

GRACIOUS REASON:  
THE MEANING OF NAZARENE HIGHER EDUCATION AND  
THE WESLEYAN-HOLINESS IMAGINATION

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*Introduction*

The Church of the Nazarene was born in the optimism of grace. This optimism grew out of the deep wells of Wesleyan theology, which had its origin in eighteenth-century England. John Wesley, an Anglican minister and fellow at Lincoln College/Oxford, had struggled to find peace with God and a sense of full salvation. Finally, at Aldersgate, Wesley found the peace he had long sought and as he preached this message others were invited to embrace a message defined by the optimism of grace. The Holiness movement in America captured some of his spirit in the last decades of the nineteenth-century. People like Aaron Lummus, George Peck, Thomas Upham, John Miley, Phineas Bresee, J. B. Chapman, H. Orton Wiley, and Phoebe Palmer began to believe and then preach a simple message – the power of sin can be broken and a believer can live with the assurance of full salvation. This message is still radical over one hundred years later. The Church of the Nazarene is one of the major voices spreading this glorious hope. Early on, the Church of the Nazarene understood that establishing colleges, universities, and even a seminary was an essential part of defining a holy imagination, one that is capable of serving as a hermeneutic for all of life. Technically, the Church of the Nazarene is too small to have so many institutions for higher learning, but from the beginning the clear relationship between an intellectually credible and practically viable holy imagination was understood.

The flourishing of holiness theology within the context of Wesleyanism<sup>1</sup> is most characterized by the bold claim that there is no sphere where the message is irrelevant. Graced reason defines Nazarene Higher Education. The well-known Wesleyan Quadrilateral<sup>2</sup> provides a particular notion of reason, one that is best understood as both gift and grace, and as such it can become a hermeneutic for faithful learning. Faculty members teaching in the institutions of higher learning sponsored by the Church of the Nazarene have the opportunity to facilitate the kind of environment which honors the depths of the Christian faith while engaging difficult questions. Therefore, gracious reason offers the lens through which the mind and spirit can be actively engaged in intellectual pursuits which have spiritual implications. All the dimensions of human knowing along with the attending educational convictions can be honored within the context of gracious reason,

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<sup>1</sup> A basic assertion of this paper is that Nazarene theology is best described as Wesleyan-Holiness theology. The emergence of holiness theology within Wesleyanism requires the presence of multiple voices in order to facilitate an understanding of Nazarene theology and thus Nazarene Higher Education. At this point, I am merely recognizing the issue without fully defining all of the influences that have contributed to and continue to contribute to the nature of theological discourse within the Church of the Nazarene.

<sup>2</sup> The term “quadrilateral” was not used by Wesley, but it does suggest a theological construct that represents his theological method. Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience compose the quadrilateral and together point the way toward a Wesleyan imagination that is open toward full engagement with culture through a mature understanding of the Christian faith.

The purpose of what follows is to define the challenge, convictions, and educational trajectories of the Wesleyan-Holiness imagination, which defines the educational ethos of the Church of the Nazarene. A Wesleyan-Holiness University depends upon its capacity to fund the imagination of students and faculty toward the concrete hope of evacuating the notion of the secular/sacred dichotomy. In fact, it is the creation of something like “secular space” that must be denied by the philosophical, theological, and intellectual labor of students and the life-long vocation of the professoriate in the Church of the Nazarene. The Wesleyan-Holiness imagination depends not only upon capturing the minds of our young, but also encourages the life-long discipleship of men and women, who devote themselves to conceiving the world through the optimism of grace. Holiness education links the mind and the heart in the trajectory of the expelling love of Christ. Above all, an education framed within the Wesleyan-Holiness imagination avoids intellectual defensiveness, which finally closes the world to redemption, and instead builds fortresses of Christian insecurity. A Wesleyan-Holiness imagination also denies any tendency to settle for intellectual laziness in the name of pietism. Rather, a Wesleyan-Holiness imagination embraces the optimism that the world may be reclaimed for the Christian faith through gracious reason.

### *Three Challenges for Wesleyan-Holiness Imagination*

The intellectual, moral, and spiritual shift of Western European culture presents us with a world that has lost its moorings in the sources of wisdom that have nourished Western civilization from its beginning. Here I am referring to the kind of historical consciousness that reflectively engages the Bible, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and so on. To be sure there are many things that separate these sources in the rich intellectual traditions of the West, but one thing clearly unites them. All of them agree that the point of living is to progressively embody a character defined by wisdom, prudence, justice, and courage, that is, in turn capable of freedom. When the theological virtues (faith, hope, and love) are added to the philosophical virtues (wisdom, prudence, justice, and courage) the resources of the Western intellectual tradition come clearly into view.

A Wesleyan-Holiness imagination embraces the conviction that it is possible to order life toward the kind of character that is assumed by Western civilization and made clear in the Judeo-Christian tradition.<sup>3</sup> I would like to explore three dimensions of the problem which confront any

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<sup>3</sup> Character is linked to virtue, friendship, and ultimately the social nature of human existence. The trajectory of Western Civilization and Western Christianity assumes character as its basis. The significance of friends in the process of education and the development of virtue is based in a social understanding of human nature. We need to reflect and expand upon our understanding of human nature as fundamentally social. The Judeo-Christian tradition talks about being made in the image of God, that is, of being a creature designed to comprehend and act upon its relationship to God, others, world, and self. God is Triune, He is - - everlasting relationship: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are made in His image as beings capable of relationship. It is not normal and it is rarely healthy to live in isolation. We learn to talk, so that it is possible to communicate and learn with one another. We develop a complex set of signs and gestures, so that we can make ourselves understood. Human beings are inescapably sign-makers.

attempt to engage the world through a Wesleyan-Holiness imagination: loss of historical consciousness, a fractured individualism and lazy pluralism..

### *Loss of Historical Consciousness*

The first challenge confronting the Wesleyan-Holiness imagination is the loss of historical consciousness. Please understand that I am not making an appeal for the inherent superiority of Western European culture over the cultures of China, Africa, India, Japan or any of the other world cultures. My argument is simply that it is not possible to talk about a Wesleyan-Holiness imagination apart from some sort of historical/cultural consciousness. Perhaps, the greatest threat to the kind of education envisioned by the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition is an insidious “present-ism”, which lacks either history or depth.

The basic problem is that we rarely learn the history of something. What we learn is “how to do it” and “how it is relevant” to my interests or the needs of others. Neither relevance nor application is in and of itself problematic, but either without a sense of history can be meaningless. Historical consciousness is necessary in order to have any kind of understanding. Here I am not talking about a mere list of facts. I am talking about the kind of understanding that renders a character capable of freedom. Stanley Hauerwas, Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke Divinity School, points to this precise issue, “freedom comes not from choosing our stories, but by being formed by a truthful narrative that helps us appreciate the limits and possibilities of those stories we have not chosen, but are part and parcel of who we are.”<sup>4</sup> While there is much more to his argument, it is clear that he understands the importance of history and its role in truthful narrative. We can teach technology to people, but unless we teach them a history worth remembering the very technology that was intended to free us will enslave us.

### *Fractured Individualism*

A fractured individualism presents the second challenge for Wesleyan-Holiness imagination. Without a common history and a common historical consciousness, we will inevitably seek to define meaning purely within our own resources. Existentialism is a philosophy that became popular in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it took individualism to its logical

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Aristotle observes that human beings are by nature political. We form associations with one another in order to achieve goods that without each other remain closed to us. We learn to live as families because we find that together we can accomplish more than we can alone. We make friends with people we admire, so that we might emulate them. We allow friendships with those who need us, to form an association with us in order to grow. This fact is all the more interesting in light of the possessive individualism. The tendency to think through moral concerns with the language of rights tends to alienate us from one another. It tends to cast all human relationship in terms of entitlement and when this happens relationships begin to look like a tournament. Character will not flourish in this situation.

