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Grace And Social Science:

Nonsensory Perception of God in a Constructive Postmodern Wesleyan Philosophy

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In this essay, I endeavor to accomplish three tasks. The first involves briefly introducing the creative and complex constructive postmodernism of David Ray Griffin. Given that Griffin has written and/or edited massive amounts of material in advancing his distinctive postmodern proposals, I cannot cover many pertinent ideas in our present time constraints. I will, however, focus on one notion that Griffin believes crucial to his postmodern proposal: nonsensory perception. This focus amounts to the second task I endeavour to accomplish. My third task entails briefly exploring how this insight – nonsensory perception – relates to a central element in Wesleyan philosophical theology: prevenient grace. I am convinced that the hypothesis that prevenient grace is perceived through nonsensory perception can aid theists in general and Wesleyans in particular as they traverse the unpredictable postmodern epistemological terrain.

I. Postmodernism According to David Ray Griffin

With the variety of postmodernisms espoused or referred to in recent times, a short excursus into what David Griffin means by postmodernism, and how his is a constructive version, seems necessary. Postmodernism, according to Griffin, refers to a diffuse sentiment — that humanity can and must go beyond the "modern" — rather than to any common set of doctrines (Griffin 1993: vii-viii). In philosophical and theological circles, there are at least two different positions labeled "postmodern" and each seeks to transcend the modern worldview developed out of the seventeenth-century Galilean-Cartesian-Baconian-Newtonian science (Griffin 1993: viii). However, the manner in which diverse postmodernisms seek to transcend modernity varies.

Griffin refers to the postmodernism inspired variously by pragmatism, physicalism, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, and many recent French thinkers as "deconstructive" or "eliminative" postmodernism. This postmodernism, according to Griffin, "overcomes the modern worldview through an antiworldview" (Griffin 1993: viii).

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Abstract: The author endeavors to accomplish three tasks in this article. The first involves briefly introducing the creative and complex constructive postmodernism of David Ray Griffin. Given that Griffin has written and/or edited massive amounts of material in advancing his distinctive postmodern proposals, he cannot cover many pertinent ideas in our present time constraints. He will, however, focus on one notion that Griffin believes crucial to his postmodern proposal: nonsensory perception. This focus amounts to the second task he endeavours to accomplish. His third task entails briefly exploring how this insight - nonsensory perception - relates to a central element in Wesleyan philosophical theology: prevenient grace.

> Deconstructive postmodernism deconstructs or eliminates the ingredients necessary for a worldview, such as God, self, purpose, meaning, a real world, and truth as correspondence. While motivated in some cases by the ethical concern to forestall totalitarian systems, this type of postmodern thought issues in relativism, even nihilism. It could be called *ultramodernism*, in that its eliminations result from carrying modern premises to their logical conclusions (Griffin 1993: viii).

To say it in another way, deconstructive postmodernists deconstruct various notions, such as rationality, empirical givenness, and truth as correspondence, without which a worldview is impossible (Griffin 1993: viii). The attempt to undermine horror-producing worldviews is admirable and even necessary. The strategy of deconstructive postmodernists, however, involves eliminating the presuppositions of worldviews as such (Griffin, Beardslee and Holland 1989: 52).

Therefore, the deconstructionist approach is both inconsistent and counterproductive. It is inconsistent because freedom, purposive agency, realism, truth, and the distinction between better and worse are presupposed in the very attempt to eliminate them. It is counterproductive because freedom for good cannot be promoted by the approach (Griffin, Beardslee and Holland 1989: 52). The type of postmodernism Griffin suggests can, by contrast, be called "constructive" or "revisionary" postmodernism. "It seeks to overcome the modern worldview," he says, "through a revision of modern premises and traditional concepts" (Griffin, Beardslee and Holland 1989: viii). It is concerned with constructing a new worldview involving postmodern persons *and* a postmodern society with a postmodern spirituality. "Going beyond the modern world," Griffin explains,

> will involve transcending its individualism, anthropocentrism, patriarchy, mechanization, economism, consumerism, nationalism, and militarism. [This] constructive postmodern thought provides support for ecology, peace, feminist, and other emancipatory movements of our time, while stressing that the inclusive emancipation must be from modernity itself. The term *postmodern*, however, by contrast with *premodern*, emphasizes that the modern world has produced unparalleled advances that must not be lost in a general revulsion against its negative features (Griffin 1993: ix).

