practical engagement with the poor.

Ellen Charry and Max Stackhouse caution that guilt-inducing sermons (Charry) and unthinking diatribes against an "amoral global market" or "immoral transnational corporations" (Stackhouse) may hinder rather than help attempts by Christians to engage in ministry with the poor in ways that amount to more than putting a few dollars in the offering plate (important as giving of our financial resources is). Stackhouse challenges Christians to reflect on the "religious and ethical dynamics" that underlie the social, economic, and cultural forces of globalization. Understanding these dynamics allows theologians and ethicists to contribute to the creative use and moral control of the forces of globalization. Charry warns that to claim that "the reason the poor are poor is that the rich are rich" makes both for bad preaching and for superficial thinking about the causes and conditions of poverty. To be sure, giving generously of our financial assets is crucial; however, monetary generosity is but "one feature of the moral imperative to help." In addition, the church can help people in poverty to enhance their intellectual, social, and interpersonal skills, as well as gain the personal discipline and motivation needed for breaking the stranglehold of poverty.

For his part, Douglas Meeks claims that the assumptive worlds of the modern market and of the church may in the end well be incompatible, not least because they operate from such different anthropologies. By sagaciously juxtaposing the market's homo economicus with God's "economy of grace," Meeks invites unflinching reflection on the meaning of discipleship in a world in which everything appears to be for sale.

The articles in this issue engage the issues of wealth, poverty, economy, and church from often very different perspectives. This is appropriate, for it reflects the complexity of the issues and of the church's call to "bring good news to the poor." But may the church's resolve to take up its Lord's mission be singular and unequivocal.

Hendrik Pieterse is editor of Quarterly Review.
In Dutch, as in many other languages, the standard text of the Lord's Prayer speaks about forgiving "debts" rather than "trespasses." Daily bread and debt were probably the most pressing material issues for the Jews at the time. Today, they are still urgent issues for many people. The fact that we find these words in the Lord's Prayer shows that Christian faith does not separate spiritual and material life. God became incarnate in Christ to share the human condition. There is no dichotomy between the spiritual and the material realms of life: If people are starving, it is a religious issue as much as an economic and political one. It is heretical to separate the prayer for our daily bread from the meaning of the eucharistic bread; it is likewise wrong to interpret the forgiving of debts in a spiritual way only.

The word *economy* stems from two Greek words: *oikos,* which means "house" or "household," and *nomos,* which refers to "law" or "rules." Economics, therefore, is about household rules. In Christian theology, *economy* is a synonym for the incarnation of God in Christ. The coming of Jesus was a special form of God's "home management"—God's economy—for the sake of saving the world. *Kenosis,* God's self-emptying through the death of Jesus on the cross, is the central theme of the divine economy. In Christ's offering, the whole created order was offered to God. According to the Orthodox Tradition, every eucharistic celebration is a participation in the self-offering of Christ. In the Eucharist (the word means "thanksgiving"), bread and wine—the fruits of human labor and the symbols of the whole material creation—are offered to God through Christ. In return we receive the body and blood of Christ. The Eucharist exemplifies the cooperation between God and us for our sustenance and for the transformation of the
world. We find our purpose in this synergy and in the fact that we are invited to be coworkers with God. This is the link between the daily bread and the eucharistic bread; it is also the connection between the divine and the secular economy. We pray to our Father for our daily bread and for the forgiveness of our debt, which places our individual relationship with God in the context of our relationships with other human beings.\(^1\)

**Oikos and Koinonia**

Like many households, God’s household—God’s economy—is structured around a table, the table of bread and wine. This indicates that God’s economy aims at establishing community—koinonia—with the Holy Trinity as the supreme model for koinonia. Herein lies a clue about God’s purpose for the secular economy. When Jesus said, “One does not live by bread alone” (Luke 4:4), he was reaffirming Deut. 8:3, which links the community’s spiritual duty with the socioeconomic needs of the poor. The centrality of building up community through economic policies and systems contrasts sharply with prevailing political and economic systems that are built on ruthless competition and the pursuit of individual gain.

The covenant God made with the people of Israel includes many guidelines for household management. The prescriptions for the Sabbath, the Sabbath year, and the Jubilee year are among the best known. The Ten Commandments call the Sabbath a day of rest (Exod. 20:10), while Deut. 5:15 places the Sabbath in the context of the Exodus, the liberation from slavery. In a sense, stopping work at regular intervals keeps us from becoming slaves to it. According to the Book of Exodus, the land should rest and lie fallow every seventh year to allow the poor to eat (Exod. 23:10-12). Connected with the fallow year is the release of debts and of slaves (Deut. 15:1-5, 12-13). The Jubilee legislation (Lev. 25:1-55) rests on the same principles as the Sabbath year. Every fiftieth year the land is to lie fallow and Hebrew slaves are to be set free. In addition, all property reverts to the original owner who, because of poverty, had been obliged to sell it.

The impression one gets from reading the institutions for the Sabbath, Sabbath year, and Jubilee year is that God is a God of grace. To follow God is to enact this grace and justice for the poor in daily life and in the institutions that govern society. As Yahweh led the Israelites out of slavery, so the people should not make slaves of one another. As the land belongs to God, who gives it to people to use, so the people should treat it with respect. As
ROB VAN UREMBELEN

God is the Creator of all things, including time, so people should at regular intervals cease to work in order to bless God. As God is the Redeemer of all, so loans that place poor people in bondage should be redeemed. All these regulations function as training in gratitude for God's amazing grace.

It is interesting that the focus of the covenantal obligations about land (ecology), labor (slavery), and capital (debts) touches on what modern economics identifies as the three essential factors of production—the "economic trinity." The covenant rules not only contradict the basic logic of our economy but also seem to undermine the political order by challenging the legitimacy of power based on acquired rights, especially property rights. God's rules are rather radical, apparently because free market forces alone do not create economic justice. The Bible does not refer to any sacred law of supply and demand; instead, Yahweh asks for justice. Just institutions and laws, including some that "intervene" in "the market," are to be set up to protect the poor, the vulnerable, and creation as a whole.

Nobody wants to reestablish the prescriptions of the Hebrew Scriptures for economic life today. The poor in Tanzania won't benefit were American farmers to refrain from mowing the edges of their fields (Deut. 24:19). Instead, we should follow the biblical mandate of creating economically and environmentally just mechanisms and institutions. Let us ask who the people are today who "join house to house, who add field to field" (Isa. 5:8) at the expense of economic justice. Who are the poor, the lepers, the widows, the orphans, and the strangers of our time? How can we be like the caring and sharing community described in Acts? Questions like these require an analysis of the political-economic realities of our world.

Globalization

The integration of local and national markets into one global market, usually referred to as "globalization," is one of the most striking realities in today's world. Either voluntarily or forced, e.g., through Structural Adjustment Programs for highly indebted countries, governments all over the world have engaged in policies of deregulation and privatization of their national economies. This has led to a receding role for the state in economic life. However, globalization also manifests itself in other realms of life. Great advances in communication and information technology speed up and improve communication across the world. Improved travel possibilities increase international travel, tourism, and migration. But glob-
alization also has negative repercussions. Some people point to the danger of the homogenization of cultures and consumption patterns; the spread of crime, drug trafficking, and epidemics (HIV/AIDS); and ecological effects—atmospheric pollution and global warming do not know any borders.

International contacts are, of course, nothing new. Migration flows took place in the ancient world. The Phoenicians had their interregional trade networks. Crusades and colonialism linked up various parts of the world, often accompanied by violent conflict. Mission, at least in its early manifestations, was about globalizing Christian faith. Following Jesus' command to bear witness "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), missionaries went all over the globe—sometimes alone, often in the footsteps of colonial powers. While international contacts are not new, the emphasis in today's globalization process on liberalization and deregulation, as well as its scope and intensity, is new. And yet, as always, the strongest players benefit most.

The term triadization may actually be more accurate to describe the process of globalization. There are three regions in the world (call them the "Triad") with comparable economic strength: Europe (and especially the European Union), North America, and the Pacific Rim (notably Japan and the emerging economies in Southeast Asia). China is a special case, with its high figures of economic growth over the past two decades. It is in these Triad countries that globalization is most apparent. The Triad countries are on the fast track of economic growth, whereas other countries, notably those in Sub-Saharan Africa, are on a slow track. The distance between the two groups of countries is growing, leading to a two-track world economy. In the past, some people have argued that the South was being exploited by wealthier nations. However, triadization tends to lead not to the exploitation of important regions in the South but rather to their exclusion. During the Cold War period, some of the regions in the South were considered of strategic interest by the superpowers. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, however, rich and powerful countries seem to have lost interest in these regions. Take, for example, the flow of official development assistance (ODA). The United Nations agreed that rich countries should try to set aside 0.7 percent of their Gross National Product (GNP) for development assistance. Yet, between 1992 and 1999, ODA, as a percentage of the GNP, declined from 0.33 percent to 0.24 percent. Of the rich countries, Denmark uses almost 1 percent of its GNP for development assistance, compared to the 0.1 percent set aside by the richest country in the world, the United States of...
Over the last decade of the twentieth century, the European Union greatly reduced the share of ODA going to the least-developed countries. At the same time, aid to countries in the Mediterranean region and Central and Eastern Europe increased. Obviously, countries in the latter regions are economically more important to the European Union than the poorest countries in the world. Yet, ODA remains extremely important, especially for the forty-eight least-developed countries. In 1998, ODA accounted for 84 percent of the incoming resource flows for these countries. Precisely at a time of unprecedented wealth, Western countries are providing less and less development assistance.

Globalization is a double-edged sword. For some, it constitutes great hope; for others, it means being ignored or excluded. On the one hand, average life expectancy has gone up more in the last 40 years than in the previous 4000. The world infant mortality rate has been reduced by more than half over the past 30 years, while combined primary and secondary school enrollment has more than doubled. On the other hand, half of humanity has to get along on the equivalent of $2 a day or less. Half of that half—1.2 billion people—has to survive on less than $1 a day. Some 1.5 billion people are lacking access to safe water. About 125 million children are still not in primary school. Even in the rich member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), some 8 million people are undernourished. The gap between rich and poor is increasing globally and within individual countries. The average earnings of the top fifth of male earners in the United States rose by 4 percent between 1979 and 1996, while those of the bottom fifth fell by 44 percent. The disparities between winners and losers in the process of globalization are obscene. The combined wealth of the top 200 billionaires hit $1.135 trillion in 1999, up from $1.042 trillion in 1998. Compare that with the combined incomes of $146 billion for the 582 million people in the least-developed countries. The ratio of the incomes of the richest and poorest countries was about 3 to 1 in 1820; by 1992, it has risen to 72 to 1. This process has, cynically, been called the "Matthew effect": "To those who have, more will be given... from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away" (Matt. 13:12). The extreme inequality created by mass poverty in the midst of global prosperity is morally unacceptable, politically unsustainable, and economically wasteful. It contradicts God's household rules for organizing the economy; it destroys koinonia and fails to build up real communities.
Competition and Markets

One of the hallmarks of globalization is increased competition. Few people would regard competition as an all-out negative force. It can promote innovation, stimulate the production of better goods and services, and help achieve an efficient use of resources. Lately, however, there has been a tendency to make competition into a universal credo—an ideology offered as a solution for nearly every social ill. This ideological understanding of competition promotes a one-dimensional view of human nature and human relationships. If competition crowds out attention to the common good, it becomes a destructive force, pitting people against one another and against nature, sacrificing what is most vulnerable in God’s creation.

Whereas markets were once embedded in a wider web of social relationships, the tendency today is for social relationships to become embedded in, and often conditional upon, pervasive forces of the market. The market economy (in principle a good thing) is being replaced by a market society. More and more aspects of life can now be bought and sold. Things once considered sacred are becoming objects of market transactions. Poor people in Brazil sell their blood (more of it than is healthy) to blood banks, while in India a grisly but profitable market for human organs has developed. Shady organizations procure kidneys and other organs from the poor to sell to the rich. The rich pay roughly $7,000 for a kidney transplant, while the poor donor may receive as little as $160. For a handsome fee, surrogate mothers carry a child for somebody else, thus creating a market for reproductive services. In the United States, the bill for this service can top $65,000. As one might expect, there is also competition on the baby market: a Russian agency offers surrogate-mother services for only $25,000. And where there are markets and competition, there is advertising. On the Internet, a prospective surrogate mother specifies that she has blond hair, green eyes, and is of Caucasian complexion. Even churches have not escaped the influence of the market.

The all-pervasive nature of the “market logic” is basically a spiritual and cultural challenge. To go against this logic requires an attitude of cultural disobedience. A society that is a grand auction block, where even sacred things like human lives can be bought and sold and where values are replaced by prices, reminds us of the vision of the Apocalypse (Rev. 18:3).

Markets can be very useful; but it would be wrong to rely on the
market alone if our objective is to build a just, participatory, and sustainable society. One problem with the market mechanism is that it is oriented towards purchasing power rather than needs. Take, for example, the market for drugs. Poor people need drugs against such diseases as river blindness, sleeping sickness, and malaria. But, since they cannot afford them, these drugs are tough to find in dispensaries in Southern countries.

The fact that poor people cannot translate their needs into purchasing power explains the lack of incentive for drug companies to develop new medicines for people in poor countries. The World Health Organization estimates that globally more than $56 billion a year is spent on health research—but less than 10 percent of that sum is directed toward diseases that affect 90 percent of the world’s population.

Moreover, drug companies are afraid that poor countries may not respect these companies’ patents. This is why transnational companies are a driving force behind the implementation and further expansion of the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), which were negotiated in the GATT Uruguay Round and are now meeting with increasing opposition in the South. The pharmaceutical companies argue that it is very expensive to develop new drugs and that patents are necessary to recoup the money spent on research and development. Some Southern countries, such as India, maintain that it is more important to save the lives of poor people than to respect the patents of the pharmaceutical companies. It is not surprising that such an attitude provokes a reaction by the drug companies. In a full-page advertisement, Pfizer explains that it will not transfer its newest or best technology to its subsidiaries in India because of that country’s weak patent protection.

The emphasis on competitiveness goes hand in hand with the current trend towards privatization, deregulation, and liberalization—leading, of course, to a receding role for the state. In some cases, a smaller state may not be a bad thing. But it can lead to lower social and environmental standards; for example, when national and local governments compete to attract investment by relaxing labor conditions and environmental standards.

It is worth asking how serious is the North about liberalization. The U.S. and Europe are forever lecturing Southern countries about the need to open their markets; yet, the U.S. and Europe do their best to keep out many products from poor countries. In the Uruguay Round, rich countries cut their tariffs by less than poor countries did. Since then, they have also found ways
to protect their home markets, notably by imposing anti-dumping duties on imports they deem "unfairly cheap." Rich countries are protectionist in many of the sectors where poor countries are best able to compete, such as agriculture, textiles, and clothing. As a result, the average tariffs rich countries impose on the import of manufactured goods from poor countries are four times higher than those from other rich countries. This creates a big burden on poor countries. The United Nations estimates that Northern protectionism costs the South nearly $720 billion per year (official development assistance from OECD countries stood at $51.9 billion in 1998).

Markets and Culture

Increasing wealth has led some people in the North to believe that their political-economic model is superior. If poor countries in the South would only follow the Northern model, they say, they would soon be able to climb out of poverty. Some economists argue further that the "laws of the market" are universally valid. Opposing these laws spells disaster, as the collapse of the centrally planned economies in Central and Eastern Europe has shown.

The market economy has been highly efficient in stimulating production, but less so in promoting fair distribution of income. We shouldn't claim that there are no legitimate, viable alternatives to the Northern model, because economics is not neutral. Consider the three production factors that economists usually identify—labor, capital, and land—from the point of view of culture. Culture affects a range of questions about labor, such as the acceptability of work on Sundays; attitudes toward slave and child labor; the division of work between women and men; and the types of work to be remunerated.

The logic of amassing capital dominates many societies. Yet, neither is this logic universal nor has it existed throughout history. There have been and are cultures in which people produce or collect only for their immediate needs. There are even cultures in which people compete in giving away instead of accumulating (recall the early Christian community in the Book of Acts). The use of the third production factor—land—is also heavily influenced by culture. The respect for land and nature that characterizes most indigenous cultures contrasts sharply with the disrespect for creation prevailing in industrial societies. Some indigenous people pray before cutting down a tree, in effect apologizing for their need of the wood or the land on which it was growing. Some parcels of land may be sacred and should not be touched, because ancestors are buried there. Ownership of
the three production factors is also seen differently from culture to culture. Private property is valued highly in Northern-type societies, whereas collective use of production factors characterizes many indigenous societies, though it was previously found elsewhere as well—the "commons" in Britain, for example. Likewise, consumption patterns differ according to the cultural context. Something judged a need in one culture may be seen as greed or waste in another setting.

One reason why there are different economic systems in the world is that the organization of the economy—who produces what, how, where, when, and for whom—is built on history and culture. A system that works in one place may not work in a setting with a different cultural, historical, and political background. Driving on the left side of the road may be the best way to get from A to B in India, but drivers in New York would be ill advised to follow that example. The logic of Northern-type economic systems has brought many material blessings, but there are also serious shortcomings. Rather than imposing this system and its logic wholesale on other cultures, it would be better to acknowledge that other cultures and economic systems also have things to teach—and that by learning from these insights a better understanding of one's own culture is possible.

The importance of culture has been emphasized in recent ecumenical discussions. The gospel of Jesus Christ must become incarnate in every culture, and more attention should be given to "contextual theology" and the "inculturation of the gospel." It would be interesting to ask what "contextual economics" and the "inculturation of economics" might look like.

Economics always involves value judgments. The economy is not an independent sphere of life governed by neutral, universal laws. Claims like "the economy demands such-and-such measures" tend to hide the fact that behind this "demand" lie choices made by some person or group on the basis of their values and, possibly, interests. In this sense, economics must be demystified. The "invisible hand" (Adam Smith) that distributes the "necessities of life" must be made visible. Power relationships in economic life, the underlying value judgments, and the "hierarchy of values" on the basis of which critical actors make their choices must be uncovered.

**Economic Growth**

Economists and politicians often claim that economic growth is a prerequisite for combating poverty. Only if the cake grows, they say, will the poor get
a bigger slice. Economic growth thus becomes the chief indicator of economic success. Politicians make economic growth a key theme of election campaigns, often promising that it will combat unemployment. Why are people so fascinated by economic growth? One reason may be that they associate economic growth with progress. Indeed, economic growth has brought many benefits. The production of goods can be a blessing—as the word goods suggests. But economic growth needs to be qualified. After all, growth for growth's sake is the strategy of a cancer cell.

The most commonly used indicator to measure growth is the Gross National Product (GNP). As a measure of the flow of money, the GNP is a valid instrument; but as a measure of value and of quality of life it is much more problematic. One major flaw is that the GNP counts only goods and services exchanged for money. For example, it does not measure unpaid work. Since most unpaid work is done at home, and still done primarily by women, such work is under-represented in the national statistics. Volunteer and charity work and work done in the church and the community are also excluded, since no money changes hands. Activities vital to the health and cohesion of a society thus go unrecorded, creating the false impression that these are irrelevant to the wealth of the country.

The GNP lumps together good things and bad things indiscriminately. A dollar spent on the care of children or the elderly has the same statistical weight as a dollar spent on the manufacture of landmines. Environmental degradation, pollution, and resource depletion fall outside of the scope of the GNP. If a person becomes an invalid following a bad automobile accident, this loss is not subtracted from the GNP. However, the cost for towing the car and paying for the hospital stay and the wheelchair are all added to the GNP. The more car accidents, the more economic growth! In GNP statistics, one can only add, not subtract.

Like economics, statistics are never neutral or value-free. They incorporate worldviews, goals, and social values. The standard indicators for measuring economic growth or the wealth of nations reveal the hierarchy of values of those who use them: We measure what we treasure. If improving the quality of life in community (koinonia) is the goal, we must not be misled by the obsession to maximize unqualified economic growth—which is like saying the quality of the symphony improves when more notes are added.

Practical experience refutes the assumption that the benefits of economic growth trickle down automatically to the poor. Growth can
reduce poverty, but only if appropriate measures are taken. Instead of beginning with economies and their growth, we would do better to start with communities and their well-being. The result may be economic growth.

Besides material (environmental) limits to unqualified economic growth, there are also spiritual limits. Paradoxically, ever-increasing production can lead to increasing scarcity rather than abundance. Goods like clean air and water, stillness, and time become increasingly scarce. The "unpriced scarcity" of the so-called "noneconomic" goods is growing because human needs and desires are increasing faster than we can meet them. If we assume human desires are virtually limitless, scarcity increases regardless of the current level of material prosperity, because people are never satisfied and always want more. Many seem to have lost the idea of having enough. One cannot be aware of abundance without having an awareness of what is enough. Abundance is by definition more than enough.

As Larry Rasmussen reminds us, for millions of destitute people, to have more is required in order to be more. He also correctly points out that once people are above the poverty line, there is very little correlation between happiness and well-being, on the one hand, and increased consumption and rising incomes, on the other. Satisfaction in life relates more closely to the quality of family life and friendships, work, leisure, and spiritual fulfillment. None of these factors is measured well by the GNP. In fact, in societies with the highest levels of consumption, where the basic choice of serving God or mammon is faced squarely and decided in favor of the latter, there seems to be vast psychological and spiritual emptiness. People who have lived under Communist regimes are sometimes asked how difficult it was to be a Christian under such circumstances. It is equally pertinent to pose the question to those living in contemporary consumer societies, for they seem to follow a new commandment: "Thou shalt covet." To go against the tide requires considerable spiritual strength and is perhaps the greatest challenge to churches and Christians who wish to keep and live out their faith in today's global economy.

Globalization and Ecumenism

Globalization, in the sense of intensifying economic, social, cultural, and political interaction and the accompanying growing gap between rich and poor, presents a challenge for our faith and for ecumenism. God's economy and the global economy are at loggerheads. In God's household, commu-
nity includes economic security. Paul recognized the relationship between Communion and community: As long as any Christian anywhere is hungry, the eucharistic celebration of all Christians everywhere is imperfect. This makes the issue of poverty and wealth an ecclesiological issue. The scandal of the growing gap between rich and poor challenges the essence of the church.

For a long time, the ecumenical movement touted the slogan, "For the unity of the Church and the unity of humankind." In view of the process of globalization, the question arises: What is the unity we seek? The idea of "unity in diversity" is too easy. After all, who decides the limits of legitimate diversity and the criteria used to assess it? How do we hold together particularity and universality, identity and plurality, without falling into the trap of "cultural relativism" or an idealistic and simplistic philosophy about unity? It is clear that one of the main challenges for the ecumenical movement and humankind as a whole is how we deal with identity and difference as we embark on this new century. How can we make visible, in practice, that "the world is our parish"? The difference between globalization and ecumenism is that globalization is not based on an eschatology; it does not have a telos transcending the process itself. Rationalization, profitability, efficiency, and progress have become goals in themselves and offer only "more of the same." For this reason alone, globalization is a spiritual issue and highly relevant for those who seek a new catholicity and who are concerned about the oikumene—the whole inhabited earth.4

Rob van Drimmelen is General Secretary of APRODEV, the Association of World Council of Churches-related Development Organizations in Europe.

