

Wesley Keeps Dad And Me Talking

Rediscovering Wesley's loom of faith (scripture, tradition, reason, and experience) can reknit the Adventist community.

by David Larson

THE POWER OF THE WESLEYAN CONNECTION to hold together divergent views within Adventism is illustrated by the relationship of my father and me. Ralph S. Larson was born 75 years ago. For more than 50 of those years he has served Adventism with distinction as a pastor, evangelist, teacher, and author. My father and I, both Adventist theology teachers, differ profoundly. But Wesley, whom we both admire, draws us together. My father stands on Wesley's right. I stand on Wesley's left. That accounts for our differences. It also explains why we have more in common with each other, and with other Wesleyans, than we do with those who look elsewhere for theological help. With the Wesleyan connection, we, and the Adventist Church, can stand together.

The tree of Adventist theology is more like

a banyan than a pine or palm. It has many roots and many trunks, some of which develop in "reverse order." As the banyan tree grows, it drops vines that take hold in new and diverse soil, that become additional roots and trunks nourishing the entire organism. It is long past time to emphasize that the Wesleyan heritage is one of Adventism's oldest, largest, and most deeply rooted trunks. An Adventism aware of its Methodist roots has a better chance of avoiding the contrary but equally disastrous outcomes of fundamentalism, on the one hand, and relativism on the other. Fundamentalism falls short by denying in theory or in practice the degree to which Scripture and our interpretations of it are both culturally conditioned. Relativism misses the mark in a different way by leaving the impression that Christian views and values are nothing but social and linguistic constructions of reality that are neither better nor worse than their rivals. These temptations, which strike me as opposite sides of the same counterfeit coin, are not always easy to resist.

Fortunately, Adventism has inherited from

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Wesleyans a way of developing theological convictions that can keep Adventist theology's quest for "present truth" in the middle of the road. Although it is often ignored, this approach, the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, is one of the most valuable treasures in Adventism's theological inheritance. Properly formulated and employed, it can help current and subsequent generations of Adventist theology from careening into either fundamentalism or relativism—or both.¹

Interweaving Christian Affirmations

The expression "Wesleyan Quadrilateral" was not introduced by John Wesley in the 18th century but by Albert Outler and others in the 20th.² Although the term is not Wesley's, the theological method to which it refers most certainly is. It is a way of formulating Christian convictions by interweaving converging lines of interpreted evidence from four related but distinguishable sources: Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Instead of appealing to any one of these, and drawing his inferences solely from it, Wesley utilized all four in ways that proved fruitful for him and others.

In seeking a "middle way" between Roman Catholicism and continental Protestantism, the Anglicanism to which Wesley was devoted for the whole of his life had long appealed to interpretations of Scripture, tradition, and reason.³ Wesley transformed this trilateral into a quadrilateral by appealing more directly and explicitly to interpretations of experience as well.⁴ He did so in ways that revealed his confidence in the fundamental intelligibility and harmony of the universe as God's creation, a primal faith that was also a part of his Anglican heritage.⁵

"I allow no other rule," Wesley declared, "whether of faith or practice, than the Holy Scriptures."⁶ He knew the whole of Scripture

"so nearly by heart that even his natural speech [was] biblical."⁷ He believed that the Holy Spirit inspired those who wrote the Bible, and that the same Spirit also inspires those who read it.⁸ He insisted that those who study Scripture should do so prayerfully, comprehensively, and contextually and that they should employ the best scholarly tools at their disposal.⁹ As Edward H. Sugden indicates, "Wesley was a critic, both higher and lower, before those much misunderstood terms were invented."¹⁰ According to Outler, Wesley held that Scripture should be read literally unless "that appears to lead to consequenc[e]s that are either irrational or unworthy of God's moral character as 'pure, unbounded love.'"¹¹ Wesley emphasized what he called the "analogy of faith," a complex of themes that unify Scripture in an unrelenting focus on divine grace and human responsibility.¹² "No Scripture can mean," he declared, especially against those who appealed to the Bible in behalf of John Calvin's doctrine of predestination, "that God is not love, or that his mercy is not over all his works."¹³