<sup>4</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between* (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1988), 29.

conclusion - nihilism. These philosophers, artists, novelists, and playwrights assaulted all common history and all common historical consciousness with a relentless diet of individualism. We do not have time, at this point, to embark upon a consideration of existentialism as a philosophy of life, but all of us have been impacted by it.<sup>5</sup> Of course, the average person has not read Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Martin Heidegger, or Freidrich Nietzsche who helped to shape existentialism. But many people have read Wayne Dyer, Dr. Phil, and Oprah Winfrey all of whom have unwittingly popularized existentialism or at least possessive individualism. While you will never hear them quote an existentialist, and I freely admit, they probably have not read any existentialist philosopher, what they have drawn deeply from the wells of individualism. For example, expressions like “Forgiveness is something we do for ourselves” or “Choose Your Best Life” are informed by possessive individualism. The idea that our problems dissolve with a “Simple Three Step Plan” is not only wrong, but dangerous. These expressions depend upon my ability to construct my life without any need for other resources. Each expression implies that I can live meaningfully without much or any help. While there is a “sort of common sense wisdom” in these comments they fracture under the real pressures of life.

Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, addresses a fractured individualism in *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement*. This exceptionally rich book lends insight on the issues I am addressing here. The following comment will perhaps illustrate Williams’ insight, “A culture which tolerates the loss of a sense of damage to the moral identity, the loss of shame and remorse, is bound to be one that dangerously overplays the role of the will in the construction of human persons.”<sup>6</sup> A fractured individualism thrusts our destiny on the will alone and such a move requires the sacrifice of things like remorse and shame and moral identity. Animating life purely upon the resources of the will does not allow for failure and thus will not allow the luxury of remorse or shame. The intellectual exhaustion occasioned by the reliance upon the will alone results in “bad faith”. The unbearable weight of emptiness results in nihilism. The path of fractured individualism runs through the entire history of modernity. Without the richer resources of a common history/community we find ourselves thrust toward an individualism that fractures life, leaving us with a will that has limited resources for dealing with life. Character requires something more in order to be realized.

Perhaps, one more example will be sufficient to make my point. Plato is one of the most important philosophers of Western culture. Toward the end of his best known book *The Republic* Plato addresses the evolution and transition of government. He asserts the most basic kind of government is “Timocracy” which locates itself in honor. The next evolution he calls “Oligarchy” which is the rule of the few over the many. “Democracy” is the rule of the many and it is expressed as the desire for freedom. The final evolution is “Tyranny” which is the rule of the one over the many. Two things interest me in Plato’s analysis of government. First, he

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<sup>5</sup> I do not intend to dismiss the importance of existentialism or deny that it arises out of a very specific historical consciousness. I merely argue that its general lack of respect for history becomes part of the fabric of possessive individualism.

<sup>6</sup>Rowan Williams, *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 2000), 102

observes that democracy will always evolve into tyranny, because the desire for freedom inevitably causes one to grab for all of it. That may or may not be true, but it is an interesting point. It is his second observation that I find absolutely fascinating. He describes democracy as the desire for freedom for its own sake, and thus the average life in a democracy radiates between excess and deficit, between guilt and satisfaction. He describes this in Book VIII of *The Republic*:

And does he not also live out his life in this fashion, day by day indulging the appetite of the day, now winebibbing and abandoning himself to the lascivious pleasing of the flute and again drinking only water and dieting, and at one time exercising his body, and sometimes idling and neglecting all things, and at another time seeming to occupy himself with philosophy. And frequently he goes in for politics and bounces up and says and does whatever enters his head. And if military men excite his emulation, thither he rushes, and if moneyed men, to that he turns, and there is no order or compulsion in his existence, but he calls this life of his the life of pleasure and freedom and happiness and cleaves to it to the end.<sup>7</sup>

Freedom as Plato understands it is an expression of desire and choice and as such it ultimately fractures the very life it intends to satisfy. This describes our time in an uncanny way. Such a situation renders all talk of character and Wesleyan-Holiness imagination more difficult, if not impossible.

### *Lazy Pluralism*

Lazy pluralism with its attending relativism represents a third dimension of the challenge and defines our time. The first two dimensions of the problem [a loss of a common history and fractured individualism] contribute to lazy pluralism with its attending relativism. Not all pluralism is problematic and in fact, a certain amount of pluralism is necessary for learning to take place. It is like the often repeated phrase “have an open mind, but not so open that it falls on the floor.” Therefore, a critical pluralism is a worthy goal and it is one of the conditions of an educated mind. The problem arises when we allow pluralism to become uncritical. When this happens we merely place all the objects of our understanding alongside one another. Each object or idea is as good as the other and there is no way to order them or discriminate between them. We have all heard the slogan “When in Rome do as the Romans do”, but what we may not always recognize is that this phrase originates with the Pre-Socratic Sophists. These philosophers became so frustrated with the attempt to locate one thing that would always be true that they gave up. This meant that they quit trying to do anything more than describe a state of affairs and then affirm it. A contemporary example of this is “Values Clarification,” which is in my estimation, a bankrupt theory of values and life. Yet, for a lazy pluralism the existence of an

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<sup>7</sup>Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, ed., *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 789-790).

idea or value is a sufficient condition for its acceptance. On the face of it this relativity of value sounds fine, but relativity quickly breaks down when we really think about it.

Most people I encounter are “practical” relativists, even in the church. When options are so many and the resources of decision-making seem limited, then all choices become arbitrary. Here the attitude is, if I need it to be true, or if I want it to be true, or if it is convenient for it to be true, then it is true. Such a state of affairs cannot help but result in nihilistic violence, the kind that we see in films, television, music, and in our world. Alasdair MacIntyre, professor of philosophy at Notre Dame University, has written one of the most important books of our time: *After Virtue*. While first published in 1984, the text’s clear analysis and compelling constructive proposal continues to make the book a worthwhile read. *After Virtue* begins with a chapter entitled “A Disquieting Suggestion.” MacIntyre makes the point that if what has happened to virtue (its all but complete dissolution) had happened in the world of natural science the whole world would have noticed.<sup>8</sup> Since lazy pluralism lacks a clear rationality for making moral judgments decisions are usually reduced to emotions. Therefore, moral judgments resemble choosing the flavor of an ice cream cone or the color of a dress. The moral theory associated with the type of decision-making is emotivism. Lazy pluralism results in emotivism, thus rendering moral decision-making entirely subjective. MacIntyre suggests that if such a state of affairs had taken place in the natural sciences the effects would have been widely disputed. But because emotivism has attacked virtue, nobody noticed or for those who did, it did not seem to matter. After all, what possible importance could this have for things that matter? That is why we generally scrutinize our “physicians” and “attorneys” more than we do our ministers - - we believe that what a minister teaches or preaches is less vital to life than the practice of medicine or law.

The problem with pluralism is at its base a problem of authority. Most would acknowledge that we are a living in a time “after virtue”, because we no longer have any way to arbitrate our disagreements. This means that many have thrown up their hands in frustration and surrendered to the relentless cacophony of opinion. Yet, our common life together will not allow us to surrender. Moral reflection moves to the margins, but we will not allow science and medicine to surrender, because in our mind they were always more important anyway. Such an analysis is wrongheaded and dangerous.

Over confidence in human subjectivity is a dimension of a fractured individualism. This problem is the result of a loss of a common history, a fractured individualism, and a lazy pluralism. These three dimensions are all inter-related through the category of “subjectivity” as the source of all meaning. William Placher reflects upon the emergence of human subjectivity:

Both Aquinas’ defenders and his critics generally see him as the culmination of the Middle Ages, who will fit everything together in grand synthesis in which monastic contemplation and university argumentation came perfectly together. In a sense, however, he achieved that synthesis by tearing things apart. For a thousand years, Christians had thought of their world as single order hierarchy. All knowledge began

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<sup>8</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2.

with faith; all authority, Aquinas agreed, come ultimately from God, but in this world he separated the realms of reason and revelation, church and state. Once that separation had been made in principle, it grew wider.<sup>9</sup>

A significant shift took place in Western culture with the advent of modernity between the fourteenth and sixteenth century. Prior to the advent of modernity, it was always necessary to locate ourselves in the life of God. But the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, and perhaps the Reformation, effected a shift to God had to be located first in the mind of humankind. There is no place where this is more evident than in the philosophy of Rene Descartes. After dispensing with everything we experience, all common sense judgments, and finally all that tradition has taught us there is but one thing that we can know - - I am. Descartes *cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) is tantamount to a secular orthodoxy. It has been upon this foundation that modern thought has constructed itself. MacIntyre<sup>10</sup> among others has rightly observed that this project has failed and we are faced with the prospect of living amid the shambles of this failure. I will argue that no one is forced to live in the shambles of the failure of the modern project, because there is a land far richer. This is part of what a Wesleyan-Holiness imagination seeks to accomplish. When we get there we will find that things like character, virtue, and goodness still exist.

