THE CONCEPT OF MAN IN HENRY NELSON WIEMAN'S THEOLOGY

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In a perceptive article, Edgar A. Towne represents Henry Nelson Wieman as a theologian of hope. With this designation, Towne locates Wieman in the mainstream of a contemporary theology which is often referred to as a theology of hope, a theology of the future, or simply, Christian eschatology. Whatever its name, it is a theology concerned with the relationship between present human needs, their existential demands, and their future fulfillment. Towne's rationale for describing Wieman as a theologian of hope centers basically on two recurring themes in the latter's writings: (1) a characterization of God as Creativity, the ground of hope, operative in history for the salvific good of men, and (2) a definition of faith as primarily an act of total abandonment in utter trust and complete openness to God. In view of Wieman's thinking on these topics, Towne suggests that Wieman can contribute valuable insights to a Christian theology of hope.[1]

With Towne, I agree that theistic hope[2] is crucial in the Wiemanian corpus. Indeed, Wieman's efforts to reconceptualize the image of God (perhaps his dominant concern) can be placed within this frame of reference. Thus, Towne touches a nerve center in Wieman when he says that the latter in view of his stance on God and faith can be likened to theologians of hope.

This article will attempt to underscore the similarity by illustrating another line of convergence between Wieman and scholars engaged in Christian future-talk. Specifically, it will discuss Wieman's concept of man as one which is coherent with the opinion in contemporary eschatology that man is by nature a hope-er.[3] In order to demon-

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[1]Edgar A. Towne, "Henry Nelson Wieman: Theologian of Hope," *The Iliff Review* 28 (1970), pp. 13-24.

[2]Recently, Wieman signed *Humanist Manifesto II.* As a consequent, some raised the question as to whether Wieman is still a theist. In a letter to me (dated October 5, 1973 and appended to my study, *The Eschatological Dimension in Henry Nelson Wieman's Empirical Theology of Creativity,* Unpublished S.T.D. Dissertation, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 1974, pp. 299-301) Wieman states that his signature to the document is not a sign of a change in his religious convictions.

[3]For a discussion of this concept, see for example: Carl E. Braaten, *The Future of God,* (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1969), pp. 33-57; Harvey Cox, "Ernst Bloch and the Pull to the Future," *New Theology #5,* Martin and Peerman, eds. (N.Y.: The Macmillan Co., 1968), pp. 191-203; James M. Gustafson, "The Condition for Hope: Reflection on Human Experience," *Continuum 7,* (1969-70), pp. 534-45; Carl J. Peter, "Why Catholic Theology Needs Future-Talk Today," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 27 (1972), pp. 146-67; Karl Rahner, "Theologische Prinzipien der Hermeneutik eschattologischer Aussagen," *Schriften zur Theologie, IV* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1956), pp. 412-13; Karl Rahner, "Towards a Theology of Hope," *Concurrence* I (1969), pp. 29-30.

strate the compatibility, this article will first briefly sketch a concept of man which is generally common to modern theologies of hope and secondly, it will present in greater detail Wieman's ideas on the subject. This method of approach is suggested by the fact that the former is more widely known and hence requires only brief consideration in order to establish major areas of accord whereas Wieman's understanding of man has not received a similar attention and hence warrants more discussion.

At this point, a word of clarification is in order. To state in this article that Wieman's thought bears a resemblance to that of theologians of hope is not to imply a complete identification between him and the latter. On the one hand, several of Wieman's ideas (e.g., his insistence that God works *in history,* his understanding of fellowship, his *modus operandi* for God) serve as important correctives to some (but not all) representatives of a theology of hope.[4] On the other hand, a number of his concepts (e.g., his considerations of Jesus and the Resurrection, of God's power and promise) would raise serious questions for the latter. To discuss these differences and their implications, however, is not the purpose of this paper. Rather, it is to expose another correspondence between Wieman and theologians of hope. Ultimately, the aim is to suggest that Wieman bears re-reading from the perspective of hope. His theology has captured a number of important aspects which address themselves to a Christian eschatology. Regardless of whether one can agree entirely or only partially with his thinking, his contributions to a relevant theme in contemporary theological discourse ought not to be overlooked.

A Working Paradigm for the Question: Who Is Man?

An adequate answer to the question *who is man?* constitutes an important, fundamental building block in a theology of hope. Perhaps the significance of the response can be indicated by summarizing briefly two familiar paradigms used to answer the question posed.

