

According to Martha Grace Reese in her popular book *Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism*, evangelism is the “E’ word...[that] seems to have replaced sex and money as That Which Must Not Be Named in our mainline churches.”¹ Notwithstanding this taboo, the theological academy has not been shy on the topic of evangelism, especially since the late 1980s when the changing cultural landscape in North America and Western Europe coupled with declining mainline denominational membership created a fresh urgency for evangelism to be considered in a scholarly way. This essay will specifically focus on the contributions of United Methodist scholars to this undertaking.

The reason for focusing on United Methodist scholars is twofold. First, while it is still a matter of debate as to whether evangelism can be declared a field in its own right, The United Methodist Church has expended significant resources in helping evangelism come into its own as a credible area for academic work. The denomination has done this first through the Foundation for Evangelism (FFE), a lay organization that works in conjunction with The United Methodist Church's General Board of Discipleship. The FFE funds doctoral fellows in the work of evangelism as well as providing for endowed chairs of evangelism in thirteen of the sixteen United Methodist schools of theology worldwide (<http://foundationforevangelism.org/grants/e-stanley-jones-professors/>). This has provided a set of scholars who can focus on evangelism as a specific field of inquiry. Second, Abingdon Press, the United Methodist publishing house, has committed itself to the publication of numerous books and monographs about evangelism. Between the scholars and the publishing house, United Methodism has had a substantial role in shaping the current theory and practice of evangelism.

In the following pages, I will offer a brief overview of major texts published by United Methodist scholars concerning evangelism. I will treat these texts in chronological order to demonstrate the impact that some of the earlier scholars had on those publishing later. I start the list with the first text published in the 1970s because it is from this time forward that a sustained conversation about

¹ Martha Grace Reese, *Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism* (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2006), 4.

evangelism began taking form and shape among United Methodist scholars.

In considering each text, I will focus on three questions: 1. How does the text define evangelism? 2. What methodology did the text use to explore evangelism? 3. What practices and/or exemplars of evangelism does the text recommend to its readers? The second question is of particular importance because evangelism is not yet a field with a clear methodology of its own. As a result, evangelism scholars often employ methodologies from other fields, including systematic theology, ethics, and history.

This is not an exhaustive list of all books published by United Methodist scholars on evangelism. Several other excellent scholars have published in the field, and many of the authors I treat in this essay have published texts beyond the ones I mention in this essay. The reason I chose the texts appearing here is because they are frequently assigned in United Methodist seminary courses on evangelism and so are among the most recognizable in the study of evangelism.

Albert C. Outler

Evangelism in the Wesleyan Spirit (1971) by Albert C. Outler is the published manuscript of the four Harry S. Denman Lectures given by Outler at the Congress of Evangelism held in January 1971 in New Orleans. In the first lecture, Outler interpreted John Wesley as an evangelist by re-evaluating Wesley's ministry in light of Wesley's own spiritual formation and his engagement in activities meant to share the good news with others. In doing this, Outler emphasized how Wesley engaged in field preaching and how Wesley's own faith became more secure as a result of dedicating himself to the salvation of others.² The second lecture focused on the central Christian doctrines that Wesley held to be part of the "evangel," i.e., the core gospel message to be shared. In looking at this Outler stressed the importance of evangelists understanding that the primary motivations and activities of evangelism are also the primary motivations and activities of the Christian faith itself.³ The third lecture traced a brief

² Albert C. Outler, *Evangelism in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville, TN: Tidings, 1971), 21.

³ Outler, 46-47.

history of revivalism in the United States and considered what a “Third Great Awakening” might look like. Outler was insistent that any new awakening requires all previous awakenings dying out completely so that expectations associated with the old awakenings do not smother the fresh fires of the new awakening.⁴ In the final lecture Outler sketched his view of the new cultural setting in North America and offered his vision of what sort of church might be evangelistically effective in it. Such a church would be a herald of a clearly-articulated gospel, a witness to the life of grace in how it lived, and a servant by expending its resources to care for the needs of the world.⁵

In approaching his subject, Outler was not concerned with developing a nuanced definition of evangelism. To the extent that he defined the word, he did so in the first lecture: “by evangelism we mean the communication of the gospel and the maturation of Christians in the community of the church in the human community at large.”⁶ A paragraph later he offered a pithier definition that he would make reference to in the later lectures: “evangelism means God’s good news to man’s bad news.”⁷

Outler’s methodology ranged broadly in his lectures. As might be expected of the pre-eminent Wesleyan scholar of his time (Outler taught systematic theology with an emphasis on Wesleyan studies at Yale, Duke, and Southern Methodist University, with the last of these three naming a chair in Wesleyan studies after him), Outler drew significantly from historical sources concerning the life, ministry, and teachings of John Wesley. At the same time, Outler was not insensible to the cultural setting in which evangelism had to be practiced during his own time, and he demonstrated facility with the psychological and cultural issues current to the early 1970s. In the end, then, his methodology was largely one of pragmatism. Outler looked for what worked well in Wesley’s life and ministry and expostulated on how the church might learn to practice evangelism in a likewise effective way.