### *Implications of the Three Challenges*

The cultural and intellectual challenges are real for the Wesleyan-Holiness imagination. Perhaps, two observations suggest the reach of the challenge. First, if modernity is correct in imposing subjectivity as the single category of meaning, then God was always going to die. The infamous “Death of God Theology” is a logical implication of modern philosophy. Modernity could not have possibly avoided the implications of its own metaphysics: God is dead. Nietzsche, the German philosopher, saw this clearly in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. A God who depends upon us to think Him will not survive. Mark Taylor, a prominent theologian in the American Academy of Religion, succinctly summarized the moves of late modernity: God is dead, the self comes next, and finally history is at an end.<sup>11</sup> My point is simply this - - subjectivity is not sufficient in and of itself to sustain a meaningful life, much less talk of Wesleyan-Holiness imagination.

Second, no one should be surprised by the insipient narcissism of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially in light of the already present reduction of meaning to one category – subjectivity. While there are many examples of this the most obvious one has to do with sexuality. When love is merely the unitary positing of subjectivity love becomes the love of one’s self in another. We are created to love our complement and not ourselves, but a culture lost in its own subjectivity

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<sup>9</sup>William C. Placher, *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 158.

<sup>10</sup>Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Second Edition. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1984), 51-61.

<sup>11</sup>Mark Taylor made this comment at the American Academic of Religion held in Boston, MA during a session devoted to his theological contribution to contemporary theology.

finds this increasingly difficult. Because of the subjectivity that pervades our life and almost all of its cultural expressions, we have lumped the expression of love as complement and love as narcissistic resulting in the loss of difference. The vigor of the debate in Western European culture has no ability to arbitrate the issues apart from the reduction of everything to the one category – subjectivity. Therefore, without a broader set of categories the only option is simple - as long as you really love the person, either as complement or as a deceptive attempt to secure oneself, then it must be fine.

These three dimensions of the problem [loss of a common history, fractured individualism, and lazy pluralism] present the challenge we are investigating. There is much more that can be said on each of these dimensions. This, then is, my lament. Yet, the last word need not be one of despair. Serving at the crossroads of where culture has been and where it is going requires that a constructive response be formed. It is precisely at this point where a Wesleyan-Holiness University can begin the work of imagining a world that flows like milk and honey with the wisdom of the Triune dance.

### *Wesleyan-Holiness Convictions*

The resources necessary to creatively engage the challenges already indicated requires a closer look at the theological convictions which inform a Wesleyan-Holiness imagination.<sup>12</sup> According to David McKenna,

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, John Wesley had the vision of a world parish. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Wesleyans risked their lives on the American frontier in order “to spread scriptural holiness across the land, and reform the nation.” Later in that century, Wesleyans had a prominent role in the spiritual awakening that helped shape the conscience of America against the slavery and the compassion of America that is unique in human history. At the opening of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Wesleyans had the opportunity to project their vision for the integrity of personal and social holiness at a time when the Bible was under attack and the social gospel was on the rise.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Recent history in the Church of the Nazarene has produced two major theological works. The first, H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988) represents the classical Wesleyan side of the debate. The second, J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994), represents the American Holiness side of the debate. The issues between these two approaches are interesting for those concerned with the specific way in which holiness theology has shaped the Church of the Nazarene. Perhaps, the same general dynamic is present in United Methodism with the theological debate between Randy Maddox (Duke Divinity School) and Kenneth Collins (Asbury Theological Seminary). The issues raised by these theologians suggest the parameters of the Wesleyan-Holiness imagination.

<sup>13</sup> David L. McKenna, *What a Time to Be Wesleyan!: Proclaiming the Holiness Message with Passion and Purpose* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1999), 149.

While McKenna goes on to suggest that at this crucial point Wesleyans retreated to a region of personal holiness, as an escape from the more difficult issues, he believes that resources exist within the Wesleyan-Holiness imagination to provide direction. In fact, according to McKenna, “I fully believe that we will see the “new thing” that is springing up among us now.”<sup>14</sup> Wesleyan theology with its deep roots in classical Christianity is fundamentally Christian in the sense that it affirms the ecumenical creeds and the essential tenets of the Christian faith: the Triune God, deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, authority of the scripture, the sinful human condition, the possibility of gracious redemption, the sacraments, and the second coming of Christ. Wesleyan theology has rich theological debts to Anglicanism and to the Protestant Reformation. The rich expressions of Wesleyan theology exist in the entire Methodist family of denominations. Nazarene theology itself is far too complex to reduce to only one descriptor, but the link between Wesley and the Holiness with all of its challenges defines a particular way of appropriating Wesleyan theology.

Gracious reason presents a particular entry into the possibility presented by Wesleyan-Holiness theology for defining the intellectual space necessary for education: formation, discernment, and praxis.<sup>15</sup> The reference to imagination needs to be specifically clarified at this point. Wesley reflects upon the meaning of this imagination in the following, “This love we believe to be the medicine of life, the never failing remedy for all the evils of a disordered world, for all the miseries and vices of men. Wherever this is, there are virtue and happiness going hand in hand”.<sup>16</sup> Theology is best understood as a disciplined reflection on the forms of life engendered by the Word, Spirit, and Sacrament. Therefore, theology as an intellectual/spiritual activity is an interpretative act. The Christian faith becomes in this understanding a lens through which the world and thus life is understood. For Paul, the Cross became the basis upon which to read history and frame the emerging faith of the Christian community. Imagination is used in a disciplined sense of the hermeneutical approach to the world through Wesleyan-Holiness theology.

### *Metanarrative Realism and Intellectual Space*

The purpose of a Christian education is to train men and women to see the world truthfully. We might do well to hear the proclamation of John Milbank, “The task of . . . theology is not apologetic, not even argument. Rather it is to tell again the Christian myths, pronounce again the Christian logos, and call again for Christian praxis in a manner that restores their freshness and originality. It must articulate Christian difference in such a fashion as to

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<sup>14</sup> McKenna, 152.

<sup>15</sup> I am indebted to Dean Blevins for the use of these three terms to describe education in the Wesleyan-Holiness imagination.

<sup>16</sup> John Wesley, “An Earnest Appeal To Me of Reason and Religion” *Wesley’s Work* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1872, 1979), 8: 3.

make it strange.”<sup>17</sup> Milbank evokes an essential discussion that needs to take place on the campus of any university seeking to constructively engage the world through the resources of Wesleyan-Holiness theology. Engaging the world through Wesleyan-Holiness theology requires a sustained attempt to understand the nature of Wesleyan-Holiness intellectual space. Any failure to understand the importance of intellectual space leaves many confused about what motivates work on the campus of a Wesleyan-Holiness University. Life and thought take place within a certain intellectual space. Essentially, intellectual space translates into metanarrative.<sup>18</sup> While the emergence of postmodernism has called into question all attempts at metanarrative the resources of Wesleyan-Holiness theology suggest the possibilities of metanarrative realism<sup>19</sup>. Kant was one of the first modern philosophers who attempted to address the challenges of metaphysics. His work allows for metaphysics, but refuses to allow metaphysical claims to be treated as scientific. Regulative reason allows for the limits of metaphysics without dismissing it. This restriction represents an important way to weave the facts (science) with the creative/constructive dimensions (reason) of understanding. It allows for metaphysics which in turns opens the way to comprehending the role of intellectual space.