The first is the classical essentialist model; the second, the modern existentialist paradigm. The former states that man's essence limits his existence; the latter, that existence precedes and determines essence.

[4]Theologians of hope is a misleading term because it is often restricted to specific continental scholars (e.g., Jürgen Moltmann, W. Pannenberg). As the literature on the issue suggests, a significant number of theologians have written on the questions of hope and eschatology. Thus, it is difficult to draw all of these under one umbrella. Not all of them relegate God solely to the future. An example of the diversion among them can be extracted from the references cited in fn. no. 3. In addition, see Frederick Herzog, ed. *The Future of Hope: Theology as Eschatology* (N.Y.: Herder & Herder, 1970); E. Cousins, ed. *Hope and the Future of Man* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972); Carl J. Peter, "Metaphysical Finalism or Christian Eschatology?" *The Thomist* 38 (1974), pp. 125-45.

From the perspective of the first, man usually emerges as a static, clearly defined, programmed reality; from that of the second, as a changing, wholly unpredictable, absolutely free entity. In the first human history is planned and its future unfolds according to a fixed pattern; in the second, it is absurd and its future lies solely in an authentic decision of every individual.

Contemporary theologians of hope have by and large rejected both paradigms as adequate working models in themselves for an understanding of the human person, and hence for providing insight into his history. The first one is discarded primarily because it does not take into account the radical creativity of man, his historical character, and his fundamental openness to the *novum;* the second, because it does not allow for man's sense of purpose, the meaning of human history, and mutual accountability in a responsible social ethics. To put it in other words, neither one sufficiently reflects the data (psychological, sociological, historical, philosophical, theological, etc.) presently available about man. In particular, these models have little reference to the eschatological message of Jesus. What paradigm, then, do these scholars use as their working model?

The answer generally given by the theologians of hope to the question *who is man?* can be succinctly summarized in the statement: man is by nature a hope-er, that is, he manifests an innate capacity to reach out for that which in his present moment is still a veiled future. This capacity is, therefore, a constitutive element of man's nature and it is the dynamism which accounts in part for the human striving to participate now in the promise of the future. Usually, this capacity is labelled simply the human ability to hope.

This basic statement about man includes a number of details. Christian theologians of hope observe that man's essence gradually discloses itself and that his being requires a genuine becoming. Thus, man is not-yet what he is to be. Further, his becoming depends upon the action of God, his cooperation with Him, and his interaction with men. Therefore, man is not merely what he might be in his isolated self but what he might become *in relation,* specifically, in terms of his response to God and to the world. Effectively, man is in a state of mutual dependence with those to whom he stands in relation. Since such is his condition, he must keep himself in readiness, capitalizing on his inherent openness, to whatever help might be forthcoming to him. In particular, because he depends on God (who continually interacts in human history and who is beyond expedient manipulation and human prediction) he must be open to the truly new which only God can initiate in history. Ultimately, of course, Christian hope takes its

basic direction from the eschatological message of Jesus Christ. Man's hope orients him, not merely to any future, but to the absolute future which is God. Further, man's dependence on the latter includes an urgent need for redemption, not only because man must rely on others as well as himself to achieve that for which he strives but also because his sins stand between him and his final destiny.[5]

Significantly, Wieman's concept of man also differs from the two paradigms noted above and it corresponds remarkably to the current view cited. As Wieman describes him, man is not-yet what he is called to be. The movement to his future can be traced to a constitutive factor in his make-up and to a contextual event, that is, to his dynamic relationship with others. Specifically, man is dependent in his becoming on a creative interchange (which is, in effect, a transforming, saving process) that involves him with God, his fellowmen and nature. But Wieman explains this in his own way. His explanation must now be considered.

The Human Condition

According to Wieman, man is fundamentally nature's creature of need. Representative of his thinking in this regard is the statement, "All the works of man are also works of nature, not only because man himself is a part of nature, but because he is always dependent upon the rest of nature and must cooperate with it in bringing forth any good thing."[6] Ultimately, Wieman interprets man's need from a religious frame of reference: man stands in need of salvation and he relies on Creativity (God) for the satisfaction of this need. In Wieman's opinion, such need is *the* basic human need because it emerges out of man's own nature, specifically from his capacity for transformation, and hence it is a condition common to all men.[7]

As Wieman describes it, the human potential for transformation is a two-edged sword, cutting either to the depths of evil or the heights of virtue. To understand why it is and why man, therefore, has such an

[5]Modern studies of man have played a role in the rejection of the classical and modern paradigms as well as in the development of the current model for man. See for example: Bernard Stoeckle, "Desiderium Personale: Erwägungen zur Problematik des Naturverlangens nach der Gottesschau," *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift,* 72 (1963) pp. 1-22); W. Kasper, "Christian Humanism," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 27 (1972), pp. 1-17. Cf. also sources in fns. nos. 3,4.

