

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

Proposal submitted by: Elaine Robinson, Ph.D. student, Emory University

Topic: "Loosening the Reins: John Wesley the Itinerant Theologian"

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:** Elaine Robinson <erobins@emory.edu>  
**To:** Albert Truesdale <ALTRUESDALE@NTS.EDU>  
**Date:** Mon, Aug 17, 1998 2:38 PM  
**Subject:** Re: Wesleyan Theological Society Meeting

Professor Truesdale,

Attached is the copy of my paper, "Loosening the Reins: John Wesley the Itinerant Theologian." As I don't have the announcement for the meeting, but only Stephen Gunter's suggestion that I contact you, let me very briefly outline the main argument (which would be tailored, of course, for the meeting presentation itself).

1. I review the Cell-Outler tradition of rediscovering Wesley the theologian and suggest we need to rediscover him yet again, as we have neglected the content of his theology for the sake of his "method."
2. A brief review of Wesley as a "folk theologian" and the quadrilateral as offered by Outler.
3. The contemporary dilemma in which "method" is primary (a modern preoccupation) in both academic and ecclesiastical circles suggests reengaging the distinctive Wesleyan doctrines of grace, justification by faith, and Christian perfection (note: a nuanced difference from the "essentials" of original sin, justification, and Christian perfection).
4. Following a brief synopsis of the doctrines, I offer the example of Wesley's theological activity by examining his understanding of faith and the assurance of salvation.
5. I conclude by suggesting that theological reflection is the bridge between doctrinal affirmations and embodied practices which facilitate growing in holiness of heart and life. Wesley's theological activity is thus 1) itinerant (i.e., characterized by a certain openness which is seen in post-modern theologians such as Rebecca Chopp); 2) steering a middle position between relativism and objectivism (riding with "loose reins" -- a metaphor from his journals I use throughout -- which hold onto the essentials but give leeway in opinions); 3) communal (i.e., the imperative to reclaim Christian "conference" as scholars are now suggesting); 4) pointing toward embodied practices as the real theological task (i.e., growing in faith and love of God and neighbor).

This is the gist of the argument. Thank you for considering this proposal. If you should need anything else from me in the way of more formal or properly formatted materials, I will be happy to provide them.

Elaine Robinson