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WESLEY'S GENERAL RULES: PARADIGM FOR POSTMODERN ETHICS

by
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INTRODUCTION

Poised at the cusp of transition from premodernity to modernity, "The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies" (1743) bear postmodern ethical import. Wesley's premodern emphasis upon "doing no harm" and "doing good" anticipates the modern debate between those ethical theories which stress either nonmaleficence (not inflicting harm) or beneficence (provision of benefit). In many respects, the story of modern ethics revolves around an extended process of presenting, critiquing, and then representing the dialogue, the tension, between doing no harm (nonmaleficence) and doing good (beneficence). However, Wesley's simple integration of these primitive Christian principles offers deeply promising postmodern possibilities for a coalescence of ethical emphases which have often been considered mutually exclusive. Could not a postmodern synthesis of the "General Rules" point contemporary Wesleyans toward an ethic which both protects the sacred individual and promotes the commonweal, an ethic which both aims to avoid harm and yet is highly cognizant of the public good? It is in this sense that John Wesley's "General Rules" offer a paradigm for postmodern ethics.

THE ANTICIPATORY POWER OF PREMODERN PARADIGMS

Any consideration of Wesley's "General Rules" as a premodern construct with postmodern significance must first articulate some typology of modernity. While several credible delineations of modernity abound, none are perhaps as concise as that offered by Thomas C. Oden. Oden sees modernity best defined "first as a historical period, then as an ideological worldview, and finally as a malaise of the deteriorating phase of that worldview."¹ In this schema, modernity is confined to the specific two-hundred-year period between 1789 and 1989, between the French Revolution and the fall of Communism. Whether such definitiveness will ultimately be ascribed these two events remains to be seen, and one might offer a more nuanced understanding of mid-eighteenth century antecedents of modernity, as well as post-communistic expressions of modernity. But in at least general terms, the years 1789 and 1989 best frame the chronological poles of modernity.

The ideological worldview of the period has been indelibly marked by scientific naturalism, hermeneutical deconstructionism, and moral iconoclasm. French rationalism, German idealism, British empiricism, and American pragmatism, while apparent epistemological foes, all share, in various forms, the presuppositions of

modernity. One need not be unsophisticated or reactionary to identify in modernity a destructive tendency toward ethical nihilism. The often arrogant appeal to a hypercritical hermeneutic has left modernity convinced that its entanglement with relativism is something "objective." Yet, as Oden points up, the Enlightenment's dogmatic regard for relativism has left an almost unimaginable legacy of confusion and pain.²

Given this state of affairs, it is appropriate to ask what one means by a move beyond modernity to a postmodern consciousness. Such a movement does not, must not, imply an intellectual amnesia which denies that modernity ever happened. A postmodern awareness does not champion the nostalgic return to precritical constructs as ends in themselves. Rather, reference to a "critique of criticism" best exemplifies the constructive project of postmodern consciousness.³ Such a hermeneutic owes much to the prolific work of Paul Ricoeur and his emphasis upon the postcritical resilience of narrative, symbol, and metaphor.⁴ But it is Ricoeur's oft-quoted reference to a "second naivete" which most directly captures the sense of postmodernism's return to premodern sources.⁵

This second or "willed" naivete does not engage modern thinking by merely harking back to a time of literal understandings. It is not a reaction to critical thinking so much as a response to it and an attempt to move beyond the sophomoric claims of iconoclasm. This second naivete is a postcritical or postmodern acknowledgment that the most mature understanding still wears the flesh and blood of symbol. One cannot simply reduce the symbolic and longstanding to some conceptual certainty of critique. Even as traditional images and icons are subjected to criticism, they disclose renewed meaning in indispensable ways. They continue to speak through the modern world to the postmodern horizon. For Ricoeur, the aim of understanding is not to eliminate outmoded symbols and traditions but to journey with them through the rhythms of critique and willed naivete.⁶

Wesley's "General Rules" of 1743 offer a decidedly premodern ethical construct. Their simple integration of (1) doing no harm, (2) doing good, and (3) attending upon the ordinances of God is often dismissed as a hopelessly dated precritical formulation.⁷ Yet beyond such modern conceit lies promising postmodern significance. One can even argue that Wesley's practical moral formulation substantively anticipates the current revolution in postmodern consciousness. What if Wesley's "General Rules" were neither naively idolized nor critically discarded? What if the "General Rules" were appropriated out of an intelligent, postcritical second naivete? One might find a way beyond certain accepted dilemmas of modern ethics.

