

Response

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It is my honor to response to Dr. Michael Lodahl's paper entitled, "Renewal in Love: Living Holy Lives in God's Good Creation." I believe theology is a consequence of revivals and awakenings, thus, renewal movements in general encompass every area of Christian body spanning from orthodoxy to reformed, early Methodism to holiness Wesleyanism, and classical Pentecostalism to independent/indigenous Global South Christianity around the globe. Having seen, studied, and visited several thousand denominations around the world, Protestant churches and denominations demonstrate not only cross-traditional lines, but also cross-denominational flavors as well. One of the significant factors of global Christian growth is from Evangelical, Wesleyan, holiness and Methodist movement worldwide.

Strong merit of Wesleyan evangelicalism is actually shown in rationalistic empiricism, in which evangelical praxis makes a good balance of soteriological implication of Wesleyan perfectionism, where holiness and perfection in love may have havens of theological and ethical practices properly applied in lives of Christian believers. As the decline of primitive Methodist spirit appeared apparent in the Global North, Evangelical Wesleyan theological metaphor of which Dr. Lodahl argues in his paper, clearly touches a profound ground of the Word of God yet we can have a journey together with him in his paper to observe incrementally rich resources of holiness tradition of Wesleyanism, heartening our hearts and heads together as systematic theology and practical theology are combined.

Origins of Wesleyan Evangelical Awakening

Before giving my response in which I have to deal with several key issues which Dr. Lodahl addressed in his paper, it is important to first go over the historical background of the growth of Wesleyan movements worldwide. The beginning of the Methodist movements in Britain and British America had grown from religious tensions and conflicts between the conformist Church, the Church of England that provoked them to yearn for spiritual hunger and longing for spiritual awakening, revival and renewal. The spiritual awakening by outpouring of the Holy Spirit led John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards to new dimensions on theological discourses and new born dissent groups in transatlantic regions.

Before the birth of Methodist movement by Wesley brothers and George Whitefield, some groups within the Church of England already had modest fashions of Pietistic religious

societies, such as a upper class and devout groups who paved a way of the early Methodist movement. As early as in 1718, a short-lived revival took place in Lakenheath in Suffolk, England, and it was followed by a more succeeding revival in Wales, later on, the Evangelical revivals and awakenings swept over in the British Isles and British America. In vivid interaction between transatlantic continents, the Evangelical revivals and Great Awakening, particularly through influence of Jonathan Edwards and Wesley brothers, the wildfire of revivals predisposed in Wales and Scotland in 1740. It is obvious that the early Methodists as one of dissent groups in Great Britain had grown extensively from 1772, because itinerant preachers and circuit riders boosted Methodist Bible classes and small group meetings.

They broadly fascinated the artisan groups who were lower class people, of whom most of them eventually upgraded to the middle class. The early Methodist leaders led a great number of dissidents, while the Church of England unwelcomed them. Along with the Wesley brothers, the early Methodists evangelized masses and common people in open areas such as the marketplace, prison cells, poor villages, and public plaza. Noticeably, the Eighteenth century Methodist revivals caused social changes as they became the second largest dissenting group next to Puritans midst the transatlantic region. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Methodist groups branched out to become different forms and denominations of holiness movements throughout the world. Due to unparalleled growth of Methodist movements, the Church of England also espoused Methodist itinerant preachers' methods and revival meetings in mid-eighteenth century.

Between the late 1840s and early 1850s, Methodist groups such as Primitive Methodists and British Methodists experienced leadership disputes even during their extensive development. Methodist membership and attendance exceeded all other nonconformist churches combined, and this occurred during the Industrial Revolution in British society. The great influence of Methodists all over Protestant denominations throughout the world caused one of serious theological topics to become that of the holiness of believers. The topic of holiness brought several other theological dogmas to light, such as repentance, regeneration, justification, sanctification and glorification. Holiness denominations nurtured not only Wesleyan and holiness denominations but also classical Pentecostal denominations during the early twentieth century. At the end of the twentieth century, the Methodist denominations turned out to become the largest component of Protestant denominations in the entire world.