As is evident from the answer to the first two questions about Outler’s work, the

⁴ Outler, 61.

⁵ Outler, 99 *ff.*

⁶ Outler, 15.

⁷ *Ibid.*

exemplar of evangelism Outler put forth was John Wesley. Centrally, Outler contended that Wesley presented the gospel in a way that gave those he evangelized a genuine choice between the grace of God and the despair and indulgences of the world. In modeling a lifestyle that demonstrated the genuine existence and power of grace, the church, like Wesley, could provide the hope and forgiveness the world so desperately needed.⁸ Outler made this clear in the first lecture when he stated that Wesley best succeeded by engaging lay people to live out their faith in a meaningful way. He termed this “the Word made *visible*.”⁹ In his concluding lecture, he picked up the theme again, declaring “The Word must become audible, yes; but, more crucially, it must become visible, exemplary, winsome.”¹⁰ For Outler, evangelism was best understood as that which transformed people’s lives and then led them to impact the lives of others in the name of Christ.

Mortimer Arias

Thirteen years after the publication of Outler’s lectures, Mortimer Arias published *Announcing the Reign of God: Evangelization and the Subversive Memory of Jesus* (1984). Arias is a native of Bolivia who served as bishop in the Bolivian Methodist Church and subsequently as the Professor of Evangelism at Claremont School of Theology and later at Iliff School of Theology. It was during his time at Claremont that he wrote the bulk of this book as material to be covered in a course he was teaching. Notably, Arias also received a Doctor of Ministry from Perkins School of Theology in 1977, meaning that he and Outler were at Southern Methodist University at the same time. However, there is no indication from the text that Arias was heavily influenced by Outler.

Arias explained in the introduction that his view of evangelism was formed out of two sources: his reading of the Bible and his own life experience. From his reading, Arias became convinced that the reign of God was at the heart of evangelism because it was the reign of God that was at the heart of Jesus’ own ministry. From his life experience, which included substantial ecumenical dealings, being

⁸ Outler, 105-106.

⁹ Outler, 25.

¹⁰ Outler, 101.

kidnapped as a possible insurgent in Bolivia, and witnessing the grinding oppression and poverty in Latin America that led to the rise of liberation theology, Arias concluded that evangelism would only be legitimate if it faced head-on the threats to human life experienced in much of the world. The confluence of these two sources led Arias to present “a critique of traditional evangelism,”¹¹ by which he meant to point out the reductionism of practicing evangelism as a means of church growth. In place of this, he desired to offer a more holistic understanding of evangelism centered on the reign of God.

Arias described his understanding of evangelism as “kingdom evangelization.”¹² More than just a definition of evangelism, “kingdom evangelization” is an entire way of practicing the Christian life that, as Arias articulated it, would bring the full hope of God’s gracious action on behalf of human life to bear in a world that is filled with forces that seek to hinder or destroy human life. What made the hope expressed in “kingdom evangelization” concrete was the ontological reality of the reign of God that Jesus inaugurated in his own ministry and that God would consummate in the future. Probing the wide-ranging implications for having the reign of God as the grounding evangelism, Arias concluded that “kingdom evangelization” could also be understood as “holistic evangelization” because it encompassed all of life,¹³ “liberating evangelization” by promising the return of God’s justice to the earth,¹⁴ “incarnational evangelization” because it formed communities of people around it,¹⁵ and “discipleship evangelization” because it challenged followers of Christ to live in a new way that offered hope to the world and denounced the powers of death.¹⁶

Although the book is only divided into chapters, Arias effectively organized the book into three sections. The first section, comprising chapters 1 – 4, exegeted the meaning of the Kingdom of God throughout the New Testament (Arias used Kingdom of God and reign of God interchangeably,

¹¹ Mortimer Arias, *Announcing the Reign of God: Evangelization and the Subversive Memory of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publisher, 1984), xiv.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Arias, 4.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Arias, 6.

¹⁶ Arias, 8.

preferring “Kingdom of God” when dealing with biblical texts). The second section only included chapter 5, and questioned why the theme of the Kingdom of God dropped out of evangelistic practice following the ministry of Jesus. In the third section, comprised of chapter 6 – the epilogue, Arias suggested how kingdom evangelization might be practiced in such a way that connected the biblical attributes of the Kingdom of God with the realities of life and death in the world.