Endnotes

To those who have been following the debates about "globalization," it is clear that a new era is upon us. Most people presume that globalization is caused by the expansion of an amoral global market and by the intrusions of immoral transnational corporations into cultures around the world. Some people think rapacious greed is destroying not only societies but also the biosphere as a whole. I believe that such views are mistaken and based on a set of dated presuppositions about economic life rooted in socialist presuppositions that were wrong when they were engendered.

Globalization is mistakenly understood as a manifestation of capitalism only. In fact, the global market is the context in which business now has to be done, because technological, communications, transport, educational, and cultural developments—factors other than the ones the critics identify—have become the driving forces of contemporary life. Economic expansion, the capacity to build networks of corporate interaction and international finance, and the role of the market are only the most recent and most obvious corollaries of a much more complex process.

Of course, anyone can see that globalized business today is a major reality. Every national economy must open its borders or become a backwater; every significant business must be alert to global forces or die. Furthermore, neither traditional nor socialist economies can produce at the levels that the world's populations need to survive and flourish; and they both place constraints on human rights, creativity, and mobility that the world's population increasingly resists—even if ideals regarding ecology from the one and more equitable patterns of distribution from the other have a continuing legacy. If we want to understand why this is so or want to reform the dynamic forces at hand and not simply be bulldozed by it or become isolated protestors shouting curses at the new vessels of civilization that are destined for a new future, we must recognize that a purely anti-capitalist way of interpreting the world is mistaken.

Globalization is the result of a complex set of social and cultural developments that, in turn, have religious and theological roots and are reshaping...
the deep moral ecology of civilization. What appears to some to be an economic juggernaut without social boundaries or moral purpose is, more accurately, an incarnate set of religio-ethical developments rooted in complex historical dynamics and specific theological traditions, now partly out of control because they are not recognized for what they are. They are, in substantial measure, highly laden complex systems that are simultaneously critical for the well-being of civilization, presently interacting in new ways, and laden with potential danger. These religio-ethical developments are often held to be "externalities," ignored from an economist's point of view or held to be "principalities and powers" to be avoided or resisted, according to the views of religious leaders. The neglect of them by theologians, clergy, social analysts, and business and political leaders has meant that we do not know what drives us.

Indeed, it is more appropriate to call these externalities "conditionalities"; and engaging them theologically is indispensable to the creative use and moral control of the forces of globalization. In this task, pastors, theologians, and ethicists have an indispensable role to play in contemporary life. They contribute when they seek to understand and then assess the deeper moral and spiritual currents behind what economists, historians, and social scientists study and what business leaders do. This means religious leaders cannot take secular categories of analysis as final. Above all, theologians and church leaders should try to see things whole and to identify the metaphysical presumptions that stand behind the interactions of complex systems.

Once we recognize that there are religious and ethical dynamics at work in globalization, we can avoid the tendency of business to try to isolate itself from explicitly spiritual and moral concerns and the tendency of religious life to slide into the radicalism of the fundamentalist right or the liberationist left, in ways that make it impossible to creatively engage the social world in which we live.

My contention is that, in fact, specific religious and ethical dynamics are manifest in certain social patterns, discernible by recalling prolonged processes of development. These dynamics have passed through "modernism" (which obscured but did not blunt their reality) and are appearing now in globalizing concerns. Three great themes, decisive in a global era, are too little discussed: the theological character of technology; the ecclesiological character of the corporation; and the vocational character of management. For example, Max Weber's classic discussion of the
"Protestant work ethic" shows that religious convictions have consequences—often unintended—in social life; and one can neither understand nor creatively engage a social problem unless one understands the theological issues that have been plowed into the social contexts in which we live.

An ascetic view of work, or the notion of human rights (derived from the biblical traditions), is decisive for business today; and we can be grateful for those who taught us to understand how they came to be. They have become so ingrained in our social history that they have become second nature to the West, and they have been more and more widely acknowledged around the world. Taken alone, each can become a problem but taken as part of the web of moral understanding behind contemporary life, they can be put in perspective and used to shape the future creatively.

Globalization undoubtedly does and will involve conflict and disintegration in many areas. Schumpeter's principle of "creative destruction" is likely to continue, on more than the economic front alone. It is also quite possible that the societies that generated modernity will both advocate globalization most strongly and benefit sooner from it. Others will protest that globalization is bringing with it a more strikingly marked economic distance between the top quintile of the population and the bottom, as well as a graded, somewhat greater, distance between the middle three quintiles and the bottom—even if most of those in the bottom gain a little. The issue of equality of results is a major moral consideration, and efforts must be made to reduce any damaging effects on those least equipped to cope with the changes—as all the international agencies presently argue. But the larger issue has to do with how presently disadvantaged people can become participants in it. In fact, every democratically elected government in the world now seeks to participate in global processes and wants a voice in setting the terms for them. What are the roots of this phenomenon?

The Theological Character of Technology

Globalization is new, but when it became so is a large debate. The idea of the whole world as one place, as an inclusive field of spaces and peoples, is not new. The great world religions and especially the Hebrew prophets knew long ago of a single created realm where many peoples lived under a universal law, with hopes for a divine end. The "-ization" part of "globalization," however, suggests not only that the whole can be conceived as a single reality but also that a historical process is taking place whereby some
different whole comes into being—a turn to something new. The "already" and "old" whole is incomplete, flawed, unfinished, or distorted. It requires a "not yet" of something "new." When the terms are joined, we get a systemic alteration of what already is, in a manner and degree that brings a novum. And when humans see themselves as instruments of that alteration, with a duty to change the world, to repair its flaws and distortions, and to make it more complete and finished, for God's sake, the change accelerates.

The ancient prophets anticipated this, and the New Testament conveys just such views with an idea of "the world" as something that is, but which is fallen and to which we must not conform. Yet God so loved the world that it is being redeemed; and those who know God are sent to aid in the process of its redemption and transformation. It is views such as this, which intellectual honesty demands that we trace to the power of religion in civilization, that call for the deeper view of globalization. Those who catch the vision of a promised reign of God that transforms the world toward justice, righteousness, peace, and bounty are to employ every moral means to make it actual—and available, in principle, to all.

That is why, from early on, some strands of religious history have been pro-technological—willing to engage in the transformation of nature and of society, because they want to restore what can be restored and fulfill by transformation the potential of the creation that points to a future beyond the original condition. All salvation religions have a cosmic vision, a sense of time, and a hope for change to an altered state of being. In some religions (Christianity generally, and Protestantism especially) it is central. Thus, in some parts of the tradition, technology and the intentional restructuring of the world, selves, and society became a moral duty.

Obviously, globalization as we encounter it today could not take place without technology. It has revolutionized the family farm, the craftsman's shop, and the local store. Where did this come from? Why this drive to change nature, to reorganize it so that it will do what we want it to? Many cultures try to find the right order of things by studying nature. But some traditions study nature to see how it can be changed (since it is "fallen") to the benefit of humanity and the glory of God. Against the so-called "ontocratic" religions of the world, "creational" traditions, such as Judaism and Christianity, hold that nature does not rule life; God the Creator does. And we, as God's creatures, are to have, under God, a dominion over the earth as a mark of obedience to God's will and way.
MAX L. STACKHOUSE

It is precisely such deep themes that have come to fruition in globalization. Indeed, in the era of globalization 'dominion over the earth' may well take the form of total "earth engineering," a process through which all peoples on all continents are drawn into a web of economic, communications, and ecological interdependence. Brad Allenby comments,

The scale and scope of human impact on critical natural systems has grown so large that it amounts to an unprecedented discontinuity at the scale of the globe itself. The dynamics of many fundamental natural systems are now dominated not by life as a whole but only by one species. The earth is increasingly a largely unintended product of human engineering. ... A myriad of economic and engineering decisions, evaluated and taken as if independent, are in reality rightly coupled to each other and to underlying natural systems. Each action in this process may, indeed, be planned, but the comprehensive systemic impacts, which are just becoming apparent, are in large part neither planned nor foreseen.²

Such developments signal a basic shift in our sense of what the "natural" order of things is and what we must subsequently take responsibility for, since what was once thought to be given as limit is now seen to be subject to concerted action for reconstruction. We may take the remembered, and still partially discernible, natural patterns as our models, in some measure; but it is unlikely that we will go home to the garden of innocence again. What we see as natural is domesticated in many respects, viewed increasingly, and properly, as "artifact." This recognition demands the increased scientific measurement of possible perils and the mobilization of technology to lower the risks. It also opens the imagination as to what is socially permissible, technically feasible, humanly possible, and ethically acceptable—even theologically required—to make things better. These developments, in other words, prompt a kind of awareness that puts sharp questions to all efforts to understand how things are and how they ought to be.

How did this come to be? A rather decisive clue, I think, can be found in Robert K. Merton's now classic essay, "Puritanism, Pietism, and Science." Following the mode of post-Marxist interpretive sociological analysis first developed by Max Weber, Merton argues that both economic life and science were deeply stamped by Protestant attitudes toward material life and work.³ Subsequent work in this field basically confirmed Merton's
findings. Moreover, the newer "worldview" research conducted by authors like Nancy Pearcey argues that modern science rests on certain assumptions that were provided by theological beliefs, such as the assumption that the world has a rational, intelligible order because it is created by a singular and rational God and that we can discover that order because we are created in God's image. Pearcey further argues that three additional principles were necessary to produce what we now have:

1. The universe is contingent and can be changed without violating its inherent character. This principle fundamentally challenged the ontocratic assumption that nature (as it is or as it is created by God) is teleological (as in Aristotelianism) or is imbued with an inherent rational order that cannot—indeed, dare not—be altered (as in Deism). Instead, the expectation of a transformation to a "new heaven and a new earth" and the call for humanity to change its ways suggest that nature as it is will collapse and is less to be followed than to be reordered.

2. Humans find their primary kinship not with nature but with a transcendent God and with other humans (created in the image of God). This generates a stance that gives permission for humans to have an active role in engaging nature and denies that humans are so embedded in nature that they can only conform to it.

3. Humans have a duty to intervene in the world; indeed, they are commissioned by God to have dominion. In short, to help people overcome, for example, health problems is a moral and spiritual duty, because nature had no inclination to the good without the intervention of transformed persons and communities of commitment. But, Pearcey notes, this is more deeply rooted, and points to Paracelsus and, behind him, to Bacon.

It turns out that key developments are behind Paracelsus and Bacon, and, at this point, I turn to controversial author David Noble. He begins his new book, *The Religion of Technology*, by stating that "the ... project of Western technology, the defining mark of modernity, is actually medieval in origin and spirit. ... [It] was rooted in an ideological innovation which invested the useful arts with a significance beyond mere utility. Technology [was] ... identified with transcendence, implicated as never before in the Christian idea of redemption. ... The other-worldly roots of the religion of technology were distinctly Christian." It is not that technology sprung from the Bible or Jesus' teachings; rather, the deep assumptions in these traditions altered prevailing attitudes precisely as they interacted with
philosophy and the sciences of the day. Indeed, Noble is sympathetic to the tradition represented by Jacques Ellul (a tradition he mistakenly traces to Augustine) that the capacity for technology is a residual manifestation of the *justitia originalis*, to be used only for the service of humanity in the fallen state (as in Genesis 4), but having no significance for salvation, except negatively: If we turn to it to save us, it will destroy us. But it is the contrary view that has come to dominate the West and is now being globalized, namely, that technology is a proper instrument of the just for the salvation of the world.

This is not the place to review fully Noble's tracing of how the spiritual character of this theme expanded to include the early theological celebrations of the "mechanical arts" and how they influenced subsequent history. Still, we can note that from the fifth to the twelfth centuries, technological developments, modest as they were by today's standards but foundational for later developments, came to be seen as a possibility after the Fall. Properly cultivated, technology could help us reclaim the wisdom and virtue God implanted in humans with the gift of the image of God. This view increasingly became absorbed into the mainstream of educational philosophy; it also became the basis of a powerful reactive movement—an attempt to reclaim innocence, not only in the renewal of monastic movements but also in the growth of a series of highly ascetic lay movements against the institutions and dynamics of society. These battles were given expanded articulation at the turn of the last millennium by the recovery of the biblical themes of apocalyptic speculation, with all its anxiety about the collapse of everything and its hopes for a renewed earth. A thousand years ago already, such speculations anticipated and basically set the contours for the current apocalyptic literature. Our survival is at stake!

On the other side of this dire set of predictions was a movement to avoid degeneration, not by withdrawal but by engagement. This increasingly modified the apocalyptic movements, orienting them less toward the recovery of a lost past and more toward hopes for a new future. This second accent was given a specific direction by a series of lesser known, but highly influential, theologians and philosophers, such as Roger Bacon. He saw the mechanical arts as a means of anticipating and preparing for the kingdom to come and their rapid expansion as an indicator that the kingdom was already at work among us. Late medieval Catholic thought, the Reformation, and modern humanist thought are inconceivable without
these influences. While humans may well help restore humankind by recovering what was lost in the Fall, the greater benefit would be the fostering of means to move us, as imperfect allies and reluctant servants of God, closer to perfection by earthly means in the service of divine ends. Indeed, humans had a moral and spiritual duty to seek progress, a view taken up by many and eventually adopted by the Royal Society.

These developments are based on the view that humanity is created good but is fallen. The Fall likewise compromised nature. Consequently, neither can the lion and the lamb exist together in peace nor can the child play safely over the hole of the asp. Diseases and plagues wreak havoc on life; and humans by nature are inclined to rearrange their environments to suit themselves even if it threatens whole species. Thus, from a theological point of view, nature, at least in some respects, departs from the intent of "creation," which always has to be seen from the standpoint of an intended order that is not perfectly manifest in the way things are. Nature always contains a mixture of the good and the distorted, the deeply creative order of divine design and the inevitably destructive chaos of pollution, corruption, and pretended autonomy. That nature is "good" means that residual capacities to improve life are present; that it is fallen means that improvement is required. These two facts seem to survive in critical, post-literalist readings of the creation myth. The disciplined use of technology, under God's watchful eye in this view, is a grace-filled means whereby residual, if ambiguous, goodness can make things that are distorted better. In this view, engineers are the physicians of fallen nature and the artisans of a better world—if they view their work as under God's guidance.

Technology is both most dangerous and most effective when people hold that they have some ultimate duty to reshape, invent, revise, reform, or transform the world. Thus, it must be treated with care and respect. The contemporary secularized view of the need to increase technological proficiency and to respect the nature of nature and of human nature is held with no less passionate religious commitment than the dogmas of established religions. It appears to theological ethics to be enormously powerful in contemporary industrial life, although seldom if ever in such bald terms and usually without a conviction that life is under God's supervision and that our best engineering can neither stave off collapse nor bring a renewed world. Noble fails to mention the power of the most important competing myths over the centuries in the West, those of Gaia and
Prometheus. Gaia refers to the ancient myths of Earth as Sacred Mother, who, if left alone, has an organic, holistic power to heal all that is within her, even if it is sacrilegiously disrupted by wayward offspring who pretentiously develop technology against her innate, natural wisdom. And Prometheus sees technology as the possession of the gods, so that when humanity gets technology’s power after Prometheus steals it from them, the gods are punitive toward him for giving away their secrets. But the gods are also, finally, dispensable. Once humans have technology, the need for the mythical deities is surpassed and humans have the only truly divine power. Is it not so that these are functionally the dominant myths of those forms of technology that have lost sight of the actual roots of what drives contemporary theology? Henceforth, technology must be limited so that we can reintegrate into nature, or technology must be expanded so that nature is fully subject to human will; for humans make their own future by the kind of technology they have developed beyond religion. If so, we must either pay more attention to the logic of our ecological environment or seize control of our own evolution. Today, global technologies built on this foundation tell us that insofar as we seek to face the problems of globalization, not only we but every culture, religion, science, and philosophy must wrestle again with precisely these basic theological issues.

The Ecclesiological Character of the Corporation

This is only another illustration of the complex of conditionalities that shape all that we are and do. When we take on the questions of the “principalities and powers, the authorities and dominions” that are shaping our global economy, we are taking on the fruits of our theological traditions. This is no less true of a second major conditionality. Technological revolutions need an institutional home in which to operate. What kind of an institutional arrangement is necessary in civil society if a modern economy is to flourish? Adam Smith thought it was the market; and surely a market is required. But there is no known culture that does not have a market, and where a new institutional set is not developed outside the family and regime, all human resources in the family (sex, affection, decisions about marriage) and in the government (power, influence, and policy) become matters of economic calculation that is marketed. For a vibrant technology to work in a complex, global system, one has to have an institutional order of another kind; in the West, that developed as “the corporation.” Why did
the corporation not develop in India, China, the Middle East, or Africa, where so many other things did develop, and where family, governments, and markets have been present and strong for centuries? It is seldom recognized that most of human civilization—religion, education, production, distribution, consumption, medical care, and legal judgment—has been conducted by two centers of social organization: the family (which includes kinship organizations such as clan, tribe, and caste) and the regime (the king, emperor, or the republic). Trade existed between families or between regimes, and household businesses or palace commissions became the loci of production and consumption. Further, the worship center, whether the hearth or the temple built by the regime, reinforced familial or political loyalties and subordinated all economic values to them.

In such a context, the market was clearly a place where one must be wary and canny. All deals and all taxes were calculated to benefit the relatives or the state, and all outsiders were suspect. Considering that this context ruled most of the earth most of the time, the birth and growth of the corporation, which is neither familial nor political, is an amazing event—one that is rooted in a deep history with striking implications. Indeed, from a social-ethical point of view, we should call what we now have a "corporate, technological economy" rather than a "market economy." Technologically equipped corporations are now the primary actors in the global markets—labor, finance, commodities, services, etc.—and are able to sustain them around the clock and around the world. They have created a world without family values and without political controls. Yet, this new world must have rules. Indeed, the creation of international treaties governing trade, modes of production, and transportation on a regional and global scale have increased exponentially over the past half century. The rules for regulating these interactions, if they are to be morally influenced, will be shaped not only by residual familial and political institutions but also by technological and corporate organizations (as can be seen in the debates over the World Trade Organization and various other international bodies).

It bears noting that the modern corporation has its roots in the church. Out of the available models, Christians formed communities of faith distinct from the household or the regime—the synagogue and the cult. Further, people joined the church irrespective of familial or political connection. It is precisely in this independent social space that the church grew as a corpus Christi anticipating a New Jerusalem. In fact, the life of
Jesus transcended both family and state. He neither came from an ordinary family nor married to continue one; he was neither an heir to power nor an aspirant to political office. He promised a kingdom of different order. Thus, the early church established another center of human loyalty and activity. For the first time in human history an enduring model of a third center of organization—what sociologists call “voluntary associations” and political theorists call “NGOs” (non-governmental organizations)—was formed. The legal basis for the persecution of the early church was that it had no right to exist as a body (a corpus).

Over time, gradually demanding and getting the right to exist, own property, and designate trustees and managers as a persona ficta, the church spawned independent religious orders, hospitals, and schools; and they all managed to secure a place for nonpatriarchal and nonroyal participation (although patriarchy and aristocracy persisted). Later, these became the basis for highly successful institutions in the “free cities” and expanded steadily from then through the twentieth century. A dramatic growth came when the legal entity of the corporation converged with the technology of the Industrial Revolution and the fruits of the work ethic. These are among the decisive roots of the current globalizing economy—reinforced by legal provisions for limited liability, the “prudent man rule” for trustees, and the distinction between interest and usury (decisive for finance).

Today, the corporation is the basic organizing principle of complex societies, not only of the for-profit businesses but also of hospitals, universities, professional associations, unions, ecological advocacy groups, political parties, and singing societies. Civil society is a consociation of incorporated bodies—ordinarily good citizens of political orders and increasingly sensitive to people’s familial needs, to be sure, but less and less identified with any specific family or regime. The historical shift to the corporation is morally freighted. As in the areas of the work ethic, human rights, and the mandate to technologically engage the world, the socio-theological tradition of the corporation, rooted in a specific ecclesiology, now forces every people, culture, and religion to assess how it wants to organize its economic life—precisely at a time when traditional, family-based means of production and consumption and politically controlled national economies are being made obsolete. We need a theological ethic for corporate existence that develops not only guidelines for policy but, more importantly, also a theory of both their place in social organization generally and their internal organization.
The Vocational Character of Management

This brings us to the third theological issue that must be confronted in globalization: Who should make the guiding decisions for these institutions, and on what basis? Having gained a degree of freedom from parental and governmental control, whose interests and principles and purposes shall reign? The contemporary, transnational business corporation and the international regulatory agencies continually alter their internal shape, sometimes organizing more in terms of hierarchy-subsidiary and sometimes in a more federal-pluralistic way. But they continue to expand their operations to include people from many families and nations and to develop partners and branches, customers and suppliers from around the world. This transforms familial and political life wherever it goes and establishes centers of production, finance, distribution, consumption, technological development, and coordination that are not geographically rooted or culturally defined.

Whether or not all this has yet created the material basis for a global civilization is an open question; but no viable ethic for the future can be developed that does not wrestle with the presuppositions and social implications of these historic influences. They now join humanity together in a common destiny, with those who only resist tragically left behind.

Who runs these institutions? The answer, of course, is "managers," business professionals. However, this may be an oxymoron, for business is not necessarily a "profession" in the classical sense. While clergy, lawyers, doctors, and professors were long identified as "the professionals," and architects, engineers, accountants, pharmacists, nurses, teachers, psychologists, and certain military or law-enforcement officers have claimed to be professionals also, this understanding of business is relatively new. Historically, professionals had to undergo specialized training, be admitted to associations by examinations on theoretical and practical matters, take oaths to standards of conduct, be certified by governmental agencies, and manifest a dedication to values (e.g., faith, justice, health, wisdom, safety, honesty) that were beyond material gain or worldly success. Business was at once more democratic and more pragmatic—although several occupational groups, such as high-performance athletes and undertakers, have also developed images that seek to approximate professionalism.

Yet, something is lost if managers do not remember the deep roots of the idea of profession. It developed out of the proper response to a sense
of a "calling"—a notion derived from biblical themes and cultivated in religious history. If one had a "vocation" to some function decisive for the well-being of humanity and the glory of God and was given the gifts to perform that calling well, one was expected to cultivate a disciplined profession.