To celebrate and honor the birth of John Wesley more than 300 years ago, his core value of theology must be revisited as most Christian believers are influenced by the Methodist movements, whether they belong to these denominations or not. As we looked into two significant Methodist groups, one in Britain and the other in America, we can see some tendencies within the British Methodist Church that distinguished themselves from the Church of England, while American Methodist groups were established as more free forms of their movements. Randy L. Maddox reminds us about this distinction,

In Great Britain Methodists tended to align their self-understanding and practices with the dissenting churches, over against Anglicanism; in North America, with Anglican presence minimalized, Methodists were forced to articulate their self-understanding and practices over against the competition of Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists.²

Having seen different versions of Wesleyan traditions throughout the world, Albert C. Outler pinpoints of one of American Wesleyan versions. He says,

The ironic outcome of stone in the arch of Wesley's own theological "system" came to be a pebble in the shoe standard-brand Methodists, even as a distorted version of Wesley's doctrine of sanctification (as "a second and separate work of grace subsequent to regeneration") was becoming a shibboleth of self-righteousness amongst a pious minority of Methodists who professed themselves holier than the rest.

According to Point Loma Nazarene University's the Faith Statement, Wesleyan family denominations are listed of "United Methodist Church, African Methodist Episcopal, and African Methodist Episcopal, Zion" and "the American Holiness movement (e.g., Church of the Nazarene, Wesleyan Church, Salvation Army, Free Methodist Church, and Church of God—Anderson), most Pentecostal denominations (e.g., Church of God in Christ, Foursquare Gospel Church, Church of God—Cleveland, and the Assemblies of God), and many independent evangelical churches."

Holiness and *Imago Dei*

As far as Methodist movements are concerned in history, there is no doubt that Wesley brothers' emphasis was the transformational holiness of believers. Dr. Lodahl's primary view in his paper demonstrates the nature of Wesleyan theology in biblical and systematic theology, and then he designates hermeneutic narratives of holiness in his descriptive and analytic study of the *imago Dei*. Along with the Wesley brothers' focal points of perfectionism and sanctification, themes spanning from the creation to the cross and even up to the second coming of Christ are mentioned. Without doubt, the core aspect of sanctification according to the Wesley brothers is the renewal of human beings into the *imago Dei*.

² The author of the response left citations out of his paper [Editor].

Therefore, sanctification must be defined in detail along with the entire process of holiness. In fact, the process of sanctification interrelates with issues of the *imago Dei* of human being and various ministries of Holy Trinity. Therefore Lodahl draws our attention to the relational dimension of renewal of humanity to the image of God, and as seen in his paper, the centrality of holiness is expressed in the renewal in love. Furthermore, his creative mega-narrative on holiness of believers leads our awareness to first the *imago Dei* (Image of God), that we are created according to the image and likeness of God. Not only according to Wesleyan theologians but also other reformed theologians recognize the *imago Dei* as relational, all the way from the Garden of Eden. Rightmire states fourfold relational dimensions of the *imago Dei*, “The primary relation constituting the *imago Dei* is humanity’s relation to God, in the sense that a person’s right relation to others, the earth, and self is dependent on a right relation to God.”

First of all, Adam’s fall at the Garden of Eden caused us to lose the *imago Dei*. According to John Wesley’s sermon, “The effect of disobedience is cumulative and corrosive. Bit by bit the divine image disintegrates, and Satan stamps his own image in its place, so that man now bears of a family to him that to God.” Jesus Christ as the second Adam came to the world to restore the *imago Dei*. Eventually the renewal of humanity to imitate Jesus Christ brings all believers can be accomplished into Christlikeness of the *imago Dei* through the work of the Spirit of God. Hence, the colossal function of redemption must be understood in the context of restoring humanity to the image of God. Rightmire pinpoints;

The total process of salvation from its beginning in the new birth, its “perfection in love” at entire sanctification, and its progressive development toward final glorification has as its objective the restoring of humanity to its original destiny.