Arias’ methodology is essentially that of biblical studies. Especially in the first section, he exegeted the texts in the New Testament that deal with the Kingdom of God. However, this is not a formal exegesis which considers specific passages at length and seeks to tease out their meaning. Focusing primarily on the way that Jesus practiced evangelism, and especially on how Jesus taught about or enacted aspects of the Kingdom of God in his own ministry, Arias jumped from passage to passage in order to illuminate activities he believed were essential to manifesting the Kingdom of God through evangelism. As such, the whole takes on the semblance of a homiletical endeavor, with exegesis serving the larger goal of getting across a specific point the preacher has to make. Those looking for rigorous biblical studies methodology will be disappointed here, though they will not find this to be merely an eisegetical flight of fancy.

In accordance with the more homiletical thrust of the work, Arias applied the lessons he drew from his examination of the biblical text to the question of how the church should practice evangelism in the present. Covering this primarily in the third section, Arias followed the contours of liberation theology in his answer by suggesting that the church must offer compassion to those sinned against,¹⁷ hope through announcing God’s goodness to those lost in misery and judgment by denouncing the powers of anti-life in the systems of the world,¹⁸ and discipleship to those within the church’s own ranks by helping them live in community with each other and with the poor.¹⁹ As examples of this sort

¹⁷ Arias, 78-79.

¹⁸ Arias, 90-92.

¹⁹ Arias, 104, 108.

of evangelism Arias pointed to the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr.,²⁰ the martyrdom of Archbishop Oscar Romero,²¹ and the vitality of the Base Christian Communities among the impoverished of Latin America.²² Arias ended the book with a note of optimism, believing that the church, now reawakened the potency of the reign of God as the basis from which to engage in evangelism, could begin to be faithful to the example of Jesus.

Walter Klaiber

Another Methodist bishop from outside the United States followed Arias in dealing with evangelism. Walter Klaiber, who served as the Bishop of the Germany area of The United Methodist Church, wrote *Call & Response: Biblical Foundations of a Theology of Evangelism* (1997, originally published in German under the title *Ruf und Antwort: Biblische Grundlagen einer Theologie der Evangelisation*, 1990) during his tenure as an active bishop. Prior to his election as bishop, Klaiber served as the professor of New Testament in the Theological School of The United Methodist Church in Reutlingen, Germany.

Unlike Outler and Arias, Klaiber defined evangelism narrowly, stating, “evangelism is a part of preaching, part of the *kerygma*: It is the fundamental testimony of God’s salvific act in Jesus Christ.”²³ He defended this definition in three ways. First, he argued that the actual New Testament language around the Greek verb *euangelizesthai* dealt specifically with a speech act. Second, he claimed he wanted to preserve the orientation of the gospel of announcing God’s salvation to all people, especially the poor. Third, he suggested that the act of preaching the gospel has been a critical means of drawing the Christian community to constantly reconsider the extent to which they found their own lives on the gospel.²⁴

²⁰ Arias, 90.

²¹ Arias, 94-96.

²² Arias, 107-108.

²³ Walter Klaiber, *Call & Response: Biblical Foundations of a Theology of Evangelism*, trans. Howard Perry-Trauthig and James A. Dwyer (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 26.

²⁴ Klaiber, 26-27.

Another reason for Klaiber's restricted definition of evangelism was his broader definition of "mission," which he explained as "the whole mission of the church, i.e. for its existence, its words and deeds through which it, in faithful obedience to the commission of its Lord, devotes itself to the world."²⁵ Given this broad view of mission, Klaiber was not concerned that a reduced definition of evangelism would become license for the church to reduce its engagement with the world, as Arias had been. Rather, evangelism served as one of the constituent practices of mission, though it was the chief constituent. Klaiber agreed with missiologist David Bosch in claiming that "evangelism as a word event is the 'heart' of mission in so far as it names what saves and liberates humankind and that from which the Christina community and its members live."²⁶

Klaiber explained in his foreword to the English edition that he had planned this book to be much larger in scope, tracing the discussion of evangelism through the texts of systematic theology. Pressed for time, he scaled back to focus on the biblical principles that undergird a theology of evangelism.²⁷ Even in this more modest endeavor, it is clear that Klaiber's methodology belongs to systematic theology as he carefully interrogated a variety of situations evangelists often face, theologically reflecting on each through studying appropriate biblical passages that pertain to it. Klaiber framed his methodology through three questions: "1. What is the biblically justified message of evangelism and how does it speak to the situation of those addressed?... 2. What implications does the acceptance of the message by the hearer have for its orientation and its effect?... 3. What is the essential motivation for preaching the gospel?"²⁸

Klaiber answered the first of his questions in the first half of his book as he exegeted several passages related to evangelism in the Bible. Resisting the urge to totalize the varied witness about evangelism in the Bible, Klaiber considered the Old Testament, the Synoptic Gospels, the Johannine

²⁵ Klaiber, 26.

²⁶ Klaiber, 26.