Griffin's postmodernism, therefore, involves a creative synthesis of modern and premodern truths and values. It differs significantly from deconstructive postmodernism in its insistence upon the necessity and possibility of constructing a new worldview for future generations (Griffin 1993: 1).

It is crucial to note that Griffin's proposal does ***not*** hold to "the naively utopian belief that the success of this movement would bring about lasting peace, harmony, and happiness, in which all spiritual problems, social conflicts, ecological destruction, and hard choices would vanish" (Griffin 1993: x). There is truth in the testimony of the world's religions that a deep evil is present within the human heart, an evil that no new worldview will suddenly

eliminate (Griffin 1993: x). However, Griffin says, we should not reconcile ourselves "to the present order as if this order were thereby uniquely legitimated . . . . The human proclivity to evil in general, and to conflictual competition and ecological destruction in particular, can be either greatly exacerbated or greatly mitigated by a world order and its view" (Griffin 1993: x). While modern worldviews exacerbated it, a reconstructive postmodernism may envision, without being naively utopian, a far better world order than the one we now have.

> (See the appendix for a chart that I constructed that indicates the general characteristics of modernism, ultramodernism, and Griffin's postmodernism.)

II. Nonsensory Perception in Griffin's Constructive Postmodernism

While David Griffin believes that a constructive postmodernism builds upon the thought of several recent philosophers, he admits that his own postmodern agenda takes its primary orientation from Alfred North Whitehead's philosophy and only slightly less from Charles Hartshorne's (Griffin 1993: 2). From this perspective, says Griffin, "the two fundamental flaws in modern philosophy have been an ontology based on a materialistic doctrine of nature and an epistemology based on a sensationalist doctrine of perception" (Griffin 1993: 3). He explains:

> The sensationalist doctrine of perception said not only that all knowledge is grounded on perception (with which constructive postmodernists agree), but also that perception is to be equated with sense-perception (with which they do not agree). The materialistic doctrine of nature — whether part of a materialistic ontology of reality in general or of a dualism between "mind" and "nature" — said that the ultimate units of nature are, in Whitehead's words, "vacuous actualities." That is, they are actualities (*contra* Bishop Berkeley), but they are completely devoid of experience (Griffin 1993: 3).

An exposition of Griffin's argument against the sensationalist doctrine of perception and his alternative proposal — a doctrine of sensory and nonsensory perception — serves as the subject for this segment.

The epistemological side of Griffin's constructive postmodernism involves the idea that sensory perception is not our only means of perceiving the world. In fact, it is not even our *primary* means of perception, because sensory perception is derived from nonsensory modes of perception (Griffin 1993: 14). The key epistemological revision for overcoming deconstructive postmodernism's epistemological chasm - a chasm whose depths have spawned numerous philosophical and theological inadequacies - involves a postmodern affirmation of nonsensory perception.

The recent obituaries for constructive epistemology written by deconstructive postmodernists have resulted primarily from what Whitehead called "the tacit identification of perception with sense-perception" (Whitehead

1968: 231). Modern philosophy's doctrine of perception was based on two premises: (1) the only possible source of information about the world beyond our own experience is sensory perception, and (2) sensory perception gives us nothing but sense-data. Griffin notes that, given these premises, it is hard to see how one could escape solipsism Griffin, 1993: 17). For instance, David Hume concluded that we must be content with solipsism, which is based upon a radical bifurcation between theory and practice. In practice, says Hume, we assume that a real world exists while, in theory, we realize there is no justification for this belief.

The equation of perception with sensory perception has led to the shallowness of modern philosophy of religion. If perceptual experience is equated with sensory perception — thereby denying non-sensory perception — we have no perceptual experience of causation, the actual world, or the past. There can be no religious experience, in the sense of a direct awareness of God. There can be no perceptual experience of normative ideals, whether moral, aesthetic, or cognitive, and, therefore, what remains is a multiplicity of perspectives, none of which is more normative than the others (Griffin 1989: 32).