[6]Henry Nelson Wieman, "A Workable Idea of God," *The Christian Century* 46 (Feb. 14, 1928), p. 227

[7]The following represents Wieman's statements on this subject: "This deepest and universal need of man to commit himself in faith to what creates, sustains, saves and transforms him ino the best that he can become, arises I have said, out of the nature of man, namely, his capacity to be transformed beyond any known limit to the utmost extremes of good and evil," H. N. Wieman. "The Promise of Protestantism - Whither and Whether," *The Protestant Credo.* Vergilius T.Ferm, ed. (N.Y.: The Philosophical Library, Inc., 1953), p. 167.

urgent need for salvation, it is necessary to discuss four aspects found in Wieman's considerations of the human condition: the subrational in religion, the needs of man, the intrinsic faults of man, and the super-rational lure.

The Subrational in Religion

Wieman notes that man has an inherent capacity to reach out beyond himself to good. This ability, coupled inseparably with an external persuasive force, accounts for man's entrance into a way of life productive of value. Wieman labels the capacity and the force the subrational in religion and the super-rational lure, respectively. The latter terms are perhaps unfortunate since at face value they seemingly undermine Wieman's explanations that reason plays an important role in faith and that God is accessible to empirical inquiry. Taken in the context that Wieman uses them, however, the terms are intended to emphasize that human reason alone, despite its indispensable importance to human growth in goodness, is not adequate in itself to explain the creation of new meanings of value in human history.

Wieman tells us that the subrational in religion is "the physiological process which makes men religious."[8] By subrational, Wieman means that something is at work in man which orients him naturally to God and that this something is prior to his rationalizing about God. Wieman is not saying that religion emerges out of an instinct in man. On the contrary, it is precisely because man lacks "a fixed system of instincts which serve to direct his behavior automatically" that he is religious (GR, p. 411). In other words, man's integration with his environment does not, as in the case of animals, occur involuntarily in simple adaptation. Man must actively contribute to bringing about harmonious adjustment with his environment and a satisfaction of his elementary needs. If he does not participate in this endeavor, then he languishes. Thus, while animals merely react to the forces in their environment, man must respond to his situation by adapting, refashioning, cooperating, inquiring, learning, controlling for the purpose of extracting maximum good from all of nature and integrating himself to his fullest potential with this good. This circumstance requires that man develop every facet of his personality (psychological, sociological, cultural, scientific, political, religious, and whatever else contributes to human growth). Such development demands effort. As Wieman puts it:

Man is the most helpless of all of the animals from the point of

[8]Henry Nelson Wieman, and Walter M. Horton. *The Growth of Religion* (Willet, Clark & Co., 1938), p. 411 (hereinafter, GR).

view of his native endowment of automatic reflexes. He must learn to share deeply in the thoughts and feelings and interests of his fellow men, else he cannot survive, much less attain any satisfaction in life. More than that, he must learn to share deeply in the sustaining processes of nature, and change himself and these processes to the end of attaining deep rapport with them. If there is anything else beyond nature, anything which controls the processes of nature, above all he must find some community of life with that. (GR, p. 412).

As a physiological process, the subrational in religion incorporates the mechanism of man's biological make-up.[9] Perhaps the inclusion of the human organs in man's attempt to form an harmonious whole illustrates Wieman's concern for a total contextual interaction in man's search for value and the relevance of his point might be that the whole of man's being participates in the quest for salvation. In any case, more specific to our purpose is another dimension of the process. The subrational in religion also involves an internal sense in man which alerts him to his own impotence to achieve alone that good which is vital to him, which makes him aware of his need for an external force to help him, and which impels him to associate himself with that power. As Wieman puts it, in man

> deep in the physiological processes of his nature is a sense which indicates that he is in danger unless he redirects his living. It also indicates that there is blessedness for him if his living is so redirected as to unite him and make him an organic part of a comprehended totality of what is best. (GR, p. 412).

