

Response

Alberto D. Patacsil

The Wesleyan Church

This reflection covers the very content of the Word of God, emphasizes the very need of man, outlines the very purpose of the creation of human beings, and the imperatives on the plan of full salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. The presenter shows his sound theology, balance knowledge between anthropology and ecology in connection to Christians' engagement to the world. The following are the perceived point of emphasis:

God created man and woman in His own image. This reflection pointed out the very nature of God, a God of love which He wants to emanate from Him through human beings toward all His creation. Wesley Duewel wrote, “*God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit have existed without beginning from all eternity in a trinity of holy love. Holy love is the greatest reality of their nature*” (1991:5).

The emphasis of salvation by grace through faith in Christ was also reiterated to bring back the depraved and defaced image of God in human beings. It was also presented clearly through John Wesley's theology that God's image in man can be restored by experiencing justification and sanctification whereby the heart will be cleansed from original sin and can be filled with the Holy Spirit and God's love by faith. This is called “*perfect love*” which synonymous with “*pure heart*” which means – *Motives laid open to the cleansing of God! False ego consumed in the perpetual fires of the Holy Ghost, and the real self, offered up in a living flame of uttermost devotion to Christ*” (Glenn Black, “Paul Rees” 2008:85).

The presenter affirmed and I agree that believers have the privilege of growing in grace, of going on to holiness of heart, of knowing that all sin has been purged, cleansed, washed away by the blood of Christ. It is also important to note what the presenter's emphasis by quoting John Wesley's “*Means of Grace*” needed for believers to have their “*hearts renewed after the image of God*” such as prayer, corporate worship, reading of Scriptures and the sacraments.

God created man and woman in His own image for a purpose. I agree with the presenter's heart of idea in his reflection “*that the essence ... we are created in God's image, or that we are created to 'image' God, is a function, or vocation, to which we are called*”. In connection to the *renewal of God's image* through the renewing grace of God, it was emphasized by quoting Wesley's theology that holy men *are not to escape from the world, but instead a deep and enduring participation in God's good creation.* It was mentioned about the call, to make this world more *fruitful and beautiful.*

It was brought out the concept about the image of God in human that could be analysed under three different expressions: *the natural, the political, and the moral.* He quoted the idea of

Wesley that the “natural image” generally meant those relatively unique capacities which tend to distinguish us humans from the rest of our fellow living creatures. The “political image” refers to the human as created and called by God to be “the governor of this lower world”. The “moral image”: humanities God-given and God-graced potential for godliness, or godlikeness. I strongly agree with the idea that holiness is in relation to the world where we are in or with the communities where we belong. Dag Hammarskjold said, *“The road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action”* (Jo Anne Lyon, “The Ultimate Blessing”, 2003:65).

The explanation of Dr. Lodahl about the whole creation as a part of God’s image which he says that it was mentioned six times in the very opening chapter of the Bible is very important to note. Considering this reflection, it is a reality that the created world is not innately evil because it was affirmed that *“it was good”*. Bonhoeffer wrote, *“In Jesus Christ the reality of God has entered into the reality of the world. Partaking in Christ, we stand at the same time in the reality of God and in the reality of the world.”* (Metaxas, 2010:469). He further posited, *“God’s action is invisible to the world – but the action of community is visible”* (Lyon, 2003:31). This means that God expects Christians to care, to connect and to engage with the world where they are in.

In the concluding part of this reflection the emphasis of Wesley was clearly noted that *“...through active faith in Jesus Christ human beings may be renewed and restored into the whole image of God. And being restored both to the favour and image of God, thou shalt know, love and serve (God) to all eternity”*. This is very important in Wesleyan theology and I would like to affirm such truth. In conformity to this idea, the following steps are deemed necessary in the part of human beings in reaching such state, *“renewed and restored into the whole image of God”*:

1. The need be born again by confession and asking forgiveness of sins committed and asking Christ to enter the heart by faith (I John 1:9; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 5:1; I John 5:12).
2. The need to be sanctified so that the work of the Holy Spirit in cleansing, purging, refining the mind and heart from the nature which is unlike Christ, occurs in a moment of time by faith (Rom.12:1-2; I Thess.4:3,7; 5:23; Heb.12:14).
3. The need be filled with the Holy Spirit that will give power to witness, to love and to reflect God’s image or re-present Christ to the world (Acts 1:8; Phil.1:9; 1 Thess.3:12).
4. The need to be consecrated, committed, total surrender to His will and to grow into Christlikeness as evidenced in a life of perfect love toward God, man, and creation (Matt.22:35-37; I John 4:12,17-18).

“It’s the work of the Holy Spirit to teach us and to bring a keen sense of need to our hearts”. (Caldwell, 1991:31).

John Wesley's theology has connections with the community which he was in and gave transformation to his country and extended to the known world. He was an evangelist and also a reformer as seen in many ways:

He was an early opponent of slavery, calling for its abolition in a day when few seemed concern. He took up the cause of the poor, creating interest-free loans, free medical services, and a jobs program that was far ahead of its time. He advised prison wardens not to abuse and brutal to prisoners. He fight against distilleries who make wines and elevated the role of women (Black & Drury, "The Story of the Wesleyan Church", 2012:18).

Summing up the totality of Dr. Lodahl's reflection, a challenge sparked my heart to go back to the DNA of Wesleyans, "*There must be a clear association of God's sovereignty with man's responsibility*" (Wood, 1967:150), to work hard for a better world. Adonis Gorospe wrote, "*If we want to believe we can build a better world, we must stand by the needy, against the cruelty in our locality. For it is only by standing by the needy, with integrity (emphasis mine: with holiness), against the cruelty in our locality, that any of us will have reason to believe we can build a better world*" ("The Church and Poverty in Asia" 2008:227). Finally, Billy Graham once told a Wesleyan congregation, "*In your message, you have what the world needs. You just need to do more to get that message out.*" *Now and ever!* (Black & Drury, 2012:282).

Bibliography

- Black, Robert and Keith Drury. *The Story of The Wesleyan Church*. Wesleyan Publishing House: Indianapolis, Indiana, 2012.
- Black, Glenn D. *Paul Rees*. Whispering Pines Publishing: Shoals, Indiana, 2008.
- Caldwell, Wayne E. *Life in the Spirit Now*. Wesley Press: Fishers, Indiana, 1991.
- Duewel, Wesley L. *God's Great Salvation*. Word of Life: Valenzuela, metro Manila, 1991.
- Gorospe, Adonis A. "Methodist Societies, Paradigms for Incarnating Christ as Communities of God Among the Poor". *The Church and Poverty in Asia*. Lee Wanak, ed. OMF Literature: Mandaluyong City, Metro, Manila, 2008.
- Lyon, Jo Anne. *The Ultimate Blessing*. Wesleyan Publishing House: Indianapolis, IN., 2003.
- Metaxas, Eric. *Bonhoeffer*. Thomas Nelson Inc.: Nashville, Tennessee, 2010.
- Wood, A. Skevington. *The Burning Heart*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1967.