In spite of the fact that ideas of job, career, status, or achievement have obscured this level of meaning for many in contemporary life, other pressures invite business leadership to recover the deeper vision of professionalism. One development is the introduction of business management and efficiency studies (the application of technology to human systems) into college curricula in the early twentieth century. Out of this came the M.B.A. as an academically honored degree conferred by business schools at leading universities, which have become major centers of professional consciousness since World War II. Since then, there have been many efforts to raise the quality of such education at both the graduate and undergraduate levels.

The business schools now attract some of the most promising young talent of the future and have begun to certify that well-trained business managers are qualified experts as much as those who graduate from a divinity school, medical school, law school, or many doctoral programs. This new, professional degree marks a potential new chapter in the history of the professions, for it brings the prospect that business is developing internal standards of performance and excellence that were neither universally practiced nor widely recognized. It is unlikely that governments will or should conduct qualifying exams for business, similar to those doctors, lawyers, clergy, professors, architects, and others are required to take to practice their profession. Still, the ripple effect of this development means that business, commerce, and management courses in colleges and universities are adopting standards of excellence that can also be found among those who are in pre-medical, pre-law, and other pre-professorial courses of study.

At the same time, the awareness of deep moral and spiritual values connected with the professions seems to be declining in many areas. Only at some Christian and Jewish colleges and universities does the deeper religious grounding shape questions of professional conduct. Even in the growing number of courses in business ethics, the basic questions of integrity, principle, and sacred responsibility are scarcely touched upon.

And here we face fateful issues for our global future. On one side are very personal issues. People in many professions today are frustrated with what they are finding in their professional schools and in their work places.
On the one hand, they love their work; but the moral and spiritual roots of why they do what they do are eschewed. Justice, including the defense of human rights universally, is too often blocked out of law. The health of the total person—mind, body, and spirit—is too frequently neglected by the "cure" orientation of modern medicine. Truth is often viewed as impossible or marginal to the central agenda of contemporary, postmodern academia. Moreover, today's technology knows little about the transformation of nature as a quest for redemptive possibilities. Corporations frequently lose sight of covenantal patterns of relationship, and they seldom discuss the trustee-stewardship model of management.

It is an open question whether the professions can cultivate an inner sense of meaning that can guide the society as we move increasingly toward a global society that has no overarching political order to coordinate its meanings and contain its potential perils. In this context, the decisive question is whether the managers of today and tomorrow can capture a moral and spiritual vision of what they do, why they do it, under what principles of right, and with what vision of the good. Historically, all these were nurtured and shaped by religious traditions. It is not at all clear that a purely secular vision can recapture and recast these themes under the changing circumstances of today.¹⁰

To be sure, these several themes are a matter of intellectual honesty about their roots and a structural matter as to how they are cultivated in the professional schools and the professional organization. But their consequences are both personal and global. What is our proper vocation as each of us tries to be faithful to our deepest convictions, excellent in what we do, and responsible in our actions toward family, community, and the world? What does it take to cultivate a company of the committed who will assist one another and assume the responsibilities required by our inner convictions and our present objective situation? In a globalizing civilization, only a solid moral and spiritual foundation, found in the depths of what is now going on, will suffice. It is in raising such issues for debate, decision, reaffirmation, and reform that theologians and ethicists can make their most substantive contributions in the current economic environment.

Max L. Stackhouse is Stephen Colwell Professor of Christian Ethics at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey.
Endnotes


8. This is a major theme of the essays collected in The Spirit and the Authorities of Modernity (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000-). The book is volume 2 of a four-volume series titled God and Globalization: Religion and the Powers of the Common Life, ed. by Max L. Stackhouse, et. al. This series seeks to establish a deeper and wider constructive theological, ethical, and cross-cultural view of globalization than is presently available.


The modern market is second nature to those of us who live in the North Atlantic community and is increasingly so to masses of people around the globe. We live much of our lives under the assumptions and rules of the market and so do not recognize that there could be different ways of living. Postmodern thinking increasingly assumes that we are what the modern market has made us. Could we be any other way in the light of technological advance and the transformation of economic structures? Are we now in a situation in which God and the human being can be only what the workings of the market allow? But this line of questioning by itself would efface the fact that in order for the modern market to come into being there had to be a culture and an anthropology to support it. The market view of the human being is an artifact—despite the claims that it is lodged in the nature of things—and it could be historically changed just as it was historically produced. It is not incorrigibly based in nature and therefore universally true. In point of fact, the market conception of the human being arose in Britain in a particular culture among a definite type of people.

Until modernity the Christian tradition spoke relatively confidently of economy in relation to God and of the human being engaged economically before God. But Christianity has had an unsteady relationship to the modern market and its views on the human being. Many of the early theorists of the market were clerics. They tended to give a "Christian" interpretation of the market economy, for instance, by applying the relationship of God to the dependent believer to the relationship of the landowner to the worker as servant. God's providence assured the correctness of the market. Adam Smith maintained, however, that the hidden workings of the market, the so-called "invisible hand," were the only providence the market needs. God is not needed to explain anything or make anything possible in the market at all, though Smith still viewed God as important to the moral sentiments necessary to the soundness of the market. As modernity moved from a market economy to a market society, the tendency was that everything in society was thought of as if it were in the market. The modern...
market emerged in conjunction with the rise of Deism. So the science of economics and the practice of commercial society can assume that God is absent from the market, as from everything constructed by human rationality, though various concepts of God still function surreptitiously in both the theory and practice of the market.3

Absent God, the notion of *homo economicus* could be introduced—an anthropology that fits neatly into the presuppositions and workings of the modern market. It depended very little, if any, on Christian theology. Market anthropology works. It is eloquently simple. It is a view of the human being tailor-made for the mechanisms of the market and the rapid advance of technology. It is also extraordinarily narrow in comparison with the memory of the Christian tradition. No one can gainsay the persuasive power of this anthropology in the awesome advances of the global market in which everywhere is somewhere and nowhere at once. It is connected with the vast increase and expansion of living standards all over the world. It radically simplifies the human being as an actor in the market. Can it be otherwise when globalization seems to portend the withering of traditions, the death of local loyalties, and the birth of a new order in which economic power over life seems the only universal?4 Is the market character of the human being so indelible that there is little chance of changing global arrangements in any case? It is difficult to resist the despairing sense of the inevitability of threat to the ecosphere and intransient economic structures, and thus we are tempted to live by fate rather than faith. Christian theology has to be all the more intentional, then, in distinguishing an authentic teaching about the human being according to the biblical narratives and doctrines of the church. Can the church's remembered view of the human being provide an imaginary that makes us more hopeful beings, less subject to fate?

**Two Ways of Being Human**

Let us turn to some of the prominent dimensions of the market view of the human being and juxtapose them to the Christian conception of the human being formed out of the biblical and trinitarian traditions. The two anthropologies do not lend themselves to easy comparison, because they are so different at the assumptive level. The theorists of the market were at great pains to restrain the Christian tradition's views of the human being from interfering with the construction of the new human being needed for the market. The strategy has been to keep Christian theology and
economic theory in isolated, hermetically sealed compartments or (some
Christian theologians have themselves followed this method) to eliminate
the peculiar teachings about the human being that come from christology
and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in favor of universal conceptions of the
human based in nature or in a concept like "common grace."

Why does the human being exist? Market anthropology answers: to
maximize utility. A well-known Christian answer to the same question is to
"glorify God and enjoy God forever." It is worthwhile to reflect on why praise
does not appear in the market's concept of the human being. It is moreover
true that grace, gift, promise, and the embrace of enemies do not appear in
this lexicon, regularly replaced as they are by debt, commodity, contract, and
competition. Thus those things the church has traditionally considered
essential to a Christian mode of being are precluded by the logic of utility.

The construction of the market theory functions by asking how one
would act in certain circumstances and drawing hypotheses out of this intro­
spection. Economics seeks to give an explanation of commercial society and
in doing so elucidates how people make decisions and act. If we ask what
basic assumptions had to pertain in order for the market view of the human
being to gain ascendancy, we would do well to start with the notion of free
choice. The human being is free to choose and through choosing gives value
to goods in the world. All markets are markets in possibilities, otherwise
there would be only simple barter between two people. People have to
choose among the proffered options. Every choice entails "opportunity
costs," since every choice excludes the other possibilities. This is the
prevailing "fact" so all consuming in the economic makeup of the human
being that "free choice" is the highest value of our social and political world.

The Christian tradition has always raised questions about free choice
because of the "bondage of the will. "I am of the flesh, sold into slavery
under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I
want, but I do the very thing I hate" (Rom. 7:14b-15). The reality of sin and
the ruinous decisions of human beings are never investigated in economic
theory; for what must be in place for the market to function is undeterred
preference. Some Christian interpreters of the market society make use of
Max Weber's facts-values schema. Christianity offers the values that the
facticity of economic theory needs. They focus largely on the doctrines of
creation and sin and argue that the universal values stemming from these
doctrines should provide parameters for free choice. The difficulty is that
values are always considered after the facts are ascertainment. Facts trump values. The fact has preference. In market theory we are not asking about the good life, the promised reign of God's righteousness, or the life of following Jesus Christ. We are asking about the human being capable of expressing preference in the market. The teleological, eschatological, and ecclesial dimensions of Christian faith are precluded.

J. S. Mill's utilitarian theory added a major component of market anthropology. In making choices the individual is motivated by self-interests, maximizing utility or individual satisfaction by seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. This model of human nature—the rational-economic human being expressing preferences over the consequences of all possible actions—is the uncontested paradigm of economic analysis. It happily reduces motivations for seeking utility to gain and hunger, motivations that every human being can understand. Its simplicity proves particularly adaptable to mathematical analysis. It explains a wide range of economic behavior of producers and consumers. It doesn’t have to be consistent with the real world, since it is based on introspection about the actions of human beings and on deductive logic. The correctness of the theory depends on the initial propositions about human nature and the accuracy of deductive reasoning. The search for accuracy has led to ever-greater mathematical content of economics. Economists explain that the anthropological framework of their theory is so abstract that it cannot be explained but can be put in a graph.

The next assumption that has to be in place in the market anthropology is that all things have a known value and therefore can be subjected to exchange. This means everything has to have a cost, a price. A commodity is something with a price that can be bought or sold. The most obvious characteristic of market society, now exacerbated by instantaneous global communication, is that everything tends to become a commodity. Is there anything that is not a commodity? Is there anything not for sale? Karl Polanyi argued that land, labor, and money had exhaustively to become commodities in order for the modern market to come into being. The commodification of human life has continued unabated. Christians who are not suffering from amnesia know that justice, healing, and learning should not be commodities. But our courts, hospitals, and educational institutions tend to be closed to those who have nothing to exchange. The media are full of concocted arguments that things we used to think could in no sense be commodities should be commodities: blood, organs, fetuses, children, and
The market is the ever-present solution to the allocation of goods. The typical economic argument is that in view of long-distance, and now computerized, instant markets we do not know enough to apply the "golden rule" or any other rule for governing mass human behavior. Thus we accord the market a kind of omniscience, even if this leads to commodification of all social goods that have to be distributed. In the process human beings are commodifying themselves. Possessive individualism leads to a self-identity of making oneself, being on sale, and thus being "on the make."

If one thinks only of what is necessary for human beings to engage in transactions—buying and selling of commodities—the notion of the human being expressing preferences among many possibilities and foregoing other opportunities may be appropriate. But we have moved from a market economy to a market society, and the tendency is to apply the market view of the human being to all social existence. All of human existence becomes a matter of preferences and maximization.

Desire and Scarcity

Both answers to the question of the ultimate end of human existence, utility and praise, make clear that the human being is full of desire. The difference is that the praise of God has no utility; otherwise, God would not be praised for God's self. Market anthropology describes human behavior from a formal account of an insatiable desire. Christian faith describes human actions from the desire accounted in the contingent history of Israel and Jesus Christ. The problem of being human is how desire is to be directed. The Christian answer is that desire finds its end in the praise of God's glory and in participation in the abundance of God's communion through God's grace. The market anthropology maintains that desire finds its end in the satisfaction of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. To use Augustine's terms, the former makes use of the world to enjoy God and rejoice in God's existence; the latter makes use of God to enjoy the world.

Desire turns out to be the motor of the market. Economics falls back on the human heart as the prime mover of the market. In the introductory chapters of most textbooks on neoclassical economics one finds an argument like this: No matter how much we ever produce, there will never be enough to go around. The reason for this is that the human being is an infinite desirer, an infinite acquisitor. We always desire to have more.

This assumption about the human being puts artificial scarcity at the
heart of human existence. Artificial scarcity is not to be identified with the lacks and shortages that human beings have always had to face. The ancient conception of economy asked the question, Will everyone in the household get what it takes to live? The aim of economy was to store up real wealth; that is, what could be used to meet the needs of life of those in the household. When there were shortages, the concern was still the same: how to assure that everyone had access to what it took to live even in spite of the shortages. Lacks were real and often led to death. The modern market view of the human being, however, trades not simply on lacks but on a metaphysical lack that pervades life. Modern economics has relatively little to do with human livelihood or with the life of nature, though outside the theory many humane economists intend to use economics to serve human life.

Christian theology also presents the human being as a creature of desire. We are created with the capacity to love the infinite God infinitely. All human life is aimed at friendship with God and at participation in the eschatological banquet at which God's creatures will be reconciled and feast in the plenitude of God's love. But this desire for companionship with God can be distorted. We fall into sin by desiring infinitely what is not God. We love the creature rather than the Creator and fall into idolatry, which is infinitely loving what we have made with our own hands, thought with our own minds, and achieved with our own efforts.

Loving the finite infinitely creates artificial scarcity, the pervasive sense that reality itself is governed by the lack of the conditions for life. "There is not enough to go around" is writ large in market anthropology. Accepting this lack as the way things are leads to agonistic existence. Competition is the accepted way of being in the world. Most human beings end up being convinced that a noncompetitive life cannot survive in a competitive world. The Hobbesian war of each against all is accepted as inevitable. One argument for modern market anthropology is that the "war" of economic competition is considerably better than the wars of state and religion that have been fought over the millennia and better than living according to the threat of nuclear extermination. After all, it can be claimed, the triumph of capitalism over communism was won by competition in the economic markets. But competition over scarce resources remains the officially undoubted signal of what it takes to survive and flourish. In the meantime, violence stills threatens societies all over the world, including the societies most persuaded by market anthropology, and life and death still hang in the balance.
The Economy of Debt

Artificial scarcity leads to another matter about which both anthropologies are deeply concerned: debt. The biblical anthropological perspective is clear that debt issues in slavery. The biblical narrative, repeated at every Seder, begins, "Once we slaves . . ." (see Deut. 5–7). A great portion of the biblical narratives is concerned with how we got into slavery, what is the way out of slavery, and how we can resist slavery. Slavery is certainly not limited to chattel slavery. There is slavery in the economic, political, cultural, bodily/natural, and personal dimensions of life. For Paul, the ultimate question of salvation is redemption from slavery to the "law of sin and of death" (Rom. 8:2). Although historians have constantly pointed out that Israel and the early church tried to accommodate themselves to slavery as the predominant economy in which they arose, the Bible is an antislavery book. That Israel and the church did not have many dramatic successes in overcoming slavery is somewhat analogous to the church's record in transforming the contemporary global economy.

The market view of the human being claims to be more realistic by recognizing that debt is inevitable when there is scarcity; and, as we have seen, scarcity is a permanent fixture of reality. Therefore, we should acknowledge debt as the structure of human decisions and actions; and if it is sin that drives debt, then all the better that we have an economic system that acknowledges debt and makes the best of it. Human beings engage in debt as a way of dealing with scarcity. Debt becomes the primary rationale of obligation.

We constantly put each other in debt. We do this not only in the financial markets but also in subtle and not-so-subtle ways emotionally. We create a moral market in which respect is given or taken away and belonging is affirmed or denied according to what can be returned in the moment or what can be returned only in the future. We ceaselessly assess and rank each other in a jarring process of mutual judgment. Since no social order could survive without assigning responsibilities and powers, a degree of ranking is necessary. External pressures compel us to enter the competition for recognition. But since we judge ourselves as others judge us, we are constantly engaged in a struggle for self-esteem. We put ourselves in debt. This is harsh competition. We are all vulnerable, because we are all in debt to others and lack some natural or moral endowment.
considered crucial by the judges. Few are rated according to what they
deserve because of the fallible other who stands in judgment. If debt besets
us everywhere, why not let the market deal with lack and debt? It can take
the place of human moral judgment. So much have we accepted the market
as the adjudicator of debt that we live in a credit society. If you are not in
debt, something is wrong with you. But the warnings of the Torah and the
Christian tradition are as urgent today as ever for persons, communities,
and nations: Debt leads to slavery or to exclusion from community.

Because they lead to slavery, the Torah places severe restrictions on
debt and interest. Interest may not be charged to the poor, and nothing
that a person needs for life may be taken as collateral (Exod. 22:25-27;
Deut. 23:19-20, 24:6, 10-13). The Christian tradition before modernity made
usury, the increase of wealth through sterile money, a sin.

The Economy of Grace
The response of the Christian view of the human being to debt is grace.
Redemption is the transformation of the economy of debt into the
economy of grace. The appropriate prayer to be prayed in the economy of
grace is "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." The human being
in this economy is to be understood primarily in terms of the charisma (grace
or gift) of God. This is the most difficult problem of Christian anthro-
pology: to show forth the full logic of grace in face of the logics of the
global economy. It may be even more difficult than demonstrating the logic
of grace over against the Roman global economy or the far-flung economy
of medieval feudalism. Modern market anthropology harbors all the
ancient prejudices against gifting and dreams up additional ones.

Why are we so suspicious of giving? Because the gift giver is due a return
gift, gift giving establishes relations of superiority and subordination. It is
very hard to balance the gift and the return of the gift because of the
tendency of the gift to increase through further giving. This leads often to
competition for prestige among gift givers that cannot be abated. Each gift is
matched by a greater return gift, so there is a struggle to gain ascendancy in
the relations of indebtedness. Potlatch destroys many goods in order to
establish superiority among givers. Thus, a kind of debt multiplying without
end presents itself as a way of insuring indebted relations. Infinite, unpayable
debt could mean the possibility of infinite command and unbending domi-
nation. The debt owed God has always been available to be shifted to the
And thus receiving a gift usually entails ambiguity fed by the faint sense of debt, competition, and domination. It may be that non-commodity gift exchanges are really not very different from the logic of loan, debt, and credit. If gift economies harbor debt and competition, then they can hardly represent the giving of God and the giving God expects.

Does God's giving free human gifting from the reality of debt? A Christian anthropology focused on gift giving as grace rather than commodity exchange will turn to the triune community of gift-giving. Christian anthropology cannot be based solely on the opening chapters of Genesis. The human being is the imago trinitatis. The Trinity as a hermeneutic of God's gracious giving and the theory of the practice of gifting through the grace of God opens up the possibility of thinking not only God's being through the hyperbolic logic of giving but also the human giving of God's gift. God is the communion of perfect self-donation. The Trinity is the community of extravagant, overflowing, and self-diffusive goodness. The gratuity of God's giving is the mystery of God's being. The persons of the Trinity give themselves unstintingly to each other and thus constitute each other as distinct persons and as perfect communion. We cannot be this perfect communion of giving, for we live in history under the conditions of sin, evil, and death. Yet, as creatures of God's acts of love, we are to be like the divine communion. Utterly in need of Christ, yet united with him, our lives are to take on a similar trinitarian structure as givers of the goodness we have received from God. The testimony of the New Testament is that our self-giving love can take place only through the grace of God. God's being as love seeks affiliation, a society of persons who are both free and connected through acts of excessive and mutual giving. God aims at a community that responds to giving with further giving, creating relationships of mutuality and responsibility. God's excessive giving creates space and time for human reciprocity.

This can be seen first in creation. God always gives without the guarantee of return, because God gives everything that we are and thus there is nothing in us that could establish an obligation toward God. Moreover, God's gift of Christ, and through union with him the gift of life in the triune community, is given not because we deserve it but only because of our need. God's gifting does not put us in debt, because God has no need of a return from us. God already has anything we could pay back, and we
have nothing more to return than what God has given us already.

If we move from creation to redemption in the narrative of the cross, we are faced with an even greater gift of God. In order to save us from slavery, God becomes a slave (Phil. 2:4-12), the ultimate condition of indebtedness, and in obedience suffers death for us. How shall we interpret the gift God gives in the cross? Does this gift produce an infinite debt that is in principle unpayable? It is not that in the cross God is paid back our debts or the obedience of which we are not capable. Rather, God delivers us from the debt economy altogether by canceling the possibility of debt. Ransomed from debt itself, we are restored to God’s economy of unconditional giving. The others see us as unable to pay what they demand of us; God sees us as having no debt. Jesus’ obedience springs from God’s gift of participation in God’s life; the possibility of our obedience comes from this gift, not from the force of our will clearing our debt with God.

If God gives to the creation in a way that undermines the debt economy, we are left with the question of how we should give. God does give to us with the expectation that God’s giving will be reflected in our giving. We must will the giving God expects. To be the homo economicus in God’s economy of grace means that we are shaped by God’s giving rather than by maximizing utility. Failing to reflect God’s giving, blocking the receiving or further giving of God’s gifts through our sin, means that we forfeit the blessings of the life God intends for us. But God maintains God’s gift-giving relation to us despite our failure to give. Despite the fact that our lives do not reflect God’s gift giving, God still gives and is willing to give more. Squandering God’s gifts does not put an end to God’s gifts to us. If God’s giving of gifts depended on our stewardship of gifts, it would mean that they are a loan to us and thus not really gifts. God’s gift of Christ is given to sinners without preconditions of any kind. Sinners deserve this gift because they need it. Everything about our lives should be a reflection of this gift; but this way of life is not the payback of a debt. What, then, is the horizon or framework in which our giving of God’s gift can express God’s grace rather than the obligation of debt? Is there any sense in which the return of the gift properly reflects trinitarian giving?

Giving and Eucharist

Our obligation is to give as God gives to meet the needs of the creatures for whom Jesus Christ has died. For this reason, Christian anthropology under-
stands the life-serving shape of human life to be the eucharistic existence gifted at the spreading of the Lord’s table. Whereas commodity exchanges are anonymous, the emphasis in giving as God gives is on the persons brought into relationship, not on the objects that are exchanged. Gift giving takes place among people who know one another, therefore, it creates relationships of interdependence. Gift giving is community dependent and community creating. A commodity transaction ends the relationship as soon as goods are exchanged, so that one is free immediately to enter into another transaction. This may serve equilibrium, but it does not promote reconciliation and mutual life with the different other. Commodity transactions cannot serve the most important right to life because of God’s claim on every human being, that is, the right to be included, to belong to a primary community in which the conditions of life are mediated.