²⁷ Klaiber, 12.

²⁸ Klaiber, 27.

texts, the Pauline texts, and the General Epistles in turn, drawing out broad themes from what each of the texts have to say about the message and means of preaching the gospel. This allowed Klaiber to develop a rich and multi-faceted view of evangelism in spite of his narrow definition.

One of the chief outcomes of Klaiber's exegesis was his development of hermeneutics for reading about evangelism in the Bible. These hermeneutics focus around the incarnation of Jesus Christ as a means for God to live in solidarity with humanity, overcome human anxiety, and usher people into a life of love.²⁹ Klaiber specifically examined how these hermeneutics might be used to make sense of passages in the Bible that are often difficult for evangelists, such as those that declare judgment on people who do not follow Jesus Christ.

Focusing on the role of human agency in both sharing and receiving the gospel message, Klaiber used the second half of the book to answer the second and third questions. In reference to how people receive the gospel, Klaiber reviewed the numerous ways in which the scriptural narrative describes people becoming followers of Jesus Christ, concluding that the key issue is not how someone responds to the gospel, but that a person makes a volitional choice in favor of the gospel.³⁰ He followed this by reminding the reader that, while Christ did expect a positive response from people who heard the gospel, it was God's gracious work that enacted salvation, not the person's acceptance of the gospel.³¹ Based on this, he concluded, "evangelistic proclamation is therefore nothing else than such a provocation to a response, an invitation to agreement and an urgent petition to reconciliation. Its aim is that hearers accept God's saving activity as the reality which shapes and determines their lives."³² This conclusion is followed by a brief chapter on the psychological and sociological ramifications of conversion.

The last chapter is a brief description of reasons why people may choose to evangelize. In this

²⁹ Klaiber, 65-74.

³⁰ Klaiber, 147.

³¹ Klaiber, 161.

³² Klaiber, 175.

chapter, Klaiber offered his only sustained conversation about practice in the book. Rather than develop a clear set of suggestions about what normative motivations should be, Klaiber simply listed a series of common motivations that people cite for practicing evangelism. He then suggested that Christians must make a point of practicing their “spiritual speech” with each other, must be prepared to develop pastoral relationships with people over a lengthy period of time, must take time to be theologically educated so that they understand the power and meaning of what they are doing as evangelists, and must be prepared to call people to a decision for Christ at an appropriate time.³³

Klaiber is unique in that he emphasized the individual both as the evangelist and as the evangelized. While he acknowledged the importance of the church as a place for nurturing people in the faith, he held to the view of the individual evangelist calling people to a decision to follow Jesus Christ. He did this because of what he claimed to be the more biblically sound, narrow definition of evangelism as a speech act. This act would necessarily only be carried out by one person at a time.

William J. Abraham

The Logic of Evangelism (1989) by William J. Abraham is a watershed text on the topic of evangelism in many ways, providing a critical launching point for many of the United Methodist scholars who published later. Abraham, serving as the McCreless Professor of Evangelism at Southern Methodist University when he published the book, had two primary concerns in his writing. The first was the lack of serious academic attention that was being paid to evangelism in theological education. The second was what he perceived to be the reductionistic understandings of evangelism that were common among practitioners of evangelism, especially those who described evangelism as only proclamation or as only church growth. Given these particular interests, it is not clear that either Outler or Arias had a substantial impact on Abraham, in spite of all three coming out of SMU. He did not rely on their arguments to bolster his own.

³³ Klaiber, 198-207.

In order to deal with his dual concerns, Abraham conceived of evangelism “as that set of intentional activities which is governed by the goal of initiating people into the kingdom of God for the first time.”³⁴ In making this claim, Abraham, like Arias, was convinced that by re-conceptualizing evangelism, he would offer a way forward 1) for scholars to reconsider the importance of treating evangelism and 2) for practitioners to engage in a more robust and faithful set of evangelistic activities.

Abraham’s methodology for defending his view of evangelism as initiation into the Kingdom of God followed largely along the lines of systematic theology. However, Abraham acknowledged that he would not be engaged in a purely systematic project. This was intentional, as he wanted to make the case that evangelism “is an embryonic field of investigation in its own right.”³⁵ Specifically, it is a field that is not simply a subset of theology, but a practical theology that draws together “the findings and reflection of a discreet number of disciplines.”³⁶ As such, Abraham overtly argued that evangelism should not be beholden to a specific methodology, but should be an area of inquiry which allows scholars to apply multiple methodologies from multiple disciplines. Abraham followed his own advice as he sought to address multiple issues of import to evangelism.