The *imago Dei* in the likeness and image of Jesus Christ offers the best model of holy life for all believers in Christ Jesus, our Savior and the Lord.

Perfection in Love and *Imago Dei*

In the words of John Wesley, perfect love implies to him the sanctified life, in other words, holy life, and “holiness of heart and life.” It is also critical to remember the work of the Holy Spirit in the process of sanctification, that the renewal of the image of God is obtainable through the grace of God by “the atoning work of Jesus Christ and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit” unto our living God. (2 Cor. 5:18-21) According to the “Our Wesleyan Tradition” of Point Loma Nazarene University states,

To talk about prevenient grace is another way of saying that the Holy Spirit perpetually convicts us of our sin, reveals to us God’s love, mercy, and forgiveness, calls us to repentance, and gives us the ability to offer ourselves in confession and obedience to

God. In this way we are empowered by the gracious presence of God to respond by faith in repentance and obedience to the call of God for our salvation.

The way of salvation teaching and preaching in which the early Methodists practiced in meetings such as societies, bands, classes, provided a spiritual awakening that “sinners became aware of God’s prevenient grace working in their lives, the class meeting helped people come to faith in Jesus Christ and receive the forgiveness of their sins, and the band meeting was intended to help those who had already experienced the new birth to grow in holiness through God’s sanctifying grace.” Rightmire emphasizes to distinguish between ethical perfection and perfection in love. (Gal. 5:6; Mt 22:37-39; Mk 12:30-31; Lk 10:27)

In summary, the matter of love is the absolute love of God. At the same time, this love is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. As a consequence of perfection in love, it can accomplish all of the law, not only in true relation to our God but also to others in the world. As Wynkoop indicates, “Perfection of love, Wesley’s favored term, cannot be pooled up into a mystical “love for God” which goes nowhere except to get stirred up into an emotional flurry once in a while.” A practical manner by John Wesley’s encouragement to delineate a method for the Methodists was to “unite together to encourage and help each other in that they may help each other to work out their salvation’ and for that end watch over one another in love.”

It is important to notice that the Wesley brothers’ redemptive ministry of God in human beings comprised of “regeneration, entire sanctification, and growth in grace.” Wesley encouraged the start of a so-called structure where we “watch over one another in love” through small group meetings, classes, bands, societies, and open-air evangelism. However, Kevin M. Watson expresses his grief that “the United Methodist Church has almost entirely abandoned the original Methodist structure for making disciples of Jesus Christ.” The structure wherein Wesley brothers established was to encourage the early Methodists to grow in the “Christian life and it enabled Christians to participate in their own salvation.” Loving one another in Christian growth fulfills a true aspect of Christlikeness of the *imago Dei* for believers in Jesus Christ.

Prevenient Grace and *Imago Dei*

As described by Dr. Lodahl, the restoration of the *Imago Dei* as renewal for believers’ sanctification process requires us to recognize that the core redemptive ministry of Jesus Christ is to give an opportunity for human beings to be renewed according to the *Imago Dei* of Jesus, all because Jesus Christ is the image of God Himself. His excellent theological discourse intrigues us to focus on the essence of the *imago Dei* from the state of the first Adam, to Jesus Christ, and to believers’ holiness to be restored in the very likeness of Jesus Christ, Christlikeness. Kenneth E. Geiger indicates that the Spirit of God works as the “divine agent in the communication of the divine nature to man.” Likewise the Holy Trinity works during the entire process of

sanctification. Lodahl then raises a question whether the Image of God is to be a function or vocation.

However, I have become convinced by contemporary biblical scholarship that the essence of this idea that we are created in God's image, or that we are created to 'image' God, is a function, or vocation, to which we are called. That function is the human role and responsibility to protect and to nurture the world's well-being, fruitfulness and beauty, in the great hope that God's good creation may enjoy a viable, even rich, future. This idea lies at the very heart of my reflections today.