WESLEY AS CONJUNCTIVE THEOLOGIAN

Many will agree that there is little in the Wesley corpus which qualifies as a systematic ethic. However, Wesley embodied specific theological and moral predilections which expressed themselves ethically through the integration of principles often considered mutually exclusive by the modern world. James Fowler's thought-provoking 1982 piece, "John Wesley's Development in Faith," traced the dynamics of Wesley's spiritual journey and pointed up his later tendency to combine emphases customarily assumed to be polar opposites.⁸

Fowler's heralded work on faith development borrows key language from Paul Ricoeur in suggestive ways. Fowler argues that humans bear the potential for progressing through six stages of faith. The first and second stages ordinarily refer to the rudimentary levels of faith found throughout child development. The sixth and final stage of faith represents a rare level of maturity. Therefore, Fowler sees the adult journey through the third, fourth, and fifth stages as the most readily identifiable

pattern of transformation and growth. He also associates this progression from stage three, through stage four, and on to stage five with Paul Ricoeur's language of first naivete, critique, and second naivete.⁹

Stage three is "synthetic-conventional faith" and it expresses itself through precritical apprehension of religious traditions, myths, and symbols. This is the first naivete of adult faith and represents perhaps the majority of contemporary Christians. Stage four is "individuating-reflective faith" and expresses itself through a more independently minded evaluation of both the validity and flaws found in conventional religious traditions and communities. This is the critique stage of adult faith and represents those maturing Christians who have achieved some level of self-understanding and analytical distance from the perfunctoriness of religious tradition. Though many might consider stage four to signify the highest level of human developmental functioning, Fowler makes it clear that this is by no means the terminus of Christian consciousness.¹⁰

Stage five or "conjunctive faith" represents the ability to move beyond analysis and critique. In Fowler's manner of speaking, "This stage develops a 'second naivete' (Ricoeur) in which symbolic power is reunited with conceptual meanings. Here there must also be a new reclaiming and reworking of one's past."¹¹ This level of faith awakens to the truth that traditional symbols and constructs carry an ongoing residue of meaning which defies our modern analytical reductionism. Moreover, the terminology for "conjunctive faith" implies a rebinding or re-integration of that which has been separated. ¹² Fowler finds proleptic signs of this dialectical consciousness in the premodern emphases of Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) who identified a *coincidentia oppositorum*, a "coincidence of opposites," in our apprehension of spiritual truth.¹³ Thus, stage five faith develops its willed naivete by acknowledging and integrating life's polarities and paradoxes. One reappropriates traditional truths while not feigning false innocence. One clings to the hope for moral excellence while aware of the human capacity for self-deception. One struggles to grasp truth in the apparent contradictions of life.

Fowler sees John Wesley's later theological integration as indicative of a stage five type faith. In the years following Aldersgate, Wesley managed to hold together a cadre of polarities: human bondage and human freedom, justification by grace through faith and the very real possibilities of sanctification, grace as the power of salvation and law as the gift of God's grace.¹⁴ In Fowler's words, "If there had been a theory of faith development (of the kind we work with) in the eighteenth century, certainly the theology of Wesley would have been a model for its version of conjunctive faith."¹⁵ These conjunctive tendencies provide the grounding for Wesley's significance to postmodern theology.

In 1991, James Fowler released his most recent study on faith development theory, *Weaving the New Creation*. This piece mirrors his earlier typology, with one important exception. In *Weaving the New Creation*, Fowler expands his discussion of stages three, four, and five to draw parallels with premodernism, modernism, and postmodernism. Thus, synthetic-conventional faith finds historical correlation with the precritical era prior to 1789. Individuating-reflective faith is linked to the critical Enlightenment tradition, and conjunctive faith stands as an emerging consciousness for the postmodern age.¹⁶ If Fowler's earlier identification of Wesley as a conjunctive thinker holds true, then his latest work would suggest that Wesley and his integrative constructs of faith might hold particular import for postmodern ethics.