The idea that sense-data are *constructed* by the perceiver, not passively received, has been, according to Griffin, "a central plank in the extreme antifoundationalism that is central to deconstructive postmodern philosophy" (Griffin 1993: 19). He responds to this idea by noting that, on the one hand, if *nothing* is given in perception, then all our beliefs about the world are arbitrary. Furthermore, the very idea that there is a reality beyond ourselves, to which our ideas could somehow correspond, is groundless. Extreme antifoundationalism leads to extreme relativism. On the other hand, various foundationalists have insisted that the outer world is *directly* given in *sensory* perception. Contemporary philosophers and theologians, says Griffin, seem to be at an impasse:

> On the one hand, there are good reasons to believe, from what we all presuppose in practice (e.g., that a real world exists, that its reality is given to us in perception, and that our ideas are true to the extent that they correspond to this world), that perception must include an element that is given. On the other hand, there are good reasons to believe that sense-data are constructed by the perceiver (Griffin 1993: 20).

The way beyond this impasse is to recognize that sensory perception is not our primary mode of perceiving the world; nonsensory perception is more basic. In this nonsensory mode, we directly (ap)prehend "other actual things as actual and causally efficacious for us," says Griffin (Griffin 1993: 20). But the *way* we prehend other actual things plays a role in our perception. On this basis, we see that there is a constructed character of sense-data without concluding that nothing is given to perceptual experience as such. One can agree "with the direct realists," says Griffin, "who have insisted that, in perception, we directly apprehend other actual things

beyond our own experience, while agreeing with phenomenalists that sensory perception, in providing us with sense-data, does not give us this direct apprehension" (Griffin 1993: 20). The alternative position is open to constructive postmodernists by "either saying that sensory perception is based upon a more primitive mode of perception in which that direct perception occurs, or by saying that sensory perception is a mixed mode of perception comprised of two pure modes, one of which provides (constructed) sense-data and the other of which provides causally efficacious actualities" (Griffin 1993: 20). Griffin's position, then, "comes out about half-way between modern phenomenalism and the sensory realism of pre-Humean philosophy" (Grifin 2000: 491).[1]

Griffin argues that we get direct apprehension of the world in three ways. First, we directly apprehend particular parts of our own bodies as causally efficacious for our sensory perceptions. The most direct perception of one's body is ***not*** one's perception of sensory organs; it is one's perception, albeit unconscious, of the brain. "We know from physiology," Griffin argues,

> that our sensory perceptions depend directly upon the brain. Sensory perceptions can be induced, for example, by direct stimulation of certain parts of the brain. By combining what we know from immediate experience with what we know from science, accordingly, we must conclude that it is primarily by means of a nonsensory perception of the brain, with which the mind is contiguous, that we perceive the causal efficacy of various parts of the body for our experience (Griffin 2000: 74).

Furthermore, the direct apprehension of our own bodies can serve, by analogy, to ground our talk about actualities beyond our bodily members. In other words, one can know, by analogy, the actuality of the world beyond one's body.

The second way we apprehend the world occurs by prehending our own bodies. When we prehend our own bodies, "we indirectly apprehend the actualities beyond our bodies *insofar as those actualities beyond our bodies are present within actualities comprising our bodies*" (Griffin 1993: 22). This panexperientialist hypothesis involves the belief that each actual entity is an experience that prehends, thereby including into itself aspects of prior actualities. For instance, visual images are present in the eyes by way of the eye's apprehension of them. The brain apprehends the images present in the eyes; the mind apprehends the brain.

The third way we get direct apprehension of the world is through direct prehension of actualities beyond one's own body. Although this type of direct prehension of remote actualities is negligible in the conscious experience of most people most of the time, Griffin's study in the field of parapsychology has led him to believe that authentic instances do occur.

Perhaps the main explanation of our awareness of nonsensory perception lies within the type of perception we call

"memory." Griffin suggests that memory might be better called "past-self-perception" (Griffin 2000: 75). Through memory, we directly prehend our own past experiences. It is our prehension of the immediate past (one second ago, for instance) that best illustrates our non-sensory perception that the past influences the present. Philosophers in the past have generally failed to think of memory as a type of perception, because they assumed that the human mind is a single, enduring substance. A hypothesis that more adequately accounts for the diverse activity of the mind, however, is one that considers it a serially-ordered society of distinct occasions of experience. Memory is the enduring mind's perception of prior moments of experiences as antecedent objects (Griffin 2000: 494-95). The vision in our "mind's eye," then, is not immediately derived from our sensory organs.