> It is this constant outreach, this sense of dependence, this striving to become organically united with something outside himself, that makes him religious. It is this sense of being separated from something that he vitally needs, this striving to change himself or to change that other and to be reconciled with a reality that is in this world, or beyond the world that makes him religious. (GR, pp. 411-12).

These words suggest (and a section below will show) that the subrational in religion is an orientation to God.

In his writings, Wieman refers to this sense in man as a constant outreach (note above quote) and a creative propulsion. In the final

[9]Wieman remarks: "Therefore man's religion, like everything else in him is rooted in his physiological nature. Man is religious because his nerves, muscles, vicera, and glands function as they do. He knows he is not self-sufficient. He seeks for that which will make him an integral part of a larger whole," GR, p. 412.

analysis, this capacity in man can be designated (at least in my opinion) by a word Wieman employed in one of his earliest writings, namely, aspiration, "that vague sense of something yet to be which makes human nature creative as the lower spirits are not."[10] Statements linking the constant outreach of man with the vague sense that is aspiration can be found in Wieman's writings. Representative of them are the following:

> Always the chief function of a worthy religion is to quicken to the maximum this interest in the process and possibilities of greatest value which necessarily, in great part, exceed the reach of our present knowledge and control. If they are infinite, as they may well be, they will always not only exceed, but infinitely exceed, the scope of our knowledge and control. The reason why it is supremely important to have this interest quickened to the maximum has already been made plain. Without it there can be no science, no art, no love, no creative education, no progressive increase of a social heritage which brings forth ever new possibilities of value, no progressive reorganization of society to achieve further values, in a word, no life that is distinctively human. For the distinctively human life is the life of aspiration.[11]

> Indeed, it is just this unlimited aspiration of religion, this questing throughout the infinite realm of possibility, which will some day bring forth into actuality this greater knowledge and beauty, this more able science and art, if ever they are brought forth. In this sense, religion is the greatest progenitor of the arts and sciences, both historically and prospectively, both socially and psychologically. This naturally follows from the fact that religion springs from man's acute awareness of the vast realm of unattained possibilities.[12]

> The intellectual formulation of what demands our highest loyalty must change if there is to be any intelligible apprehension of it in the changing contexts of human thought. But the aspiration and outreach after it must continue through all changes if human life is not to fail.[13]

In the history of theology, such a "vague sense of something yet

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[10]Henry Nelson Wieman, *The Wrestle of Religon With Truth* (N.Y.: The Macmillan Co., 1927), p. 49 (hereinafter WRWT). See also H. N. Wieman, "God and Value," *Religious Realism*. D. C. Macintosh, ed. (N.Y.: The Macmillan Co., 1931), pp. 168, 172).

[11]Wieman, "God and Value," p. 168.

[12]WRWT, p. 138

[13]Henry Nelson Wieman, "Dewey and Buckham on Religion," *The Journal of Religion* 15 (January, 1935), p. 19.

to be" or constant outreach has been described as a natural desire for God, the wondering in man, the questioning in him, his self-transcendence. But whatever its name, it is a constituent of man's nature and it accounts in part for his capacity to reach out and to hope for that which is still the not-yet for him. Wieman tells us that it is a capacity which ought to "induce in man a sense of mystery, of wonder, of being dependent on uncomprehended reality, and a seeking for what is unknown in its specific character save only that it is better than what has thus far been attained" (GR, p. 472).

At this point, a question of interest arises: does reason have a role with regard to the subrational in religion? As already mentioned, Wieman's use of the word *subrational* emphasiszes that man's orientation to God arises prior to his reasoning about Him. Nonetheless, man's rational faculty has an important place with regard to the subrational for it serves "as a means by which these basic interests can be better directed towards the fulfillment which they crave" (GR, p. 413). Reason's relationship to the subrational is one of mutual interaction. The former explores, directs, and clarifies the latter, but the subrational develops reason by setting forth its basic orientation and by involving it in the process toward the possible.