One deep theological concern is the total depravity of sinfulness in human nature, particularly in regards to the Wesley brothers' standpoint explicit agreement with Calvinism as well, in which "human beings have distorted, marred, or perhaps even entirely effaced this image through our resistance against our Maker," due to the fall and sin although we were originally created according to the image of God. As far as the function or vocation of human nature being created in the imago Dei is concerned, Dr. Lodahl draws our attention to the extent of sin's effect to human nature and vocation to the imago Dei which the Wesley brothers also deeply expressed, mainly regarding the sinfulness of human being after the fall at the Garden of Eden. Thus he smoothly describes our theological pilgrimage that human beings can be restored in the imago Dei only through Jesus Christ. In this regard, renewal becomes a key issue of his theological debate. Lodahl indicates,

...the Wesleyan tradition has developed an especially robust understanding of salvation as renewal in the image of God. Further, it is clear that Colossians 3:10 – which speaks of a "new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its Creator" – provided the Wesleys with the biblical warrant for their rhetoric of renewal. ... The recurring Wesleyan theme of sanctification as renewal in the image of God underscores this important idea that Christian redemption does not involve escape from the world, but instead a deep and enduring participation in God's good creation.

John Wesley himself states as well,

By salvation I mean, not barely deliverance from hell, or going to heaven, but a present deliverance from sin, a restoration of the soul to its primitive health, its original purity; a recovery of the divine nature; the renewal of our souls after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, in justice, mercy, and truth.

Lodahl suggests that the fallenness of human beings, though created in the imago Dei requires us to experience redemptive grace in order for us to be renewed through "prayer, corporate worship, reading the Scriptures and the sacraments" which is what the Wesley brothers assert. R. David Rightmire pinpoints that the Wesleys emphasized the prevenient and indispensable grace of God, that human beings have access to pardoning salvific state with their responsive participation. The ever present prevenient grace of God was given to us even "before

we have come to faith in Christ.” Nonetheless, it is obvious that salvation is primarily a continuing process to the perfection. He draws key emphasis of the Wesley brothers salvation view not as a forever one way ticket to heaven, but that it “is the Christian’s journey “by faith to spotless love, to the full image of God renewed in the heart.”

As for the Wesleys, salvation is understood as a way of immediate permissible work of pardon, that justification can be the end-all of salvation in which in due course, transformation functions essentially in requiring the ongoing development of holiness. This is what Rightmire states regarding the doctrine of salvation by Wesley brothers, “although emphasizing progressive growth, understood the important place of instantaneous transitions in Christian life.” Therefore the first work of grace as justification and second work of grace as entire sanctification are considered both central in the process of salvation. Rightmire points out that as soon as we experience the new birth in our humanity, this process results in “gradual therapeutic transformation.” Rightmire states,

Wesley understood salvation to involve three dimensions: 1) justification/pardon – salvation begun; 2) sanctification/holiness – salvation continued; and 3) consummation/glory – salvation finished. Salvation is thus understood as deliverance 1) immediately from the penalty of sin; 2) progressively from the plague of sin; and 3) eschatologically from the very presence of sin and its effects.

Having seen the second work of prevenient grace by the atonement of Jesus Christ, all believers in Christ can be participated of the epic drama in which the redemptive work of God influences over human beings from creation to the end of the world to attain Christlikeness, the image of God in Christ, by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Perfection in Love and Final point of *Imago Dei*

As a result of Wesley brothers’ viewpoint on the restoration of the imago Dei in human beings, if the beginning of it was in the Garden of Eden, the final stage of it in the Christian faith must be focused on the renewal of our hearts into the image of God through the work of Jesus Christ. What can be a means of being made into the imago Dei? Obviously as Dr. Lodahl quotes Wesley brothers, the primary element is ‘love’ as indicated in “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16) and also as in “Love filled the whole expansion of his soul” in which it is called not as absolute love, but more as love of perfection, that we have this love in the imago Dei from creation to the cross. Thus, love itself also requires us to love our family, society, and our neighbors. This is what Maddox emphasizes the fundamental point of John Wesley,

[He] believed that both Scripture and Christian tradition attested that God's loving grace can transform our lives to the point where our own love for God and others becomes a 'natural' response... To deny this possibility would be to deny the sufficiency of God's empowering grace – to make the power of sin greater than that of grace.