Although Wesley read widely in nine languages and wrote grammars for seven of them,¹⁴ and although he possessed a profound respect for the Christian tradition in its entirety, he preferred the English Reformation to its German, Swiss, and Roman counterparts, patristic writers to medieval ones, and the Greek Fathers to their Latin colleagues. Like many Anglicans, he was especially attracted to the Greek theology of Christianity's first five centuries. Wesley's interest in salvation as healing as well as acquittal, in divine grace as power as well as pardon, in the interactive cooperation between God's will and those of humans, in the human possibility of being "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4, KJV), and in "perfecting" rather than "perfected" perfection, all reflect his fondness for Greek Orthodoxy. It is a heritage whose metaphors are often drawn more from the

world of medicine than from law.¹⁵ “I exceedingly reverence them as well as their writings,” said Wesley of Christianity’s first theologians, “and esteem them very highly in love.”¹⁶

Wesley wondered how Martin Luther’s commentary on Galatians could “decry ‘reason’ (right or wrong) as an irreconcilable enemy to the gospel of Christ.”¹⁷ His own view, as expressed in his first *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* and many times elsewhere, was that he desired “a religion founded on reason and every way agreeable thereto.”¹⁸ He distinguished between what we call technical reason and what we call ontological reason and endorsed them both. He described the first as “the faculty of reasoning, of inferring one thing from another”¹⁹ or as “the power of apprehending, judging and discoursing. Which power is no more to be condemned in the gross than seeing, hearing, or feeling.”²⁰ He depicted the second as “the eternal reason, or the nature of things; the nature of God and the nature of man, with the relations necessarily subsisting between them” or “the essential nature of things.”²¹ In harmony with his lifelong desire “to be in every point, great and small, a scriptural, rational Christian”²² who saw “religion and reason joined”²³ because “all irrational religion is false religion,”²⁴ Wesley, who once taught logic at Oxford, viewed human reason in these two senses as necessary, though insufficient, features of Christian life.

Wesley’s appeals to interpretations of experience were complex and comprehensive.²⁵ On the one hand, the experience he weighed was public, communal, and related to what he called the “physical senses.” As Thomas Oden indicates, Wesley “was keenly interested in experiment and often displayed an investigative attitude toward the world. Scientific inquiry—observation, testing, hypothesizing, analyzing, discovering—Wesley found appealing, not appalling.”²⁶ On the other hand, however, the experience Wesley pondered

was private, personal, and related to what he called the “spiritual senses.” This included the immediate assurance of salvation as well as its enduring outcomes: love, joy, and peace (Galatians 5:23, 24). Wesley’s own account of what he felt when he listened to someone at a society on Aldersgate Street in London read from the preface to Luther’s commentary on Roman’s is illustrative.²⁷ “I felt my heart strangely warmed,” he wrote, “I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”²⁸ Human experience—both public and private, both personal and communal, both physical and spiritual—plays a legitimate role, Wesley held, in what he often called “experimental religion.”²⁹

The Loom of Christian Conviction

Two primary views, one more interpretive and the other more interactive, have emerged in recent discussions of how Wesley ordered the elements of the quadrilateral and of how we should do so today. When they are properly formulated, however, there is very little difference between the two; so little, in fact, that it seems best to describe Wesley’s method as both interpretive and interactive.

Randy L. Maddox declares that “Wesley’s so-called ‘quadrilateral’ of theological authorities could more adequately be described as a unilateral *rule* of Scripture within a trilateral *hermeneutic* of reason, tradition, and experience.”³⁰ For several reasons, however, this way of summarizing the matter is not as helpful as Maddox’s other description of Wesley’s method as “a ‘hermeneutical spiral’ of becoming aware of and testing preunderstandings.”³¹ For one thing, Wesley functioned as part of the Anglican heritage that had long used the Protestant principle of

Scripture alone to establish the primacy of the Bible, not its exclusiveness.³² In addition, the way Wesley developed his arguments in essays like *The Doctrine of Original Sin, According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience* strongly suggests that he appealed to interpreted evidence from a plurality of sources instead of one source interpreted by others.³³ Still further, when Wesley wrote in 1771 that "I present to serious and candid men my last and maturest thoughts, agreeable, I hope, to Scripture, reason, and Christian antiquity,"³⁴ he seems to have acknowledged several sources, not one. Wesley's method, as Maddox undoubtedly agrees, was interpretive in an interactive way.

