

**Evaluations of Paper Proposals for the 1999 WTS Meeting
Southern Nazarene University, March 5-6**

Proposal submitted by: Tom Phillips, Eastern Nazarene College

Topic: "Reader-Response Criticism: A Wesleyan Response to Post-Modernism?"

Comments by the evaluator:

_____ This proposal should not be accepted for use in the 1999 program.

_____ This proposal should be discussed during the conference call.

Evaluator's name _____

From: Tom Phillips <tphillip@post.cis.smu.edu>
To: Al Truesdale <altruesdale@nts.edu>
Date: Mon, Aug 3, 1998 9:34 PM
Subject: WTS proposal

Dr. Truesdale,

I enjoyed reading a paper for WTS in 1996 and responding to a paper in 1998. I would love to be considered to read a paper again in 1999.

The call for papers did not specify a desired length for the proposals, but in the past WTS has asked for proposals that are about a page. The following proposal is thus about equal to a double spaced page. If you desire more detail or information, just let me know.
Tom

1999 WTS Proposal

I propose to present a paper entitled "Reader-Response Criticism: A Wesleyan Response to Post-Modernism?" In the proposed paper, I will briefly describe the most crucial challenge which post-modern thought poses for Biblical interpretation, that is, determining whether any text, including a Biblical text, can have a single normative reading or not.

I will argue that post-modern literary theorists are clearly correct to criticize both the naive assumption that a text, including Biblical texts, can have a single unchanging meaning and the equally naive assumption that an interpreter could recover that single unchanging meaning--even if it existed.

Acceptance of this post-modern criticism does, of course, present serious problems to the (Wesleyan) reader who wishes to make the Bible normative for faith and practice. If one cannot say with unqualified certainty that "this is what the Bible means," then how does one interpret the Scripture and how does one make it normative for believers' lives?

I will argue that the categories of reader-response criticism, particularly as presented by Wolfgang Iser, provide the Wesleyan Biblical scholar with a method of Biblical interpretation which both accounts for the "postmodern demise of unified meaning" and also enables the reader

unqualified certainty that "this is what the Bible means," then how does one interpret the Scripture and how does one make it normative for believers' lives?

I will argue that the categories of reader-response criticism, particularly as presented by Wolfgang Iser, provide the Wesleyan Biblical scholar with a method of Biblical interpretation which both accounts for the "postmodern demise of unified meaning" and also enables the reader to offer a normative reading of the Biblical text.

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%% Dallas, Texas Moderator: Wesleyans in Theological Dialogue %%
%% . . . but always remember--I've been wrong before %%
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