If direct, albeit often unconscious and non-sensory, apprehension of that which is both inside and outside one's body occurs, we have reason to believe that our notions of truth, beauty, and goodness are rooted in our prehension of a realm of values beyond ourselves. Thus, complete relativism is denied. Such direct nonsensory perception also provides a basis for claiming that it is possible to directly perceive God, who is often described as a Spirit undetectable to our five senses. Griffin claims that perception of the divine occurs in this way and his notion will be explored further in my discussion of a postmodern Wesleyan philosophy.

III. Perception of Prevenient Grace in a Postmodern Wesleyan Philosophy

So, what does all this have to do with a postmodern Wesleyan philosophy? I propose that Wesleyans, who aspire to offer a postmodern philosophical alternative to modernism and deconstructive postmodernisms, should utilize various elements in Griffin's constructive postmodern vision. Postmodern Wesleyans can more easily appropriate Griffin's constructive vision than those in other religious and nonreligious traditions, because this vision is congenial to many distinctives and theological implications in Wesleyan thought. My discussion in this segment will centre on what I believe is one issue central to a postmodern Wesleyan philosophy: one's apprehension of prevenient grace through nonsensory perception.

The issue at hand can be put in question form: How can Wesleyans account philosophically for their distinctive claim that God's prevenient, gracious activity necessarily affects all humans (and, perhaps, all creatures) if such affection requires that humans perceive it? How can Wesleyans account for this if God, as an invisible Spirit, is unavailable for apprehension through sensory perception?

John Wesley's answers to these questions were framed in response to prominent philosophers of his day: John Locke and David Hume. The thought of these two, but especially the latter, provides much of the basis for the dilemmas besetting modern and deconstructive postmodern

epistemologies. Although Wesley has little in common with Hume, he self-consciously sided with Locke[2] (and Aristotelian philosophy)[3] who famously expresses the empiricist denial of innate ideas. Wesley several times quotes the empiricist slogan "nothing is in the mind that is not first in the senses."[4] He argues that "our senses are the only source of those ideas, upon which all our knowledge is founded. Without ideas of some sort or other we could have no knowledge, and without our senses we could have no ideas" (1823: 2, 431).

Wesley's strong empiricism leads Randy L. Maddox to conclude that "Wesley believed that all human knowledge of God is derived from experience: (1) our experience of God's restored initial revelation in nature, (2) our experience of God's definitive revelation recorded in Scripture, and (3) our experience of God's direct address to our spiritual senses" (numbers added).[5]

The knowledge of God available in (1) the revelation of nature is indirect because such knowledge is secured through inference from the created order. Wesley is far from alone in arguing for this type of knowledge. In fact, many of his contemporaries — including the deists he opposed — joined him in acknowledging this manner of obtaining knowledge of God. Inferential knowledge is based upon a different kind of perception than direct experience of God suggested in ways (2) and (3). This difference pertains to the mode of perception involved. Knowledge of God through inference is available through (natural) sensory perception and, because the invisible God is not *directly* available through the natural senses, inferential knowledge of God is indirect.

The final two avenues for gaining knowledge of God – (2) and (3), i.e., our personal experience and our experience of Scripture — were more important for Wesley, and these two are more important for my present purpose. As Maddox says, "it was to the latter two that Wesley typically turned for the 'content' of our knowledge of God" (48-49, 31). These two are related to one another in that both are predicated upon the notion that humans *directly* perceive God. This means that God's direct address to each person (sometimes called the "internal witness of the Spirit")[6] is of the same kind as God's direct address to the writers of Scripture.[7] According to Wesley, this direct knowledge of God comes through a special kind of perception: "spiritual" sensation.