Abraham’s primary theological work came in the form of explicating what he meant by the “Kingdom of God.” In this, Abraham followed many of the same points that Arias made, especially in recognizing the eschatological work of God as the primary motivation for Christians to evangelize. Also like Arias, Abraham concluded that this eschatologically based view of evangelism pointed out the weaknesses of evangelism when viewed only as the proclamation of the gospel or as church growth. However, whereas Arias began to connect these findings to the immediate problems of the poor, Abraham emphasized the catechetical implications of evangelism as initiation into the Kingdom of God.

The meat of Abraham’s book is in his explanation of what initiation entails. “In all,” Abraham

³⁴ William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 95.

³⁵ Abraham, 11.

³⁶ Abraham, 15.

wrote, “initiation involves a complex web of reality that is at once corporate, cognitive, moral, experiential, operational, and disciplinary.”³⁷ Abraham dedicated two chapters of the book to dealing with each one of these six aspects of initiation. He followed this with a chapter entitled “The Ministry of Evangelism” in which he presented the practical application of his argument. In this chapter he recommended that the church “reinstate the institution of the catechumenate.”³⁸ In this catechumenate “all six [aspects of initiation] need to be covered at some point or other.”³⁹

For Abraham, a catechetical process that covers all six of the aspects of initiation is critical for several reasons. First, it avoids what he termed “spiritual miscarriages” in which people are evangelized, but are only partially engaged with the abundant life of grace offered to them through Jesus Christ.⁴⁰ Second, it properly prepared Christians to deal with the seductive and dangerous influences of modernity, which he believed had eaten away most western Christians’ commitment to Christ.⁴¹ Finally, it made Christians capable of engaging in interreligious dialogue by informing them of their own beliefs and helping them better grasp the faith commitments of their interlocutors.⁴²

For Abraham, then, as for Outler and Arias, evangelism must first start in the existing church. The people within the church must finish being initiated into the Kingdom of God so that they, in turn, might be effective evangelists who can initiate others into the Kingdom.⁴³

It is worth observing at this juncture that there are at least two common themes in the works of Outler, Arias, and Abraham. The first is that they desired to combat reductionism in the understanding and practice of evangelism. Outler through his use of Wesley and Arias and Abraham through their respective understandings of the Kingdom of God, all sought to provide visions of evangelism that entailed much more than just speaking the gospel to another person or winning converts. Secondly, all

³⁷ Abraham, 103.

³⁸ Abraham, 174.

³⁹ Abraham, 175.

⁴⁰ Abraham, 140.

⁴¹ Abraham, 207.

⁴² Abraham, 228-229.

⁴³ Abraham, 200.

three are overtly pneumatological. Each of these authors admitted that their programs will not be realized apart from explicit reliance on the Holy Spirit. These two themes remain common in United Methodist evangelism literature today.

Scott J. Jones

In writing *The Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor: A Theology of Witness and Discipleship* (2003) Scott J. Jones followed the lead of Abraham. In part this undoubtedly arose from Jones succeeding Abraham as the McCreless Professor of Evangelism at Southern Methodist University, the post Jones held when he published this book. Jones went on to the episcopacy of The United Methodist Church following his time at SMU.

Jones acknowledged that his project was largely to refine the definition of evangelism put forth by Abraham. To this end, he defined evangelism as “that set of loving, intentional activities governed by the goal of initiating persons into Christian discipleship in response to the reign of God.”⁴⁴ Jones did not make the Kingdom of God his focus as Abraham had, claiming “my argument construes God’s evangelistic love of the world as the central message of Scripture.”⁴⁵ As such, the love of God is prior to the Kingdom of God since the Kingdom of God is none other than the manifestation of God’s loving desire to live in peace with creation.⁴⁶ The other reason that Jones preferred focusing on initiation into Christian discipleship rather than initiation into the Kingdom of God is that Jones sought to develop an explicitly Wesleyan soteriological framework for his view of evangelism.⁴⁷ In doing this, Jones felt that discipleship served as a better goal of evangelism because it connected with the Wesleyan notion of striving toward holiness better than the eschatological concept of the Kingdom of God.

Methodologically, Jones did not stray far from Abraham, understanding his work to be theological in nature. Specifically, he identified evangelism as belonging to ecclesiology because

⁴⁴ Scott J. Jones, *The Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor: A Theology of Witness and Discipleship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 18.

⁴⁵ Jones, 33.

⁴⁶ Jones, 32.

⁴⁷ Jones, 76-78.

evangelism deals with the nature of the church.⁴⁸

The primary place Jones' focus on ecclesiology came out was in his emphasis on the local congregation being the primary place where the work of evangelism takes place.⁴⁹ Recasting Abraham's six aspects of initiation into the Kingdom of God as seven aspects of initiation into Christian discipleship, Jones emphasized the implications for each of these steps in relation to participation and membership in the local congregation. The seven aspects, which he categorized according to the Wesleyan schema of grace, are "baptism, cognitive commitments, spiritual disciplines, conversion, morality, spiritual gifts, and faith-sharing."⁵⁰ For Jones, an evangelistic congregation would lead people through all of these aspects of initiation so that people could be fully formed Christian disciples. An important corollary to this is that a person must be connected to the life of a local congregation in order to be properly initiated into Christian discipleship.