Jesus Christ is the second and last Adam who manifested the true love of God giving His life for us all. Therefore, Dr. Lodahl unveils the relationship between the love of God and image of God, as much as the love of God reflecting the image of God;

God is love, and human beings are created by God to be creatures from whom “the flame of [divine love] was continually streaming forth” – streaming back to God, its Source, and thus also inevitably streaming forth also to all that God has created, including and especially all of our fellow human beings who bear “the image of their Creator.”

A political aspect of the image of God is expressed surprisingly by the Wesley brothers. They emphasize that the human being's function is “to exercise godly rule among all of the rest of God's creatures” as human being as the governor and representative of this lower world when they are working as stewards and caretakers of God toward to the rest of creation in order to manifest “a continuing faithfulness to the order of the Creator.” In this respect human beings are called “the channel of conveyance” between all creatures and the Creator in order that every blessing of the Creator “should “flow through [us]” to the other creatures.” In addition, it is important to see that an aspect of the image of God is moral image because the Wesley brothers stressed that the image of God is re-established through Christ, making the moral perfect.

H. Orton Wiley states, “Holiness as it relates to the Father, expresses the perfection of moral excellence which in Him exists unoriginated and underived.” Dr. Lodahl elucidates that “humanity's God-given and God-graced potential for godliness, or godlikeness, as revealed in Jesus Christ.” Consequently Lodahl illustrates Gen. 1 as the *imago Dei*, the place of God's ecology in which humanity has elements of the earthiness reflecting *admah* – earthlings, that human beings are “creatures of the land, finite and frail.” He interrelates the *imago Dei* between Gen. 1-3 and Gospel of John that the image of God in the creation is seen as the word when God himself incarnated in the life of Jesus Christ. He states, “For us who confess and believe that the Word became flesh and lived among us in the historical person of Jesus, then, the life and mission of Jesus become of critical importance for how we interpret Genesis 1.” In due course, Jesus glorified the Father and the Father has given his glory to Jesus can be shared Jesus followers. In Lodahl's assumption;

Thus, in Jesus's fellowship of disciples there is a kind of fulfillment of the intentions stated in Genesis 1:26; the “Let us” of Genesis is God and the Word, a relation that becomes enfleshed and realized within creation through the incarnation. The Incarnate Word, in turn, provides the opening (“I am the door”) through which humans may return to the kind of divinely constituted communion for which we were, and are, created.

If the image of God is fully manifested in the life of Jesus, humility of Jesus must be continued in the lives of Jesus' followers as well, and that "We are to replenish ourselves, and care for all human children, in ways that bespeak humble, self-giving love for all of the rest of God's beloved creatures on the land, and in the waters and the sky as well – and not at their expense." In this part, the image of God reflects natural parts of God's creation to preserve and govern well according to His commands in Genesis chapter 1. If we are to be restored into the natural, political, and moral dimensions of the imago Dei, this actually, might well be the whole image of God's restoration. Dr. Lohahl trumpets "renewal issues in a sobering call to responsibility for the wellbeing of the more-than-human world, to the extent that human beings may collectively discern what actions we can and must take in order to "imitate [God] whose mercy is over all [God's] works."

Conclusion

Lodahl's positive and classical assumption on Holiness-Evangelical Wesleyanism reminds us to theologically think about the Christlikeness of the image of God in Jesus Christ through a transformational, relational, spiritual and theological renewal process. The best praxis displayed by Jesus Christ of the prototype of imago Dei was revived in the Evangelical Awakening by Wesley brothers, and later theologized by John Wesley himself. Dr. Michael Lodahl may have had the same experience as John Wesley because a practical type of Wesleyan holiness theology may be compound within a boundary of Wesleyanism, and later may become a renewal factor for leading individual Christians to be sanctified. In my agreement with Ralph Waller, he states the influence of Wesley's renewal movement was not only by profound theological directives but also by a clear example of Christlikeness in his life all over the world.

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