The rise, fall, and return of metaphysics in modern philosophy present implications for metanarrative realism. For many the critique of Kant regarding metaphysics sufficiently undercuts any serious attempt to do metaphysics. Fundamentally, Kant allows metaphysics, but at the same time he calls into question the grand metaphysical systems of the Greeks and the medieval period. Hegel attempts to respond to Kant by painting metaphysics against the horizon of history. Hegel’s triadic pattern (Being-Nonbeing-Becoming) presents a scheme for charting the movement of history. Perhaps, Hegel’s scheme is the last great metaphysical system in the modern world. The critique of Kierkegaard and Marx of this system, while very different in tone from one another shares one common feature – metanarratives are bankrupt of meaning. Kierkegaard locates his system within the Christian faith and calls for personal decisions in the face of the moment. It is not the system which attracts Kierkegaard, it is the moment. On the other hand, Marx questions the genuine historical value of Hegel’s system and instead locates all the movements of history in economics – the struggle between the workers and the capitalist. Therefore, for Kierkegaard and Marx there is no point to metaphysics or metanarratives. It is finally Nietzsche who manages to offer the most powerful critique of metaphysics/ metanarratives. Reason may be as objective, but it is as it turns out really about the will to power according to Nietzsche. The challenge of imagination is to understand the importance of it, especially in light of the history of modern philosophy. This brief account of some major voices in the history of metaphysics only tells part of the story, but this analysis suggests that the question remains essential to the meaning of intellectual space and metanarrative realism.

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<sup>17</sup>John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1990, 2006), 383.

<sup>18</sup> I prefer the term “metanarrative realism” which follows the work of John Milbank and Radical Orthodoxy.

<sup>19</sup> Metanarrative realism is the assertion that metanarratives are about what is real and not merely stories that assert reality or construct reality. Therefore, the metanarrative embodies what is real.

Metanarrative realism represents an attempt to argue for the role of narrative as a formative discourse. The story of Israel, Jesus, and the Church form the substance of a narrative sufficiently capable of bearing meaning. Intellectual space arises from the capacity of these narratives to provide practices and rules for discerning the truth as well as define the way forward. Metaphysics represent one logic for this kind of discourse, but it is unwise to equate metanarrative realism with a full-blown metaphysical system. Perhaps, the most appropriate characterization of metanarrative realism is grammar. Intellectual space is composed of practices and therefore a grammar capable of coherence, complexity, social embodiment, and finally adaptability. Picking a word out of the paragraph rarely rendering meaning, but looking at the word in the midst of the complete paragraph, chapter, book, or even culture most often does render authenticity. Wesleyan-Holiness imagination as a grammar is a metanarrative which happens in a particular intellectual space.

Everything that happens does so within intellectual space thus constituting life and thought. For example, to be Christian is to occupy a certain place and space in the world. The ecumenical creeds and the labors of theologians within the Christian tradition allows us to make judgments about the world, which ultimately distinguish us from secularists, Buddhists, Muslims, Materialists, Marxists, Freudians, and so on. Understanding that the world was created by God out of nothing and thus is dependent upon God is essential to what it means to be a Christian. Likewise, it is essential for Christianity that human life be understood as self-transcendent in that we evacuate all views of life that are purely immanent. In other words, Christianity arises from a defined intellectual space and is thus inseparable from that space. Wesleyan-Holiness theology is Christian to the extent that it remains materially connected to the convictions of the Christian faith. Yet, to be Wesleyan-Holiness is to have several distinct theological convictions which remain in conversation with the Christian faith. For example, Wesleyan-Holiness theology affirms the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, the personhood of the Holy Spirit, the sacraments, the authority of the Scripture, the Second Coming and so on and in this way it is fundamentally Christian. Yet, Wesleyan-Holiness theology affirms Christian perfection, cooperant grace, and the possibility of breaking the power of sin.

The central themes of Wesleyan theology can be summarized in many ways, but one basic summary is optimism of grace, soteriology, and Protestant/Catholic/Orthodox. Another possible summary offered by Outler suggests that justification of faith, original sin, and Christian Perfection are the cornerstones of Wesleyan theology. The real question comes down to what it means to be a Wesleyan. Does it mean to parrot his ideas? Does it mean to accept his metaphysics or epistemology as the only option? Does it mean to share his views on political issues? According to Randy Maddox in *Responsible Grace*,

it would mean – at the very least – to bring theological activity into the service of nurturing contemporary life and witness, just as he did. I believe that it would also mean to bring the orienting concern of *responsible grace* to that situation-related theological activity. In this process it will undoubtedly be necessary to deal with issues that Wesley did not treat, to develop areas of doctrine that he only touched on, to nuance claims that he boldly asserted, and assert boldly some claims that he played down. It will even mean disagreeing with Wesley at times, out of faithfulness to the Gospel and his own wider

vision. Indeed, it could conceivably mean eventually deciding – in responsible dialogue with the Gospel of grace, the broad Christian community, and the wisdom of experience – that there is an even more adequate orienting concern that should guide out practical-theological activity than ‘responsible grace’. But if that day should come, it would be itself a contribution from taking Wesley as a theological mentor”.<sup>20</sup>

Wesleyan-Holiness theology participates in the larger conversation that is Christian, but it imagines the world and life in ways that are distinct because of the centrality of holiness in the construal of things.<sup>21</sup> A very basic reason for this is the manner in which Wesley intends to weave Latin and Greek theology into a unique perspective.

### *An Account of Wesleyan-Holiness Imagination*

The discussion above regarding Wesleyan-Holiness intellectual space requires an appreciation for the history of metaphysics, but it also includes some discussion of the intellectual integrity of Wesleyan-Holiness theology/imagination. Professor William Abraham shocked the *Wesleyan Theological Society* at its annual meeting in 2004 when he said, “Wesleyan theology is now slowly but surely laid to rest.”<sup>22</sup> His basic argument is that Wesleyanism is far too diffuse to be identified in the way that Augustinianism, Thomism, Calvinism, and so on can be defined. Abraham further argues, “Outler’s Wesley as an invented Wesley, a Wesley at once Catholic, Reformed, Evangelical, Enlightened, Ecumenical, non-dogmatic, pragmatic, pious, anti-confessional, relative to his place and time, pluralist in ecclesiology, and always open to the future”<sup>23</sup> is part of the problem. One of the problems with Wesleyan faith is that it has inspired widely diverging theologies. This has inspired debate between Kenneth Collins and Randy Maddox [understanding sanctification], Donald Dayton and Lawrence Wood [baptism with the Holy Spirit], Joerg Rieger and Scott Jones [Wesley as a centrist or at the margins], and William Abraham and Gregory Clapper [how seriously to interpret affections in Wesley]. While Abraham tends to think of this as a problem for the larger conversation in Protestantism, he is most interested in its implications for Wesleyanism. He argues, “It is not just Methodism as a determinate experiment that is over and gone; so too is Wesleyan theology in any meaningful or robust sense of that term. According to Abraham “Wesley has become a historical cipher for our diverse and competing contemporary commitments.”<sup>24</sup> He prefers to think of Wesley as a “Spiritual Midwife,”

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<sup>20</sup>Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books/Abingdon Press, 256.

<sup>21</sup>It is essential at this point to understand that holiness is much more than a moral category in my attempt to construct a Wesleyan-Holiness Imagination.

<sup>22</sup> William J. Abraham, “The End of Wesleyan Theology,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (Spring, vol., 40:1), 7.

<sup>23</sup> Abraham, 9. Albert Outler was a theologian who attempted to use Wesley’s theology as a pathway to ecumenical discussion in the latter part of the twentieth-century.

<sup>24</sup> Abraham, 17.

It is here, with Wesley as our spiritual Father in God, that we can still find solace. John Wesley is not some norm of truth; nor a folk theologian waiting to be organized into a systematic theologian; nor is he merely our brother in the faith; nor is a Doctor of the church; nor is he a prince of the church. He was and continues to be for many a spiritual Father of God. He was and is a minister of the gospel who has birthed us indirectly in the faith. He is a thinker and spiritual guide who has gone on to Glory and whose work, with all its shortsightedness and shortcomings, can still bring us to God and foster holiness of life and thought. In short, he belongs in the canon of spiritual Fathers and saints”.<sup>25</sup>

Even if Abraham is correct (and I would not agree with him), it does not diminish the importance of understanding the imaginative capacities of Wesleyan-Holiness theology. Whether Wesley provided a complete system or whether he was a Spiritual midwife Abraham has not provided a sufficiently robust critique to warrant the marginalize Wesleyan-Holiness theology. The following paragraphs will attempt to sketch in basic ways the parameters which comprise Wesleyan-Holiness intellectual space.