Following his explanation of these aspects, Jones completed the book by considering several specific questions about how individual Christians in local congregations might practice evangelism. These included recognizing the importance evangelizing in a way that takes into account the larger culture surrounding the church, whether it is appropriate to invite people to church who are already members of a different congregation, and how Christians should specifically relate to Jews. In all cases, Jones' advice is premised on his thesis about evangelism leading people to Christian discipleship. If a person is not moving toward such discipleship in his or her current situation, the Christian loves that person best by inviting that person to be initiated into Christian discipleship by joining the life of the local congregation.⁵¹ However, Jones is quick to point out that such invitations should be humbly and appropriately offered.⁵²

Unique to Jones is the appendix he included in the book which enumerated what he perceived to

⁴⁸ The entirety of Jones chapter 6 deals with "Evangelism and Ecclesiology."

⁴⁹ Abraham had made a similar claim in his book. Abraham, 181-184.

⁵⁰ Jones, 99.

⁵¹ Jones, 126-127.

⁵² Jones, 172.

be the most common misperceptions about evangelism in the local church as well as providing twenty components for an evangelistically effective congregation. This appendix offers a simple and direct way of taking the theological work of the book and putting it into practice. For this reason this book can be effective with audiences that include both scholars and practitioners of evangelism.

A final piece that should be recognized between Jones and Abraham is that each one fastidiously avoided making soteriological judgments about people. While they were willing to claim how fully engaged a person was with the Christian faith by virtue of how many of the aspects of their respective views of initiation a person had undergone, neither would therefore claim whether a person was saved or damned. This theme, of refusing to make absolute claims about a person's eternal stance in relation to God, continues as a hallmark of United Methodist scholars of evangelism today.

George G. Hunter, III

George G. Hunter, III served as the Distinguished Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism at Asbury Theological Seminary for over three decades and has published numerous books about evangelism. As his title suggests, Hunter is more comfortable with and sympathetic to the church growth movement than many of the other United Methodist scholars of evangelism. However, Hunter's works are not crass apologies for the church growth movement. Instead, while accepting the church growth admonition that local congregations should bear numerical fruit along with being faithful, Hunter also offers insight into how local congregations can renew themselves by drawing from effective biblical and historical models of evangelism. In the end, Hunter's books provide both a means of rethinking the priorities and organization of existing congregations while also calling them to grow by engaging with the people in the culture around them more relevantly. Such is the case in *Radical Outreach: The Recovery of Apostolic Ministry & Evangelism* (2003).

Hunter did not define evangelism explicitly in this book. However, he clearly argued that the ministry of the church should be defined by what he termed "apostolic ministry" (a term Hunter had

introduced years before in his writing about evangelism). According to Hunter, “apostolic ministry” is ministry based on the activities of the original Twelve Apostles. Such ministry is essentially evangelistic in character, requiring that the people carrying it out have “experienced the risen Christ” and understand themselves to be “commissioned...to reach unreached people.”⁵³ The bulk of the book was dedicated to explicating the second of these two attributes and describing how the current mainline churches must act to throw off encumbrances to apostolic ministry.

Like Outler, Hunter’s methodology was driven by pragmatism. Hunter’s text resembles a practical how-to manual more than a scholarly work. While Hunter certainly peppered his work with theological ideas, biblical references, and historical examples, his primary concern was with providing ways for congregational leaders to think through the attitudes, structure, and practices of their local churches so they might modify these in order to become apostolic. To this end, in almost every chapter Hunter included a list of positive or negative attributes for a local church and/or a series of questions that congregational leaders can use to interrogate their own ministries. His final questions of the book are most telling on this score. Writing of the specific call of the apostolic church to reach the unreached, he prompted congregational leaders to ask: “1. Do we want to know them [i.e., the unreached]?...2. Are we willing to go where they are?...3. Are we willing to spend time with them?...4. Do we want secular and outside-the-establishment people in our churches?... 5. Are we willing for our church to become their church, too?”⁵⁴

These five questions also do a good job of summing up the practical orientation of the book. Throughout the majority of the book, Hunter repeated the refrain that the culture in which the church now finds itself in North America is substantially secular and therefore no longer amenable to the traditional modes of evangelism the church practiced throughout the twentieth century. As such, the church can no longer be a chaplain to the culture, but must be an apostle to it by reaching out to the

⁵³ George G. Hunter, III *Radical Outreach: The Recovery of Apostolic Ministry & Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 49.