WESLEY AS CONJUNCTIVE ETHICIST

One document where Wesley's conjunctive disposition finds concrete expression is

"The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies" (1743). There were thirty-nine editions of these "General Rules" published during Wesley's life. At intermittent printings, Charles Wesley's hymn, "A Prayer for those who are Convinced of Sin," was added as an appendix. In some editions, the "Rules of the Band Societies," first published in 1738, were also included. These "General Rules" provided more detailed and structured direction for those in the Methodist Societies and were especially designed to elucidate how the three principles of "doing no harm," "doing good," and "attending upon the ordinances of God" must find expression in day-to-day life. 17

Wesley's concern for the practical implementation of these three principles led him to list very specific injunctions within each category. "Doing no harm" emphasized the refraining from evil and directed Methodist Christians away from such destructive behaviors as profanity, drunkenness, fighting, buying or selling uncustomed goods, self-indulgence, and laying up treasure upon earth. While his concrete directions may at first appear entirely precritical and quaint, Wesley's emphasis upon this first principle had broader implications. He firmly grounded this passion for doing no harm in the Golden Rule and desired to keep his followers from "Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us."¹⁸ The negative formulation of this Biblical admonition anticipates Kant's categorical imperative by forty years.¹⁹ Moreover, the 1789 American edition of the "General Rules" placed an unqualified prohibition of slavery squarely within this section devoted to the doing of no harm.²⁰ Opposing and eliminating evil practices had decidedly far-reaching impact.

Wesley grounded his direction to do good upon Galatians 6:10 and emphasized two basic types of benevolence. First, he instructed his followers to do bodily good to other people "by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick, or in prison."²¹ This might be construed as a clear reference to Matthew 25:35-39. Second, Wesley urged adherents to work benevolence among the souls of others. Thus, even the positive command to do good offered an integration of body and soul, physical feeding and spiritual feeding.

The third category regarding the ordinances of God stressed both public and private practices of spiritual life. Specific direction called Wesley's followers to observe communal worship, the ministry of the Word, and the Lord's Supper. Family and individual prayer, personal Bible study, and fasting were also implored.²² Wesley's juxtaposition of this third concern for the means of grace with the more strictly ethical emphases illustrates his unwillingness to dichotomize the active and contemplative life. For Wesley, there was no good reason why these three principles could not coexist as one integrated whole.²³

Since John Simon's classic 1923 treatise on the Methodist Societies, it has been customary to cite Wesley's reading of William Cave's *Primitive Christianity* (1672) as the catalyst for the threefold structure of the "General Rules." Wesley became conversant with Cave's piece as early as the middle 1730s while in Georgia.²⁴ Cave portrayed the first believers with regard to their devotional and worship practices, their humility and harmlessness, and their benevolence toward others—a rough parallel to the "General Rules" triad.²⁵ Rupert Davies also suggests that among Reformation sources "there are important passages which give the same general sense, which Wesley may have summarized for his own purposes."²⁶ Here, Davies is referring to the negative and positive thrusts Martin Luther gave to his interpretation of the fifth and seventh commandments.²⁷ Additionally, as early as 1611, the catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer* listed moral obligation under a twin concern for what is not to be done to one's neighbor and what is to be done to one's neighbor.²⁸ It is conceivable that Wesley drew upon all of these sources when enunciating the threefold instruction of his "General Rules."

Time and again Wesley integrated the emphasis upon doing no harm and doing good both in theory and in responding practically to the pressing issues of middle-eighteenth century England. As early as 1742, Wesley expressed the importance of both principles when he penned "The Character of a Methodist."²⁹ This presentation is developed polemically in *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, where Wesley states plainly: "Ought we not to do what we believe is morally good, and to abstain from what we judge is evil?"³⁰ While returning to his argument in *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, Wesley applies this integration to the experience of spiritual renewal, when individuals "left off doing evil and learned to do well."³¹ Wesley's treatment of the Sermon on the Mount also embodies a consistent regard for the intricacies of both doing no harm and doing good.³² In this series, he expresses a particular concern that the entire ""General Rules" triad originate from an inward work of the Holy Spirit.³³

Manfred Marquardt has shown how Wesley's dialectical ethic issued in specific approaches to social issues. One example is prison ministry. Here: "Wesley did not confine his activity to providing pastoral and charitable help for prisoners. Publicly and with praiseworthy clarity, he protested against shocking abuses."³⁴ Denouncing the infliction of harm without working positive good was unconscionable, but benevolent gestures, apart from condemnation of evil, were equally reprehensible.