The first parameter for understanding Wesleyan-Holiness intellectual space involves linking the inner and the outer expressions of discipleship. This becomes an issue as a result of a loss of confidence in Wesleyan-Holiness theology. It appears that in an attempt to avoid the charge of “works-righteousness” or legalism those within the Wesleyan-Holiness camp have abdicated a very crucial theological claim, namely that grace takes root in character. Therefore, the outer does matter after all in the Wesleyan-Holiness trajectory. Understanding the linking of the inner and the outer involves an evacuation of a spiritualized theology and as such forces theological reflection into the exigencies of history.

The second parameter for understanding Wesleyan-Holiness theology involves an affirmation of the Trinity, but it goes the next step and thinks toward a Triune metaphysic. The most essential thing this means concerns the refusal to allow conceptions of being to serve as a boundary for faith, rather the attempt is to allow the faith to guide conceptions of Being. Here the difference would be something like that of Origen and that of Irenaeus. A Triune Metaphysic affirms that harmonic peace is the basis of the world. Reality is then more dynamic, inter-dependent, and salvation/holiness is understood as beauty. Perhaps, it is for this reason that Wesleyan-Holiness theology seeks coherence in the drama of the work of God in the world rather than in some pre-ordained sense of things. Since the way to think about God is the ecstatic love of God, reality becomes the everlasting invitation and embrace engendered by the very life of God. Wesleyan-Holiness theology imagines that the faith is the place to begin or that the nature of God defines reality. Therefore, the Christian faith is never to be understood as the deductive ground of reality, rather it is the invitation to engage the work of God in the world. When life is understood this way pilgrimage becomes as important as destination.

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<sup>25</sup> Abraham, 24-25.

The third parameter of Wesleyan-Holiness theology involves conceiving of knowing as transformation rather than accumulation of facts or experiences. The Holy Spirit is at work seeking to lead us into all that matters and it is at this very point that we see an important difference for Wesleyan-Holiness theology. Creativity is the work of the Holy Spirit and as such we are participants in the truth we learn. Certainly, the pathos of learning and living cannot be discounted. Learning and living require that we suffer in order to grow intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally. Therefore, transformation requires pathos in order that we might be changed. Yet with pathos comes poesis or the sense in which form and matter are joined in life and thought. Poesis recognizes that life and thought are not arbitrary. Rather they are dependent upon participation in the divine. It is not that we go to church to be spiritual and to university to be educated. Pathos and poesis are joined distinctly in a university education defined by the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. Wesleyan-Holiness understands the work of the Holy Spirit so broadly that it locates it within the imagination. The journey indicated by a Triune Metaphysic depends upon seeing that knowing/learning are finally about transformation.

The fourth parameter for understanding Wesleyan-Holiness theology involves an emphasis upon practical reason. Kant makes a distinction between popular religion and religion within the bounds of reason alone. In this, he largely dismisses the “plain person”. MacIntyre characterizes the plain person in the following manner, “the plain person responds to these claims not so much through explicit arguments, although these may always play a part, as by shaping his or her life in one way rather than another.”<sup>26</sup> The emphasis upon embodiment in Wesleyan-holiness places an emphasis upon practical wisdom and practical rationality. There are those who would tend to think of Wesleyan-Holiness theology as “fuzzy” because it is more inductive than deductive in nature. In order to understand this it is important to go back to the Triune Metaphysics reference above. When theology is understood as a journey or pilgrimage guided by the Holy Spirit seeking the beauty that is possible in God and when knowing is transformation the importance of induction and practical reason come into focus. The emphasis upon intellectual space the essential argument entails the significance of understanding particular history, habits, integrity, and ecclesiological framing for an appropriate notion of Wesleyan-Holiness theology. We will briefly consider the implications of the parameters defined above for Wesleyan-Holiness theology.

### *Wesleyan-Holiness Theology: Implications*

Understanding the implications of Wesleyan-Holiness theology can be summarized in the following way. First, a Wesleyan-Holiness construal of life begins by setting out as courageously and honestly as possible the mystery of the Christian faith. It dares to believe that the Christian faith is adequate as a worldview to narrate human life. It also suggests that an educated Christian knows the faith as a metanarrative capable of sustaining a full life (intellectual, spiritual, cognitive, affective, and physical).

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<sup>26</sup> Kelvin Knight, ed., *The MacIntyre Reader* (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 141.

Second, a Wesleyan-Holiness construal of life begins to see the capacity of such an education to define a logic for life. We begin to see in the idea that God created the world a practical rationality. We begin to see in the incarnation a view to the parameters of a life that calls all to participate in the life of God. This is more than an ideal; it becomes the very fabric of the Christian life. This means we do not need the Greeks for reason, nor do we need the blessings of the Enlightenment to be credible. However, we can engage these traditions and other ways of knowing. The very fabric of the faith contains a logic capable of sustaining life.

Third, a Wesleyan-Holiness construal of life calls for Christian practice. As far back as Aristotle we have understood that habits sustain character. This implies an active life, one that is engaged in seeking good ends, is the ideal of character. Such a view begins with the rather mundane including crucial concerns like hygiene and yet reaches to such lofty places as prayer and the study of scripture. Such a construal of life understands that in Christ the Kingdom of God has come, but it also understands that the promise is yet to be fully realized. We are called to labor as educators in this very tension of the now and not yet Kingdom of God. So we define Christian practice as those habits that sustain a Christian character. In such a view chapel is not the only place where Christian proclamation takes place and the classroom is not the only place where learning happens. In other words, the dichotomy between worship and education loses any real significance. The words of Paul fit perfectly “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:2-3). We now move to a consideration of the educational trajectories present within Wesleyan-Holiness theology.

### *Educational Trajectories*

Imagining the world through the resources of Wesleyan-Holiness theology requires sustained work among Nazarene educators. David Tracy, a renowned Roman Catholic theologian, suggests, “All authentic reflection, all reflection where the subject matter and not the subject determines the questioning, has a properly hermeneutical character”.<sup>27</sup> Certainly, convictions regarding the nature of God, humanity, the world, salvation, faith, scripture, and so on will need to be explicitly unpacked by those charged with the task of reflecting upon the tradition in Nazarene universities and seminaries. Such work cannot stop with the professional theologians. It must extend to those who teach literature, physics, history, as well as those who prepare social workers, nurses, teachers, and accountants. This move requires a hermeneutical approach involving the educational trajectories of Wesleyan-Holiness theology. Undoubtedly, the serious consideration of these trajectories will require significant critical reflection. The following paragraphs will offer several gestures toward educational trajectories of Wesleyan-Holiness theology including: a humble, prayerful, sense of radical openness; a doxological determination to resist a sacred/secular division; a wise and pastoral embodiment of knowledge; and a desire to foster Christlike character anchored in Christian story and practice. These trajectories lead us to an educational pattern that cultivates an active life of gracious reason which in turn embodies the fullness of love made possible through the grace of God.

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<sup>27</sup> David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 102.

## *Radical Openness*

A significant trajectory for Wesleyan-Holiness education is radical honesty. The professor should be a truth teller and the student must be willing to face the truth. Administration and trustees must allow the space for important and sometimes troubling questions to be entertained. Likewise the professor should be open to hearing the truth at a personal level. The classroom is a place where the truth is spoken, even when it is not comfortable to hear. Wesley wrote the following in a sermon based on 1 Corinthians 14:20 titled “The Case for Reason Impartially Considered,”

It is certain reason can assist us in going through the whole circle of arts and sciences; of grammar, rhetoric, logic, natural and moral philosophy, mathematics, algebra, metaphysics. It can teach whatever the skill or industry of man has invented for some thousand years. . . . The foundation of true religion stands upon the oracles of God. It is built upon the Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. Now, of what excellent use is reason, if we could either understand ourselves, or explain to others those living oracles!<sup>28</sup>

Giving a place for critical reason will require patience in the face of a general cultural desire for narrow and lazy prescriptive responses. Wesley cautions, “The thing which I was greatly afraid of all this time, and which I resolved to use every possible method of preventing, was, a narrowness of spirit, a party zeal, a being straitened in our own bowels; that miserable bigotry which makes many so unready to believe that there is any work of God but among themselves”.<sup>29</sup> While it is clear that Wesley is not talking about the university/seminary classroom, the underlying conviction is instructive. The gospel allows patience in the face of difference and eschews narrowness. It means that the hard work of evaluation is done in order to be truthful and as a basis upon which the student is given the opportunity to grow in understanding. Honesty goes to the life of the professor. A commitment to the truth is an affirmation of the capacity of the Holy Spirit to be present in the classroom and throughout the educational enterprise. A Wesleyan-Holiness classroom is not a refuge from the hard facts and issues presented by the content. Wesley in an *Address to the Clergy* suggests, “There is yet another branch of knowledge highly necessary for a Clergyman, and that is, knowledge of the world; a knowledge of men, of their maxims, tempers, and manners, such as they occur in real life”.<sup>30</sup> The truth lies at the center of what can happen within a classroom on a university campus. A fact is a stubborn thing which will not be dismissed by those who work within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. The Wesleyan-Holiness classroom is a place where there will be

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<sup>28</sup> John Wesley, “The Case for Reason Impartially Considered” *Wesley’s Works* Kansas City, The Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1872, 1979), 6: 354.