⁵⁴ Hunter, 187.

people in it with the gospel.⁵⁵ To do this, Hunter dedicated a chapter to explaining how the church must become culturally relevant by being willing to learn the new culture.⁵⁶ He included a second chapter which stressed the importance of empowering lay people as missionaries because they are more effective in relating to the culture than professional clergy.⁵⁷

As the exemplars of apostolic ministry in the new culture Hunter pointed to recovery ministries that offered hospitality to those struggling with addiction. Such ministries are worthy of notice because they reach the very people the world considers impossible to change, meet them at the point of their need without judging them, and guide them to entrusting their lives to a Higher Power than themselves.⁵⁸ Beyond surveying the apostolic nature of recovery ministries, Hunter detailed the ministry of First Baptist Church of Leesburg, FL, a congregation that experienced significant growth as a result of reaching out to addicts.⁵⁹

Hunter's conceptualization of apostolic ministry stands out from the writing of other United Methodist scholars of evangelism. Largely this is because the other scholars, as seen in the previous books, want to develop a more holistic understanding of evangelism which looks askance at the seeming reductionism of church growth. Notwithstanding this divide, it is notable that Hunter has propounded his ideas over many years in parallel with the other scholars' work.

Bryan P. Stone

Bryan P. Stone, the E. Stanley Jones Professor of Evangelism at Boston University, is an example of a United Methodist scholar of evangelism who rejected Hunter's view. Indeed, in his book *Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (2007) Stone sought to make a break with much of the existing literature on evangelism and provide a new means of construing evangelism. He did this by drawing from the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre and the

⁵⁵ Hunter, 198.

⁵⁶ Hunter, chapter 3.

⁵⁷ Hunter, chapter 4.

⁵⁸ Hunter, 137-141.

⁵⁹ Hunter, chapter 6.

ethicist John Howard Yoder. Stone appropriated MacIntyre's notions of practice, narrative, tradition, and virtue. In doing this, Stone made the argument that evangelism is more than an individual ministry of the church. Rather, it is a practice in the sense that the Christian faith itself demands that in every aspect of the church's life the church must be in accord with virtues granted by the Holy Spirit. This means that the success of evangelism is not measured in terms of conversions, church growth, or other numerical factors that are external to the church, but in how faithfully a church embodies and enacts the internal narrative of the Christian faith.⁶⁰ Stone found in Yoder someone who corroborated his ideas and who helped him describe what this Christian narrative looks like in action.⁶¹ Yoder contended for a pacifist community that embodies such a beautiful ethic that people outside the community are drawn to it. These people not only are impressed by the beauty of the Christian community's ethics, but are challenged to recognize and reconsider the self-destructive ethics by which they are living.⁶²

From this, Stone's idea of evangelism can be described as virtuous witness. It is virtuous insofar as the community of believers is called to practice the virtues the Holy Spirit instills in it. It is witness in that this community lives according to its virtues in a way that is visible to the larger world. However, this visibility does not require people outside the community to respond positively to the virtuous life the community embodies. If people in the larger world are impressed and attracted by this virtuous life and so wish to join the community, good and well; if they are not it in no way reflects negatively on the witness of the community. Successful evangelism is found in remaining faithful to the practice of the virtues, not in any sort of quantifiable external impact that witness might produce.

As is evident, Stone's methodological approach to evangelism is largely drawn from Christian ethics. This methodology is almost inevitable because of the confluence of ecclesiology, soteriology, and eschatology in Stone's thinking. For Stone, to partake in God's salvific work is to be a part of the

⁶⁰ Bryan P. Stone, *Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 23-53.

⁶¹ Stone, 21-22.

⁶² Stone, 120-130.

church.⁶³ Likewise, while the church is not equivalent to the reign of God, the church is the unique community of Christ on the earth which embodies and practices the virtues that exist in the reign of God. As such, evangelism – indeed the whole of the Christian faith – is best understood in the light of ethics as the church seeks not only to live according to its virtues, but to be the alternative form of existence that God called it to be.⁶⁴

Based on his definition of “practice,” Stone offered five specific actions that he believed were essential to the church faithfully existing as the church. He chose these actions because he believed they best demonstrated the virtuous life of the church over and against the prevailing narratives of Constantinianism and modernity. He held that Constantinianism was the confluence of the church and the state in a way that caused the church to be a chaplain to the state, surrendering its internal narrative of the gospel in favor of the narrative imposed by the state.⁶⁵ Modernity brought the narrative of individualism which privatized religion and shattered the capacity for people to live in community, especially in a community of faith.⁶⁶

The five actions are: “1. The Eucharistic practice of sharing...; 2. The baptismal formation of a new people...; 3. Sins are forgiven and a process of reconciliation and restoration is carried out...; 4. Decisions are made by consensus...; 5. All are called, gifted, and empowered to play a role.”⁶⁷ These are not new actions of the church. Rather, they are actions that Stone believed carried additional political and economic significance that, properly understood and enacted by the church, could be used as a powerful form of virtuous witness. Stone expanded on each practice in detail, helping readers grasp his vision for how these practices might be recast in order to fit with his vision of evangelism.