Wesley postulated that God has given humans a spiritual sense so that they may perceive spiritual realities not available for apprehension through (natural) sensory perception.[8] Through our spiritual senses, we can have direct knowledge of God.[9] In *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, Wesley explains this perceptual faculty:

> Seeing our ideas are not innate, but must all originally come from our senses, it is certainly necessary that you have senses capable of discerning objects of this kind — not only those which are called "natural senses," which in this respect profit nothing, as being altogether incapable of discerning objects of a spiritual kind, but *spiritual* senses, exercised to discern spiritual good and evil. It is

> necessary that you have the *hearing* ear, and the *seeing* eye, emphatically so called; that you have a new class of senses opened in your soul, not depending on organs of flesh and blood to be 'the *evidence* of things unseen' as your bodily senses are of visible things, to be the avenues of the invisible world, to discern spiritual objects, and to furnish you with ideas of what the outward 'eye hath not seen, neither the ear heard' (32, also *Works* 11:56-57).

Wesley was not the first to claim that humans possess spiritual senses. The hypothesis of spiritual senses, as Rex D. Matthews notes, has enjoyed a long and extensive history in Christian theology (Matthews 1986: 234. See also Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 27-28, 262-63). Wesley's positing of a spiritual senses was a peculiarly eighteenth-century solution to the epistemological problem, however (Dreyer 1983: 26). His postulation of spiritual senses was a response to the dominant Lockean empiricism of Wesley's day. Locke's empirical philosophy limited perception to the acquisition of knowledge through the (natural) senses alone (Matthews 1986: 186; Brantley 1984: 29). Because God cannot be sensed by a creature's five natural senses, Wesley's spiritual sensation hypothesis provided him a way to account for how creatures commune directly with God.

The hypothesis that humans possess spiritual senses raises a question expressed well by Matthews: Does Wesley regard the spiritual senses "as an *addition to* the natural senses (implying a metaphysical and epistemological dualism), or as an *enhancement of* the capacity of the natural senses" (Matthews 1986: 248)? On the one hand, Wesley sometimes speaks as if these spiritual senses are common to all humans as a natural part of what it means to be.[10] On the other hand, he sometimes speaks as though a person is incapable of perceiving spiritual data until God has implanted the capacity to perceive this data.[11] This diversity leads Mitsuo Shimizu to argue that Wesley was both a metaphysical and an ontological dualist (Shimizu 1980: 171), while leading Richard E. Brantley to argue the contrary (Brantley1984: 99). Matthews concludes:

> It must be acknowledged that Wesley himself uses an inconsistent and sometimes confusing mixture of language about the "spiritual senses," sometimes speaking of their "opening" or "enlightening" (as if they were already present but simply "latent in human nature — the "liberationist" theme), and sometimes speaking of the "natural man" as "receiving" them (implying that they do not in fact exist in human nature prior to the prevenient action of the Holy Spirit in creating them — the "transformationist" theme (Matthews 1986: 306; Thorsen 1990: 193).

Wesley addresses the natural/supernatural scheme underlying this issue in other contexts. For instance, he says of one's conscience that, "in one sense, it may be termed natural, because it is found in all men; yet, properly speaking, it is not natural, but a supernatural gift from God, above all his natural endowments" ("On Conscience," Vol 1.6, *Works*, VII, 187-88). Regarding prevenient grace, he says famously:

> For allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by nature, this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called natural conscience. But this is not natural: It is more properly termed prevenient grace. Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man. . . . So that no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he hath.[12]

Despite the confusion of his language regarding the natural and supernatural, one thing seems clear: Wesley remained an empiricist by arguing that knowledge is gained through perception. Because natural sense perception cannot provide the necessary data for apprehension of the unseen divine, however, Wesley adopted the notion that persons possess unique spiritual faculties by which to perceive the spiritual activity of God directly.[13]

It is my belief that a postmodern Wesleyan philosophy should accept neither the metaphysical and epistemological dualisms implied in the notion that God implants supernatural senses alongside natural ones, nor the notion that humans "naturally" possess spiritual senses that need only to be enhanced by a movement of God.[14] However, Wesley's basic empiricist notion, that knowledge of God — like all other knowledge — comes through perception, *should* be accepted by postmodern philosophers. What seems to be required is a Wesleyan empiricism that accounts for direct perception of God. Such an empiricism must also be postmodern in the sense that it must not fall victim to the incoherence of modern and ultramodern epistemologies which limit the acquisition of knowledge to *sense* perception alone.