The Needs of Man

The subrational in religion reveals two things about man: he has an inherent capacity to reach out for the good and he has a deep sense of need. The interaction between these components surfaces as drives which can be described (at least in part) as follows:

> These are the drives developing in human life. They cannot be satisfied within the limits of any established organization of the world and on that account demand a more or less continuous creative reorganization of the personality, of society, and of physical conditions. They are the drive to vivify consciousness, the drive to carry into action the soaring imagination, the need to organize progressively the increasing complexity of the total person, the cry to be appreciated and understood in depth, and the drive for freedom beyond the limits of any social order.[14]

Essentially, the human need expressed in the subrational is twofold: every man desires to develop himself to his fullest potential and to participate in community with his fellowmen. The latter is simply the wider dimension of the former. In building fellowship, man simul-

[14]Henry Nelson Wieman. *Intellectual Foundation of Faith.* (N.Y.: The Philosophical Library, Inc., 1961), p. 17 (hereinafter IFF).

taneously actualizes his potentialities, thus fulfilling both aspects of his need.[15]

Ultimately, Wieman links the satisfaction of human need with man's destiny. The goal of human life is also two-fold: every man is to become fully human (i.e., he is to develop every facet of his personality so that his capacities are productive of good) and he is to contribute to the growth in meanings of value among men by taking part in and promoting fellowship. Thus, in fulfilling his need, man is achieving his destiny as well. There is, therefore, an intrinsic connection between the drives of man's aspiration or constant outreach and the goal of his life.[16]

According to Wieman, man's needs are met in the process of humanization, that is, the process for transformation to the good. The word *process* implies that man's becoming is a life-long endeavor. This process humanizes because it is the agency for creating the human mind, developing the personality in all its facets (psychological, scientific, cultural, religious, etc.) by providing new data for this purpose. Thus, through this process man receives all his innovative insights and values as well as the meaning of his life and his motivation to seek new knowledge. In effect, this process is the creative event or interchange and it empowers man to achieve maximum value and to integrate with it fully. This process finds its orientation in the drives of aspiration because it develops the "distinctively human" capacities in man.[17]

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[15]For example, Wieman states: "The nature of man is such that it demands the indefinite expansion of the valuing consciousness in community with others. Organization for power is merely a means to this end; but when the means takes over and excludes the end, we havepeople gasping for air. As the organism is made for air, so human nature is made for that relation in which the valuing consciousness can be most fully developed in community with others." H N. Wieman, "Organization for Power: Its Danger and Corrective," *Interchange* (September-October, 1969), p. 1 Cf. also Wieman's "A Criticism of Coordination as Criterion of Moral Values," *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 14 (1917), pp. 534-35, and his "Personal and Impersonal Groups," *International Journal of Ethics* 31 (1921) pp. 381-393.

[16]The linking of man's needs and destiny is a recurring theme in Wieman's writings. See for example, Wieman's *Man's Ultimate Commitment.* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958), p. 72 (hereinafter, MUC).

[17]Wieman remarks: "What distinguishes man as distinctively human is his capacity: 1) to expand beyond any known limit what he can know, predict and control by learning from others and thus accumulating the shared findings of all men, the chief example of this being science; 2) to expand beyond any known limit what he can feel in vividness and variety of felt qualities derived from happenings and possibilities which others have experienced, the technical form of kind of communication being art; 3) to expand beyond any known limit the sympathetic understanding of one another, widening and deepening community between each and all, the traditional name of this being Christian love; 4) to expand beyond any known limit the compass of each mind and personality by increasing the scope of what each can know. feel and love by using linguistic and other signs in creative communication, and so increasing the meaning of these signs in the three dimensions just mentioned, namely, in knowledge, feeling and love," Wieman, "The Promise of Protestantism — Whither and Whether," p. 174-75. This statement has reference, I believe, to aspiration, human need, man's destiny, and the creative event.

More importantly, it is, as we shall see, dependent on the external force, the super-rational lure in religion which serves as its genesis.

The Intrinsic Faults of Man

The image of man thus far presented portrays him in a positive way. Despite his inability to achieve his goal on his own, he can accomplish this destiny by associating with an external force capable of assisting him. But there is also a negative side to man.