John B. Cobb, Jr. holds that "The real issue is whether reason and experience can be employed to criticize and correct Scripture as well as to interpret it. If so, our doctrine must arise out of a free interchange among them. . . . we must allow reason and experience free play, even when they criticize Scripture."³⁵ Although this statement properly highlights the dynamic, inclusive, and interactive features of Wesley's method, it does so without detailing what it means "to criticize and correct" Scripture, on the one hand, and "to interpret" it, on the other. We are in no position to "criticize and correct" what a biblical word or deed meant in its original contexts any more than we can "criticize and correct" what the *Dialogues* of Plato or the *Analects* of Confucius meant in their first settings, and we might appear disrespectful if we tried.³⁶ But we can and should "criticize and correct" proposals as to what the Bible in part or in whole ought to mean for us today and we should do this, as Wesley did it, in light

of the best interpretations of the best evidence from the best sources: Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.

As Nancey Murphy emphasizes, "a tradition is an on-going *argument*—an argument about how to interpret and apply its formative texts."³⁷ Even if all traditions are not established in this way, the Christian tradition is constituted as an ongoing conversation about how the Bible, which Cobb rightly calls "our basic authority,"³⁸ ought to be appropriated and applied. Wesley, who edited 400 books as well as *The Arminian Magazine*,³⁹ understood that this conversation is not limited to the Bible.⁴⁰ But he also rightly held that this discussion cannot take place apart from the Bible as Christianity's formative text and primary source. The process is interactive; however, it is interactive in an interpretive fashion.

As this suggests, it is possible to misunderstand and misuse the

Wesleyan Quadrilateral in at least seven ways. One of these is to deny the primacy of Scripture. A second is to deny the legitimacy of sources other than the Bible. A third is to insist upon appealing to evidence from the four sources in some fixed temporal sequence. A fourth is to proceed as though we are appealing to Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience as such instead of to our own interpretations of evidence from each. A fifth is to presume that our various interpretations are wholly independent of one another. A sixth is to forget that our interpretations are influenced by the circumstances of our own lives as well as by each other and by the evidence they expound. A seventh is to disavow the possibility of a difference between what a text once meant and what it ought to mean now.

Wesley can help Adventists avoid crashing on the extremes of fundamentalism and relativism; he can help Adventists to the left and to the right of him continue talking to one another.

One way to prevent these misfortunes is to think of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral as a loom on which Wesley wove his Christian convictions, a loom shaped like a trapezoid instead of a rectangle, square, or diamond (all of which are also quadrilaterals). The trapezoid's four sides and four angles represent the plurality of sources of interpreted evidence to which Wesley appealed. Its longest side represents Scripture as the Christian community's formative text and primary source. Its three other sides, approximately equal in length, represent tradition, reason, and experience as additional sources. The trapezoid's unbroken perimeter represents the relatedness, as well as the distinctness, of the four sources. The web of fabric in the center of the loom represents Wesley's own Christian convictions, the attractive and coherent pattern that resulted when he interwove converging threads of interpreted evidence from the four sources.

There are instructive parallels between the Wesleyan Quadrilateral and the more plausible types of post-modern non-foundationalism. According to the post-modern critique, modern thinkers are too optimistic about finding some single, neutral, and unquestionable basis upon which to construct all their other beliefs.⁴¹ Some forms of this school of thought, both Christian and non-Christian, are relativistic—vacuously so.⁴² Others, however,⁴³ think of a set of beliefs and practices as neither a building with one indisputable foundation upon which the whole edifice rests, nor as a set of arbitrary human projections upon a chaotic and meaningless universe. Rather, they think of belief as a web, net, fabric, or mesh woven from a variety of threads, each of which has some link to the larger world.⁴⁴ For these post-moderns, non-foundationalism does not mean that all views and values are equally valid. It means, instead, that all our claims, including our own most cherished religious convictions, are influenced in part by our

circumstances; that the overall validity of a network of beliefs and practices depends upon a variety of related considerations, not just one; and that a “web of truth” is more tightly woven, and therefore less likely to fail, where various lines of interpreted evidence converge and cohere in mutually supportive ways.⁴⁵

Wesley understood that lines of evidence converge when, and only when, they are properly interpreted. If a serious divergence emerges, we have no responsible choice but to review and, if necessary, revise all our interpretations of evidence from all sources, and we must do so without preference or prejudice in any direction. Accounts of what a particular portion of Scripture ought to mean for us today properly change, whenever incorrigible interpretations of other evidence—biblical and non-biblical—require such adjustments. This rightly happened, for example, when their experience of the universe caused believers to stop reading the Bible with Ptolemaic eyes and to start reading it with Copernican ones instead. It also happened when their experience of the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844, prompted those who eventually founded our denomination to review and revise their interpretations of biblical prophecy.