From the perspective of the market concept of human being, Christian anthropology does not stand up to the realism of what it takes for human beings and nature to flourish. Could the market exist without the peculiar anthropology that has been developed to make possible the workings of the market as we know them? Christian theology has to be so bold as to answer yes to this question, for it may never give a counsel of doom. An anthropology that would emphasize inclusion rather than exclusion in what it takes to live would have to assert that the absolute exclusive private property that belongs to the market anthropology so far developed, and that many economists consider the cornerstone of market economics, would have to be appended by an inclusive property right, the right to be included in what it takes to live and flourish.

Some would say that such an economy of livelihood is simply impossible. But because Christian anthropology looks for God’s consummation of creation in which this world and its economy will be redeemed, Christian hope gives the energy to work for an economy of grace now. The human project of the market should be given its due and strengthened wherever it serves life. But the market has no power against sin, evil, and death; it cannot redeem humanity or the earth. The divine act of creation is not completed until the redemptive work of God embraces the totality of humanity and the creation. And thus Christian anthropology begins and ends with the communal and cosmic symbol of God’s reign of righteousness in the eschatological banquet at which the more-than-enough of God’s grace embraces all of God’s creatures.
M. Douglas Meeks is the Cal Turner Chancellor Professor of Theology and Wesleyan Studies in The Divinity School, Vanderbilt University.

Endnotes

5. The great names in the neoclassical construal of the theory are Lionel Robinson, L. von Mises, and F. von Hayek.
7. See Aristotle, The Politics, bk. 1, chap. 1, 8-10; and Exodus 16.
9. For example, in the arguments of Richard Baxter. See Meeks, God the Economist, 127 ff.
10. Jean-Luc Marion, in God without Being, trans. by Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1991), has taken this direction in a very creative but in the end too extreme way.
11. This has led some theologians to speak of the Trinity as the "social program," that is, the framework for the life, ethos, and missional ethics of the church. See, for example, Miroslav Volf, "The Trinity Is Our Social Program: The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement," Modern Theology 14 (1998): 403-23.
When Generosity Is Not Enough

ELLEN T. CHARRY

The preacher I hear most Sundays has one basic sermon. With some variation, it goes like this: We are the wealthy and powerful. We are a bubble of highly educated, upper-middle-class privilege, living next door to a puddle of impoverished, unfortunate, poorly educated disadvantage. Our problem (their misfortune) is that we are not generous toward our neighbors.

The church sponsors a direct-service crisis ministry to the poor and is now committing itself to a program of transitional housing for the mentally ill indigent. It participates in various other food, clothing, and job counseling ministries and has an active anti-death-penalty program. It shelters its own homeless mentally ill woman in the church building. Still, week after week we are told that we are not generous enough. Between the lines, I hear that we will be guilty as long as the poor stay poor.

What is wrong with this picture? Why does this sermon make my eyes glaze over? Why are so few members of the congregation involved in the social programs the church undertakes? The psychological dynamic of this sermon is guilt-induction and has racial overtones. The disparity between our neighbors and us is measured in material terms. We are to provide the food, money, clothing, and housing that our poor neighbors cannot provide for themselves. That is, poverty is understood as a result of want of generosity on the part of the wealthy; and the answer to the problems of the poor is understood as the redistribution of material resources from us to them. If only we were more generous and less greedy and stingy with our time, money, and possessions, the poor would be better off. Moreover, we would be better Christians, since Jesus teaches that in order to gain the kingdom of heaven, the rich are to give away all their goods. As long as the poor are with us, it is rich people's fault. If we give away enough, maybe we will get skinny enough to slip through the eye of the proverbial needle and into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 19:24).

The sin of not caring adequately for the poor is deep. Since the needs of the poor seem bottomless, the generosity of the rich should be to useless—that
The more acute our guilt, the more, presumably, we will give and do. Sometimes, in listening to this sermon—always nicely delivered—I sense that the reason the poor are poor is that the rich are rich. Nevertheless, I do not think this is the message the preacher intends to convey.

Philanthropy gets top billing in the Western religious traditions. Jews have been widely known for their tradition of philanthropy, a tradition formalized in the Middle Ages by Maimonides. Muslims, Roman Catholics, and Anglicans are required to give alms in order to be in good standing with the religious community. Throughout Western history Christians led the way in establishing schools, hospitals, facilities for the elderly, services for children and travelers, and feeding and sheltering programs.

Yet, as ready as Christians have been to deliver supportive services, they are traditionally quite ambivalent about money. Church employees, for example, are often poorly paid and have minimal benefits. Jesus is cautious about money, recognizing it as a cause of corruption. Money is kind of dirty business, and everyone groans at stewardship season. Yet, the goal of helping the poor is to help them become wealthier. Here is where Christian discomfort with money and wealth looks odd. Why do the people who disapprove of wealth, at least for some, commend it for others?

Americans, perhaps partly because they have been outstandingly religious, are extremely generous on the world scene, ready to help in almost any acute crisis. Yet, the face of monetary generosity is changing. Since the end of the Cold War, humanitarian foreign aid—not only from the United States but also internationally—has shrunk, largely because of widespread corruption throughout the Third World. Domestic welfare programs have been overhauled, tied to work, and otherwise curtailed or limited to prevent welfare dependency and fraud. The nation does not look kindly on corrupt world leaders who line their pockets and send their children to the finest Boston schools, while their people suffer without electricity and with AIDS. Nor does it approve of deadbeat dads who leave the children they beget to the state's care. Taxpayers resent being taken in.

These minimal reminders of the complexity of poverty suggest that we need more than generosity to address the issues that surround poverty either domestically or globally. This is not to suggest that poverty arises from corruption, but that not all poverty is the same. Poverty in the midst of a wealthy, democratic capitalist culture is one thing. Poverty in an under-
developed or authoritarian society is quite another. If poverty is not all the same, but assumes different dynamics and cultural patterns depending on where and why it occurs, then the means for addressing it will necessarily vary. Poverty in the US, for example, is quite different from poverty in India, Uganda, or Guatemala, because the societies are differently structured and have different histories and expectations.

At the same time, distinct cultures or lifestyles of wealth, and cultures or lifestyles of poverty, do transcend cultural differences. There is usually a strong correlation between income and education, between education and class, and between class and income. These factors may be interrelated in a variety of ways. Yet, it is not clear that income level is the key to education, class, and prosperity. It may be the other way round. If so, fighting poverty becomes much more complicated than generosity alone can handle.

Reconsidering Help for the Poor

In this circumstance, generosity becomes but one feature of the moral imperative to help. We are forced to ask what help is and when help helps. People who help want their help to work.

Christians are increasingly pressing beyond general moral exhortations to "get involved." They are looking at the concrete circumstances of poverty and seeing its complexity. Poverty today is more complicated than it was during the Great Depression, after which our great welfare programs were put in place. Poverty is a way of life—sometimes a deadly one. In some cases, poverty is tied to technology that is now deeply implicated in issues of wealth and poverty. The ability to benefit from technology requires education and a set of skills and attitudes to use it productively. In other cases, poverty and illness are linked to inappropriate sexual behavior and patterns of family structure that resist change. As the global economy becomes more knowledge dependent, the unskilled and undereducated increasingly fall behind.

The situation in the underdeveloped world is slightly different. Here, too, education is needed. Yet, in the many parts of the world the underclasses are disempowered because traditions of democracy, education, and freedom are not in place. Additionally, widespread political corruption poses a serious obstacle to the way the world's wealthy hope to help. In preindustrial circumstances, postindustrial strategies imported from abroad may not be workable.
In response to this complexity, US orientation to the questions of global poverty is shifting from donation to enterprise. That is, instead of humanitarian foreign aid, Americans are exporting their business expertise and products. While this seems to some to be a shift from generosity to greed and exploitation, there is a rationale to this approach. Americans believe in exporting democracy around the world as the best form of government. Free enterprise appears to us to be a natural component of democracy, and it has brought great prosperity with it. We see our economic way of life as a gift that we have to give. It encourages creative thinking, develops skills, brings employment, and generally floats many boats. Yet this panacea approach homogenizes the complexities of the income gap and treats the problem of poverty in terms that benefit American business interests. As instruments of international development, the values and the culture that accompany our best export may prove as harmful as it may be helpful to the Two-thirds world that is not prepared for the information economy. It did not work in Russia. Poverty and wealth either spawn or perhaps more truly express different value systems, even if they agree wholeheartedly that money is essential. This is to say that we are, or should be, ambivalent about materialism. Is exporting the ideology of material consumption a true good?

The complexity of treating poverty is becoming clearer. Neither welfare nor business has solved the problem of poverty in the US. Here the issue of poverty is different from that in the developing nations, because here the poor subsist in the midst of plenty and with an army of programs and workers to help them. Want of private generosity seems unable to account for the whole problem.

Now, interest in faith-based initiatives for the inner city suggests that perhaps social programs and tax policy, focusing primarily on income redistribution mechanisms, are inadequate to deal with poverty in postindustrial capitalism. This type of poverty is about more than money. Religious faith shapes the inner self, giving hope and a sense of divine destiny and dignity in God's eyes. Even on the cynical view that interest in faith-based initiatives is partially motivated by hopes of saving taxpayer dollars, there is also a belief that internal transformation is needed to overcome obstacles to boring a way out of poverty.

At the same time, the religious left is rethinking its traditional focus on the sufficiency of income redistribution plans. Even as liberal a writer as
Ronald Sider now advocates rethinking social policy to reflect the role that education and family life play in forming a self that is equipped to escape from poverty. A centrist consensus is gathering to the effect that there is more to poverty than the income gap. Faith, school, and family are resurfacing as essential, if indirect, means for alleviating poverty and its attendant ills. Poverty in a wealthy country like the United States is more than a circumstance. It is a way of life that is passed on from one generation to another. This tradition has to do with the way one's inner life and social skills are formed and nourished.

In the US, poverty is associated with class, and class differentials have to do with what I will call “style.” Style, in turn, is connected with education. For example, the upper, more-educated, classes, having some degree of psychological sophistication, are likely to discipline their children using reason and verbal approval and disapproval. If they have (1) some understanding of child development and (2) been trained to think about the role their own anger plays in disciplining children, they are likely to be more effective disciplinarians. Education trains them to separate their own sense of frustration, injury, or disappointment aroused by a child's misbehavior from what the child is capable of understanding and doing from a developmental standpoint. That is, education enables a parent to see the misbehavior and the punishment to be inflicted from the child's vantage point.

Those who lack this psychological sophistication and/or those who are prone to act out rather than talk out their frustration and anger are more likely to express disapproval of children's behavior through physical punishment. If disciplined with a good deal of corporal punishment, especially for deeds of which they are not physically or mentally capable, children may not learn what the parent intends the child to learn. On the contrary, they may learn to fear the presence of adults and come to distrust them. For example, if a parent does not understand that toddlers learn to explore and understand the world by touching things and putting objects in their mouths but expects them to act “well behaved” in adult terms, the corporal discipline imposed by the parent may be useless at best, and perhaps worse; for the message conveyed is that the world is not a place to explore with natural curiosity.

Without belaboring examples, the poor need the attitudes; values; behaviors; and skills of thrift, industry, and sociality that equip and sustain them to thrive in a competitive, knowledge-based, vertiginous culture.
Generosity is not enough. Too great a focus on the generosity of the wealthy may even have the unanticipated side effect of deflecting attention from the real needs of the poor. In short, the poor in the midst of wealth in an open society need skills and education in order to use money and material goods profitably.

It may be disappointing to some to have to return to the traditional trio of faith, school, and family. Many had hoped that social programs and tax policy could take up the slack as these great institutions faltered. Nurturing faith, enjoying becoming educated, and learning marriage and family skills take much more time and effort than applying for welfare or food stamps or even holding an unskilled job. Getting out of poverty requires cultivating a different style of living. The poor themselves may be disheartened by the news that an active life of faith and participation in religious community life, extensive education, and stable family life develop skills and values essential for negotiating the shoals of the economy. Why should all of this be necessary for getting out of poverty? Is the work needed worth the reward? The point here is that a whole battery of attitudes, skills, and aptitudes are required for partaking of the basic institutions that make for prosperity. It seems a chicken-and-egg problem for those locked out of the world of prosperity. How will those without a good education, a stable and loving family, and a faith that leads them into the world acquire these assets? Alternatively, how do the poor become sufficiently skilled to be able to step into the moving river without them? It looks like a vicious cycle of exclusion.

Children, for example, need a supportive, not an overburdened, family structure to benefit from education. Yet, men need job security, a certain income level, a lot of energy, and a very specific set of values and styles of behavior to support a family. Further, one needs advanced education to be able to work with one's mind rather than one's hands in order to secure job advancement that makes a man marriageable. To set oneself to the task of being educated one needs to overcome the fear of educational failure and personal pride.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of all of this, for those mired in generations of poverty and deprivation, is the need to move past the anger, resentment, and fear that cut them off from pride of accomplishment and turns them shortsightedly toward pride of self. Popular artists like Eminem merchandises cultural and social alienation and violence as a way of being. A teen subculture reared on contempt for a civilized way of life and the
rule of law cannot help its devotees become productive members of society. It is a subculture of death. Such anger and resentment reinforce social marginalization and entrench defeat in the mind and heart. For without the ability to pass through resentment, fear of failure, and false pride, the strengths needed to leave the culture of poverty will be difficult to find. Money cannot buy them.

One of the several dangerous attributes of this music subculture is its tendency to teach that whatever misfortunes befall one are the fault of someone else. Along with other “blaming” ideologies, this teaching discourages its audience from taking responsibility for their own lives, regardless of the origin of the problem. Socialized alienation deters its hearers from adopting precisely those middle-class values that enable successful participation in the culture.

This brings us to a set of psychological concerns that impinge on the ability of the poor to climb up. Given the enormity of the task, it is understandable that the poor may have a defeatist attitude about family and education and experience faith as a further pacifying rather than an enabling mechanism. Yet feeling defeated is a signal of sure defeat. In order to make one’s way into the skills and practices of productive citizenship, one must make a reasonable incremental beginning that one can emotionally and socially rely upon.

**Christian Contributions to Helping the Poor**

Where intellect, social skills, interpersonal skills, personal discipline, and strong motivation are needed to thrive in the world of plenty, the church has resources with which the state cannot compete. The point here is not that the church can provide what family and education do. It is that the church has spiritual resources to fit people to participate better in education and family life that in turn train the self in the behaviors of success.

We should note at this point that the skills and attitudes that the resources of the church offer are not quite the same as those discussed by the popular self-esteem movement. Christianity does have a strong doctrine of self-esteem, but it is on a different foundation than that appropriated by secular culture. Secular self-esteem comes from public accomplishments that are valued by the market economy. One’s economic value becomes the basis for estimating one’s self-worth. While some of this—for example, pride in being able to provide for one’s family—may indeed help the poor, it is
dependent on external recognition for affirmation, and that is always risky. The world of work can be quite unforgiving. More is needed to climb up the ladder than external reinforcement. No one should understand this better than the poor, who get almost no affirmation from their environment.

The Christian view of self-esteem is quite different from the secular one. It is sometimes expressed through the doctrine of being created in the image of God or in being adopted as a child of God through baptism and faith in Christ. It could also be expressed through being a member of the covenant of the people of God or the doctrine of election. Regardless of the doctrinal articulation, Christian self-esteem is grounded in God, and pride comes from living out one's vocation within that doctrinal framework.

For example, one who understands herself to be baptized into the death of Christ and given new life as a member of his body, the church, will see the world differently than a person whose life and accomplishments depend on his own merits. Such a person's dignity is not vulnerable to how others regard her, because her sense of self is not dependent on them, but is sure in God. This personal security protects one from the demons of pride and jealousy that so often get us into trouble with authority figures. It also relieves us of needing to exert power over others, in reaction against lacking power in the worldly sense of the word. Spiritual dignity of this sort is central to becoming free enough to take risks in the worlds of school, work, marriage, and family.

One could and perhaps should go on at length about the theological foundation of a secure self that is able to step into the flowing river of our competitive culture. Yet there is another set of Christian resources that works simultaneously with a deep theological grounding for a vivacious and gracious self that can withstand the vicissitudes of life.

One such spiritual resource is the notion of a rule of life. A rule of life may have different particulars, but every rule of life has in common the notion that a successful life requires internal self-discipline. Perhaps the most well-known and accessible Christian rule of life is the Rule of Saint Benedict. The brilliance of the Benedictine Rule is its simplicity. It is based on the principle of an ordered and balanced life in which all things have a proper and limited place. The components of the Benedictine life are prayer, work, and study in a simple context in which rest, adequate nourishment, and the blessing of silence cultivate a stable self. It is a rule that values the ordinariness of life without romanticizing it or spurning it. It is
WHEN GENEROSITY IS NOT ENOUGH

an instrument to thwart jealousy and competitiveness and to cultivate service—especially hospitality—and humility.

There are now many sources for adapting the Rule of Benedict for the laity living outside the monastery. It might be interesting to adapt the Rule for prison inmates, adolescents, or overwhelmed adults who need to develop internal discipline and ordered thinking. Studying the Rule with the poor or other at-risk persons in small groups, with some of the excellent guides for its use, might prove quite interesting.

Some people may be interested in developing their own rule of life. This has the advantage of tailoring the Rule to one’s own rhythms but the disadvantage of not being able to link the pilgrim with a long and venerable tradition and thousands of persons who have lived the Rule before him. Attaching oneself to the communion of saints in this way has an energizing quality that making up one’s own rule lacks. One of the hallmarks of despair is feeling alone. By joining oneself to a long-beloved community, even if invisibly, one undermines the self-pity that can accompany loneliness, especially when one is in narrow straits.

Christian Scripture also contains many helpful resources that are both rules of life and agents of spiritual and intellectual formation. One is the Mosaic law; another is the wisdom of the Book of Proverbs.

Mosaic law, like its successor, rabbinic law, forms the self from the outside in. When the rules laid down in the law are both practiced and taken to heart, behaving regularly in a certain manner has the effect of shaping the mind and heart. Even if these rules are only practiced and not fully internalized, their observance smooths over relationships and civilizes the populace.

Much biblical and rabbinic law is directed against the practices of paganism that have no place in the religion of Israel because they corrupt the mind and heart. Plato took a similar stance regarding the effects of Homeric religion. Alexandrian Christianity in the third and fourth centuries likewise argued for Christianity against paganism, because pagan practices were morally corrupting. In short, Judaism, Greek philosophy, and patristic Christianity all offered theology and practices that would reverse the socially and personally destructive dynamic of paganism.

Our interest here is, of course, quite different from that of the ancient world. The poor are not victims of paganism; indeed, they may be quite religious. Yet, one underlying dynamic suggests the appropriateness of
listening to these ancient voices. The biblical writers, Greek philosophers, and the Church Fathers all recognized the intimate connection between beliefs, behavior, and societal well-being. To put it simply, they realized that a culture is only as healthy as its members are socially and psychologically able.

*Mutatis mutandis*, the poor in a wealthy and opportunity-filled culture like North America are marginalized because they lack the skills and styles needed to enter the mainstream. They are kept poor by their lack of education and decision-making skills—social and interpersonal skills that are normally formed at home, church, and school—and they are victims of states of mind that reinforce their marginalization and sense of failure. These problems are greatly exacerbated in a knowledge economy that sharply divides those who work with their minds from those who work with their hands.

One way to capacitate the poor is by helping them to internalize beliefs and practice habits that shape the self in more productive patterns than they have had heretofore. Leviticus 19 is replete with laws that shape the inner life. Verses 9-10 teach care for the poor, while v. 13 teaches fair treatment of workers. Two verses order landowners not to eat of the fruit of newly planted trees until the fifth year of their harvest. This teaches delaying gratification, respect for the earth, and gratitude to God (vv. 23-5). These attitudes are not exhorted but are taught through practice, so that people can see plainly how to live the values that God holds dear.

Other examples come from the Deuteronomic laws pertaining to cities of refuge (Deut. 19:1-11). In a society without government and a police force, the divine injunction to set up sacred refuges for people who commit what we call "involuntary manslaughter" taught both clear thinking and developed considerably the notion of justice. The cities-of-refuge idea distinguished intentional murder from accidental death. It forced the society to protect those who accidentally cause the death of another from the vengeance that one might expect from the victim's relatives who would seek blood regardless of the circumstances surrounding the event. This rule develops civilization by cultivating a more-refined sense of justice and fairness.

Another example is the law against moving boundary markers (Deut. 19:14). This is a culture without surveyors. On receiving a parcel of land, one is forbidden from moving a neighbor's boundary markers. It relies on an honor system when it is easy to cheat one's neighbor. This rule assumes the worst and the best about us and calls attention to the temptation by
WHEN GENEROSITY IS NOT ENOUGH

establishing a divine rule. Good boundaries make good neighbors. The rule creates the appreciation for the civilizing effects of the practice.

The Book of Proverbs is another important scriptural text that is designed to build productive life skills. Its teachings on sex, for example, may be helpful to the poor, *inter alia*. Many social and economic problems in the US today are intimately linked with sex and the decline of family life. Poverty is closely connected with the bearing of children outside of marriage and with fatherlessness. Permanent, healthy monogamy is better for children than living with mother and a series of boyfriends, with grandparents, or in fostercare. Listen to the fatherly wisdom for men:

Drink water from your own cistern,
flowing water from your own well.
Should your springs be scattered abroad,
streams of water in the streets?
Let them be for yourself alone,
and not for sharing with strangers.
Let your fountain be blessed,
and rejoice in the wife of your youth,
a lovely deer, a graceful doe.
May her breasts satisfy you at all times;
may you be intoxicated always by her love.
Why should you be intoxicated,
my son, by another woman
and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?
For human ways are under the
eyes of the LORD,
and he examines all their paths.
The iniquities of the wicked ensnare them,
and they are caught in the toils of their sin.
They die for lack of discipline,
and because of their great folly they are lost.

Prov. 5:15-23

The author of Proverbs is definitely a "family man." He teaches men to care for their children and the importance of cultivating wisdom, prudence, and righteous living. He offers rules for success. Chapter 13 makes the case
that prosperity is the reward of the righteous, and the righteous are those who heed good teaching and embrace discipline and correction. The rule-based approach to honorable worldly success of Proverbs 13 counsels guarding one’s mouth, diligence in work, honesty, earning income slowly and intelligently, heeding reproof, and respect for the commandments.

There is a moralizing quality to this material—perhaps even to the suggestion that generosity is not enough—that is likely to be off-putting to contemporary sensibilities. We are loathe to think that poverty could be connected to issues of character or that an external authority like Scripture—especially the Old Testament—should be held up as a better way than others that we have tried and come to depend upon. Yet, traditional reliance on generosity alone paves the way for romanticizing the poor as helpless victims of circumstance over which they have no control. This pacifying attitude toward them, however, may not be very helpful. First of all, it takes away their freedom. Second, ceasing to be poor in the information age requires great industry, energy, and personal discipline. Suggesting that the poor must wait until the wealthy become generous enough to share their wealth may be contraindicated as well as unrealistic. Finally, depending on financial generosity alone patronizes the poor, for it assumes that they are not able to act on their own behalf.