Yet, in practical application, no other experience in the life of Wesley illustrates this coalescence of avoiding harm and doing good as clearly as the dual concern for both abstinence from alcohol and feeding those who hunger. His 1773 essay, "Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions," integrates the avoidance of drink and a positive concern for the hungry. Wesley specifically sees a direct linkage between England's grain shortage and the alcohol industry: "But why is food so dear? To set aside partial causes, . . . the grand cause is, because such immense quantities of corn are continually consumed by distilling."³⁵ Elimination of the systemic harm worked by alcohol was intimately related to a passion for the positive and equitable provision of resources. It would have been out of character for Wesley to dichotomize the avoidance of evil from the need to work positive good. His worldview simply did not consider such polarities mutually exclusive.

This is not to say that Wesley was oblivious to periodic conflicts of principle between doing no harm and doing good. Yet, he attempted to resolve such dilemmas without absolute violation of either emphasis. At times, Wesley appears dependent upon consequentialist solutions to conflicting claims, as when he responds to accusations that his preaching may encourage disorder and error. He grants that some ill consequences may flow from a genuinely good thing but counters that "the good consequences, in the present case, overbalance the evil beyond all possible degrees of comparison."³⁶ On other occasions, Wesley affirms certain intrinsic moral values which must not be transgressed, regardless of outcome. This is particularly the case in his sermon on "The Use of Money." He argues that taking economic advantage of others through such practices as charging excessive interest or pawn-broking would be inconsistent with Christian life, even if one could argue that, on balance, some good results. In an intriguing reference to Romans 3:8, Wesley states that we "are not allowed to 'do evil that good may come.'"³⁷ He might entertain certain teleological criteria but never at the expense of nonnegotiable deontological values. In this manner, Wesley sought to hold doing no harm and doing good in creative tension, even through perceived conflicts of principle.

A POSTMODERN WESLEYAN ETHIC

Wesley's paradigmatic formulation of doing no harm and doing good has found

modern expression in those ethical constructs which stress non-maleficence (not inflicting harm) and beneficence (provision of benefit). This distinction has been particularly well exercised in contemporary biomedical ethics. It is not my intention here to rehearse every nuance of the nonmaleficence and beneficence dialogue. Rather, I simply wish to frame the general contours of current discussion in a manner that suggests Wesley's promise for forging a postmodern integration of these two emphases. The principle of nonmaleficence or not inflicting harm has been typically associated with the *maxim primum non nocere*, "Above all do no harm." Contrary to popular assumption, this specific wording of the axiom does not exist within the Hippocratic oath, though nonmaleficence is accentuated within Book I, Chapter 11 of the Epidemics.³⁸ Beneficence, as an identifiable principle of ethical discourse, can be found in numerous texts. In fact, it is rather clearly expressed within the Hippocratic oath, where the physician promises to "follow that system or regimen which, according to my ability and judgment, I consider for the benefit of my patients."³⁹ In Aquinas, the two emphases are held in creative tension: "Hence this is the first precept of law, that good is to be done and promoted, and evil is to be avoided."⁴⁰ But such integrated premodern statements have become suspect within modern ethical conversation. One might even argue that contemporary biomedical discourse has been characterized by competing claims about the logical priority of either nonmaleficence or beneficence. Presuppositions regarding some inevitable conflict in principle have informed much of modernity's approach to philosophical ethics.

In a piece first published during 1967 (reprinted in 1980), Philippa Foot reinterprets the doctrine of double effect to de-emphasize a distinction between direct and oblique intention. Instead, she focuses upon a fundamental differentiation between avoiding injury and bringing aid. Avoiding injury is termed a negative duty, bringing aid a positive duty: "Let us speak of negative duties when thinking of the obligation to refrain from such things as killing or robbing, and of the positive duty, e.g., to look after children or aged parents."⁴¹ Foot suggests approaching moral dilemmas by first considering whether one is being enjoined to refrain from injury or to bring positive aid. She concludes that, while this strategy does not provide universal direction, it can offer a helpful distinction. Decision-making is thus clarified because one "does not in general have the same duty to help people as to refrain from injuring them."⁴² In short, Foot's argument rests upon delineating competing claims of nonmaleficence and beneficence, so that one may grant preeminence to refraining from harm.