Reweaving Adventist Teachings

Illustrations from the development of Adventist theology abound. To take just one positive example, consider the Adventist conviction that the human self is a mortal psychosomatic unity. This conviction does not rest on Biblical, traditional, rational, or experiential considerations alone, but on interwoven interpretations of evidence from all four sources. It reflects the view that the preponderance of biblical evidence favors a wholistic account of

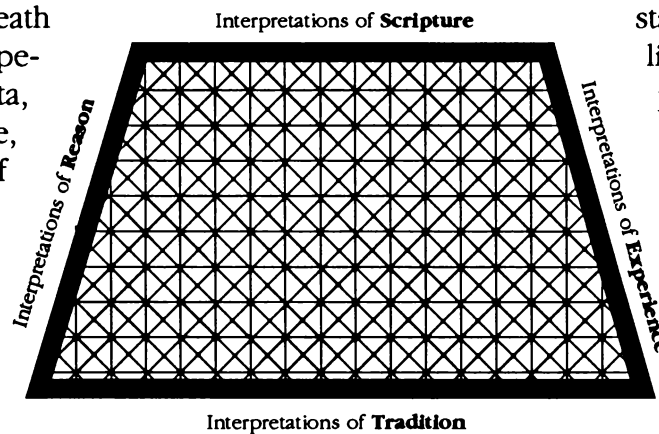
the human self, even though some passages of Scripture can be read another way.⁴⁶ It also rests upon a narrative of the Western intellectual tradition that detects an important difference between Hebraic and Hellenistic views of the human self. Adventism sees Christianity's appropriation of Hellenistic ideas of human nature in the patristic era as an "unfortunate fall" from which Christianity should recover as soon as possible.⁴⁷

Adventist conviction that the human self is a psychosomatic unity accepts that dualism (whether Platonic, Cartesian, or otherwise) is rendered irrational by its own incoherencies. For example, dualism leads to fierce struggles between idealism and materialism, parallelism and interactionism.⁴⁸ Conviction that humans are a unity leads to skepticism regarding "near-death experiences." Such experiences are reliable data, not about the afterlife, but about distortions of reality caused by biochemical changes in deteriorating human brains, illusions that are easily replicated by inducing similar biochemical alterations of neurological functions.⁴⁹ Thus, from an Adventist point of view, depicting the human self as a psychosomatic unity that lacks inherent immortality makes more sense than any other current option, all things—biblical and non-biblical—considered.

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral can help clarify another important issue for Adventists—how the writing of Ellen White ought to relate to Scripture. Two approaches that seem less than promising in opposite ways are those of elevating these publications to the doctrinal authority of the Bible, on the one hand, or relegating them to the status of mere devotional use, on the other. There are many

advantages, I believe, in following the English Reformation and the Methodist Revivals in understanding *sola scriptura* to refer to the primacy, not the exclusiveness, of biblical authority. This is the first step.

The second is to recognize that the writings of Ellen White provide the only access many Adventists around the world have to their own religious heritage. In harmony with her own observation that "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history,"⁵⁰ it would be helpful if her writings were utilized more widely and more responsibly throughout the denomination. This leads directly to the third step, that of helping Adventists and others understand the relationships between the circumstances of Ellen White's life and her views. Her publications can become a window through which Adventists in all parts of the world come to see their own religious tradition, with all of its richness and complexity, more completely and clearly.



If something like this is not done, and quickly, Adventism may forfeit its future by forgetting its past.