The purpose of this reflection has been to suggest that the church has more in its repertoire than direct service programs and income redistribution policies. While these may be necessary and important, they should not be used so extensively that other, more stimulating, approaches to helping the poor are lost sight of. Generosity comes in a variety of forms.

Ellen T. Charry is Professor of Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey.

Endnotes
The Bishops Initiative on Children and Poverty: Its History and Future

PAMELA D. COUTURE

Who are the most vulnerable children in our annual conference? This was the question Carole and Judy asked each other as they waited in the airport for their flight home. They had attended a workshop led by Bishop Jack Meadors and worship led by Bishop Kenneth Carder, chairperson and secretary of the Bishops Initiative on Children and Poverty respectively, at “Focus 1997,” an event sponsored by the General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church. The ensuing conversation between Carole Vaughn, Director of Discipleship and Children’s Ministry of the Virginia Annual Conference, and Dr. Judy Bennett led to the birth of the conference’s ‘All God’s Children’ camp for children of incarcerated mothers. The camp allows seventy-five children of incarcerated mothers to attend summer camp for a week in an environment with one church-appointed mentor for every two campers. The camp seeks to establish relationships between the church mentors and the children and their mothers. Each mentor agrees to remain in relationship with the child, the caregiver, and his or her mother for the next year. Congregations have increasingly welcomed the children into the life of the church. In 2001, the camp is expanding its ministry to a week in two locations. The ongoing support of the bishop, Joe E. Pennel, says Ms. Vaughn, is essential to the success of the camp.

Recently, children of the annual conference, accompanied by parents and led by Bishop Pennel, marched to the state legislature to bring to legislators the concerns for public policy issues arising from the camp and other activities of the Virginia Bishops Initiative on Children. The marchers brought the concerns in a different form—a book of children’s prayers. Marchers wanted members of the House and Senate to make laws with the needs of children and the poor in mind, children like those who attend the camp. Children of incarcerated mothers are more likely to be poor and are at higher risk for negative behaviors.
The focus of the Bishops Initiative in Virginia taught marchers, camp mentors, and church members that seemingly adult issues are very much on the minds of children—issues such as restoring guidance counselors in elementary schools, assuring health care for children, and creating a living wage for working parents. They have also discovered that the children of their churches are concerned about such issues. All God's children—children of the incarcerated, the mentors, the tutors and others touched by the Initiative—have a voice that the legislature lawmakers need to hear.

Children and adults also discover that God can hear the children's voices. At camp the children regularly receive notes from children in the Virginia congregations. One child was incredulous that a child he didn't even know would want to write him a note. When he asked Carole why a stranger would write to him, she replied that people in the church think this is one way Christians show God's love. "Then God must really be alive," the child replied. The child experiences God as alive; the ones who wrote the notes experience themselves as means of God's grace.

This kind of program builds relationships across social and economic boundaries, helps people recognize the humanness of those often dehumanized, leads people to issues that create and maintain poverty, engages children with children, and builds the religious experience of all persons involved. It offers the possibility of the kind of transformation for which the Bishops Initiative on Children and Poverty hopes. A stellar example, the program is also unusual for its wholeness and comprehensiveness: visits are made house to house—visiting both the house of the child and that of the governor! The program is a sign, however, that, with leadership, education, will, and the grace of God, the goals of the Initiative can be met.

The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church approved the Episcopal Initiative on Children and Poverty in 1995 (subsequently renamed "The Bishops Initiative on Children and Poverty"). An episcopal initiative occurs when the Council of Bishops decides that an issue is so important to the church and to the world that the bishops should focus their teaching around that issue. They wrote, approved, and distributed a short, practical theological foundation document that outlined the urgency of the problem of children and poverty and the theological rationale for the church's response. It outlined three goals: creating resources for congregations, reshaping the church, and evangelization. In contrast to previous initiatives, such as "In Defense of Creation" and "Vital Congregations," the
bishops chose not to center the Initiative around a longer teaching document. Rather, they sought to create a movement that taught through practice—an initiative that could be implemented by each bishop, inside and outside the United States, as was appropriate in his or her locality. In what follows, I begin by suggesting the obvious achievements and remaining work of the Initiative, relative to its goals. Then I discuss some of the subtle difficulties the Initiative faces to be truly successful. First, then, what has the Initiative achieved toward its goals and what must it still accomplish?

Reshaping the Church

Through "reshaping the church" the Initiative seeks to make children and poverty the central reference point of all that the church does. Reshaping can mean cultural transformation—a consciousness-raising that changes the common sense of the community. The community becomes uncomfortable with the old assumptions, norms, and symbols of its culture and lives toward a new culture. The word can also mean spiritual formation, the shaping of character toward compassion, generosity, resilience, hospitality, and humility. Reshaping can further mean developing new habits, patterns, and practices. These embodied activities express our theology and turn individual "works of mercy" into living a life by "the principle of mercy," fully integrated with "works of piety" that orient a life fully toward God. Last, reshaping can denote restructuring the budgets, bureaucracy, and other resources of the church. It is a very common sentiment that the goal of "reshaping the church has miles to go toward fulfillment."

The United Methodist Church excels at creating programs and ministries. In various places the church may be good at building relationships, even across generational and socioeconomic boundaries. It plods toward transforming its underlying culture. Many parts of the church know that the culture of the church, a culture that is still dominated by middle-class denominationalism, must change. But toward what will it change? The Initiative provides one effort among the many that seek to reshape the culture of the church. This question of reshaping the church leads us into the more subtle questions underlying the Initiative.

Creating Resources

Discussion of the Initiative in the Council of Bishops has spawned a number of resources that have supported bishops and their partners in
local teaching efforts. *A Church for All God's Children* is an online guide to a series of activities recommended for local congregations. By using the guide to develop their ministries in a number of areas, congregations can receive a bishop's award. In response to a passionate plea from the African bishops to their colleagues, "Hope for the Children of Africa" is an effort of the Council of Bishops to call attention to the urgent needs of children in Africa. It focuses on partnerships between US and Central conferences. The compact disk "Prayer for Children," sung and produced by Kurt Bestor and the Pinnacle Group, was used at the dedication of the United Methodist Building in Washington, D.C. It was given to The United Methodist Church, and the CD is available for use by congregations. The General Council on Ministries created a directory of general boards and agencies' programs related to children and poverty. A number of seminaries, both United Methodist and those with United Methodist student populations, have offered courses, library exhibitions, or other events focusing on children and poverty. Some persons have suggested that the worship resources developed through various Initiative events, general boards and agencies, and annual conferences be collected and published. Individual annual conferences and local congregations have created or become involved in more programs and activities than can be listed in this article. Only the creation of a national database of programs and activities, with short descriptions and contact persons, could really capture the activities that have resulted from the Initiative. If such a national database is created through the Initiative's web site, ideas can be shared and connections can be made. If every bishop identified five to fifteen significant activities in his or her annual conference that have resulted from the Initiative, an impressive collaboration of local churches and annual conferences could begin. The Initiative task force is considering developing such a resource through its web site.

The Initiative has received about $200,000 in unsolicited donations. This money will be distributed as grants to local congregations that develop new ministries related to children and poverty.

**Evangelism**

What is evangelism? I see evidence that The United Methodist Church is struggling with a new kind of evangelism—not the evangelism of the unchurched but the evangelism of the churched. Leaders are actively...
working to help church members develop roots in biblical and Wesleyan theology and to energize them spiritually. The Initiative is part of this trend.

Evangelism is about deepening religious experience; sharing the meaning of the gospel; and living in greater accord with the example of Jesus. Bishops have reported a more profound sense of faith, meaning, and hope within the church as a result of ministries related to the Initiative. Indeed, the bishops themselves have been evangelized! As a result of the Initiative, the bishops experience a growing sense of morale and hope in the future of the church. Bishop Don Ott said he came to the episcopacy with a sense of hope for the way he could influence the church and the world for the good; but he became disheartened by the knot of episcopal tasks that seemed to accomplish little. Through the Initiative he was able to say to himself, “I am a bishop for children and the poor,” retrieving a meaning and sense of identity he had taken into the episcopacy. Bishop Ott’s disillusionment and his retrieval of hope is not unusual for bishops and other persons who have worked toward the goals of the Initiative.

Evangelism is about strengthening the United Methodist identity through reclaiming the practical theology of the Wesleyan movement. In the last decade Wesleyan theology has moved from being a scholarly endeavor to becoming a central referent in denominational documents. What Wesleyans call “the means of grace” has received particular focus. The practices through which human beings seek to make themselves open to God’s grace—works of piety and works of mercy—are necessary for and interdependent in religious experience. Writings that interpret Wesleyan theology or that appropriate Wesleyan theology for the life of the church (such as the Connectional Process Team Report) concretely identify the practices of piety (prayer, reading the Scriptures, attending worship, partaking in Eucharist). But when commending practices of mercy (feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, educating the illiterate, creating economic means for the poor), they tend to be abstract rather than concrete. Whenever this tendency is corrected and persons are introduced to the mission of the early Wesleyans, they respond!

Evangelism is about creating new relationships that help deepen faith. When people work on outward-looking projects together, they find hope and renewal. The Initiative has fostered and supported new relationships among general boards and agencies, local ecumenical groups, pan-Methodist groups, and annual conferences in the United States and around the world. The
Initiative has recognized and supported people of faith who have worked anonymously at projects related to children and poverty for a long time. The support and connection that have occurred in many places are incomplete, with major questions remaining, such as, How does the Initiative relate to other poverty programs, such as Shalom Zones and Holy Boldness?

Some conferences, such as Virginia, have developed projects that have created new relationships between members of the church and children and persons who live with poverty. Such efforts raise the question: How can ministries that intervene in personal relationships and systems of poverty, such as the “All God’s Children” camp in Virginia, become the norm rather than the exception in The United Methodist Church? Others have intensified their partnerships with Central conferences (such as Missouri with Mozambique and Northern Illinois with Angola), creating relationships and direct care between the First and Third worlds.

Is a Holistic Initiative Possible?

Is it possible, based on the tenets of the Christian faith, to advocate for political, economic, and cultural justice while attending to interpersonal, familial, and community relationships? The bishops who have become leaders among their peers in the Bishops Initiative on Children and Poverty have answered this question with a resounding yes. Children, especially those who live in poverty, cannot wait for the long, slow process necessary for economic, political, and cultural change; they and their families need personal support relationships now. But poor children, all children, and all poor persons and families live with cultures, economies, and national and international politics whose priorities leave them behind; therefore, long-term, international strategies toward creating systems of justice for children and persons living with poverty are absolutely necessary.

The Bishops Initiative on Children and Poverty challenges the historic and comfortable divisions between those who are advocates for economic and political policy, those who seek to create cultural change, and those who minister in interpersonal activities, such as tutoring, camping, and crisis intervention. The Initiative overturns fundamental assumptions embedded in The United Methodist Church, restating them in this way:

1. Caring for children is not primarily a “women’s” or a “parent’s” issue. Caring for children safely is the responsibility of all adult women and men, especially those committed to living as disciples of Jesus Christ.
2. Spirituality is not first about prayer and studying the Scriptures and only secondarily about visiting the poor and the imprisoned, clothing the naked, and feeding the hungry. Spirituality grounded in prayer and befriending are essential aspects of life in Christ and are mutually interdependent in rich religious experience.

3. Church unity is not primarily formed through theological consensus; rather, it happens around a mission that persons of different theological emphases can participate in together.

4. The United Methodist Church is not a US denomination with extensions in countries it has "colonized" through mission. It is an international body of Christ whose members suffer together, sacrifice for each other, and rejoice in the safety and security of all vulnerable persons.

5. It is impossible to draw neat distinctions between preaching and teaching, program development, and pastoral practice. All theological practices work together toward a common good.

The Initiative implicitly asks United Methodists to heal the historic tension between charity, mercy, and justice; to call women and men, young and old to learn the practices of compassion and justice for children and people who live in poverty; to reaffirm the necessary interrelationship between love of God and love of neighbor; to unite around the care of vulnerable people as an essential theological practice, even when our secondary theological beliefs differ; to consider the welfare of the vulnerable persons, both in other nations and in one's own, to be equally important; and to bring different divisions of the denomination together to do what needs to be done on behalf of the vulnerable—children and persons living in poverty—regardless of church territory or "turf."

These assumptions have not been directly stated; they have been sidestepped and tripped over like boulders in the path toward implementing the stated goals of the Initiative. The bishops' ability to create transformation through the Initiative is related to the challenge of addressing the main arteries of the church—its politics, its economics, its culture, and its understanding of discipleship based on its biblical interpretation and theology. The assumptive world of the church is the greatest obstacle to the church's care of children and families living in poverty. Yet the task is urgent: children born in the first year of the Initiative, 1995, are now six years old. Of those children, some have been helped by the church, but many have been left behind.
Why is the transformation of the assumptive world of the church so difficult?

Problems Inherent in the Emphasis on Children and Poverty

A bishops' initiative on children and poverty developed for good reason. Children are the poorest persons in the world. By standards originally based on minimum nutritional requirements, the child-poverty rate in the United States is 23 percent. In poverty-stricken countries of the world, over 90 percent of children may be destitute. An analysis of the lives of poor children within their social ecology—the families, communities, nations, cultures, politics, economies, and natural environments in which they live—reveals a concentration of the factors related to childhood and poverty, creating extreme destitution and vulnerability.

The bishops' focus on children and poverty, as accurate as it was to the population most shaped by poverty, creates a loophole through which the church can gravitate to its comfort zone. As the church implements the bishops' call, middle-class congregations too often focus the issue on children, not poor children. Conversely, advocates for persons living in poverty may be more comfortable with poor adults than with children. The problem is exacerbated by the lack of parallelism in the name. "Children" refers to a population; "poverty" to an environment. It is easier to see the people in children than the people in poverty. But calling people "the poor" is problematic. This is the language the wealthy and the middle-class use to refer to another population. Such language can be marginalizing and paternalistic when used in the presence of the poor, except in those communities in which the poor have chosen this designation for themselves. These practical and linguistic problems point to one of the most significant emphases facing the Initiative in its next phase: how to build community across socioeconomic boundaries. How can "the poor," "the middle-class," and "the wealthy" become friends in such a way that they can identify one another by their identities, strengths, and characteristics rather than by their poverty or wealth?

Bishops as Teachers

The 1744 annual conference was conducted in a format of questions that go to the heart of any episcopal initiative: What to teach? How to teach? What to do? Through a bishops initiative, the bishops exercise the teaching ministry
of their office. In addition to teaching within their episcopal areas, they also teach one another. The Initiative on Children and Poverty has kept the issue of children and poverty before the bishops, reminding them to teach about it. It has helped them to gain the confidence to teach about children and poverty. But are they equipped to teach about children and poverty?

Leaders cannot teach well simply by announcing their intent to teach. They need a conceptual framework within which to organize their knowledge, especially when they want to teach about a subject as complex and comprehensive as children and poverty. Some persons have wondered whether the bishops are equipped to teach about this subject. A theological consultant, addressing the Council of Bishops on another theological issue, observed: “I always worry when I hear about the bishops teaching, because their theological resources are so out of date.” By inviting this professor and others to stimulate their theological discourse, the bishops have shown that they take their mandate to be theological teachers seriously.

Another consultant to the Initiative has remarked that some of the economic and social information upon which the church relies is often fifteen years out of date. Among researchers it is common knowledge that while one can get immediate information about our economic well-being, the data about our social well-being is at least two years behind. Alan Greenspan and the Federal Reserve could not make adjustments for economic well-being if it received data at the rate that social policymakers and the church receive its data. Paul McCleary, a consultant to the Initiative task force, has suggested that the church could develop a resource center that helps bishops and the church compensate for this social lag. In a world that is changing as rapidly as this one, he argues, the bishops would be well served by a resource center to which they could turn for current information that would inform advocacy and practice. This resource center would not be a program agency but would serve as a funnel of information, based on fast-changing realities, and would help to make the bishops’ work more effective. As a professor who spends many hours educating myself on issues related to children and poverty (hours that I know a bishop does not have), I am sympathetic to this suggestion. I, too, would be well served by such a resource center! The subject is very comprehensive, and there is a wealth of information to gather and analyze. But this suggestion has yet to receive an adequate hearing among the bishops.

Even without the most up-to-date information, the thrust of the
bishops' teaching can occur in the realm of reshaping the church's assumptive world. An active community of inductive learning is most effective when the common sense of the community needs to change. The bishops are at their best in situations involving inductive learning and teaching. As the Initiative developed and the most active annual conferences were building on their existing knowledge about children and poverty, the community of learning began to take over. Inspired by the learning taking place in their annual conferences, the bishops began teaching and inspiring one another, which amounted to some of their best teaching. The bishops grew in their ability to support the learning that was happening in their annual conferences and to lead the conferences into practices that stimulate biblical and theological thinking. By supporting one another, those bishops who wanted to could teach their annual conferences. Bishops who choose to teach through practice can initiate change in the culture of their annual conferences. However, "What to teach? How to teach? What to do?" remain crucial questions for the Initiative.

The Need for Spiritual Resilience

The non-episcopal leaders and other members of the church experienced a rare moment of unity of opinion when, at the end of the last quadrennium, they asked, "Is this the bishops' quadrennial emphasis or are they in it for the long haul? Or are they moving on to something else?" They suspected the latter. The bishops affirmed the former. However, the ground beneath the Initiative has shifted. Neither is it new nor does it create fresh energy for the bishops. The Initiative has nourished some episcopal leaders, but all have not grown equally. The challenge for sustaining the Initiative's goals until they are reached centers on this question: Can the leaders of the Initiative among the bishops hold spirituality and social responsibility together?

The Initiative will make significant gains in its second quadrennium only if the bishops water the Initiative from a flowing stream of spiritual courage. Nourished by this stream, they can be persistent about making connections between spirituality, on the one hand, and responsibility toward children and persons living in poverty, on the other. The contrast is stark between Jesus' generous attitude toward children and the poor and the dismissive or even hostile attitude that is building momentum in the United States. The contrast is evidence of serious spiritual malaise. People in the United States, however, seem to be yearning for spirituality and
PAMELA D. COUTURE

connection with God. As public theologians who are fed by their own spiritu­
ality, the bishops may be able to model for the public in the United
States a way of living that closes the divide. When the habits and practices
of the church implicitly or explicitly reveal this contrast, it exposes a deep
alienation in the church's relationship with God. It suggests that evange­
лизing within the church, as defined earlier, is profoundly needed.

Evangelizing the church begins with evangelizing the bishops and
strengthening their resilience for the leadership that is required. The spiri­
tual courage necessary to reform the church from within is underesti­
mated. I was disheartened by one bishop's comment: "It's apple pie; who
can be against children and poverty?" I was discouraged further when
another bishop said, "It's just another social action program." An initiative
on children and poverty that is perceived as "apple pie" underestimates the
radical ecclesial evangelism that is necessary if the church is to be reshaped
to any significant extent. An initiative on children and poverty that is
perceived as just "social action" will miss the deep yearnings for religious
experience among all generations and all socioeconomic populations that
God through the church seeks to provide. Initiative leaders must clearly
communicate to their colleagues in the Council of Bishops and to the
church that an integration of spiritual transformation and social responsi­

What to Teach? How to Teach? What to Do?

A key question has to do with what to teach in the second quadrennium of
the Initiative. The new task force for the Initiative is unified in its call for
education of the Council of Bishops and the church in the root causes and
effects of poverty. This systemic analysis must integrate the church’s knowl-
edge about poverty with local, urban, suburban, and rural dynamics of poverty in all countries and locate these in the dynamics of international global economics. How does the global economy exploit or edify children and persons living in poverty? What economic, cultural, and religious motives and beliefs prevent the treatment or eradication of diseases, including water-borne disease, malnutrition, worms, HIV/AIDS, and other preventable diseases? How does the United States both depend on migrant labor and persecute migrant workers? What economic, cultural, and religious beliefs contribute to low-birth-weight babies, lack of education for women and girls, abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and sexual abuse? How can The United Methodist Church counter exploitation and promote flourishing around the world where it has influence? In a time when we have a United Methodist president and vice-president and sixty-five United Methodist legislators, how can United Methodist leaders make their values and voices known to the most powerful political leaders in the world, holding them accountable to basic United Methodist teachings?

How to teach is also an important question. A steady diet of statistics or stories about poverty or violence and reminders about First World privilege are paralyzing. Formal knowledge about poverty and violence needs to be integrated with direct personal and institutional knowledge and ongoing practices that sustain hope for change.

What to do is critical. If people can immediately begin to engage in small practices that begin to change their traffic patterns, they can begin to reshape their lives—and the church—on a larger scale. In spiritual transformation, small actions lead to larger transformations, because they produce hope and confidence that our lives can be lived in closer accord, if not in unity, with the God we worship.

Conclusion

The United Methodist Church as a whole is not yet ready to make the welfare of poor children, all children, and all persons and families living in poverty in any country its priority. If it were, United Methodist candidates for ordination would be required to study, preach, teach, and build relationships with children and persons living in poverty as part of their preparation for ministry. They would be expected to answer questions such as these: What are the biblical and Wesleyan reasons for involvement with children and persons who live in poverty? When have you built a relation-
PAMELA D. COUTURE

ship with a poor child and his or her family? How did you make the world a safer place for this child to live in? Can you explain the obstacles that this child and his or her family face to building a flourishing life in your local community? How is this child and his or her family enabled or impeded by assumptions about gender and race widely held in your community? In what ways have you advocated for this child and his or her family to politicians and the economic elite who shape the life of your community? Who among these persons hold positions in the local community, the state, the nation, or the international community? Who in each of those settings can be helpful for your care and advocacy? How is this experience of care and advocacy a religious experience for you? What spiritual resources do you call upon to stay in relationship with this child and his or her family and the persons with whom you advocate? Have you found God’s grace communicated to you by children and persons living in poverty, and have you in return been a vehicle of God’s grace to God’s vulnerable people?

The church is not yet ready for questions like these. Perhaps ten years from now, when the children born in the first year of the Initiative are sixteen, will we be ready.

Pamela D. Couture is Professor of Practical Theology and Pastoral Care at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in Rochester, New York.