Nancy Davis offers a closely reasoned rebuttal to Foot's priority of avoiding harm.⁴³ Among more rarefied criticisms, Davis counters that any assertion of absolute priority in moral principle ignores differences of degree within both negative and positive claims. The balance of obligation does not categorically relate to some difference in kind between positive and negative duties. Rather, obligation is affected by differences of degree among nonmaleficent and beneficent demands: "Though we might be inclined to agree that one may not violate very strict negative duties to act in accord with positive duties, we would surely allow that it is permissible to violate some negative duties in order to act on strict positive duties."⁴⁴ The shift in emphasis from kind to degree allows Davis to avoid the error of critiquing Foot through claiming some absolute priority for beneficence. This moves us somewhat away from rigid orderings which stress either nonmaleficence or beneficence, to the detriment of the other. But one still might ask the all-too-obvious question: are nonmaleficence and beneficence, by their nature, competing or complementary principles?

Refreshing attempts to integrate nonmaleficent and beneficent concerns do exist. One of the most promising can be found in the collaboration of Tom L. Beauchamp and James E Childress, whose piece, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, juxtaposes the two emphases. Beauchamp and Childress do not ignore irreducible conflicts in principle, but neither are they prematurely willing to sacrifice one emphasis for the other. In

dilemmas which pose competing claims, we can "expect nonmaleficence to be overriding on many occasions, but not on all occasions."⁴⁵ Here, Beauchamp and Childress shift the focus toward distinctions of degree and suggest as an example that one might inflict a negligible surgical wound to prevent a major harm, such as death.⁴⁶ Ultimately, the two ethicists refuse to play the game of absolute logical priority and are adamant about not providing any "hierarchical arrangement of principles."⁴⁷ We might summarize their position by stating that they (1) argue for a complementarity in kind, while (2) recognizing conflicts of degree. Such acknowledged conflicts do not obliterate basic complementarity and must be resolved on a case-by-case basis.

Nancy Davis suggests that traditional acceptance of irreducible conflict has often neglected one crucial element: the culpability of a second agent who has created or, at the least, contributed to circumstances considered unresolvable.⁴⁸ In this sense, the most critical concerns may not relate to kinds of principle or relative strictness of degree within respective principles. Here, focus is placed upon the agency of individuals responsible for creating dilemmas which are perceived as irreducible. We might tentatively extend Davis's insight to explore the impact of institutional structures and systemic phenomena upon supposed dilemmas. What role do greed and exorbitant profits among the health care industry play in creating the perceived conflict between long-term care for the terminally ill and broader access for the poor? What identifiable role does societal injustice play in creating the perceived conflict between protection of the unborn and the economic well-being of women? These provocative questions deserve a much more detailed treatment than I am able to offer here.

But suffice it to say that Davis has done us a great favor by suggesting that culpability among supposed conflicts in principle often hinges more upon the agency of an external party than upon the intrinsic dynamics of some dilemma. These elaborate arguments are heartening for those who attempt to hold in tension the traditional ethical polarity of doing no harm and doing good. Yet, an even more instructive synthesis of nonmaleficence and beneficence might arise from a reappropriation of premodern ethical integrations. Wesley's "General Rules" offer precisely such a model. The precritical coalescence of doing no harm and doing good anticipates current juxtapositions in significant ways. This premodern formulation may strike one as remarkably naive. Clearly, there is contemporary ethical territory where nonmaleficence (doing no harm) and beneficence (doing good) conflict. But one might also ask whether modernity has too readily accepted a mutual exclusivity of these emphases. Perhaps it is time to reenter Wesley's ethical construct out of a willed naivete. This postmodern consciousness would see unresolved conflicts between nonmaleficence and beneficence as the exception, not the rule.⁴⁹ This approach would refuse simplistic denial of those instances when either nonmaleficence or beneficence claim priority, but this approach would also free itself from the modern presupposition that one or the other principle must necessarily be violated. The postmodern appropriation of Wesley's "General Rules" does not entail neglect of critical ethical distinctions and differentiations developed throughout the modern age. Rather, this willed naivete seeks merely to move beyond the institutionalization of conflicts in principle, to a more integrated and consistent respect for both nonmaleficence and beneficence. As a start, Wesleyan ethicists might explore the naming of those ways in which external agents and structures have affected perceived conflicts between positive and negative duties.

