

REPORT TO: WTS Executive Committee

4-22-86

FROM: Howard Snyder

RE: Program Options, 1987 WTS Meeting

Suggestions for the 1987 program have included the following:

- Wesleyans and the World Church
- Holiness and the Kingdom of God
- Toward a Wesleyan Pastoral Theology
- Toward a Wesleyan Ecclesiology
- Theology as Story
- Prevenient Grace
- The Image of God
- Sacramental Theology

I lean most strongly to the first of these suggestions. Therefore my preliminary proposal is as follows:

Theme: WESLEYANS AND THE WORLD CHURCH

Rationale: This theme offers the possibility of combining several topics of current importance and interest: Ecclesiology, ecumenicity, and the increasing awareness of an emerging "global city" and world church.

A survey I recently conducted in preparation for my forthcoming book on church trends revealed considerable interest in the rapid growth and maturation of the church in the Third World. Of the ten trends identified as most significant (in the opinion of the respondents), what I call "the new internationalization of the church" emerged most strongly. We concluded from the surveys: "The most important trend today is the new internationalization of the church and the accompanying shift in the church's 'center of gravity' from the North Atlantic nations to the newer, more vital churches of Latin America, Africa, and Asia."

My perception is that currently we are witnessing a major shift of historic proportions in which (1) the church is empirically becoming internationalized and a "world church" in a way that is unprecedented in history; (2) this will produce a new consciousness among Christians of being a "world church"; and that (3) from these developments emerge major theological issues not only of mission but also of ecclesiology and eschatology.

Wesleyans are uniquely placed to explore and contribute to the discussion of these matters for several reasons: John Wesley's own "catholic spirit" and openness to various traditions; his understanding of grace and universal atonement; his demonstrable interest in history and the "general spread of the Gospel" (Sermon 63); and the ecclesiological issues raised by the unique place of Methodism as a renewal movement which became a church.

I would propose a program which would explore some of the major issues related to the theme of Wesleyans and the World Church.

Major Addresses

The theme could be addressed through major papers on topics such as the following:

- "Wesleyans and the Emergence of a World Church" (overview)
- "Ecumenical Options for Wesleyan Churches"
- "Gospel, Church, and Kingdom: Toward a Global Theology"
- "Wesleyan Resources for a World Theology"
- "Church Renewal and Renewal of the Earth"
- "Missions and Evangelism in a World Church"
- "Wesleyan Witness and Culture Christianity"
- "Toward a Wesleyan Theology of History"
- "Disciplining World Christians"

Speakers/Presenters

Major papers would be assigned/negotiated from within the WTS membership, as usual. As to a major "outside" speaker, I would propose one of the following:

- Richard Lovelace *Durham-Cornwell Professor* *with Charles Finney* *at the first or second topic*
- Mortimer Arias *Methodist Bishop in Bolivia* *Announcing the Reign of God.*
- Orlando Costas
- Ron Sider
- Gerald Anderson *UMA Missionary* *Overseas Study Ministry* *New Methodist Mission Board. Sharpe.*
Build Bridges
Edits mainly

Program: I would propose that the program be structured much as it has usually been, but perhaps with a section on Saturday with two or four brief papers being given simultaneously, more in seminar fashion, with plenty of time allowed for discussion.

Christ outside the Gate
Critique of Church Growth
Offers it, but in other
Contexts also.