<sup>29</sup> Wesley, “A Plain Account of the People Called Methodist” *Wesley’s Works* (Kansas City, The Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1872, 1979), 8: 257.

<sup>30</sup> John Wesley, “Address to the Clergy” *Wesley’s Works*, (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1872, 1979), 10:484.

tears, passion, vigorous debate, and multiple expressions of confidence in the Holy Spirit to guide us into the truth. Wesleyan-Holiness education can be honest because of its deep confidence in the resources of Spirit and Tradition.

Wesleyan-Holiness education is more inclined to what it includes than what it excludes. We have often concluded that Christian education is defined by the books, music, arts, and ideas it excludes. After all, what does Nietzsche have to do with a Christian education? Why should a Christian study psychology? Why should a Christian study evolution? However, I think a strong case can be made for understanding that a Christian education is defined by its breadth instead of its narrowness. Christian education is defined not by its capacity to exclude or ban, but by its capacity to narrate a Christian perspective in and among different perspectives. A Christian education is about the capacity to critically engage ideas and to construct sound arguments within the parameters of a particular narrative. The pluralism and attending relativism of the late modern period threatens those traditions which lack confidence in their own resources, when addressing multiple perspectives. Honesty and openness are the hallmarks of confidence. Finally, Wesleyan-Holiness education conducts itself within the open arms of a confidence in the fundamental convictions of classical Christianity. This is not to say that such a commitment to open honesty allows all facts to assume equal relevance. After all, creedal Christianity serves as a concrete set of convictions which must always be clearly in view and brought into every conversation either directly or indirectly on a Christian university. A hermeneutic of radical honesty must be in a position to make judgments. The critical and constructive capacities of thoughtful reflection assume the importance of “graced” reason to begin the difficult task of weaving a comprehensive perspective reflecting a disciplined mind.

Wesleyan-Holiness education is able to listen as well as to respond. When education is understood in this way the distinction between thinking and doing is called into question. This means that Wesleyan-Holiness education requires a risk and as such cannot wait to have all the issues resolved before thinking begins. Wesleyans must be willing to listen to our students and to our subject along with our tradition. Wesleyans must be willing to stop mid-sentence, if necessary, in order to follow a good question. There is something beautiful about a serious question and solid response. The sort of education engendered by Wesleyan-Holiness theology encourages questions and thoughtful response. The movement from head to heart to hands is essentially Wesleyan.

Wesleyan-Holiness education is shaped in humility. The knowledge represented on the faculty only tell part of the story. The language found in a Wesleyan-Holiness education is gift and just because of this, education is often expressed in terms of gratitude. When we think of teaching as a gift, it inevitably leads to thanksgiving. The educated mind that has been humbled by the immensity and complexity of the world becomes a blessing to the student who may forget many of the specifics, but be profoundly indebted to the professor.

Wesleyan-Holiness education conceives of itself as prayer. The questions, lectures, and forms of life are addressed to God. Sometimes we pray with our eyes open wide, so that we do not miss the joy of what God is doing. We begin our day and our class with prayer, but there is a sense in which we never stop praying. We pray to the One who is alone able to knit it together.

Prayer speaks ‘in Being’; the words are embodied in acts of mercy and justice in the world. Our language becomes incarnate by the way our knowledge takes on flesh in the classroom and in the world.

Wesley asks those who intend to become clergy to answer several questions:

- Have I such knowledge of Scripture, as becomes him who undertakes so to explain it to others?
- Do I understand Greek and Hebrew?
- Do I understand my own office?
- Do I understand so much of profane history as tends to confirm and illustrate the sacred?
- Am I a tolerable master of the sciences?
- Am I acquainted with the Fathers?
- Have I knowledge of the world? <sup>31</sup>

These questions suggest the seriousness and confidence with which Wesley defined ministerial preparation. The questions also illustrate the radical openness of Wesley-Holiness education. Honesty, inclusiveness, responsiveness, humility, and prayer are gestures toward a Wesleyan-Holiness approach to education. Reflecting on the parameters of clergy preparation Wesley suggests, “Without this, I am a blind guide indeed! I am absolutely incapable of teaching my flock what I never learned myself; no more fit to lead souls to God, than I am to govern the world”.<sup>32</sup> Expanding this logic toward a university education must include a similar willingness to be radically honest with all information, critical reflection and constructive effort while remaining in fellowship with classical Christianity.

### *Refusal of the Separation of the Secular and Sacred*

The partitioning off of the world seems to be self-evident in much university education. For example, the separation of church and state which has assumed self-evident political logic is often understood to warrant a limitation of theological relevance. The sacred is for church, spirituality, morality, piety, Sunday, and ultimately for those who lack the capacity to engage the world fully. The secular is for hard reason, public office, law, and for those who have the courage to face the world based on facts and not faith. While the separation of church and state has opened a space for the free expression of faith it has contributed to the sense that religion and faith do not belong in the public square. The marking off a sacred space and a secular space

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<sup>31</sup>Wesley, “Address to the Clergy,” 10:490-493.

<sup>32</sup>Wesley, “Address to the Clergy,” 10: 493.

coincides with the advent of modernity. The challenge for any gesture toward Wesleyan-Holiness pedagogy is to refuse the separation of the secular and sacred in the name of a more holistic approach.

Part of the holistic approach I am recommending is careful attention to both the material and formal aspects of education. There is a specific material content to the Christian faith. This content is historically transmitted and it is passed on by the labors of the faithful. It is broader than scripture, but it does not depart from scripture. It is important for all who teach in a Christian university to have some sense of this grand deposit of faith. It is essential that the tradition be faithfully brought in to conversation with the material content of the disciplines taught. The formal aspect of Christian education has to do with structures and practices, such as chapel, prayer and/or devotions before class. The formal aspect addresses how students are treated and policies interpreted. Both aspects actually reach beyond the classroom by implying that education does not engage the larger world. A Wesleyan-Holiness theology imagines the world through the balance of the material and formal aspects of education. This pedagogical move provides an essential cornerstone of Wesleyan-Holiness theology. The importance of holding the material and formal aspect of education together is suggested by the conviction that knowledge always includes both matter and form.

Wesleyan-Holiness education is doxological. The chief reason for this is the fundamental conviction that God is present in the social work practicum as much as course in Old Testament theology. According to Reinhard Hütter, “Theological discourse thus stands between the two poles of learning the faith on the one hand and church doctrine on the other, between the pole of individual poetic pathos in which theological discourse participated catechetically and that of public church doctrinal articulation which theological discourse accompanies.”<sup>33</sup> Defining theology in this manner suggests the importance of doxology for all aspects of knowing, teaching, and living. Doxology is a term which embraces a holistic approach to reality and as such comprehends a refusal to separate the secular and the sacred. Central to this conviction is the recognition of transcendence in order to rescue knowledge from the merely arbitrary. For many the suspension of the middle represents the fatal flaw of modern education. Wesleyan-Holiness theology comprehends the importance of the transcendent for a proper understanding of the particular. Therefore, the doxological is present in the nursing clinical and the student revival. Surely, chapel attendance is a part of every Wesleyan-Holiness campus, but it is essential to understand that the doxology spills out of the chapel and into the classroom and then into vocation. That is to say, that everything is addressed to God in some way or another. And if I am in the lab, library or music rehearsal room, I am addressing God. In other words, God is not to be dusted off for Sunday, but worshipped all week.