Taking account of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience is the kind of process for which we Adventists, like others, should strive in all of our doctrinal efforts.⁵¹ The procedure of reviewing and revising our interpretations of evidence from Scripture "in light of"⁵² our interpretations of evidence from tradition, reason and experience, as well as reviewing and revising our interpretations of evidence from each of them "in light of" our interpretation of Scripture, presses toward a "reflective equilibrium" of all four. This equipoise is neither

permanent nor perfect in every detail; nevertheless, it commands itself as the most adequate and coherent integration now available, not of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience by themselves, but of the interactive web of all four.⁵³

However, as Wesley realized, Protestants are tempted to shield their interpretations of Scripture from review and revision. Of course, Roman Catholics, rationalists, and mystics or charismatics can be just as protective of their interpretations, respectively, of tradition, reason, and experience.⁵⁴ Wesley was painfully aware, for instance, that the Protestant expression *sola scriptura* is often used, not only to promote the primacy of the Bible, but also to protect particular interpretations of Scripture, interpretations that frequently work to the advantage of some at the expense of others. As seen in his strong opposition to slavery and racism, which were defended in part on biblical grounds, Wesley detected and denounced such subterfuges, especially when they are used to defend ignorance, bigotry, and injustice.⁵⁵ His attitude toward

his own work was quite different. "It is very possible that I have," he replied to the charge that he might have erred in his interpretations, "but I trust, whereinsoever I have mistaken, my mind is open to conviction. I sincerely desire to be better informed. I say to God and man, 'What I know not, teach thou me.'"⁵⁶

As Albert Outler once observed,⁵⁷ "the 'quadrilateral' requires of a theologian no more than what he or she might reasonably be held accountable for: which is to say, a familiarity with Scripture that is both critical and faithful; plus, an acquaintance with the wisdom of the Christian past; plus a taste for logical analysis as something more than a debater's weapon; plus a vital, inward faith that is upheld by the assurance of grace and its progressive triumphs, *in this life*."⁵⁸ Such a comprehensive approach from our theological progenitors can help contemporary Adventists from crashing on the extremes of fundamentalism and relativism. Wesley can help Adventists to the left and to the right of him continue talking to each other.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Woodrow W. Whidden has written an excellent account of how the Wesleyan Quadrilateral can do justice to fundamentalism's legitimate interest in promoting the primacy of Scripture without discrediting itself by making unsupportable claims. It is scheduled for publication by *Andrews University Seminary Studies*.

2. Albert C. Outler, "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral—In John Wesley," and Ted A. Campbell, "The 'Wesleyan Quadrilateral': The Story of a Modern Methodist Myth" in Thomas A. Langford, ed., *Doctrine and Theology in the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Kingswood Book [Abingdon Press], 1991).

3. The English Reformation was often more self-conscious and self-confident than the Continental Reformation about appealing to tradition and reason as well as Scripture. But even Martin Luther, who sometimes thundered against reason, declared in the midst of his ordeal before the Diet of Worms: "Unless I am convicted by *Scripture and plain reason*—I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they

have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive of the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant" (Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1950], p. 185). Emphasis supplied.

4. Donald A. D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Mode of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), pp. 96-124.

5. Outler, "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral—In John Wesley," pp. 78, 79.

6. John Wesley, Letter to James Harvey, March 20, 1739, in Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), p. 56.

7. Albert C. Outler, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), p. 77.

8. Thorsen, p. 129.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 147-150.

10. Edward H. Sugden, "Introduction" in *John Wesley's*

Fifty-three Sermons (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), p. 7, as cited by Thorsen, p. 148.

11. Albert C. Outler, "Introduction" in Frank Baker and Richard P. Heitzinger, eds. in chief, *The Works of John Wesley, Bicentennial Edition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), Vol. 1, pp. 58, 59, as cited in Thorsen, p. 148.

12. Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books [Abingdon Press], 1994), pp. 38, 39.

13. John Wesley, "Free Grace" in Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, p. 39.

14. Oden, p. 67.

15. Outler, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Introduction*, pp. 75-103.

16. John Wesley, Letter to Dr. Conyers Middleton, January 4, 1749, in Thorsen, p. 155.

17. John Wesley, "Journal" (Monday, June 15, 1741) in Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 366.

18. John Wesley, "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," in Outler, *John Wesley*, p. 394.

19. *Ibid.*

20. John Wesley, "Journal" (Monday, June 15, 1741) in Outler, *John Wesley*, p. 366.

21. Wesley, "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," in Outler, *John Wesley*, p. 394. In our time, process theologians take note of Wesley's views on "necessary" relations.