According to Wieman, man has three faults which make his judgment of value unreliable. These faults are characteristic of and intrinsic to the human person. Wieman lists them as follows: (1) a limited range to appreciate value; consequently, man overlooks much of the value in the world; (2) an inadequate capacity for apprehending value because human perception is subject to the domination of self-concern which distorts and at times perverts value; consequently, self-interest and not genuine value (more precisely, not the Source of human good) becomes the measure of value; (3) a stubborn resistance to any change in one's value system; consequently, man's structure of value can become rigid – in view of his other two faults, it can become fixed on his ruling interests and his primary groups.[18]

It would seem from Wieman's statements that these faults are the roots of evil in man. They account for his turning (i.e., his transformation) to evil and hence, for his inability to place himself in that process which will help him achieve his destiny. Uultimately, they are the reason why he does not give himself to God in ultimate commitment. Wieman observes:

> The naturalist says man is a sinner because some things other than God count in his esteem. He allows other things to lay claim on him. He fears some things other than alienation from God. He prizes some things on other grounds than their relevance to God. He does not live solely for the hidden riches of God. He cannot freely give up his dearest desire even when assured that by so doing he would enter more fully into the experience of the uncomprehended totality of God's goodness. He is in that state of existence called sin because conscious and subconscious interests corrupt the single-hearted devotion to God. He is a sinner because he must be transformed before he can experience the fullness of the specific content of God's goodness. (GR, p. 268).
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> Always men are tempted to seek protection, pleasure and power, each for himself or for his group, and thus to turn away from the one high devotion to unlimited growth. (GR, p. 470).

[18]See Wieman's *The Source of Human Good.* (Arcturus Books. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964, o.p.d., 1946), pp. 27-29 (hereinafter SHG).

Man in this persuasion is under the domination of original sin.[19] Such domination obstructs his own personal growth in goodness as well as the establishment of community among men. In view of this, the concept of human need takes on an added dimension: man's drives are in need of some purification because they are subject to the influence of his faults; thus, they can terminate either in individualism and a man-centered world, or, in fellowship and a God-centered community.[20]

Left to his own devices, therefore, man cannot achieve the true goal of his aspiration. He stands in need of redemption by an external power capable of helping him to overcome his deficiencies. This power responds to man's need through the creative event; the latter finds its source in that power and it becomes in effect a means of salvation. In it, someone greater than man saves him from his own tendency to evil and enables him to enter into and to continue in this process which will realize his destiny. Man must cooperate actively but he cannot alone effect this movement to good. This consideration leads to the super-rational lure in religion.

The Super-rational Lure

Wieman tells us that the super-rational in religion is the external pull on man, "the lure of an uncomprehended reality with which he may be reconciled" (GR, p. 413). There is sufficient data in the Wiemanian corpus to identify the uncomprehended reality, the lure, with God. For example, Wieman states

> If God be defined as the object of this mystic experience, then the touch of God saves when it lures to the quest of a better world. In this sense, God, the ultimate cause or condition enters into the supreme good, since he is that which gives rise to the best possible world when men make right adjustment to him.[21]
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> This dominant object of devotion which frees the individual from the control of every specific object of desire and fear is God, the uncomprehended totality of all that is best in this concrete situation.[22]

Where, then, does a man meet God? How?..... There

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[19]See MUC, p. 133; GR, p. 268; Wieman's "Reply to Weigel," *The Empirical Theology of Henry Nelson Wieman.* R. W. Bretall, ed. (Arcturus Books. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern University Press, 1969, o.p.d., 1963), p. 370.

[20]For a sampling of Wieman's thinking on this issue, see for example "The Revolution of Our Time," *Interchange* (March-April, 1969), p. 1. See also SHG, ch. 10.

[21]WRWT, p. 159. Wieman's concept of God as a super-rational lure reminds one of Thomas Aquinas' final cause and Karl Rahner's supernatural existential. Other themes in Wieman's theology, however, do not allow for the comparison.

[22]Henry Nelson Wieman, "The Absolute Commitment of Faith," *Christendom* II (Spring, 1937), p. 205.

are two ways of approaching the stark reality of uncomprehended being. One is that of the negative path of mysticism, which is not a way of knowing at all, but is a way of acknowledging an uncomprehended reality. The other is that of scientific procedure, which is a method of restraining the mind from leaping to an assumed finality of knowledge.[23]

A large number of similar statements could be drawn from Wieman's writings. The above suffice to conclude that God is the external persuasive force which complements the subrational in religion. Taken in themselves and in the context of other themes in Wieman's theology, these remarks designate God as the "Source of Human Good." God is the power responsible for man's becoming fully human and for his entering into and establishing community with his fellowmen. God exercises his influence in the creative event. Through this means, He touches the minds of men by intuition (i.e., by inspirations of grace), providing them with the possibilities for new meanings of value. In this way, God creates the human mind, assisting it to meet the needs of the times, and He injects the *novum* into history. Of course, man is not passive in the process. In fact, God and man stand in mutual dependence: God provides the possibilities for new meanings; and man, the conditions conducive for the creative event. The former is the ground of hope; the latter ,the agent to make it fruitful.