### *Embodiment*

Wesleyan-Holiness education acknowledges the centrality of the incarnation to the educational enterprise. The humanity of Jesus is as essential to the Christian faith as is the

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<sup>33</sup>Reinhard Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 59.

divinity of Christ. In fact, it is the claim that Jesus is the God-man which separates it from all other religious expressions in history. While the theological affirmations which are key to this faith-claim are instructive and nearly two thousand years later are yet to be fully explored, it appears that the pedagogical implications of this claim are completely unrecognized or developed. Since Christology is essentially Christian and lies at center of Wesleyan-Holiness theology, the pedagogical implications must be explored.

Wesleyan-Holiness education requires embodiment. The abstract concept is worthwhile, but ultimately it is what assumes flesh that drives Wesleyan-Holiness education. It does little good to define justice and act unjustly. It is relatively meaningless to understand the parameters of compassion and seldom act compassionately. The information gained with a university education is of little significance, if it is never the source of concrete actions. Some of these gestures have already been alluded to in the foregoing analysis, but at its base embodiment means that all Wesleyan-Holiness education is incarnational. Wesley sought to offer *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists* in order express the “whole economy of the people commonly called *Methodists*.”<sup>34</sup> The most intriguing thing about the account offered by Wesley of the Methodists is that he clearly links these people to practices/habits. Wesley understood that a profession of faith would rarely be sustained apart from learning specific habits in community. According to Wesley,

But as soon as any of these were so convinced of the truth, as to forsake sin and seek the gospel salvation, they immediately joined them together, took an account of their names, advised them to watch over each other, and met these catechumens apart from the great congregation, that they might instruct, rebuke, exhort, and pray with them, and for them, according to their several necessities.<sup>35</sup>

Wesley understood that faith apart from specific embodied practices/habits would ultimately be pointless. Likewise, education within the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition requires habits/practices of embodiment. Knowledge is understood as applied knowledge. Theoretical insight matches with the practicum. Knowledge is never for its own sake; rather knowledge is an expression of the presence of God in the world and the work of the Holy Spirit, which drives toward incarnate reality. The God who walked on earth calls for an education that sees heaven and earth.

Wesleyan-Holiness education is less about fact than wisdom. Facts are important things and also stubborn. But finally, an education is less about the width of our knowledge than its depth. A Christian education is about the capacity we have to see things in the perspective of faith. It is about our ability to apply what we know in the context of a character capable of freedom. Wisdom is finally defined by a catharsis that takes place in the mind that exceeds a mere accumulation of “bits-and-pieces” of knowledge.

Wesleyan-Holiness education imagines the educational task as pastoral. There is no way to separate teaching from the level of care given to the student. It does not really matter if we

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<sup>34</sup> John Wesley, “A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists”, 8:248.

<sup>35</sup> Wesley, *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*”, 8:251.

talk about the love of God, if the student does not see this in the attitude and actions of the professor. A distinctive characteristic of Christian education is that care is always given to the outcomes of words and ideas. This care rises to the level of pastoral practice because the life of the student is never unimportant to the educational enterprise. Content is never more important than the student. Wesley employed the use of small groups in order to promote a vital faith. While a fellow at Lincoln College/Oxford University, he gathered students around him for admonition and accountability. The lecture hall joins small groups on a Wesleyan-Holiness campus. Fundamental to this pedagogical insight is the conviction that education renders one accountable. The professor is accountable to bring the best to the classroom, but the student is called to act upon what is learned. The pastoral expression of teaching is shaped by the conviction that care, discipline, evaluation, and affirmation are all essential ingredients to this educational approach.

Wesleyan-Holiness education aims at conversion. Soren Kierkegaard writes in *Philosophical Fragments* that the difference between Socrates and Jesus is that only Jesus can change the condition of the learner.<sup>36</sup> Wesleyan-Holiness education aims at spiritual and moral transformation. We really do expect that people will be changed forever. There is a sense in which Wesleyan-Holiness theology arises out of the hope engendered by grace. The conviction that a student will be changed for a lifetime guides all instruction in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.

### *Christ-formed Character*

Reflections upon the trajectories of Wesleyan-Holiness education require one more consideration. In fact, the point of considering a Wesleyan-Holiness imagination along with pedagogical implications is to consider how such an education comes to rest in character. While this task is considerably more difficult in our generation, it is no less important. Robert Bellah in 1985 publication *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* addresses the problem and possibilities of talk about character in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. He understands that the way is not purely either an individual initiative or a move imposed by the state. He proposes throughout the book that formation of communities of memory will figure prominently in finding a way out. He says, “Implicitly or explicitly, a number of the communities of memory we have discussed in this book hold ethical commitments that require a new social ecology in our present situation”.<sup>37</sup> Bellah talks about these communities of memory as they emerge slowly out of shared interest, common history and specific practice. He feels, as I do, that life in Western European culture will depend in large measure on communities of memory for its survival.

We need to give attention to the stories we tell our children. The stories we tell will either engender wholeness or they will further divide and segment life. Character depends upon

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<sup>36</sup>Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*. Ed., Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 17.

<sup>37</sup>Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1985), 286.

our ability to tell stories that are truthful. Christ formed character is primarily informed by the life and teaching of Jesus. Paul exhorts the Philippians to “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus (2:5). Accordingly, Paul amplifies this statement in the following way: did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited (2:6), taking the form of a slave (2:7a), humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, and even death of a cross (2:8).<sup>38</sup> This grand Christological passage in the New Testament is a rich expression of what a Christ formed character looks like: humility and obedience. The Gospel of John includes a prayer of Jesus which includes the following “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (17:21). 1 Peter represents another way to think of Christ formed character, “have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called.” (3:8b-9a). The very definition of character is the Christ who became human, obeyed to the point of death, and was raised in order to defeat the power of sin. The New Testament fills out the meaning of Christlikeness. Wesleyan-Holiness education has no better example of what character looks like than the life of Jesus. The habits and practices of Wesleyan-Holiness education must seek to embody the Christ by attention to prayer, the study of the scripture, Christian discipline, formative preaching and teaching, and faithful attendance to the means of grace. Christ formed character is a particular narrative, life, and practice.

Plato posited that all human beings have a soul and that the soul itself is composed of three parts: desire, spirit, and reason. Since all people have these three parts the real issue is which part dominates. If desire dominates, we will be thrown from one interest to another without any real hope of settling in on what is truthful. If spirit dominates life, we will need to compete on and on for momentary glimpses of peace and happiness. These moments will always be eclipsed in light of the next new challenge. Only if reason dominates life will we be able to live the kind of existence that Socrates refers to as an “examined life”. These three parts of the soul magnify into the city three groups of people: producers/desire, soldiers/spirit, and rulers/reason. Using the same argument, Plato will suggest that only the city ruled by reason will flourish. It is like a chariot, he explains in another work, only when reason has the reigns can desire and spirit be managed in such a way as to live coherently.

Therefore, Plato insists that the stories we tell to the rulers as they are educated engender character. Plato goes through the kinds of things that cannot be told to the young, if we ever hope that they will mature into people capable of carrying the authority of ruler. In other words, we will not be free, if we are merely told truthful and deceitful stories alongside each other. Plato feels that truth is sufficient and if we are told the truth, when we see the lie it will be apparent then. It is not the capacity to choose that makes the ruler. Rather it is in knowing the truth that enlivens discernment.

*Deuteronomy* tells the story of how Moses sought to prepare a new generation to enter into the Promised Land. These people had never known the slavery that informed the lives of their parents, but they are told to remember,

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<sup>38</sup> All quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version.

You must diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his decrees, and his statutes that he has commanded you . . . . When your children ask you in time to come “What is the meaning of the decrees and the statutes and the ordinances that the Lord our God has commanded you”? Then you shall say to your children, “we were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. The Lord displayed before our eyes great and awesome signs and wonders against Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household. He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land that he promised on oath to our ancestors. Then the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our lasting good, so as to keep this entire commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, we will be in the right. [6: 17, 20-25]

Subjectivity does not dominate this passage - if this true. For Moses, the stories are true. Therefore, tell the stories when they arise in the morning, tell them throughout the day, and tell them as you lay down at night. The promise is, that if you tell these stories, then they will produce the kind of character that is capable of freedom.