Enter the constructive postmodern epistemology of David Ray Griffin outlined earlier. Griffin agrees with Wesley and other empiricists that knowledge is gained only through perception. He agrees with Wesley that humans have direct knowledge of God through perception. Both Griffin and Wesley could be labeled "theistic empiricists" in that both are adamant not only that God exists, but also that direct perception of God is possible. Both agree that this direct perception of God is unavailable through natural sensory perception. Because of this, both reject the epistemological claim of Locke, Hume, and other modern and deconstructive postmodernists that *all* knowledge is garnered through *natural sensory* perception alone.[15]

Wesley and Griffin differ, however, in accounting for how God can be directly perceived. Wesley is obliged to postulate a sense faculty that pertains to "spiritual" data. Griffin, however, argues that humans, in fact all creatures, perceive God through natural *nonsensory* perception. Perception of God, according to Griffin, "requires no implanted *Sensus Divinitatis*, in fact no special religious sense of any sort, given the recognition of a nonsensory mode of perception" (2000: 501).[16] Genuine experiences of God, says Griffin, require "no special religious sense, *a priori* or otherwise, no supernatural inter-

vention into the normal causal processes involved in human experience, and no special pleading in terms of the beliefs and practices of a particular religious community" (2000: 98).

Process (and Wesleyan) theologian John B. Cobb, Jr., explains this well: "If God is present and working in us, as Wesley (and also process philosophy) affirms, there is nonsensory perception of God all the time.... Instead of speaking of new spiritual senses, we can think of nonsensuous experience of the divine presence in our lives and awareness of its salvific effects" (2000: 75). Although modern philosophers, due to their sensationalist proclivities, tend to assume that nonsensory perception must be supernatural, Griffin's .constructive postmodernism offers an account that is theistic and naturalistic. This hypothesis finds evidence for its plausibility in the way we live our lives, i.e., we all act as if we possess knowledge unavailable to sensory perception.

The hypothesis that we all perceive God directly through nonsensory perception provides an additional basis for Griffin's collapse of the classic natural and supernatural dualism. In its place, he suggests a naturalistic theism or theistic naturalism. General precedence for such a collapse can be found in Wesley's own writings, noted above, as well as in early Greek theologians and the continuing Eastern Orthodox tradition. Precedence can be found in the writings of contemporary Wesleyans as well. For instance, H. Ray Dunning contends that "the distinctiveness of the Wesleyan view is that nature is so graced that the natural man is but a logical abstraction. The grace extends to the whole of human existence" (Dunning 1988: 159; 432). Mildred Bangs Wynkoop and John E. Culp also push for such a collapse (Wynkoop 1972: 213-221; Culp 1996: 147-166. See also, from a Wesleyan-Process perspective, Cobb's *Grace and Responsibility* and Suchocki 1987: 31-43).

It is my argument, then, that Wesleyans endeavoring to propose a postmodern Wesleyan philosophy are wise to adopt Griffin's hypothesis that direct knowledge of God is available through nonsensory perception. This hypothesis is postmodern in that it overcomes the difficulties inherent in modernity's and deconstructive postmodernity's reduction of perception to sensory perception alone. It is Wesleyan in that it corresponds with (1) Wesley's empiricist philosophy, (2) insistence upon direct perception of God, and (3) recognition that direct perception of God is unavailable through the natural senses. Its further benefit is in overcoming the spiritual/natural dualism that Wesley's language sometimes supports. The hypothesis that God can be perceived through nonsensory apprehension allows Wesleyans a realistic and nondualistic basis upon which to articulate their convictions regarding the efficacy of prevenient grace in our postmodern world.

Notes

1 My essay's pagination reference corresponds to a rough draft version of this book.

2 It is generally agreed that Wesley was profoundly influenced by Lockean empiricism through Peter Browne's *Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Knowledge* (London: William Innys, 1728). Some who have explored deeply the connections between Locke's and Wesley's epistemologies include Richard E. Brantley, *Locke, Wesley, and the Method of English Romanticism* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1984), Frederick Dreyer, "Faith and Experience in the Thought of John Wesley," *American Historical Review* 88 (1983): 12-30, Clifford J. Hindley, "The Philosophy of Enthusiasm: A Study in the Origins of 'Experimental Theology,'" *London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 182 (1957): 99-109, 199-210; Rex D. Matthews, "'Reason and Religion Joined': A Study in the Theology of John Wesley" (Th.D. diss., Harvard University, 1986), Yoshio Noro, "Wesley's Theological Epistemology," *Iliff Review* 28 (1971): 59-76, Mitsuo Shimizu, "Epistemology in the Thought of John Wesley" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Drew University, 1980), Donald A.D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, & Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1990); Laurence W. Wood, "Wesley's Epistemology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 10 (1975): 48-59.