Endnotes


On Taking the Method Out of Methodism

PHILIP R. MEADOWS

In the United Methodist Book of Discipline, the church’s theological task is defined as the “effort to reflect upon God’s gracious action in our lives... the author and perfecter of our faith,” in order that we might be “more fully prepared to participate in God’s work in the world.” Described this way, theological reflection would seem entirely consistent with the historic Methodist commitment to the coincidence of doctrine, discipline, and practice in the formation of authentic Christian life. In this article, I argue that this commitment has been compromised, if not supplanted, by a preoccupation with “theological method.” These methodological concerns, cultivated by the inclusion of “theological guidelines” in the Discipline and authorized as the so-called “Wesleyan Quadrilateral,” keep us captive to the problematic trajectories of modernity. They obscure our common calling to disciplined discipleship by sundering the integrity of doctrine and practice. Methodist theology, therefore, does not need a clearer account of its “method”; rather, it needs to recover its true identity as a fruit of disciplined discipleship. This requires a very different re-reading of Wesley’s theological commitments, setting aside the Quadrilateral lens for a postmodern or postliberal critique. In making Methodist theology less methodological we can be more faithful to the idea of “practical divinity,” as Wesley understood it: the disciplined formation of “theological competency” that embodies an integrity of doctrine and practice in the life of discipleship. It is our common identity as Methodists, formed through a common commitment to disciplined discipleship, that will prove and improve the adequacy and catholicity of our tradition in the world.

The Conditions of Modernity

For most people in John Wesley’s day, living under the authority of God meant adopting an attitude of faithful obedience to Jesus Christ that is
shaped by the scriptural story, through submission to the doctrine and
discipline of the historic church. It was this account of authority, however,
that the emerging modern mind chose to reject, setting a trajectory that
would dominate theology until now. Seeking liberation from the prescien-
tific uncertainties of Scripture and the historically unreliable witness of the
ecclesial tradition, the primary means for knowing God and understanding
the Christian life were relocated from the *transcending authorities* of
Scripture and tradition (as the means of God’s self-revelation to the world) to the *immanent authorities* of reason and experience (as more-secure foun-
dations for our knowledge of God, self, and the world).

**What Method?**

At the origins of the modern era lay a project to find indubitable truth
about God in an age of increasing skepticism, fueled by the rise of scien-
tific discovery and cosmological revolution. A common starting point is the
work of René Descartes (1596–1650), who found that the only indubitable
reality was the existence of his own doubting mind; thus, he made this the
rational foundation for a system of thought built with the logic of mathem-
tical certainty. Cartesian thinking, therefore, makes critical reasoning
the final arbiter of truth, refined through the fires of methodological doubt.
It became incumbent on faithful people, therefore, to demonstrate the
rationality or reasonableness of presumed divine revelation on these terms,
if it is to be taken as true or authoritative.

With the Enlightenment came the rise of Deism, which sought to
demonstrate that Christianity could commend itself to human reason
alone, without appealing to the authority of divine revelation. For the
Deists, many essential Christian doctrines (such as the Trinity, Incarnation,
original sin, the Atonement, and divine providence) that rested upon
divine revelation and mediated through Scripture and tradition were ruled
out of court at the bar of reason. Knowledge of God and the attainment of
virtue were possible through exercising universally available capacities of
human nature (reason, common sense, and natural conscience) that, it was
hoped, would yield public agreement in the areas of social and religious
life.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) is a figure of pivotal importance for trans-
mitting the Enlightenment project to modern theology. On the one hand,
Kant’s own “Copernican Revolution” posited that one’s experience and
ON TAKING THE METHOD OUT OF METHODISM

subsequent rational understanding of the world is itself shaped by one's cognitive apparatus. On the other hand, he demonstrated that "pure reason" was incapable of establishing the reality and nature of God, since our cognitive apparatus functions properly only within the bounds of ordinary experience—which God must lie beyond. Kant's legacy, therefore, has been an enduring emphasis on the fundamental unknowability of a transcendent God and the central role of human subjectivity in establishing the conditions under which reasonable belief in God can be held.

Whereas Deism sought to preserve the rationality of the universe by removing God from it (which led to what Wesley called "practical atheism"), Kant's successors have tended to locate our knowledge of God, and even the reality of God's self, within the realm of human reason and experience. The result has been a persistent radicalization of divine transcendence into absence turned unknowability, and divine immanence into a presence constituted by our own subjectivity. Following Descartes and Kant, modern theology freed itself from traditional authorities only by becoming captive to the methodological problem of accounting for how we might know that which is essentially unknowable. Under these conditions, the development of theological method turned to the structures of human subjectivity (reason and experience) in pursuit of universally secure foundations upon which we can claim to know and agree upon our knowledge of God.

Whose Reading?

It still comes as a surprise for many contemporary Methodists to discover that we are actually more indebted to Albert Outler than to John Wesley for the so-called "Wesleyan" Quadrilateral and to discover how thoroughly the church has been inscribed into this "modern Methodist myth." John Cobb is surely right when he says that the phrase theological method is "alien to Wesley, as indeed it was to the Reformers, the Medieval scholastics, the church fathers, and, still more emphatically, to the biblical writers." Cobb is representative of scholars more generally, however, in reading this lack of explicit theological method as a shortcoming in Wesley's work that we, who are more theologically enlightened (i.e., modern), have the possibility and privilege of fixing! The work of William Abraham is almost unique in its rejection of the Quadrilateral as a theological method, and my sympathy with his position will be evident throughout this essay. Abraham argues that the Quadrilateral has become the unofficial dogma of The
PHILIP R. MEADOWS

United Methodist Church, thus competing with, and largely eclipsing, the binding significance of its own doctrinal standards. Thus, the healing of the church depends upon a confessional recovery of those standards that connect us to the historic and apostolic tradition. What I seek to demonstrate here is the connection between this concern and the failure of disciplined discipleship in the church, but in a way that goes beyond Abraham's own prescriptions for the recovery of doctrinal confession.

It is, of course, entirely consistent for moderns to think that they are capable of uncovering methodological foundations that remained implicit and unthematic in Wesley's own theological reflection. But it is unfortunate that this preoccupation with theological method persistently lures scholars into misreading Wesley as a putative modern. As an alternative, we might learn from Wesley to understand theological reflection as church practice—that the early Methodist commitment to disciplined discipleship was itself the very mode and character of their theological competency. It is ironic that the present attempt to encourage theological reflection in our churches so often defers to the very methodological enterprise that divorced church and academy in the first place.

The closest that Wesley comes to speaking of a "method" appears in the conclusion to his treatise on The Character of a Methodist: "... whosoever is what I preach... he is a Christian, not in name only, but in heart and life. He is inwardly and outwardly conformed to the will of God, as revealed in the written Word. He thinks, speaks and lives according to the 'method' laid down in the revelation of Jesus Christ." Surely this must be the method of the Method-ists! To have the mind that was in Christ, and to walk as Christ walked, and to cultivate Christlike habits of mind and life in the pursuit of holiness. Indeed, it is significant that Wesley does not provide a methodology for a discrete activity called "theological reflection," for it demonstrates how little he is caught up with the skeptical persuasion of modernity. Wesley's Works may not provide a theological method on modern terms, but they do narrate a story in which the teaching of Scripture (doctrine), the necessity of accountable fellowship (discipline), and the patterns of discipleship (practice) all naturally coincide. The work of John Wesley, then, may be read as an attempt to preserve scriptural and historic Christianity against the rising cultural tide of modernity. It would be ironic for present-day Methodists to find in Wesley a support for the kind of Kantian project he sought to save us from.
The Captivity of the Quadrilateral

In what follows, we explore the extent to which Quadrilateral thinking ties us to the narratives of modernity, and so removes us from the story of Wesley.

Suffering Discipline and Securing Foundations

The modern “turn to the self” has inscribed generations of people into a culture that prizes individual autonomy and self-possession; and for many theologians, it is this account of freedom that has secured the possibility of thinking reliably about God. Thus, being liberated from the supposedly capricious authorities of Scripture and tradition, our critical reasoning and human experience are set free to establish more reliable and intelligible conditions for faith and practice in a modern world. Wesley, however, would consider it absurd that Christians would look to human reason or experience as more secure foundations for the knowledge and love of God than God’s own word to us! That word comes to us in and through the historical Jesus as a call to discipleship: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23). For Wesley, any condition for the possibility of knowing God comes through suffering discipline, not through a turn to self.

The root of discipleship lies in the teaching authority of Jesus Christ and our willingness to be teachable, expressed through the obedience of faith that is called forth. Nowhere is this more clearly articulated than in Wesley’s description of Jesus as teacher in his commentary Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount. He concludes his commentary on the Beatitudes by inviting us to “behold Christianity in its native form, as delivered by its great Author” and not to rest “until every line thereof is transcribed into our own hearts. Let us watch, and pray, and believe, and love, and ‘strive for the mastery,’ till every part of it shall appear in our soul, graven there by the finger of God; till we are ‘holy as He which hath called us is holy.’”

Under the conditions of modernity, however, the idea of divine authority as God’s binding revelatory address to humankind has been hard to sustain. The broad reason for this is made clear in Kant’s claim that “Enlightenment” can be defined as freedom from self-incurred tutelage. In other words, modernity marks the freedom to be self-governed, or self-disciplined, through the use of our own reason, without subjection to other authorities.

To what extent does our preoccupation with theological method undermine the teachable spirit of disciplined discipleship? Although the
question of authority has been a distinctive element in most accounts of the Quadrilateral, noticeably absent is the idea that our total theological life is oriented toward suffering the discipline of Jesus Christ, the Author and Perfector of our faith. Rather than asking how this singular authority is mediated through a complex relation of outward means (Scripture and tradition) and subjective involvement (reason and experience), we are frequently ensnared in the methodological problem of defining how a multiplicity of competing or complementary authorities can be unified to a common end. The solution is often to treat Scripture and tradition merely as ‘theological consultants’ for independently constructing rational accounts of the truth rooted in our experience.

The problem, then, does not lie in the enormous difficulty of defining such a methodological enterprise. Rather, it lies in the fact that the unavoidable investment of reason and experience with this kind of authority, in the interest of ‘theological freedom,’ is simply wrong-headed. First, the Quadrilateral too easily ties us to modern patterns of human autonomy and self-possession that obscure the truth that Methodist discipline is actually supposed to bind our theological life in a common response to the teaching authority of Jesus Christ. There is a grave danger that our preoccupation with theological method undermines the need for ecclesial discipline at the same time as it underwrites the modern thirst for theological autonomy and self-sufficiency. This, in turn, runs the risk of theological idolatry, inasmuch as the revelatory function of Scripture and tradition (as means of grace) becomes reduced to ‘sources’ or ‘criteria’ that can be assimilated by our self-possessed subjectivities. Second, insofar as the Quadrilateral perpetuates the foundationalist assumptions of modernity by securing the presence and possibility of knowing God in human subjectivity itself, we remain mired in the subtle temptations of rational self-determination (or “practical atheism”) and self-absorbed spiritual experience (or “enthusiasm”).

Doctrinal Catholicity and Privatized Opinions

Wesley insisted that Methodists not be distinguished from other Christians only by their “principles” but by the quality of their disciplined discipleship, which kept doctrinal commitment and Christian practice inseparably bound in the pursuit of holiness. This reflects his understanding of the Methodist movement as both ecclesiastically located and ecumenically composed. Defending the movement against accusations of schism and bigotry, Wesley noted that
the people called Methodists "do not impose, in order to their admission, any opinions whatever. . . . They think, and let think. . . . Is there any other society in Great Britain or Ireland that is . . . so truly of a catholic spirit?" Rather, Wesley organized an ecumenical movement whose catholicity was rooted in a form of discipline that integrated plain scriptural teaching with the pursuit of holiness, for people who also remained committed to their tradition-specific doctrines and practices. Methodism was to help Anglicans become holy Anglicans, Presbyterians holy Presbyterians, and Baptists holy Baptists. Wesley's difficult task, therefore, was to define a movement in terms of doctrinal commitment within one's ecclesial tradition without ascribing any particular orthodoxy to the movement itself.

Wesley's sermon on the catholic spirit has received the most attention as a resource for thinking about the nature of doctrine in the Methodist tradition. Thankfully, many recent commentaries have demonstrated that his apparent ambivalence about "orthodoxy" or "right opinions," coupled with the admonishment to "think, and let think," should not be read as an attitude of indifference in matters of doctrine or practice. What is typically neglected, however, is Wesley's third point: "a catholic spirit is not indifference to all congregations." Rather, "a man of truly catholic spirit . . . is fixed in his congregation as well as his principles." Lack of attention to this most important point belies a failure to plot the changing significance of Methodist discipline in a movement turned church. The result has been a persistent mistranslation of Wesley's commitment to ecumenically oriented doctrinal catholicity in terms of institutional diversity, supported by the misconstrual of catholic spirit as a theological method.

Insofar as catholicity becomes confused with institutional diversity, a methodological commitment to the Quadrilateral is not only wrong-headed but also self-destructive. Wesley's catholic spirit cannot be made a methodological principle of institutional diversity without doing violence to its proper nature, since an institutional church cannot be a self-possessed ecumenical movement. The Quadrilateral has certainly provided a way for the church to simulate the catholicity of a movement, but only by re-inscribing it into the fabric of modernity that today, like United Methodism, is falling apart. On the one hand, the early Methodists understood "doctrinal catholicity" to be a spiritual principle that binds differently churched people in a common discipleship. Under the conditions of modernity, however, "institutional diversity" has replaced it as a methodological principle that binds similarly
unchurched people in a common suspicion of discipline. We confuse these two at our peril!

Membership in the Methodist movement was meant not to constitute one's Christian identity \textit{per se} but to embody the possibility and truth of a catholic commitment to holy living while retaining one's own tradition-specific commitments. It would be ironic if, by misconstruing doctrinal catholicity as institutional diversity, a methodological commitment to the Quadrilateral actually rendered The United Methodist Church incapable of both doctrinal consensus and ecumenical catholicity, simply because there cannot be any theological opinion or ecclesial tradition that is genuinely "other." This problem is present in the beguiling notion of theological "pluralism" with its principle of methodological "inclusivity." As a totalizing narrative, not only is the possibility of rejecting this methodological commitment \textit{excluded}, but the inescapability of being \textit{included} in its discourse means the silencing of real difference in the process.

The Quadrilateral ensnares us in the methodological principle of diversity through two interrelated moves. First, we have become accustomed to making a false division between "essential doctrine" and "theological opinion," as though reason and experience could help us abstract a universally livable gospel from the concrete traditional particularities in which it is enfleshed. We mistake Wesley's distinction, however, by reading it as a dialectical opposition that reifies certain doctrinal essentials by making tradition-specific opinions peripheral to Christian discipleship. Of course, such a misreading does support the principle of institutionalized diversity, but only by privatizing theological reflection as a matter of individual opinion or personal preference. This usually leaves liberals and conservatives arguing over what counts as essential and what is "merely" opinion. For Wesley, theological opinions belong to traditions, not individuals; and they are formed in us by participation in an ecclesial tradition, not by the exercise of a "theological freedom" that liberates us from ecclesial discipline. This being so, we must also resist misreading Wesley's criticisms of "dead orthodoxy" as an indifference to orthodoxy in general. Indeed, it would seem that those with a lifeless assent to right opinions are only as far from true heart-religion as those who have failed to truly interiorize the heart-forming theological opinions of their tradition. In other words, we must not take Wesley's admonition that "right opinion [i.e., orthodoxy] may subsist without right tempers [i.e., true religion]" unless we first
acknowledge that "right tempers cannot subsist without right opinion." 18

Second, a continuing attraction of the Quadrilateral has been the irre­
sistible promise of a methodological neutrality that can transcend and there­
fore unify a hopelessly conflicted diversity of theological opinions. Insofar
as the methodological commitments of both liberals and conservatives are
indebted to the categories of modernity, however, it is actually sameness, not
difference, that becomes the insurmountable problem. Conservatives typi­
cally seek rational and experiential foundations for securing the authority of
Scripture and tradition, while liberals use the same kind of strategy for
casting traditional authorities into suspicion. The difficulty, then, lies not
only in giving a coherent account of how the Quadrilateral is to be
employed but also in giving an account which everyone will agree upon!
Yet, even to attempt such a description invites commitment to another set
of opinions, thus investing the method itself with dogmatic importance and
compromising its self-assigned neutrality. It would seem, therefore, that any
account of the Quadrilateral as a theological method must either succumb
to the problems of modern foundationalism or it must remain so underde­
termined as to be practically meaningless.

Practical Divinity and Theological Reflection

Modernity's obsession with establishing secure foundations for knowing
and doing has led to a wide-scale sundering of "theory" and "practice" that
has deeply infected our theological life. At the risk of oversimplification, we
can see how this is replicated in the Christian community when the proper
distinctions between seminary and church life, theologians and pastors, and
pastors and laity have been unhelpfully interpreted in dualistic terms. The
Discipline has sought to correct this by stating that the task of theological
reflection belongs to all Christians. In defining how the theological task is
"essentially practical," however, the division is reasserted by the use of
language that continues to subordinate practice to theological reflection: if
we get our theology right, then presumably right practice will follow. Again,
it would be ironic if a methodological commitment to the Quadrilateral,
intended to liberate and equip people for theological reflection, actually
undermined the requirement of disciplined discipleship by capturing us
within the very division of theology and practice that it sought to overcome.

The Quadrilateral effectively sundered theology and practice by
providing our modern selves with an interpretive vantage point that tran­
PHILIP R. MEADOWS

scends the practical relations between scriptural revelation, the light of tradition, vivifying experience, and rational argumentation (to use the language of the Discipline). In other words, theological reflection becomes an activity abstracted from practice by subordinating these particularities as "sources and criteria" to be read and interpreted by our independently rational selves. This approach, however, only repeats the "synoptic illusion" of methodological neutrality. Indeed, to authorize the modern self with such a divine perspective effectively usurps the truly transcendent otherness of God as the means and end of our theological life. This threatens us once again with theological idolatry. For Wesley, however, our theological identity has no such advantage over Scripture and tradition; rather, it is itself formed by dwelling within them.

In a time of great controversy between Christians, Wesley prefaced his Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament with a plea for catholicity in reading the Scriptures: "Would to God that all the party names, and unscriptural phrases and forms, which have divided the Christian world, were forgot, and that we might all agree to sit down together, as humble, loving disciples, at the feet of our common Master, to hear his word, to imbibe his Spirit, and to transcribe his life in our own!" Here, Wesley maintains the integrity of discipline, theology, and practice through the metaphor of transcription, which we have already encountered in his discussion on the teaching authority of Jesus Christ. In these terms, we are not first called to do theological reflection (i.e., on and for our practice); instead, we are called to be theological reflections of God's word uttered to the world (i.e., in and through our practice). The danger with theological "reflection," then, is that it too easily reflects our own theological self-possession rather than the ecstatic rewriting of our subjectivity by the Holy Spirit. Christians rightly handle theological texts, however, to the end that their very lives become theological texts. The development of theological competency lies not in a transcending mystery of multiple sources but in a transforming participation in Christ's call to common discipleship. I suggest this is why testimony was such an important ingredient of early Methodism, not because it enabled people to explore their own inner spiritual states but because the lives of those who proved the truth of the gospel in their own experience became spiritually potent theological texts worthy of transcription. It is for this reason that Wesley included a great number of spiritual biographies of those "experienced in the ways of God" among the

FALL 2001
works he revised and abridged for general readership among Methodists.

The theme of transcription is closely related to the idea of "practical divinity" in Wesley’s work. Together they describe the intimate connection between the teaching authority of Jesus Christ and the cultivation of spiritual wisdom in his disciple, mediated through Scripture and tradition. The Christian Library (a "complete body of practical divinity") is a diachronic reading scheme of theological texts from the early church to contemporary times—a historically connected chain of authors who effectively transcribed the gospel through their lives. In the Collection of Hymns ("a little body of experimental and practical divinity"), Wesley describes not only the nature of hymns as theological texts but also the pattern of their particular embodiment in the hymnal as itself a transcription of real Christian experience. The General Rule is one of Methodism’s most important theological texts from the perspective of practical divinity: "all which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written word, the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these, we know, his Spirit writes on every truly awakened heart." Here we have the means by which the Spirit creates a "public space" of mutual confession and accountability, which possessed its members of theological self-sufficiency as it directed the formation of Christian self-understanding and expression, in and through the practices of discipleship.

All these constitute the mode of theological reflection as a fruit of disciplined discipleship in early Methodism. So also we may consider the publication of Wesley’s own sermons, journals, tracts, and letters as an exercise in practical divinity: the work of a theological mentor whose teaching is commended by his life and whose spiritual vision we seek to transcribe into our own lives, as contemporary heirs of the Methodist tradition.

A Cure for the Quadrilateral

The strongest argument for the Quadrilateral is, of course, its promise of a theological method that can combine faithfulness to Scripture and tradition with the need for maintaining relevancy through the ever-changing world we inhabit. The modern appeal to "relevancy" is persuasive, however, only because it plays into the hands of interpretive selves that have been readymade by the narratives of modern culture itself. Under these conditions, we are encouraged to become individual "meaning makers" with a seemingly priceless freedom to render the received wisdom of Scripture and tradition
"practically relevant" to our many contexts of experience. The problem with this is not simply the danger of accommodating the gospel to secular culture but also the danger of making our theological reflection so individualistically self-possessed that it can no longer be an authentically "public" witness at all. Paradoxically, the gospel invites us to find ourselves by denying ourselves, through suffering a life of discipleship patterned after Jesus Christ. I want to conclude this essay by suggesting that it is through yielding to Methodist discipline that we embody the authority of Jesus Christ over our lives. Only well-formed Methodist disciples are capable of practical theological reflection with and for the people called Methodists, as those who transcribe the gospel in and through the vagaries of life in the world.

Wesley opens his earliest collection of Hymns and Sacred Poems with an account of scriptural Christianity as a "social religion," meaning that our spiritual maturity comes not by solitary contemplation but when we are "knit together" in Christian fellowship: "Ye are taught of God, 'not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is;' but to instruct, admonish, exhort, reprove, comfort, confirm, and every way 'build up one another.'"12 In other words, "social religion" was Wesley's expression for belonging to a Methodist Society. Our theological freedom, then, is to have our self-possessiveness ruptured through the rewriting of our lives by the Spirit, in and through the responsible discipline of Christian community. On that basis, the immediate social context for our theological reflection is the "public" life of the church itself, shaped by a Discipline, with its particular doctrines and practices, and embodied by a community of disciplined people who prove its truth in the witness of their lives.

For the people called Methodists, it is catholic love, not methodological neutrality, that is capable of sustaining a breadth of theological reflection; and it is through suffering discipline, not commitment to theological method, that a loving character is cultivated. Only by the ecstatic movement of our mutual love for God and neighbor can the theological "other" be embraced; yet only by disciplined discipleship can such ecstatic love be practiced and doctrinal catholicity expressed (through mutually self-surrendering unity). It is the character of love to be both binding and liberating; indeed, the Spirit sets us free only by binding us to Christ and to one another in Christ. The freedom and richness of our theological life, then, should emerge as a fruit of our common discipleship, in a reciprocal self-abandonment to the teaching authority of Jesus Christ, embodied by a
mutually accountable commitment to Methodist discipline.