At this point, the goal of man's aspiration and his need take on additional nuances. Man's destiny can be simply described as service to creativity. In this way, man finds his own greatness and promotes a fellowship ruled by the creative event.[24] Thus, his need is to give himself in ultimate commitment to God. It should be noted that Wieman considers such service with its commitment and fellowship to be the destiny of man *within* history. He does not definitively include in man's destiny a life after death with God. As most who are familiar with his writings know, he believes there is no data which permits one to draw conclusions about life after death. Whether Wieman's theology gives some reason to hope for such a life is an open question. I believe it does. To develop this point here would carry this article beyond its purpose. It will have to suffice to say that I think such a hope can be supported by at least three concepts in Wieman's writings:

[23]Henry Nelson Wieman, "The Theology of Karl Barth," Review of *Come Holy Spirit* by Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen and *of Karl Barth and Christian Unity* by Adolf Keller. *The Christian Century* 51 (February 7, 1934), p. 186.

[24]Representative of Wieman's thinking on this point is: "serving the Creative Event that renews itself is the work of man — the supreme vocation of human history" (SHG, p. 74); "All this indicates that it is man's destiny, prescribed by his nature, to be the spearhead of that Creative Process which works to transform the world." (Henry Nelson Wieman, *The Directive in History,* Boston: The Beacon Press, 1949), p. 70.

Creativity in history, ultimate commitment, and a positive attitude in the face of death.

The super-rational lure in religion suggests another change (at least to me), namely, that aspiration has been touched by grace so that it is now transformed. Wieman claims that man's mind and imagination, his drives and ruling purposes must be transformed. Within this grouping, it would seem aspiration is included. God's grace does not add to nature in the sense of putting a new layer; rather, it transforms. It seems to me that aspiration as a "vague sense of something yet to be" becomes under grace more steadily focused on its goal, more clearly aware of what that goal is, more able to achieve that for which it strives. In short, it would seem that the ultimate commitment in faith could be best understood as a *transformed* aspiration. Wieman does not himself draw these comparisons but I believe a careful reading of his writings would justify the connection between faith (which is really hope in Wieman's theology, or perhaps more precisely, faith-hope in the tradition of *fides fiducialis*) and aspiration.[25]

Observations

As the above discussion indicates, a number of features in Wieman's description of man lend themselves to the notion, man is by nature a hope-er. Wieman has, of course, developed the concept in his own way. Perhaps others might construct theirs differently. Some might find fault with his on the basis of its interaction with other Wiemanian concepts. Nonetheless, it still remains that Wieman presents a positive but realistic vision of man as a hope-er with many of the implications included in that term today. A point of special interest, in my opinion, is the fact that Wieman introduced his idea of man long before a similar paradigm found its place in contemporary theologies of hope.[26]

If one were to single out the facet in Wieman's anaylsis of man which is the most stimulating and thought-provoking, it would be, in my opinion, the idea that man's becoming in the creative event involves a transformation of his drives, his imagination, his attitudes *by God providing the truly new possibilities.* I consider this note to be an important Wiemanian contribution because it gives some insight into how man the hope-er is able to become other than what he is now and how this process of change can be effective for the good when one sincerely participates in the creative event and is loyal to his ultimate commitment in faith to God. Admittedly, Wieman has at times sug-

[25]For example, Wieman speaks of an outreach of faith which is very reminiscent of the constant outreach or aspiration. Cf. MUC, p. 167.

[26]See dates in fn. no. 10.

gested that a genetic change is also necessary in man, but as I read him, this note is not the necessary one for it is something that *might* happen. What is necessary is the change in man's attitude: this is how he becomes what he is not-yet, a becoming that must begin now if it is to blossom fully in the future. This aspect of Wieman's thought shows how the truly new can occur in history and it is a note which can be intellectually respected.

If one were allowed to ask a single question of Wieman from among those raised in description of man, then mine to him would be one which touches on the issue concerned with man's destiny of fellowship. Would Wieman please address him to the question: does this fellowship among men which is brought about by God providing new insights include in any way a fellowship with God also? To my knowledge, Wieman has not answered this question. If he would (or point out where he has answered it, and where it has, therefore, been overlooked by his readers), I believe he might provide us with some stimulating ideas.