22. John Wesley, Letter to Freeborn Garrettson, January 24, 1789, in Outler, *John Wesley*, p. 85. Wesley was 86 years old when he affirmed this lifelong ideal once again.

23. John Wesley, Letter to Joseph Benson, October 5, 1779, in Oden, p. 71. Also see Rex D. Matthews, "Religion and Reason Joined: A Study in the Theology of John Wesley" (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1986).

24. John Wesley, Letter to Dr. Rutherford, March 28, 1768, in Oden, p. 71.

25. Thorsen, pp. 201-225.

26. Oden, p. 75. For a discussion that contrasts Wesley's positive attitudes toward scientific innovation with the negative views of some contemporary spokespersons, see Ronald Cole-Turner, "Religion and Gene Patenting," *Science*, Vol. 270 (October 6, 1995), p. 52.

27. For a study of the variety of ways in which the "Aldersgate Experience" has been understood in the Wesleyan tradition, see Randy L. Maddox, *Aldersgate Reconsidered* (Nashville: Kingswood Books [Abingdon Press], 1990).

28. John Wesley, "Journal" (May 24, 1738), in Thorsen, p. 219.

29. Thorsen, pp. 83-100.

30. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, p. 46. Emphasis in original.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

32. Outler, "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral—In John Wesley," pp. 78, 79.

33. "We see Wesley's quadrilateral theological method more consciously unfolding here than anywhere else in his writings. We see him first working with historical arguments, then experiential and sociological arguments, and finally with early patristic and scriptural arguments" (Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity*, p. 160). "Thus the defense of 'original sin' begins with general and pervasive human experience, turns on an argument about how it is to be explained, and engages in Biblical exegesis. Although 'tradition' does not function as an explicit court of appeal in this essay, it is clear that the idea of original sin comes to Wesley from tradition and that his interpretation of both the facts of history and the Bible are deeply affected by this tradition" (John D. Cobb, Jr., *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, p. 173).

34. John Wesley, "Preface" to the 1771 edition of his *Works* in Oden, p. 65.

35. Cobb, pp. 174, 176.

36. It is easy enough to "criticize" but very difficult to "correct" what others said or did centuries ago. At this point, we can only decide how we will appropriate their words and deeds and apply them to our own lives. This can be done in a variety of ways that do justice to what was said and done then as well as what ought to be said and done now (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Researcher and physician Paul Gien informs me that good scientists never discard data; they interpret and reinterpret until everything eventually "fits." Good theologians do likewise.

37. Nancy C. Murphy, *Reasoning and Rhetoric in Religion* (Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1994), p. 206. Emphasis in original.

38. Cobb, p. 155.

39. Oden, p. 56; Outler, *John Wesley*, p. 23.

40. "To those who propose to read only the Bible, Wesley replied: 'You are got above St. Paul. He wanted others too. 'Bring the books,' says he, 'but especially the parchments'" (Oden, p. 56).

41. Cobb would probably agree with Maddox, who states that Wesley's theology "is quite amenable with contemporary non-foundationalism and the attempt to recover theology as a practical discipline" (Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, p. 42). I do not have a similar statement from Cobb except his observation that his own process theology "is in fact one continuation of Wesley's influence" (Cobb, *Responsibility and Grace*, p. 12). Nevertheless, at least since Cobb used the term in

this way in an essay he published in 1964, process theology has often presented itself as one form of post-modern thought. Cobb has consistently functioned as one kind of non-foundationalist insofar as he has acknowledged the contingency and conditionedness of all theological formulations, his own and others; nevertheless, he has avoided relativism by placing his proposals before those who evaluate them from very different points of view. I cannot help but believe that in this respect, as in so many others, Cobb "stands in Wesley's connection."