3 That Wesley was influenced in this matter by his study of Aristotelian philosophy is an argument championed by Matthews, "Reason and Religion Joined," 260-280.

4 Wesley mentions this in his sermons "On the Discoveries of Faith" (Works 4:49); in "Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith," (Works: 4:51); and in *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (Works 11:56)

5 Maddox, *Responsible Grace,* 48. Thorsen comments similarly: "In substantial agreement with the British empirical thinking prevalent in his own day, Wesley believed that there is an experiential dimension to all knowledge, both natural and supernatural," (*The Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, 83).

6 The notion of direct perception of God is important for Wesley's distinctive notion that one can be assured of their status as children of God through the internal witness of the spirit. See Matthews, "Religion and Reason Joined," ch. 5.

7 See *NT Notes*, 2 Tim. 3:16. Donald Thorsen notes that the apprehension of the Spirit is a means whereby the believer can be assured of the truth of biblical revelation as well (Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral.* 132-33.

8 Maddox, 27. See Wesley's sermons "The New Birth" and "On Living Without God"

9 Or, in the words of Donald A. D. Thorsen, the felt experience of God "originated in the 'direct testimony of the Spirit,' for which Wesley primarily argued from 'the plain meaning of the text' of Scripture and from Christian experience." Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, 186. The phrases Thorsen quotes from Wesley are found in "The Witness of the Spirit, II" (1767, sermon 11), *Works* (Bicentennial ed.), 1:288-98.

10 Because of this, George Croft Cell describes Wesley's religious epistemology as "transcendental empiricism" (*Rediscovery of Wesley* [New York: Henry Holt, 1935], 93), and Albert C. Outler calls it "transempirical intuition" (*Works* [Bicentennial ed.], 3:361n1).

11 Although Wesley sometimes argues for the implantation of spiritual senses, he rejects the notion that God has implanted innate ideas of Godself in humans (see "The Imperfection of Human Knowledge" [1784, sermon 69] *Works* [Bicentennial ed.], 2:571). This demonstrates his rejection of a Reformed epistemology which appeals to Calvin's notion that God has implanted in all persons a certain understanding of Godself so that they might know that there is a God and that God is the Creator.

12 Sermon, 85, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," 6: 512. In his letter to Mr. John Mason, Wesley writes of the relationship between prevenient grace and the "natural" person: "One of Mr. Fletcher's Checks considers at large the Calvinistic supposition, 'that a natural man is as dead as a stone'; and shows the utter falseness and absurdity of it; seeing no man living is without some preventing grace; and every degree of grace is a degree of life" ("Letters to Mr. John Mason," Nov. 21, 1776, 12: 453).

13 I have used the notion that God is Spirit (analogous to the human soul or mind) as a crucial element for an adequate theodicy. See my essay "A Process Wesleyan Theodicy" in a forthcoming book *Thy Nature and Thy Name is Love: Wesleyan and Process Theologies in Dialogue* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, forthcoming).

14 Both John B. Cobb, Jr., (*Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1995], 75) and H. Ray Dunning (*Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* [Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1988], 163) join me in rejecting Wesley's spiritual senses hypothesis.

15 Process thought in general, and Griffin's constructive postmodernism in particular, can agree with the Wesleyan notion that God is the initiator of relationship through prevenient grace (See John B. Cobb, Jr., *Grace and Responsibility*, ch. 2). In process terms, this refers to God's activity of providing an initial aim (comprised of various possibilities which can be instantiated) to each actuality prior to each moment of that actuality's experience. Process thought differs from Pelagianism in that it affirms that God's graceful action to establish a richer relationship always occurs prior to a creature's action, thereby making the action of creatures a response to God. It differs from the thought of most in the Reformed tradition, however, in insisting that this response is uncoerced, i.e., resistible.

