

A Call for Papers

The Wesleyan Theological Society

Thirty-fourth Annual Meeting

Southern Nazarene University

March 5-6, 1999

Program Topic:

Wesleyan Theology in a Postmodern Era

There is sufficient reason to believe that we have either moved or are moving from one major historical period to another, from modernity into a postmodern and post-Christian era. Current debates about the defining contours of postmodernity, and the diversity of philosophical and theological responses prompt caution regarding definitions and assessments. Further, Jean-Francois Lyotard has cautioned that postmodernity does not advance uniformly within nations and cultures. Nevertheless, the term postmodernity now denotes a historical development of sufficient identity and importance to demand intense and sustained theological attention and interpretation.

The 1999 program of the Wesleyan Theological Society calls upon society members, speaking as representatives of that tradition, to respond creatively and responsibly to postmodern and post-Christian thought and characteristics. The request prescribes no patterns of response to or assessments of postmodernity. It asks only that we generate informed responses that keep faith with Wesleyan theology and that seriously engage postmodern thought and cultural characteristics.

There are at least three strands of postmodern thought that come in for consideration: (1) the deconstructionist/neopragmatist strand represented by Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, Rorty and Taylor; (2) the postcritical strand represented by the later Wittgenstein, Alasdair McIntyre, J. L. Austin, Michael Polanyi, James McClendon and Nancy Murphy; and (3) process theology as represented by David Griffin's response to postmodernity.

For this project to succeed, all the theological disciplines must contribute. Representatives of Biblical studies, church history, the history of Christian thought, systematic theology, Christian ethics, preaching, pastoral care, missiology, evangelism

and Christian education must step forward. We should also include teachers of philosophy and philosophy of religion.

Representative issues that need to be addressed are: (1) how will Wesleyan theology respond to the charge that all ideologies (including Christianity) are necessarily oppressive (totalizing)?; (2) how will Wesleyan theology respond to the new pluralisms?; (3) how will the Wesleyan tradition appraise the world religions?; (4) what is now demanded of Christian preaching, Christian education, evangelism, and pastoral counseling?; (5) the prophetic role of Wesleyan theology in a postmodern era; (6) the place of nature in Wesleyan theology; (7) can the Wesleyan tradition provide for its adherents a compelling theology of culture?; (8) can or should the Wesleyan tradition offer a Christian social ethic in a pluralistic world?; (9) what are the implications of postmodernity for ecclesiology and the practice of Christian piety; (10) the Christian metanarrative in a postmodern world; (11) a hermeneutic of affirmation as well as suspicion; and (12) a theological appraisal of postmodernity. Other issues can be added. Papers may also address the work of particular postmodern thinkers.

Paper proposals that directly bring dimensions of Wesleyan theology to bear on postmodern thought will be preferred. Paper proposals that only indirectly engage postmodernity will receive secondary consideration.

The deadline for paper proposals is September 1, 1998. Completed papers must be presented no later than January 1, 1999.

Proposals should be sent to: Al Truesdale, Nazarene Theological Seminary, 1700 E. Meyer Blvd, Kansas City, MO 64133. Telephone: 816-333-6254 (ext. 238). Fax: 816-333-6271. E-mail: altruesdale@nts.edu