



# WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

A FELLOWSHIP OF WESLEYAN ARMINIAN SCHOLARS

ESTABLISHED IN 1945

To the Members of the Wesleyan Theological Society:

This report covers my work as promotional secretary of the society for the year 1979-80. My duties by the constitution involve service on the program committee and the assignment to promote the work of the society by whatever means possible. In spite of a few months sabbatical leave in the Spring that prevented my attendance at the Spring executive committee, I am pleased with what has been achieved this year.

In addition to executive committee meetings last year, I have participated in the planning of this year's program by phone and correspondence. I have carried on correspondence with a number of persons enquiring about the society and membership. And, as in the past, I have supplemented our usual program of promotion of this year's annual meeting by sending programs to a great number of other persons who I thought might be interested in the meeting, but would not hear of it through other channels.

As usual, I filed a report of last year's meeting with Christianity Today. And as usual, they did not wish to carry the whole report, but extracted only a couple of sentences out of context for a short mention of the meeting. The whole report, however, did appear in TSF News and Reviews, the organ of the Theological Students Fellowship, the graduate division of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. This latter group has shown itself to be very receptive to the work of WTS and also announced, at my initiative, this meeting in the fall issue of their organ. Last year, I believe I reported that a description of the work of the WTS had been edited out of an essay in the Christian Century. I am happy to report that this section has been restored to the essay which will appear later this month in a book edited by Martin Marty, Where the Spirit Leads (Abingdon Press, 1980).

This last year I have given special attention to promoting the society within United Methodism, where it seems to me that WTS might have a role to play within those emerging organizations attempting to articulate an evangelical identity in that context. The next issue of Catalyst, a newsletter distributed to United Methodist Seminary students, will carry an essay that I prepared on the range of evangelical theological societies. Because of the context, I have given special attention to WTS as an emerging center of theological scholarship in the Wesleyan tradition. I have also attempted to correspond with Charles Keysor of the Good News movement about possible promotion of WTS through their publications. To date I have had no response to this correspondence,

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but I would lift this area up before the society and a possible area of expansion and service.

As most of you no doubt realize, I have seen it my special gift to promote the society in the broader scholarly and ecclesiastical world. This has meant on occasion that the line has been difficult to draw between my own scholarly work and the specific promotion of the WTS, and that promotion of the WTS has sometimes required the prior task of creating the awareness of the existence of the holiness tradition as a distinct ecclesiastical strand of which the WTS is an arm. Much of this work has come to fruition this year, and I take the liberty of including in this report some of this broader work. I would draw special attention to the following:

(1) I took the occasion of a luncheon this summer at the World Council of Churches in Geneva to point out the diversity of evangelicalism and to ask WCC leadership why the "holiness" tradition is not recognized among the "world confessional bodies" delineated in ecumenical circles.

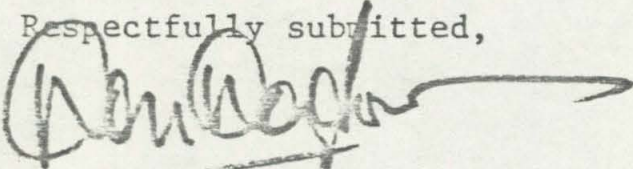
(2) For some years I have been dialoguing with George Marsden of Calvin College about the role of the holiness traditions in the shaping of modern evangelicalism. George was surprised even to discover our existence and has since commented that having his horizons so broadened has helped to explain several puzzling features about the development of modern fundamentalism. As a result of this dialogue his new book on Fundamentalism and American Culture, to be published later this month by Oxford University Press, contains several chapters on the holiness churches. This book will, I am sure, become the standard treatment of the fundamentalist era, and I am personally delighted that it recognizes both the role of the holiness traditions and their divergence from the dominant motifs of fundamentalism.

(3) I would draw your attention to the inauguration of a new monograph series, "studies in Evangelicalism," published by Scarecrow Press and co-edited by myself and Kenneth Rowe of Drew University. A major intention of this series is to break through the tendency to interpret "evangelicalism" through lenses and categories developed in the wake of the fundamentalist experience. Thus the first volume in the series is Mel Dieter's study of The Holiness Revival in the Nineteenth Century, which not only traces the emergence of the holiness movement, but also links it internationally to counterparts like the Keswick tradition in England and the Gemeinschaftsbewegung in Germany. The second volume will be a study of the roots of the anti-slavery movement in the revivalism of Finney and the Oberlin period. As this series develops, we will continue to be biased toward the Wesleyan experience, and we solicit your help in promoting this series and locating appropriate dissertations and other manuscripts that might be included in the series.

(4) Some of you will remember that three years ago several of us were in the fresh flush of excitement upon return from the 1977 Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies in which for the first time major holiness participation had been incorporated. You may wish to watch for the imminent publication of the proceedings of this conference in a volume edited by Theodore H. Bunyon under the title Sanctification and Liberation (Abingdon Press, 1980). My own contribution to this meeting was a general interpretation of the rise of and significance of the holiness movement, but Timothy Smith and Nancy Hardesty of our society also have contributions in the volume.

I mention some of those facts in part because I am convinced that we stand at a crucial point in the development of the holiness churches and the WTS. In addition to the growing maturity of our own society and its journal and something of an intellectual renaissance in both Wesley studies and scholarship on the holiness traditions, we face as well new external interest in the holiness churches, especially its history of evangelical social concern and its relationship to Pentecostalism. We need to continue the work of our society in full awareness of the opportunities that lie before us at this time and the perhaps fleeting kairotic moment that we need to seize. May God help us to meet the challenge of our time.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Donald W. Dayton", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Donald W. Dayton

WTS Promotional Secretary, 1979-80