Perhaps it is prophetic, as well as philosophically valid, to assert a fundamental complementarity in principle. Wesleyans may initially claim such complementarity out of a naive regard for premodern constructs, but they will also be faced with the critical, modern identification of real and imagined conflicts in principle. It is my hope

that one might hold the sensibilities of these two eras in creative tension, out of a postmodern, second naivete. This willed naivete is only possible through a koinonia permeated by the ordinances of God. Admittedly, such conjunctive thoughts are more suggestive than definitive. Yet, highly creative ethical dialogue awaits those prepared to live within the means of grace and within the dialectic of nonmaleficence and beneficence. As Biblical scholar, Walter Wink, reminds us, ". . . creativity involves the capacity to allow a perceived contradiction to reach its very limits and then be reordered at a higher level of integration into a new whole."⁵⁰ It is in light of this awareness that John Wesley's "General Rules" offer a highly resilient, integrative, and promising paradigm for postmodern ethics.

Notes

1 Thomas C. Oden, *Two Worlds: Notes on the Death of Modernity in America and Russia* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 31-32. I resist the urge to cite some extended litany of postmodern diagnosis. Emerging understandings of "postmodernity" are still so varied that, for the sake of this investigation, I limit discussion to the particular issues raised by Professor Oden's typology.

2 Ibid., 38-40.

3 Thomas C. Oden, *After Modernity . . . What?: Agenda for Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 111. Thomas C. Oden, *Two Worlds: Notes on the Death of Modernity in America and Russia*, 71-89.

4 See especially Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, Texas: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976). For an insightful treatment of more specific metaphorical issues: Paul Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling," in *On Metaphor*, ed., Sheldon Sacks (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 141-157. I accept that some may balk at my correlation of symbol with crucial Christian constructs. It might seem that a truly postmodern hermeneutic would root itself within something more substantial than "mere" symbol. To this, I respond that there is no such thing as "mere" symbol. Rather, in the most incarnational sense, symbol is mediated reality and therefore stands as the requisite bearer of truth. Ricoeur writes: "Thus, contrary to perfectly transparent technical signs, which say only what they want to say in positing that which they signify, symbolic signs are opaque, because the first, literal, obvious meaning itself points analogically to a second meaning which is not given otherwise than in it." Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans., Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 15.

5 Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 351-352.

6 Ibid. See also Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection," in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, ed., Charles E. Reagan and David Stewart (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 36-58.

7 Even the United Methodist Church's Office of Covenant Discipleship has chosen an alternative construct for its class meeting ministry, claiming that the model found in Wesley's "General Rules" does not meet the rigors of a "post-Marxian and post-Freudian age." See David Lowes Watson, *Covenant Discipleship: Christian Formation through Mutual Accountability* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1991), 77-78.

8 James W. Fowler, "John Wesley's Development in Faith," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, ed., M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 172-192.

9 James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper, 1981), 187.

10 Ibid., 183.

11 Ibid., 197.

12 Ibid., 198.

13 James W. Fowler, *Faith Development and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 71-73. Jasper Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism: Text, Translation, and Interpretive Study of "De visione Dei,"* (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 1985), 93, 159. Hopkins adds that, "In opening the door to Modernity, Nicholas does not surrender his pre-modern standpoint" (96-97). See also Jasper Hopkins, *A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), 11-12, 21-22, 160 n22.

14 James W. Fowler, "John Wesley's Development in Faith," 190. Manfred Marquardt makes reference to Wesley's "theological dialectic" in Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles*, trans., John E. Steely and W. Stephen Gunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 101.

15 James W. Fowler, "John Wesley's Development in Faith," 190.

16 James W. Fowler, *Weaving the New Creation: Stages of Faith and the Public Church* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 16-24.

17 *The Works of John Wesley*, ed., Rupert E. Davies, Vol.9, *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 61.

18 Ibid., 70-71.

19 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans., H. J. Paton (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1964), 88.

20 Warren Thomas Smith, *John Wesley and Slavery* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 116.

21 *The Works of John Wesley*, ed., Rupert E. Davies, Vol.9, *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design*, 72.

22 Ibid., 73.

23 This point has been well argued in David Lowes Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting: Its Origins and Significance* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1985), 108. Here, Watson describes worldly service as "ineffectual without the power of the Holy Spirit."

24 John S. Simon, *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* (London: The Epworth Press, 1923), 105.

25 William Cave, *Primitive Christianity: or, the Religion of the Ancient Christians in the First Ages of the Gospel*, ed., Henry Cary (London: Thomas Tegg, 1840). See also H. Ray Dunning, "Ethics in a Wesleyan Context," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 5 (Spring 1970): 6-7, and *The Works of John Wesley*, ed., Rupert E. Davies, Vol.9, 7.