It is unfortunate that the Quadrilateral has so often trapped the church in self-reflexive conversations about theological method, making honest attempts at Christian conferencing thoroughly preoccupied with finding ways to justify diversity rather than with testing the adequacy of diverse opinions against the standards of doctrine and practice. As a practice of faithfulness and relevancy, early Methodist conferencing did not aim at a diversity of theological doctrine unified by a common commitment to a supposedly neutral theological method; rather, it aimed at theological consensus about all that was desirable to teach. Such consensus was possible because theology in the mode of disciplined discipleship is capable of remembering that the true end of our reflections is the life-transforming presence of Jesus Christ, calling forth responsible love for God and neighbor. This practice does not diminish the breadth of our theological reflection or exclude the possibility of diverse personal opinions in matters of theological doctrine. What is circumscribed, however, is any privatization of such opinions that would render them incapable of being judged by the corporate discipline of a faithful community. Paradoxically, the freedom of the Christian community to engage in faithful-yet-relevant theological reflection is secured by the very dispossession of such individualism, made possible through the call to mutually accountable and disciplined discipleship.

At its best, discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition has always involved a radically faithful obedience to Jesus Christ, characterized by self-denial and embodied in the corporate scriptural discipline of mutually accountable Christian fellowship. Theology requires discipleship if it is to escape the idolatrous self-possession of modernity that suppresses the transcendent otherness of God in Christ and the call of responsibility toward our neighbor. Only disciplined discipleship is capable of bearing witness to the real presence and real authority of Jesus Christ, in obedience to whom our every thought is made captive. In the Wesleyan tradition, disciples are drawn into the divine presence through the means of grace and made responsible for answering Christ's call upon their lives in and through the mutual accountability of intimate, small group fellowship. So, as we bind our theological reflection to the doctrine and practice of community, we come to understand that it is actually Christ who does the teaching. The most natural prerequisite for theology, then, is a willingness to be teachable; that is, to grow spiritually in our discipleship means deepening our
theological understanding through the commitment of one's whole life to Christ, in and through the discipline of Christ's body, the church. For those with a teachable spirit, such discipline is a complex means of grace that integrates doctrine and practice in the ecstatic movement of our theological life towards God. It is through suffering such discipline that we yield to, wait upon, and wrestle with the Spirit of Christ—who is our Divine Teacher—for the church, in the world.

Philip R. Meadows is Assistant Professor of Historical Theology and Wesley Studies at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois.

Endnotes

2. For a fuller version of the ideas present in this essay, in dialogue with postliberal theologians, see Philip Meadows, "The 'Discipline' of Theology," Wesleyan Theological Journal 36:2 (fall, 2001).
8. Ibid., "Thoughts upon a Late Phenomenon," vol. 9, paras. 9–10.
12. Ibid., "Hymns and Sacred Poems (1739)," 14:322.
MARK W. STAMM

In my recent book Sacraments and Discipleship: Understanding Baptism and the Lord’s Supper in a United Methodist Context (Discipleship Resources, 2001), I argue that the historic order of Christian initiation—Baptism followed by Eucharist—is embodied in our United Methodist rites. I remind readers that the invitation found in our Service of Word and Table is not unconditional; rather, it calls to the Table those who love Christ, turn from their sin, and actively seek a right relationship with others. This invitation makes no demands based on denominational affiliation, but it does imply that those who come for Communion should be disciples of Jesus Christ. To state that demand in sacramental language: They should be persons living within the grace and disciplines of the baptismal covenant. The church’s resolution on baptism, By Water and the Spirit, allows an unrestricted Table, but only in a provisional sense: “Unbaptized persons who receive

continued on page 307

E. BYRON ANDERSON

Historically, the Christian churches have limited participation in the sacrament of Holy Communion to those persons who have been baptized. At various points in the churches’ histories, this boundary has been further limited to persons confirmed, whether by the laying on of hands, anointing with oil, or personal profession of faith—or to those who had attained a particular “age of reason.” Increasingly common among many mainline Protestant churches, and in The United Methodist Church in particular, is a practice of “open Communion,” which extends the hospitality of the Lord’s Table to all persons in attendance at the service, regardless of confession, creed, church membership, or baptismal status. Among United Methodists, two primary arguments are being used to support the practice of open Communion. First, many have misunderstood John Wesley’s argument that the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is a “converting ordinance”

continued on page 310

306
continued from page 306

communion should be counseled and nurtured toward baptism as soon as possible."

Notwithstanding these official rites, rubrics, and resolutions, I suspect that many United Methodists will find the question we are addressing a rather odd one. Many will say, "In our congregation the Table is open. All are welcome, all of the time." Indeed, the vast majority of United Methodist parishes practice a completely open Table, with no restrictions whatsoever. In that sense, even discussing this question may seem like chasing the proverbial horse that has already left the barn. Be that as it may, in this essay, we are discussing theological norms. Who should be allowed to receive? If we United Methodists insist on a completely unrestricted, open Table, can we justify that practice theologically; and if so, on what basis?

Justification for such a practice begins with the corporate experience of God's people, with taking the "sense of the faithful" seriously. Applied to the question at hand, we should notice the passion with which United Methodists practice and defend their commitment of the open Table. Instead of the conditional invitation found in our official rites—and sometimes in addition to it—worship leaders will say something like, "In The United Methodist Church we have an open Table. All who wish to receive may come." Many of our members witness to the formative power of that affirmation; it expresses the essence of what we profess as a church. Conversely, at Communion services in some denominations, a notice will say something like, "All baptized Christians are welcome to receive Communion." The intent of such statements is hospitable and invitational; yet some United Methodists hear them as exclusionary and respond to them with perplexity, even anger. After a recent seminary chapel service, one of my United Methodist students remarked, "The presider said all baptized Christians are invited to the Table. In this setting, can't everyone come?" Such passion should be noticed and taken seriously, for it expresses deeply felt commitment.

Acknowledging this passionate sense of the faithful does not mean that we may thereby set aside the classical norms of Scripture and tradition. As the Discipline states, "Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason." Methodist tradition is rooted in John Wesley's encounter with the gospel. In the same way, the normative order for Christian initiation developed in faithfulness to the gospel call to
HOLY COMMUNION

make disciples through baptism and teaching—the gospel call to receive the body of Christ for the sake of the world (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:37-42; 1 Cor. 10-15). As we engage this ancient norm for initiation, we should assume that those who formed it were faithful interpreters of the biblical narrative with wise pastoral intentions. We should not, however, assume that they understood all things perfectly. All tradition is subject to correction and adjustment under the same biblical witness that first shaped it.

In such a prophetic spirit, we may understand the open Table as a Methodist exception to the classical order of Christian initiation. An exception is a conscious departure from the accepted norm, yet not for reasons of disobedience or lack of faith. It seeks a higher expression of faith. Such an exception seeks to highlight meanings of the Eucharist that may be obscured by the normative pattern itself. For example, the Society of Friends does not celebrate the Lord’s Supper in the ritualized sense practiced by most Christians. Members of the Society would challenge us, however, were we to accuse them of refusing Jesus’ commandment to “do this in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:24-25). On the contrary, they would insist that every meal shared is the Lord’s Table. Every meal is an ἀγαπή, an occasion for κοινωνία among Christ and his people. With this sacramental exception, the Friends remind the rest of the church that first-generation Christians knew no sharp distinction between ἀγαπή meals and the Lord’s Supper. They remind us to seek a closer connection between the Eucharist and all of our eating and drinking (see Acts 2:41-42, 46). They also follow a longstanding prophetic tradition that rejects ritual, not in disobedience or impiety but for the sake of its essential meaning (see Amos 5:21-24; Isa. 58:1-14; Mark 2:23-28).

In like manner, the Methodist exception to the normative pattern for Christian initiation calls the church to look beyond the so-called “institution narratives” (e.g., Matt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 11:23-26) to the wider context of Jesus’ eating and drinking with sinners and tax collectors, to his feeding of the crowds, to his many parables and stories relating to meals. As the United Methodist Great Thanksgivings remind us, at the Lord’s Supper we celebrate the entirety of Jesus’ life and ministry, not just his death and resurrection. By the same logic, the holy meal is rooted not just in a scene from the passion narrative but also in the wider meal ministry of Jesus. As the Gospels insist, when Jesus fed the multitudes, he also took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them (e.g., Mark 6:30-44). When Methodists proclaim their radically open Table, they call the church to an anamnesis of
the Christ who would eat with anybody, anywhere, at any time.

While we may be able to justify it, practicing such a sacramental exception is not without its problems. The ancient classic order for initiation embodies important values, in particular a commitment to the disciplined formation that initiates persons into a countercultural, eucharistic way of life. If all can partake of the Eucharist, with or without repentance and spiritual formation, then by what right do we call anyone to such holiness of heart and life? Notwithstanding its positive witness, the open Table must not contradict the biblical expectation that those who eat and drink with Jesus will repent, opening their hearts to new life.

While the open Table as practiced by many United Methodists is not the classical norm for the whole church, nevertheless it can help the church catholic come to a deeper understanding of the Eucharist. In all likelihood, United Methodists will continue practicing the open Table. Even so, we should affirm the formational values of the classic initiatory order, heeding the wisdom expressed in By Water and the Spirit. We may continue to invite all persons to the Lord's Table as long as we understand that unbaptized seekers should be urged to enter the baptismal covenant they so desperately need. Such a position also reflects a Wesleyan commitment. John Wesley was quite suspicious of Christians who thought that they could do without God's appointed means of grace.

Mark W. Stamm is Assistant Professor of Christian Worship at Perkins School of Theology in Dallas, Texas.

Endnotes


(a means by which persons are awakened to the life of faith and grace) to mean that even non-Christian persons should be welcomed to the Table. Those who make such claims fail to recognize that Wesley made his argument in a social and ecclesial context in which he could assume that all persons who presented themselves at the Lord’s Table had been baptized, most as infants. While those who came to the Table may not have demonstrated evidence of the new birth or awakened faith, they had been baptized nonetheless. Wesley believed that the grace enacted through and available in bread and cup could provide the means that could awaken such “slumbering Christians” to a living faith. Wesley’s description of the Lord’s Supper as a converting ordinance was never an argument for the Communion of the unbaptized.

A more accurate understanding of Holy Communion as a converting ordinance supports Wesley’s desire that Methodist persons engage in “constant Communion.” Whereas Baptism is an unrepeatable act in the church, Holy Communion is the repeatable means of grace that convicts, converts, consoles, and nurtures the Christian person throughout his or her life. At the least, Holy Communion in The United Methodist Church should be celebrated frequently and opened to all baptized persons regardless of age or intellectual ability. This is clearly the historic and ecumenical norm of the wider church.

A second argument frequently offered for the Communion of the unbaptized is that of evangelical necessity. As the church continues to fail to bring people to faith in Jesus Christ, and as membership rolls decline, we are hard pressed to justify turning any person away from the Table. How can we say no to someone who, baptized or not, seems interested enough in participating in the life of the church to come to the Table? In addition, we hear invitations to the Table in many Protestant churches—and in many United Methodist churches—stating that this Table does not belong to any particular congregation or denomination but to Jesus Christ and, therefore, all are to be welcomed and received at it.

This argument is not without merit. Our current social context requires an evangelical response. We must invite people to Christ and offer Christ to them. This may be no more concretely practiced than in the invitation to participate in the Lord’s Supper. The difficulty with the way in which this is being practiced is the way in which it leads to what I would call “undisci-
plained hospitality," and what others have called "cheap grace."

I have been wrestling with the implications of the parable of the wedding feast in Luke 14:15-24 and Matt. 22:1-14 for the practice of eucharistic hospitality. Luke's version is the gentler, continuing an emphasis on Jesus' ministry to the poor and the oppressed that marks the beginning of his ministry in Luke 4:16-21. In Luke's story, those initially invited to the great dinner make various excuses (all permitted under the Torah) when finally summoned to the dinner. The houseowner sends his servant to the streets of the city and, eventually, to country roads inviting the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame so that his banquet hall "may be filled." Luke's concern is that the house be filled and that the poor be the subjects of particular attention. "Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" (14:15).

Matthew's version of this story has several unique twists. Like the version in Luke, those previously invited to the great banquet decline the summons when told the banquet is ready to begin. They, too, offer legitimate excuses. Servants are sent to the streets to fill the wedding hall with guests. Unlike Luke's version, however, a king gives this banquet in honor of the wedding of his son. Those who decline the summons to the banquet do so not once but twice. They also make light of the invitation, seizing, mistreating, and killing the king's servants. The king's response to these acts of disloyalty and rebellion results in the destruction and death of those initially invited to the feast. Substitute guests, the good and the bad gathered from the city streets, fill the banquet hall. When the king starts visiting with his guests, he discovers one among them who was not wearing a wedding garment. The king has this person thrown into the "outer darkness." This was not an arbitrary act. Those who initially rejected the summons were openly disloyal. This person, suggests some commentators, "disdains the feast while actually attending it." The man is thrown out because the king still expects those who attend the banquet to honor the occasion. One cannot accept an invitation and, at the same time, reject what it presents.1

If Luke's version of this story supports the argument of evangelical necessity, Matthew's version encourages an argument for "disciplined hospitality" at two different levels. On the one hand, there is a long baptismal practice of enrobing newly baptized Christians in a clean, white garment that is then worn from the baptismry to the Lord's Table and...
HOLY COMMUNION

throughout the week following baptism (and Easter). This garment was often interpreted as a wedding garment and the sign of our being "clothed in Christ." We do not, and cannot, come to the wedding feast in the clothing of the world; doing so we show only contempt for the one inviting us to the Table. Accepting the gracious invitation is not enough; one must be ready to receive and honor what the banquet itself offers as well.

On the other hand, those who extend the invitation to the banquet must also be ready to provide the appropriate wedding garments for guests not so equipped. This is not an argument for "baptism on demand" but for the necessity of pastoral conversation, Christian education, and spiritual formation that leads the banquet guest to take on the appropriate garment of baptism and to accept what participation in the banquet represents and costs in the way of discipleship. In recent years we have been generous in our invitation to the banquet but undisciplined in providing the means to clothing such guests in the necessary wedding garments.

Let me suggest three conclusions from this discussion. First, baptism is the normal and normative wedding garment that entitles us to participate in the wedding banquet. Baptism is both the rite and the right by which Christians come to the Lord's Table, regardless of age or ability. Second, God's grace that extends even to the least in our midst requires a similar generosity of invitation to the Table on our part. It is an act of evangelical hospitality to invite all present to share in the foretaste of the heavenly banquet. Finally, one cannot say yes to the banquet and no to the demands of Christian discipleship. Therefore, those who accept the gracious invitation either must be willing to don the wedding garment and all that it represents or should otherwise excuse themselves from the Table.

E. Byron Anderson is Assistant Professor of Worship and Director of Community Worship at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Endnotes


Advent scans the horizon of our future like an alert sentry, waiting for the unexpected yet likely arrival of a crucial moment in time. While most Christians understandably think of Advent as preparation for Christmas and the celebration of Jesus’ birth, the church’s liturgy and the Lectionary readings remind us that Advent also turns the church toward its ultimate future and the consummation of human history. We are reminded that the mystery of God’s providence will bring us to our full destiny with the return of the triumphant Christ and the completion of the world’s mission.

It is not easy for Christian preachers to dwell on this more distant horizon of Advent at a time when Christmas and the birth of Jesus are front and center. Popular culture begins its preparation for Christmas and its bounty of sales much earlier, almost before the Halloween decorations have been taken down. And even on a purely religious plane it is pretty hard to compete with the lure of the Christ child, the beckoning star and the Magi, the angel choirs, the hovering shepherds, and, for good measure, the villainy of Herod. This is beautiful material and it has not lost its grip on Christian imagination, despite the corrosion of a shop-happy culture.

But all is not lost. Advent—this time of waiting with prayerful anticipation and spiritual discipline—is also a time of preparation for Christmas, for the first coming of Christ and the luminous mystery of the Incarnation. The joy of this season, the yearning to gather with family and friends, the celebration of innocence in memories of childhood, the impulse toward generosity— all of these are gospel values highlighted by this season and worth preparing for through the attentiveness and discipline of the Advent season.

There is, of course, an inner connection in the eye of faith between the
CELEBRATING EMANUEL

first coming of Jesus and his triumphant return at the end of time. The entrance of the Word into human history and human flesh reveals the divine presence. The human face of Jesus reminds us that God is both compassionate and just, reconciling us and commissioning us for mission in the world. The triumphant Christ who comes at the end of the world reveals the same God, now bringing human history to its completion and gathering the human family into one community of justice and peace. In the meantime, between these two manifestations of Christ, the Christian is able to live in the world with purpose and hope.

Advent, then, is a liturgical season meant to renew our sense of purpose in the world, both individually and collectively, and to freshen our commitment to the teachings of Jesus and our mission to the world. It is a season that invites us to cast our glance homeward, to our ultimate rest in God.

The Year of Matthew

Most of the Gospel selections in the Lectionary for this coming liturgical year are drawn from the Gospel of Matthew. There is, I think, a particular affinity between Matthew’s Gospel and the meaning of Advent. Matthew probably wrote his Gospel to give his fellow Jewish Christians a sense of historical perspective about their unique role in history. As the opening lines of the Gospel indicate, the evangelist connects the advent of Jesus with God’s providential guidance of Israel—tracing Jesus’ roots from Abraham to David and into the moment of God’s unanticipated and startling choice of Mary to be the vessel of God’s incarnate presence.

Throughout the Gospel, Matthew emphasizes that Jesus came not to destroy or abrogate the “law and the prophets” or the attendant beauty of Jewish faith and tradition but, rather, to bring it to its full purpose. On the other hand, Matthew also turns the gaze of his community to the future, a future that would include within the community new peoples, the Gentiles, who would now become part of God’s people as the world moved to its consummation.

For Matthew, Jesus is “Emmanuel” (1:23), “God with us.” This unique title conferred on Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel reveals the evangelist’s historical perspective. Between the coming of Jesus in his human history and public ministry as recounted in the Gospel narrative and his longed-for return in triumph proclaimed at the conclusion of the story, the Matthean Jesus remains mysteriously present in the community, guiding it and
DONALD SENIOR, C.F.

protecting it "until the end of time." Even though Matthew's community may have experienced profound changes and wrenching transformations, the Risen Jesus, Emmanuel, abides with the community.

That reality of Jesus' abiding presence in the community gives direction and warrant to the teaching of Jesus contained in the Gospel. As evident in the Advent selections themselves, Matthew is concerned not only with faith in Jesus as Son of God but also with how that faith must be expressed in authentic virtue and committed action. In this Matthew remains true to his Jewish heritage that was also concerned with fidelity to God expressed in faithful action. Matthew's concern with action should not be skewed by later Christian debates about "faith and works." There is no question that in the view of Matthew's Gospel, Christian existence is solely dependent on God's graciousness. But, for Matthew, reception of this gift is evidenced in a transformed life, and a transformed life is expressed in good deeds.

These basic perspectives of Matthew's Gospel are present in the Lectionary selections for Advent and offer the preacher many rich leads. The Lectionary builds the other readings around the Gospel selection so that the Matthean themes set the tone for the whole ensemble of Advent readings.

December 2, 2001—First Sunday of Advent

Matt. 24:36-44; Isa. 2:1-5; Ps. 122; Rom. 13:11-14

The Gospel selection for the first Sunday comes from Matthew's version of Jesus' last discourse, an extended reflection on the endtime and the future that awaits the community. Here the motif of Advent as preparation for the final coming of Jesus is on full display. The discourse runs through the entirety of chapters 24 and 25. Matthew, drawing on the Gospel of Mark (his primary source), situates the discourse on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the Kidron valley and the magnificent Herodian temple that dominated the skyline of ancient Jerusalem and must have posed a breathtaking vista for Jewish pilgrims as they crested the Mount of Olives and first glimpsed the Temple enclosure on the other side of the narrow valley.

The disciples are awestruck by the scene (Matt. 24:1-2), but the spell is broken by Jesus' ominous prediction that the Temple itself would be destroyed. His words prompt the disciples to ask when would such a calamitous event take place and when would Jesus himself return and the end of the world take place. The setting on the Mount of Olives—itsself asso-
associated with the final judgment in both Jewish and early Christian traditions—the threat to the Temple, and the disciples’ pointed questions provide the context for all of Jesus’ words in the discourse that follows.

While Matthew borrows much of the material found in Mark 13, he adds several parables that illustrate the kind of stance the disciples are to take during the time between the departure of Jesus and his triumphant return. The sayings and parables of this so-called apocalyptic discourse provide a kind of “interim” ethic—a moral guide for how the community is to live out its commitment in the midst of a sometimes threatening and alien history.

The sayings and parable that make up this Sunday’s Gospel selection fit right into this context. The allusion to the “days of Noah” and the ignorance of the people about the impending flood (24:36-42) drive home Jesus’ teaching about the unexpected timing of the Parousia and the need for vigilance. At this point Matthew emphasizes not the lack of moral preparation on the part of Noah’s contemporaries (even though they are described as “eating and drinking”) but their lack of vigilance (compare the parallel passage in Luke 17:28-30, who also adds a reference to the example of Lot and Sodom, sure signs of corruption). The Son of Man will come at a day and hour that only God knows. The proper stance, therefore, for the disciple is “to stay awake.”

The Greek word used here—gregorein—has the connotation of “alert watchfulness.” It suggests an interesting virtue for Christian life in the world. The authentic disciple of Jesus is attentive, looking for the signs of God’s presence breaking unexpectedly into the world. This, in fact, is one reason for the spiritual disciplines of prayer and fasting that are recommended for Advent observance (and echoed in the first reading from Isaiah and in the segment from Paul’s letter to the Romans). Our senses can be dulled, just as the senses of the people of Noah’s day were. We can easily miss the subtle presence of Christ in the people and circumstances that surround us; much less do we keep our minds and hearts focused on the ultimate purpose of our existence signaled by expectation of Christ’s final return.

The quaint parable of the housebreaker (24:42-44) repeats the same message but with a different image. A responsible head of the household should be prepared if he knows that a thief is going to break into his home. The Christian knows that Christ is coming, but he or she cannot know the time. The conclusion is clear: One has to live an attentive life, alert to the
DONALD SENIOR, CP.

sure but unannounced implosion of grace into our world. The image of the Parousia coming like a thief is found in other New Testament writings as well (see 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10; Rev. 3:3, 16:15) and finds an echo in Jesus' own description of his ministry in Mark 3:27 as breaking into Satan's household, tying him up and stealing all his "possessions"!