16 Regarding Wesley's notion of "spiritual senses," John Cobb argues that "few today will find it convincing. It affirms a radical difference between the bases of natural and of spiritual knowledge that does not fit our experience. We can hardly avoid being skeptical of the existence of this second set of senses" (*Grace and Responsibility*, 72).

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Appendix

Modernism (in general)	Ultramodernism(in general)	Griffin's Postmodernism
God: Supernaturalistic or Deistic	**God:** None, Cipher, Unknown. De-onto-theology	**God:** Naturalistic Theism, De-"classic onto"-theology
God: Essentially Independent	**Epistemology:** Either solipsistic, because knowledge comes through sense perception, or confined to language game rules.	**God:** Essentially related
Epistemology: Limited to knowledge gained from 5 senses	**Nature:** Mechanism/Materialism	**Epistemology:** Knowledge gained through sensory and non-sensory experience.
Nature: Materialism: Actualities are vacuous, devoid of experience	**Self:** No self or Solipsistic	**Nature:** Panexperientialism
Self: Individualistic	**Anti-centric**	**Intrinsic value** of nonhumans
Anthropocentric	**Anti-totalitarian**	**Self:** Individual-in-Community
Patriarchal	**Purposeless/Determinism**	**Aesthetic-centric, Common Good**
Determinism	**Values:** Ultimately relative to the individual or community	**Purposive organicism/ Limited freedom**
Values: Consumer-driven Rational or Revelational Foundationalism	Extreme Anti-foundationalism, self or community constructs meaning	**Values:** Derived from God and actualized in various actualities
Truth: one-to-one correspondence	**Truth:** Ultimately perspectival	**Hardcore** Commonsense Notions are practiced universally, even if denied verbally.
Uniformity	**No correspondence, difference**	**Truth:** God fully knows the satisfaction of all actualities
Utopian: Progress inevitable	**Pessimism:** Ultimate irony	**Unity-in-difference**
Mind-Body: Ontological dualism	**Mind-Body:** Materialistic Monism	**Realism:** Pro or regress possible
Religious truth guaranteed by supernatural authority.	**Religious truth** denied insofar as it is based upon Divine Reality. If affirmed, most often based on claims of one's community.	**Mind-Body: Mind** ontologically same as body but numerically distinct
		Religious truth obtained naturally because God is essentially related
(Constructed by Thomas Jay Oord)		

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The New Renaissance and Postmodern Reformation

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If there is one lesson from history it is that history has no lessons. The past is no help in trying to predict the future. Nevertheless, an understanding of the past can help us to understand the present and by so doing help us face up to our future. It is through such understanding that our hopes can be achieved. We should look forward, not with misty eyes to a golden dawn, but clear eyed from where we are. At first glance, there may not seem to be much cause for hope. We live in extraordinary times. The world around us seems chaotic and contradictory: secularisation and religious fundamentalism, technological fantasies and poverty-stricken realities, globalisation and fragmentation into conflicting tribal loyalties. However, in looking into the past we can find similar periods of incoherence and instability, and one period in particular is noted not only for its sense of disruption and dislocation but also for its excitement and creativity. If we can look at our own times in the same way that we look back to The Renaissance, perhaps then we might feel more hopeful about our future. What I propose is to draw out the parallels between then and now, to see if we are justified in seeing ourselves as part of a "New Renaissance". If the account that follows at times seems unsettling, then we must accept that radical change whether it be 'old' or 'new' is indeed an uncomfortable process to experience. However, such realism should not make us any the less hopeful. We do indeed live in extraordinary times, but if we see ourselves as part of a cultural transformation equal to one of the greatest flourishings of endeavour and creativity in the history of civilisation, then perhaps that should be as much cause for hope as concern.

Renaissance and Reformation

There is no period in history which is autonomous and self-contained. We will always be able to search for origins and assess outcomes, pick out precursors and trace influences. Nevertheless, it is part of the historian's craft to arrange what might otherwise be an incomprehensible flow of complex interactions into suitably sized chunks. One such chunk which finds favour with most historians is "The Renaissance",

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