Any serious student of the Old Testament will know that there is violence in its stories. Some of them make me cringe with their honesty. There are also stories of failure and betrayal. And we should be reminded that these are the good guys. But violence is never celebrated. Sexuality is never exploited. The character of a God who has always been faithful pervades in these stories. If we look from Calvary backward, we will see a God who inspires humankind to be holy and whole. The story of God defines character.

We need to define a set of practices, both intellectual and moral, that will engender character. How do these stories become real? Partly, they become real as they are told and re-told to each new generation. This leads me to my next constructive proposal – we need to define a set of practices, both intellectual and moral, that will define character. Here I am talking about less video and more page turning, critical learning skills as well as memory skills, discipline instead of license.

Alasdair MacIntyre defines a practice with the following characteristics: coherent, complex, socially established, goods internal to the practice, standards of human excellence, and enlarges our capacity to extend our understanding.<sup>39</sup> This means that a practice must make sense, that is, it must coherently reflect meaning. It must fit together with the life we are intending to live. A practice must be complex, that is, it must be sufficiently nuanced to engage all of life. While we all enjoy Robert Fulghum’s *Everything I Ever Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* we know that its simplicity makes it mostly trivial. A practice is socially established, that is, it requires that we form the kind of associations that create character. A practice seeks to establish goods internal to the practice, that is, practices are part of the good we reach toward. Practices are not merely the conduit; they are often the virtue itself. A practice is informed by a tradition or history that interprets the virtue. In other words, practices do not hang out in empty space; rather they participate in the life envisioned by them. Finally, a practice

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<sup>39</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 187.

enlarges and expands our life. A practice prepares us to learn and engage life at a number of levels. A character ethic requires that we learn the skills that will ultimately enlarge and free us to live above the necessities of the prevailing culture.

### *Conclusion*

Nazarene colleges, universities, and seminaries must engender gracious reason in order to authentically educate. Admittedly, the challenges presented by the loss of historical consciousness, a fractured individualism, and lazy pluralism complicate engendering the pedagogical process involved. Yet, the challenges cannot diminish the rich resources available for an authentic Wesleyan-Holiness education in the opening decade of the twenty-first century. This essay is merely a preliminary attempt to gesture toward the challenges and resources for the educational practice of Higher Education in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. Gracious reason is one way to conceive of the optimism required to engage the minds of our students and the work of our scholars. Such engagement requires an understanding of an active life of scholarship, educational engagement, and character formation. We need to begin to understand life as active. Aristotle thought that the ideal life was an active life, that is, the life that is engaged. Aristotle begins his *Ethics* by acknowledging that the reason we act is to achieve some good end. Therefore, an active life is one that is diligently engaged in the process of becoming good. Aristotle talks about a movement toward life and goodness and the end of that movement is virtue.

Two things need to be briefly noted here. First, an engaged life is always in time, that is, it is not an idealized existence divorced from life. Second, an engaged life can only be so with the deep conviction that there is something to move toward. Therefore, it is the vision of goodness and virtue that ultimately energizes life. An active life must be in time and it must be informed by the good.

Perhaps, returning to the words of Rowan Williams' *Lost Icons*, which offered early insight in this essay, helps move beyond a view that education serves a violently competitive world. The active/engaged life will point to the relationship between imagination, pedagogy, and faith,

The 'lost icons' of this book have been clusters of convention and imagination, images of possible lives or modes of life, possible positions to occupy in a world that is inexorably one of time and loss. But as the discussion has developed, it has hinted more and more at a single, focal area of lost imagination – what I have called the lost soul. And this loss, I've suggested, is inextricably linked with the loss of what is encoded in the actual icons of Christian tradition and usage – the Other who does not compete, with whom I don't have to and cannot bargain; the Other beyond violence, the regard that will not be evaded or deflected, yet has and seeks no advantage. . . We can choose death, but we don't have to. What we are present to is neither created nor extinguished by our will. The iconic eye remains wakeful.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Williams, 186-187

Education in any context requires active engagement funded by imagination. Williams suggests in his observation that the most fundamental loss in our time is the loss of an imagination. Many explanations might account for this loss, but this essay contends that it is this very loss that calls for a reflective Wesleyan-Holiness imagination. Competition, violence, intellectual exclusion, the diminishment of the other and the dismissal of the Other/God all too often inform Higher Education. Wesleyan-Holiness theology provides a rich resource to recover the lost icons and constructively engage the world. Nazarene Higher Education can do more than merely observe the demise of icons; it can actively engage the minds of students and scholars alike. To put it as Alasdair MacIntyre does, “We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another – doubtless very different – St. Benedict”<sup>41</sup>.

The meaning of Nazarene Higher Education emerges in conversation with contemporary culture. The first section of the paper argued that the loss of historical consciousness, a fractured individualism, and lazy pluralism define to a large extent the modern world. These challenges are so fully woven into contemporary culture they are often unreflectively assumed to be indisputable facts. I have argued that these challenges, while significant, cannot be allowed to be the last word. Wesleyan-Holiness imagination embodies a metanarrative which has the capacity to re-narrate the minds of our students and inform the work of our scholars. In fact, the central themes of Wesleyan theology noted in my essay effectively out narrate the diminishment of transcendence, so characteristic of modern life. Whether Wesley is a spiritual mid-wife (Abraham) or an architect of a theological system, Wesleyan-Holiness imagination/theology is capable of disciplined reflection on the forms of life engendered through the sources of the Christian faith. Radical openness, the overcoming of the secular/sacred divide, pastoral embodiment, and Christ formed character represent specific, complex, and actively appropriated trajectories for Nazarene Higher Education.

The theology of John Wesley is a rich resource for thinking about the work accomplished on the university campus. Wesley’s reflections on zeal have significant implications for understanding the task of teaching, learning, and embodiment. Zeal is crucial according to Wesley “for without zeal it is impossible either to make any considerable progress in religion in ourselves, or to do any considerable service to our neighbor, whether in temporal or spiritual things.”<sup>42</sup> Yet, it is crucial to see that Wesley understood “True Christian zeal is not other than the flame of holy love.”<sup>43</sup> Wesley further makes his claim of the importance of zeal in the following,

In a Christian believer love sits upon the throne which is erected in the inmost soul; namely, the love of God and man, which fills the whole heart, and reigns without a rival. In a circle near the throne are all the holy tempers; - longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, fidelity, temperance; and if any other were comprised in “the mind which was in Christ.” In an exterior circle are all the works of mercy whether to the souls or the bodies of men. By these we exercise all holy tempers, but these we continually improve, so that all these

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<sup>41</sup> MacIntyre, 263.

<sup>42</sup> John Wesley, “On Zeal,” *Wesley’s Works*, 7:57.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 7:59.

are real means of grace, although this is not commonly adverted to. Next to these are those that are usually termed works of piety; - reading and hearing the word, public, family, private prayer, receiving the Lord's Supper, fasting, and abstinence. Lastly, that his followers may the more effectually provoke one another to love, holy tempers, and good works, our blessed Lord has united them together in one body, the Church, dispersed all over the earth; a little emblem of which, of the Church universal, we have in every particular Christian congregation.<sup>44</sup>

The breadth of this statement effectively links all the elements of Wesleyan-Holiness pedagogy. First, the key is that love sits on the throne of life and in the fullness of that presence guides all behavior. Second, the holy tempers, that is, those historical dispositions that determine much of our life as they are linked to the love on the throne of the life are manifest as fruit of the Spirit. Third, from these holy tempers proceed the works of mercy. It is in this way that faith connects to the needs of other people. It is the way in which the earth is renewed by the presence of the faithful. Fourth, after the works of mercy, which touch the lives of the hurting, the works of piety follow and the means of grace become the vehicle for a further provocation to action. Finally, all of this comes to rest in the Church as the community instituted by God to engender the life and thus actions of the faithful. This is the expression of zeal for Wesley. Therefore, we come to see that zeal is the expression of the gracious leading of the Holy Spirit. One expression of zeal is to have one's imagination enlivened by the Holy Spirit through a conversation with the sources of wisdom of the West in the context of scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.

From a Wesleyan-Holiness point of view one is not educated until love flows through an informed mind in order to be embodied in the zeal of action. Gracious reason is one way to think about this zeal and to express the meaning of a Wesleyan-Holiness education.

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid, 7:60.