In a subsequent set of parables in this discourse, Matthew's Jesus adds further definition to how one stays alert. The wise slave is the one who does not abuse his fellow slaves but faithfully carries out his duties (24:45-51). The wise virgins have their lamps filled with oil and properly trimmed (some see oil as a symbol of good deeds) for the arrival of the bridegroom (25:1-13). The slave who pleases his master upon his return uses his allotted talents to the full (25:14-30). And in one of the masterpieces of Matthew's Gospel, those who feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned and the sick—even if they are the "least" of humanity—such disciples will be invited to enter the kingdom of God when the Son of Man comes (25:31-46).

December 9, 2001—Second Sunday of Advent
Matt. 3:1-12; Isa. 11:1-10; Ps. 72:1-7, 18-19; Rom. 15:4-13

The account of John's appearance in the wilderness of Judea turns the focus to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, but the arrival of the endtime is still in view. Matthew connects John's ministry of preaching and baptizing with the previous wonderful and tumultuous events of the infancy narrative but seems to bind them all together with the temporal phrase "in those days" (3:1). Even though separated from the stories of Jesus' conception, birth, and tortuous journey from Egypt to Nazareth, John's mission is part of the inaugural events of the Gospel and will bring onto the public stage Jesus himself. Matthew, following Mark, situates John's mission in the "wilderness" or desert, evoking the desert trek of Israel, where it was both tested and offered a covenant by God. Later Jesus, too, would be tested in the desert and prove to be faithful (4:1-11).

A number of subtle themes run through this scene. John's message of repentance in view of the approaching kingdom of "heaven" (the characteristic way Matthew refers to the kingdom of God, perhaps meant to be a euphemism for the name God) anticipates the summary of Jesus' own preaching (4:17) and reflects a consistent perspective of the Gospel as a whole. The advent of God's reign calls for personal and social transforma-
CELEBRATING EMMANUEL

tion, leading to a life of good deeds. Jesus' teachings and parables, as well as his healings and exorcisms, give definition to the virtues and qualities of relationship that the reign of God requires. There is, in effect, no "cheap grace"; humans do not earn salvation by their good deeds, but God's salvific love compels the human heart to change and act in accord with God's will.

Throughout the Gospel, Matthew casts the religious leaders as negative examples. Their piety is inauthentic and their repentance suspect, because these do not lead to a changed heart and life. In this scene, Matthew contrasts the crowds who come from all over Israel to be baptized and to confess their sins (3:5-6) with the "Pharisees and Sadducees" who do not "bear fruit worthy of repentance" (3:8) and presume upon their status as children of Abraham (3:9). Throughout the Gospel, there are examples of those on the fringe of the community of Israel and Gentiles themselves whose response to the gospel outshines that of the religious leaders (see, for example, Jesus' praise for the centurion in Capernaum [8:10-12] and the parable of the two sons [21:28-32]). Pious words or high status do not determine one's standing before God; response to the grace of the gospel does. (In dealing with this theme, the preacher has to be careful not to unconsciously advance a religious stereotype about the Jewish leaders. For Matthew, himself a Jewish Christian, this motif was not anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic. Of course, Jesus and all of the disciples are also Jewish. Matthew's point is to condemn a particular attitude and behavior contrary to the gospel, not to condemn a people.)

Finally, Matthew's account once again reminds the reader of the ultimate significance of the series of events that now begin to unfold. The quotation from Isa. 40:3, one of Matthew's many "fulfillment quotations" in the Gospel, announces the time of salvation (3:3). John's desert garb of camel hair and his diet of locusts and wild honey cast him in the role of Elijah, who, in Jewish tradition, was expected to return at the end time (3:4; see Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6; Sir. 48:10-11). John's message warns of the coming judgment when the "ax is lying at the root of the trees" (3:10). John's work is clearly preparatory—his baptism in water is a ritual signifying repentance and cleansing. The one who is to come will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (3:11-12).

If John's role is to announce the final days of the world's history, Jesus is the one who ushers in the final days. Even though Matthew and his community were aware that history was ongoing and there was no way to
predict its end, they still lived with the consciousness that because of Jesus and his unique mission, they were living in the final and definitive phase of human history.

December 16, 2001—Third Sunday of Advent

Matt. 11:2-11; Isa. 35:1-10; Luke 1:47-55; James 5:7-10

Although many Methodists prefer the alternative selection for this third Sunday of Advent—the Magnificat in Luke 1:47-55—we will focus on the assigned Matthean reading. The passage from Matt. 11:2-11 involves yet another encounter between Jesus and John, but this time mediated by messengers sent from the imprisoned John to Jesus. There is an ominous note throughout this section. We learn that John is now in prison (the reader had been informed of his arrest in 4:12). In 14:1-12 Matthew will narrate the gruesome account of his death at the hands of Herod. The reader cannot escape the realization that Jesus, too, will face suffering and death because of his mission, just as John the prophet had.

The main point of this passage, however, is a review of Jesus’ messianic work. The scene comes at a turning point in the Gospel of Matthew. The evangelist had described Jesus’ powerful mission of teaching (chapters 5-7) and healing (chapters 8-9) and concluded this first phase of the Gospel story with the mission instruction to the disciples to take up Jesus’ own salvific work (chapter 10). With chapter 11 the mood turns more sober as the leaders begin to actively resist Jesus—a stream of hostility that will eventually carry Jesus to Jerusalem and his final work of death and resurrection. Jesus’ words in 11:6 sound that same note: “Blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

John’s question, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” (11:2), seems far less confident than his testimony about Jesus in the baptismal scene read last Sunday (3:1-12). Nevertheless, it gives the evangelist a chance to review Jesus’ great acts of teaching and healing, all that the disciples have “heard” and “seen” (11:4). The list of liberating healings and tidings of good news to the poor echoes the messianic promises of Isa. 35:5-6. This powerful tide of transforming love changes people’s lives—restoring their bodies, telling them the truth, giving them hope. Proclaiming the “kingdom of heaven” can seem abstract until we tie it into the kinds of actual human experience that make a difference in our lives. This passage gives the teacher or preacher a chance to make that connection. What are
the kinds of salvific moments we experience? What are the kinds of noble human actions all around us that reveal the nature of God's love for us?

This passage also returns to praising John in his role as the prophet who prepares for the coming of Jesus. This Elijah-like prophet, with his ascetical bearing and fearless mission of telling the truth even at the cost of his life, was no "reed shaken by the wind" or someone who "wear[s] soft robes ... in royal palaces" (11:7-8)—ironic descriptions that may be an implied critique of Herod, who would take John's life out of weakness (see 14:1-12). Even though John is praised for his historic role and his great integrity, he belongs to the period before Jesus' advent; and, therefore, the least in the kingdom of heaven outshines John! Once again, Matthew's Gospel is dazzled by the realization that, because of Jesus' unique mission, the Christian lives in a new and decisive age of salvation.

December 23, 2001—Fourth Sunday of Advent
Matt. 1:18-25; Isa. 7:10-16; Ps. 80:1-7, 17-19; Rom. 1:1-7

The Gospel selection for the fourth Sunday of Advent leads us directly into the feast of Christmas with its account of the birth and naming of Jesus. Matthew's infancy narrative has a very different mood from that of Luke and contains a number of truly intriguing motifs.

First of all, Matthew's Gospel breathes a note of scandal and uncertainty into the story. Matthew leads up to this passage with his long genealogy, tracing Joseph's ancestry from Abraham to David and down to the present generation (1:2-17). The text presumes that Joseph and Mary are native residents of David's ancestral city Bethlehem and not Nazareth, as Luke implies. All seems in order until the moment of Mary's conception of Jesus. The story is narrated from Joseph's vantage point. To his dismay, he discovers that his betrothed wife is pregnant before they have consummated their marriage. He assumes the worse and because he is a "just" man (a favorite virtue in Matthew's Gospel), he chooses a lenient punishment of quietly severing his relationship with her. Only the direct intervention of a heavenly messenger allows Joseph to understand what is really happening.

There is an enticing connection here between what happens to Mary and the stories of the women cited earlier in the messianic genealogy. Characters such as Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba all appear in stories in which women in circumstances of apparent scandal and injustice enter unexpectedly into the messianic history. Things are not always what they
Donald Senior, C.P.

seem, Matthew's story implies. God works beneath the surface, and God's Spirit is present in people and circumstances we may blindly reject as unfit. This, of course, will happen repeatedly in the Gospel narrative as Jesus reaches out to tax collectors and sinners, to the sick and marginalized, to strangers and Gentiles. And, in turn, they often respond more generously than the religious leaders or even the disciples themselves. It is Matthew's Jesus who identifies himself with the "least" (25:31-46).

Even more fundamentally, Matthew wants to affirm that Jesus is born of the Holy Spirit and uniquely embodies the divine presence in the world. The virginal conception of Jesus, which Matthew's Gospel strongly affirms, is intended not to devalue the beauty of human sexuality but to reaffirm a foundational biblical doctrine, namely, that salvation comes from God and not from human initiative. This is underscored by the names given to the child. Jewish traditional culture considered a person's name not an arbitrary label but a revelation of the inner meaning of one's character. Alone among the Gospel writers, Matthew reflects on the significance of the name Jesus. The Hebrew root יְשׁוֹעַ means "God saves" or "God's salvation," a point noted by the angel in Matthew's story (1:21). The introduction of the first of Matthew's "fulfillment quotations" from Isa. 7:14 adds another name to Jesus: "Emmanuel," or "God with us." Just as the original quotation from Isaiah used the fact of a young woman bearing a child as a sign that God would not abandon Israel, so now Matthew views this sign of divine providence fulfilled in Mary's bearing of the Christ child into the world. The birth of Jesus is a renewed covenant, signaling that through Jesus God would never abandon the world. Matthew's Gospel repeats this motif of Jesus' abiding presence in the community at key moments in the Gospel (see 18:20; 28:20).

Matthew's account invites us to think of Christmas as a sign of God's commitment to humanity even in the midst of uncertainty and confusion. The message of Advent and of Christmas is ultimately a message of enduring hope for the world and its destiny.

---

Donald Senior, C.P., is President and Professor of New Testament Studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Illinois.
For the busy minister pastoral care is one role among many others, like preacher, worship leader, prophet, and educator. The pastoral caregiver is no longer seen as simply a visitor to the sick and dying. It is a role that may be more difficult to define in the twenty-first century than ever before.

The purpose of this essay is twofold: (1) to describe the ways in which the role of pastoral caregiver has evolved in the past fifteen years, and (2) to encourage religious professionals, like clergy and deacons, to equip themselves to meet the challenges of providing religiously based care in a new millennium. I will review several trends in contemporary pastoral care and in the process construct a vision of pastoral care in the new millennium.

The Theological Basis of Pastoral Care

In the last half of the twentieth century, pastoral care has drawn heavily upon psychology theories and practices. However, in the 1980s practical theologians like Donald Browning1 and James Poling and Donald Miller2 initiated a trend that seeks to reinstate theological studies as the primary frame for understanding pastoral encounters. They use a practical theological method that moves from the practice of ministry to reflections upon these practices. These reflections culminate in theologically based plans of care that are then enacted in practice. Psychological studies and practices can be used to reflect upon practice, especially in making psychological assessments about pastoral care-seekers who are experiencing crises and chronic suffering. However, plans of care ought to be ultimately based upon theological reflection that leads toward faith claims. For example, theological reflection upon a situation involving violence may lead to a faith claim that God does not intend human beings to abuse their power when they have responsibility over others and that the abuse of such power is evil.3 This faith claim becomes the basis for a plan of care that seeks healing and justice. Pastoral caregivers can offer unique care that is
religiously based. Such care is unique in that it uses religious sources and norms of authority; that is, it draws upon sources like sacred texts, doctrines, confessional, and denominational statements and uses norms like biblical-critical methods to interpret such sources.

Spirituality
The need for religiously based care has become more important given the trend to use spiritual practices cut off from their religious roots. These religious roots are important, because they offer resources for assessing spirituality from religious and theological perspectives. With such assessment, one can use spirituality to fulfill religious purposes and not be coopted as a commodity in market-driven health care. Coopted spirituality can assume shallow and even dangerous forms of religious practice, familiar to church historians. Pastoral caregivers can model religiously based care that uses psychological and theological analyses, especially in working as part of a healthcare team. Clergy, chaplains, deacons, and other religious professionals can demonstrate the value of theological reflection when assessing how people are using their spiritual and religious practices to cope with suffering and illness. For example, shallow use of spiritual or religious practices is more likely to support unhealthy ways of coping with sickness and death that can ultimately make sickness and dying more painful in both psychological and spiritual ways.

Contextually based Pastoral Care
Another trend in pastoral care is the use of a practice-theory-practice method with different populations (i.e., the young, the old, those who are financially secure or insecure, women, men, sexual minority persons, persons representing different ethnic groups). This practical-theological approach begins with a particular pastoral care encounter and uses self-reflection (especially on the accountability of pastoral caregivers) and then psychological and, more recently, cultural studies, and finally theological reflection, to develop a plan of care. The use of cultural studies is worth noting. In the 1980s and 1990s, pastoral theologians and practitioners often focused on a single aspect of social identity. Social identity is the way we are identified within our culture as men or women, straight or gay, as people of a particular race and ethnicity, financially secure or insecure, able-bodied or not able-bodied, and so on. In the 1980s and 1990s, pastoral
PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING

care theories and strategies focused on gender, race, or social class. In the late 1990s, pastoral theologians became concerned with the ways in which aspects of social identity (gender, race, class, sexual orientation, able-bodiedness) interacted from one moment to the next, to give people privilege or disadvantage. Many pastoral theologians recognized that they could no longer develop "generic" pastoral theologies that, for example, describe women in general. They could use particular life experiences of people who suffer as sources of revelation that could become the starting point of inductive constructive theologies.

It is no longer possible to have a "one-size-fits-all" approach to pastoral care. For example, when caregivers in the last two decades of the twentieth century tried to develop models of pastoral care to women, they soon realized that they were talking about Caucasian, middle-class, straight women and excluding women who were of other races, socioeconomic levels, and sexual orientation. Now caregivers are paying attention to the contextual nature of pastoral care. Using a practical-theological method adopted in the 1980s, they are looking in more detail at the pastoral care experiences that give rise to reflection and plans of care. They are appreciating the rich narrative details of these pastoral care experiences. They are realizing that the multilayered meanings of these narratives may push pastoral caregivers and theologians to reconstruct their theologies—for example, by breaking religious symbols no longer relevant or even harmful when used to understand the narrative brought by the careseeker. For instance, the symbol of servanthood can be offensive when associated with the oppression of women and African Americans.

A Systems Perspective

Using systems perspectives, caregivers are considering the ways in which persons, families, communities, and cultures play roles in alleviating or increasing suffering. Indeed, persons can't ultimately be transformed if oppressive cultures are not transformed. There is a call among pastoral caregivers and theologians not only for healing but also for justice. Pastoral care strategies now encompass healing and transforming persons, families, communities, and cultures. In a systems understanding of a crisis, pastoral care, no longer based upon individualistic psychological techniques, can take many forms of intervention at any level: one-on-one conversation, family conversation, community engagement, and social action.
Creative Theologies of Care

As a result of these trends, there is much creative work going on in the field of pastoral theology. A recent text by Pamela Couture uses John Wesley’s theology, along with Korean Minjung theology, to reflect upon American policies that have contributed to the poverty of children. Another text, by British pastoral theologian Adrian Thatcher, draws upon biblical, denominational, and historical theology to assess often-neglected issues to do with postmodern marriage: for example, the fact that 80 percent of couples live together before marriage—a cultural practice that many theologians and denominations have ignored. Nancy Ramsay uses biblical and theological reflections to develop a pastoral theology for those who have experienced childhood sexual abuse. Such creative theologies of care model how caregivers can engage in local, contextual theological practice in their day-to-day ministry.

The Practice of Pastoral Care

Given these trends, what does pastoral care in the new millennium look like? Nowadays, pastoral care is defined as either supportive or crisis-oriented religiously based care. Supportive care is typically offered over an extensive period of time to those who experience chronic suffering (like the frail elderly). Crisis care is offered to those experiencing acute loss, overwhelming life events such as crises associated with violence, and those associated with the consequences of compulsive ways of coping (alcoholism, drug abuse, eating disorders, etc.). A general rule of thumb is that crisis care should be between five and six sessions. By this time, adequate assessment and referrals have been made. Religious professionals can continue in the role of pastoral caregivers, working as part of a team and helping those in crisis use religious meanings and practices to make sense of their crisis. They may also pursue specialized training if they wish to offer more than supportive and crisis care.

Pastoral caregivers may be the first professional to respond to persons in crisis. They need to have the awareness, knowledge, and skills to do preliminary assessment. Pastoral caregivers are responsible for recognizing indicators of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, especially among children, teens, the elderly, and those who are not physically and mentally able-bodied. They also need to assess the risk of suicide and know what to
do when they suspect that careseekers could become violent. They need to be aware of their own reactions to the stories they hear and recognize the temptation to cross boundaries. The essential responsibilities of pastoral caregivers are to do preliminary assessments; consult with other health professionals; seek legal guidance when they are unsure about when they can break confidentiality; and then work as part of caregiving teams. The two most important words of advice for contemporary pastoral caregivers are consultation and teamwork. Pastoral caregivers can no longer work as solo practitioners. Their expertise in using religious sources and norms of authority is valuable to a caregiving team, especially given the popular use of rootless spirituality among health professionals. Their theological education and use of continuing education opportunities, along with current pastoral-theological texts, can equip them to take up the role of pastoral caregivers in a new millennium.

Carrie Doehring is Assistant Professor of Pastoral Psychology at the School of Theology and Graduate School of Boston University.

Endnotes

8. See Poling, *Deliver Us from Evil*, for a description of how race interacts with gender; see also Doehring, *Religiously-based Care*, chapter 7, for a discussion of how various aspects of social identity interact to give or deny social privilege to people.
Persons such as James White, Larry Stookey, Don Saliers, and Hoyt Hickman have provided United Methodists with useful resources for understanding the theology and history of worship. But none of these books fulfills the clear task of *Worship Matters* in bridging theological and practical knowledge in a broad sweep for both laity and clergy.

The back covers of both volumes of *Worship Matters* state their common starting point: "Worship matters because it is at the heart of and vital to the work of the local church as it makes, nurtures, and sends out disciples."

Discipleship Resources has given permission for purchasers to photocopy for worship and educational purposes in their congregations any article printed in each volume for one-time use. This permission can be a very effective tool in educating and empowering our congregations to take more seriously their part in enabling liturgy to be "the work of the people."

Each volume contains twenty-three articles plus an introduction by the editor of both volumes, E. Byron Anderson—United Methodist pastor and teacher of worship. The articles, written to be accessible to both laypersons and pastors, can be good discussion starters for worship committees and those working on worship renewal. Each article contains a brief bibliography for further reading. The authors of the articles are a cross-section of persons involved in United Methodist worship, from teachers of worship to persons working with the General Board of Discipleship to persons working at the local church level. Anderson's careful editing ensures that the articles maintain a consistently good quality but also that they speak in different voices. Both volumes are keyed to *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*—1996, *Mil Voces Para Celebrar: Himnario Metodista*, The United Methodist Hymnal, and *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. 

328 QUARTERLY REVIEW VOLUME 21, NUMBER 3, FALL 2001
Volume I focuses on the background of worship—theology, history, and culture—to frame our worship work in the changing North American culture. Part One focuses on the foundations of worship; its centrality to the life of the church; the United Methodist Basic Pattern of worship; worship's source in Jesus Christ; the means by which we receive grace; the sacraments of Baptism and Communion; and the relationship of worship to daily life. The article "How Shall We Worship?" gives congregations some helpful ways to consider their own worship patterns and the diversity of expectations brought to worship. In times of change, it is particularly useful to have articles on keeping our worship Christ-centered and on our Wesleyan heritage of understanding worship as a means of grace.

Part Two examines the varieties of cultures represented in our churches, looking at local congregations, African American worship, Asian American worship, Hispanic American worship, and feminist worship in The United Methodist Church. Those congregations involved or looking to become involved in multicultural, transcultural, and cross-cultural worship will find the opening article in this section on worship and culture helpful in defining terms and laying out general observations and principles.

Part Three turns to doing the work of worship, considering leaders, spaces, artists, media and sign-acts. As the offices of deacon and elder in The United Methodist Church continue to be defined, we need to seriously consider how various leaders work together to model Christian community. Two articles provide food for thought on how that modeling may be understood and practiced. Another two articles deal with questions around the practice and theology of Communion: Who gets Communion? (infants? children? the unbaptized? the "unworthy"?); how do we distribute Communion to those who cannot attend worship? (suggesting that this be a ministry of the laity).

Volume II of Worship Matters focuses on the work of United Methodist worship, viewing worship as something we do—that is, liturgy as "the work of the people." Part One deals with the teamwork of leaders in worship: planners; readers; cantors of psalms; acolytes; music leaders; Communion stewards, servers, and altar guilds; ushers; dancers; media ministers; and visual artists. Whether you are creating new space, renovating your current space, or trying to figure out why some things aren't working in the space you have, the articles in Part Two raise important concerns and possible solutions for baptism, Communion, preaching, and storage.
WORSHIP MATTERS

Part Three, on planning and guiding worship, is the "how to" section. Here are suggestions for how to:

- welcome children in worship;
- sing new songs;
- introduce baptism by pouring or immersion (with diagrams);
- get along without a choir;
- make the offering a vital part of worship;
- worship in small-membership congregations;
- worship in multicultural congregations;
- plan worship in an oral context; and
- plan worship for people who are deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing.

One omission here is concern for persons who are blind or visually impaired. This is a growing area of our population, and my experience with a blind student in a recent worship course has taught me that there are many things we can do that would help these persons feel more included in worship.

Overall these two volumes have important potential for assisting United Methodists in the understanding of relevant and rich worship. Don't allow them to get lost on a bookshelf somewhere; share them with your congregation!

Robin Knowles Wallace is Assistant Professor in the Taylor Endowed Chair of Worship and Music at Methodist Theological School in Ohio in Delaware, Ohio.
Issue Theme: Wealth, Poverty, and Economy in God’s World

Living Faithfully in the Global Economy
Rob van Drimmelen

The New Moral Context of Economic Life
Max L. Stackhouse

Being Human in the Market Society
M. Douglas Meeks

When Generosity Is Not Enough
Ellen T. Charry

The Bishops Initiative on Children and Poverty: Its History and Future
Pamela D. Couture

Outside The Theme

On Taking the Method Out of Methodism
Philip R. Meadows

The Church In Review

Holy Communion
Mark W. Stamm
E. Byron Anderson

A Word on The Word
Lectionary Study
Donald Senior, C.P.

Issues In: Pastoral Care and Counseling
Carrie Doehring

Book Review

Worship Matters: A United Methodist Guide to Ways to Worship (Volume 1)
Worship Matters: A United Methodist Guide to Worship Work (Volume II)
ed. by E. Byron Anderson
(Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1999)
Reviewer: Robin-Knowles Wallace

NEXT ISSUE:
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND FAITH