26 Rupert E. Davies, Letter to Christopher P. Momany, 1 January 1992.

27 Martin Luther, *Small Catechism: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), 67-69. Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*, trans., Robert H. Fischer (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 43.

28 *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, According to the Use of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944), 579-583. Reference to the 1611 prayer book is found in Rupert E. Davies, Letter to Christopher P. Momany, 1 January 1992.

29 *The Works of John Wesley*, ed., Rupert E. Davies, Vol.9, 40-41.

30 John Wesley, *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: John Gooding, 1743; reprint, Nashville, Tennessee: The United Methodist Publishing House, Library of Methodist Classics, 1992), 7.

31 John Wesley, *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, Part III (London: W. Strahan, 1745; reprint, Nashville, Tennessee: The United Methodist Publishing House, Library of Methodist Classics, 1992), 84.

32 Sermons XXI-XXXIII; in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed., Thomas Jackson, Vol. V, First

- Series of Sermons (1-39), *A Life of John Wesley* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1986), 268, 325, 404, 425, 426, 429, 430.
- 33 Ibid., 325.
- 34 Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles*, 84.
- 35 *The Works of John Wesley*, ed., Thomas Jackson, Vol. XI, 54.
- 36 Letter XLIII: To Mr. John Smith, 22 March, 1747-48, in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed., Thomas Jackson, Vol. XII, 98.
- 37 *The Works of John Wesley*, ed., Thomas Jackson, Vol. VI, 128. John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, Vol. 11, Romans to Revelation (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1983), Romans 3:8. Wesley almost wrenches this text from its theological context to make a philosophical point. See also L. D. Hulley, *To Be and To Do: Exploring Wesley's Thought on Ethical Behaviour* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1988), 68, 72-73.
- 38 Albert R. Jonsen, "Do No Harm: Axiom of Medical Ethics," in *Philosophical Medical Ethics: Its Nature and Significance*, ed., Stuart F. Spicker and 11. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1977), 27. Jonsen traces with particular thoroughness the sources of this maxim. Still, its exact origin is the subject of conjecture.
- 39 "The Oath of Hippocrates" in *The Genuine Works of Hippocrates*, trans., Francis Adams, with an Introduction by Emerson Crosby Kelly (Huntington, New York: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1972), viii.
- 40 Thomas Aquinas, ST I-II, Q. 94, art. 2. Cf. *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, ed., Anton C. Pegis (New York: Random House, 1945), II, 114.
- 41 Philippa Foot, "The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect," in *Killing and Letting Die*, ed., Bonnie Steinbock (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980), 162.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Nancy Davis, "The Priority of Avoiding Harm," in *Killing and Letting Die*, ed., Bonnie Steinbock (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980), 172-214. Davis suggests at the outset that Foot obfuscates moral discourse by claiming some absolute distinction between negative and positive duties.
- 44 Ibid., 187. Appeals to differences of degree within both negative and positive duties are not without their problems. Weighing the relative strictness of beneficent claims can collapse into consequentialism, while more nebulous intrinsic criteria may be employed when evaluating the relative weight of nonmaleficent obligations.
- 45 Tom L. Beauchamp and James E Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 122. The correlation between Beauchamp/Childress and Wesley's "General Rules" suggested here has its roots in Kenneth L. Carder, *Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task: A Leader's Guide* (Nashville: Graded Press, 1939), 50-51.
- 46 Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 122.
- 47 Ibid., 125. Beauchamp adds the further comment that, "It is risky to come up with some lexical ordering of principles." Tom L. Beauchamp, Personal Conversation with Christopher P. Momany, 25 September 1992.
- 48 Nancy Davis, "The Priority of Avoiding Harm," 201-210. Davis terms this a "doctrine of the intervening agent" and identifies it with the legal doctrine of *novus actus interveniens*. How such technical arguments of secondary agency may or may not relate to systemic culpability is an issue worthy of further exploration.
- 49 Lowell O. Erdalil, *Pro-Life: Pro-Peace: Life-Affirming Alternatives to Abortion, War, Mercy Killing, and the Death Penalty* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986). See especially the chapter entitled, "When the Exceptions Become the Rule," 24-28.
- 50 Walter Wink, *Transforming Bible Study*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 21.

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