42. Please see Nancey Murphy and James William McClendon, Jr., "Distinguishing Modern and Postmodern Theologies," *Modern Theology* 5 (April 1989), pp. 145-168; David Ray Griffin, *God and Religion in the Postmodern World* (Albany: State University of New York, 1989); David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology* (Albany: State University of New York, 1989); David Ray Griffin, William A. Beardslee, Joe Holland, eds., *Varieties of Postmodern Theology* (Albany: State University of New York, 1988); William C. Placher, *Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989); and William C. Placher, "Postmodern Theology" in Donald W. Muser and Joseph L. Price, eds., *A New Handbook of Christian Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992).

43. These individuals follow people like W. V. O. Quine and Imre Lakatos in philosophy of science and Nancey Murphy in philosophy of religion.

44. Nancey Murphy's contributions have been exceedingly helpful to me. Please see her work in *Theology in an Age of Scientific Reasoning* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), *Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action* (Vatican City State and Berkeley, Calif.: Vatican Observatory Publications and the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 1993), *Reasoning and Rhetoric in Religion* (Valley Forge, Penna.: Trinity Press, International, 1994), and *Theology Without Foundations: Religious Practice and the Future of Theological Truth* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).

45. "The requirement of coherence is the great preservative of rationalistic sanity. But the validity of its criticism is not always admitted. . . . Disputants tend to require coherence from their adversaries, and to grant dispensations to themselves. . . . After criticism, systems do not exhibit mere illogicalities. They suffer from inadequacy and incoherence. Failure to include some obvious elements of experience in the scope of the system is met by boldly denying the facts. Also, while a philosophical system retains any charm of novelty, it enjoys a plenary indulgence for its failures in coher-

ence. But after a system has acquired orthodoxy, and is taught with authority, it receives a sharper criticism. Its denials and its incoherences are found intolerable, and a reaction sets in" (Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, corrected edition, edited by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press [Macmillan Publishing Co.], 1978), p. 6).

46. Richard Rice, *The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1985).

47. LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers: The Conflict of the Ages Over the Nature and Destiny of Man*, 2 volumes (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1965, 1966).

48. Jean R. Zurcher, translated by Mabel R. Bartlett, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: An Essay on the Problem of the Union of the Soul and the Body in Relation to the Christian Views of Man* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1969).

49. Jack W. Provonsha, *Is Death for Real? An Examination of Reported Near-Death Experience in Light of the Resurrection* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1981).

50. Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1915), p. 196.

51. "The key to a legitimate appropriation of a past text or event by a present community lies in preserving the integrity of *both* of the contexts involved—that of the original event and that of the present community. To use the terms of Hans-Georg Gadamer, a proper interpretation must 'fuse these two horizons.'

"Such a fusion requires that the two horizons be self-consciously identified in the process of their dialogue. . . . In this process, however, we must exercise extreme caution that we do not simply impose our current agendas upon an ill-fitted historical authority. The best way to determine if a legitimate "fit" has been found is to forward a proposed interpretation into the community of interpretation and see how it survives the questions of those with differing perspectives" (Randy L. Maddox, "Aldersgate: A Tradition History," in *Aldersgate Reconsidered*, pp. 145, 146).

52. Oden, p. 55.

53. For a discussion of "reflective equilibrium" in a very different context, please see John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 48-51.

54. "What happens when one has striven long and hard to develop a working view of the world, a seemingly useful, workable map, and then is confronted with new information suggesting that that view is wrong and the map needs to be largely redrawn? The

painful effort required seems frightening, almost overwhelming. What we do more often than not, and usually unconsciously, is to ignore the new information. Often this act of ignoring is much more than passive. We may denounce the new information as false, dangerous, heretical, the work of the devil. We may actually crusade against it, and even attempt to manipulate the world so as to make it conform to our view of reality. Rather than try to change the map, an individual may try to destroy the new reality. Sadly, such a person may expend much more energy ultimately in defending an outmoded view of the world than would have been required to revise and correct it in the first place" (M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values, and Spiritual Growth* [New York: Simon and Schuster,

1978], pp. 45, 46).

55. Manfred Marquardt, translated by John E. Steely and W. Stephen Gunter, *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), pp. 67-75.

56. John Wesley, "Preface," in "Sermons on Several Occasions" in Thorsen, p. 125.

57. Albert C. Outler, "The Wesleyan Quadrilateral—In John Wesley" in Thomas A. Langford, ed., *Doctrine and Theology in the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Kingswood Books [Abingdon Press], 1991), p. 86. Emphasis in original.

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