In making his claims, Stone distanced himself from much of the conversation in the evangelistic literature produced by earlier United Methodist scholars. While he broadly agreed with the importance

⁶³ Stone, 188.

⁶⁴ Stone, 189.

⁶⁵ Stone, chapter 5.

⁶⁶ Stone, chapter 6.

⁶⁷ Stone, 181.

of recognizing the reign of God and of relying on the Holy Spirit, he found fault with the emphasis on practices and strategies presented by previous authors, arguing that ultimately these views of evangelism were driven by the desire to achieve external results or that they were infected with the narratives of modernity and Constantinianism. He particularly singled out Hunter for critique. While Stone acknowledged the importance of practicing virtue in a way that is culturally meaningful in order for the outside world to understand what it is seeing, he rejected Hunter's assumption that this should lead to church growth. Abraham, Arias, and Outler receive scant mention in Stone's book, and Jones receives none.

While Stone sought to forge an alternative route for defining evangelism than the previous United Methodist scholars, two United Methodist scholars who published within a year of him linked directly back into the ideas about evangelism presented by Abraham. These scholars were Lacey Warner and Elaine Heath.

Lacey C. Warner

Lacey C. Warner is the Associate Professor of the Practice of Evangelism and Methodist Studies at Duke Divinity School. In her book *Saving Women: Retrieving Evangelistic Theology and Practice* (2007) Warner chose to agree with Abraham, not in terms of defining evangelism as initiation, but by picking up on a comment in his book about rejecting the attempt of scholars to set a definitive list of practices that can be considered genuinely evangelistic. Instead, she agreed with Abraham that scholars should leave an open-ended list that would be populated by observing the actions of evangelists.⁶⁸ To the end of seeing what activities evangelists engage in, Warner chronicled the lives of seven female evangelists who ministered in the United States and abroad during the nineteenth century and twentieth century. In doing so, she set out both to illuminate the little-known history of female evangelists and to demonstrate how the theory and practices of evangelism require revision in light of

⁶⁸ Lacey C. Warner, *Saving Women: Retrieving Evangelistic Theology and Practice* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 9, 263.

the way these women evangelized. The reason for the revision, she argued, is that evangelism has often been restricted to mean only preaching the gospel at church-sanctioned events (a definition that would come close to the narrow definition offered by Klaiber). However, these women were frequently barred from preaching because they were females. As a result, they had to find alternative means of living out their call as evangelists.⁶⁹ Rather than consider these women's practices aberrations, Warner called on the church to expand its view of evangelism by recognizing these practices as normative means of evangelism.

In order to accommodate her goal of leaving evangelism open-ended so that it might be defined by the practices of the evangelists Warner never presented a definition of evangelism in her book. However, because she needed to set parameters for choosing who to profile as evangelists, she did state in her introduction that women have “contributed significantly to the spread of Christianity and the nurture of individuals in the faith.”⁷⁰ While broad, this description of evangelists as those who both spread Christianity and who nurture individuals in the faith served essentially as her opening definition of evangelism.

By the conclusion of the book Warner was ready to provide a more nuanced description of the work of evangelists. She wrote:

an eschatological evangelism informed by these women (1) offers the gospel of Jesus Christ to all, (2) in the midst of sins both of pride and lack of self, (3) facilitates a real change in and among persons, (4) enables churches and the multiplicity of its members to understand and fulfill their evangelistic purpose to love and serve the world, and (5) while receiving formation from and living into the salvation narrative of the biblical text.⁷¹

This description is less sweeping than previous definitions, only claiming the warrant of seven female evangelists as its basis. Notwithstanding, it does follow in the pattern of seeking a level of holism that

⁶⁹ Warner, 1-3.

⁷⁰ Warner, 3.

⁷¹ Warner, 280.

resists reducing evangelism to proclamation only.⁷²

Warner's text is a history text, consisting of six short biographies of seven women who were engaged in evangelism: Dorothy Ripley, Sarah and Angelina Grimké, Julia A. J. Foote, Frances E. Willard, Helen Barrett Montgomery, and Mary McLeod Bethune. Warner's historical methodology in these biographies was to look for how these women were formed in their Christian faith and for how they engaged in their ministries, including any specific opposition they faced as they sought to evangelize. Warner then used these personal narratives to make sense of the evangelistic activities that the women deployed.⁷³ Unlike a strict history, however, Warner did not remain solely descriptive in her work. As already seen in her definition, she used her historical observations to provide normative suggestions for how the understanding of evangelism should be reworked.

The exemplars of evangelism for Warner are the seven women she profiled. In order for readers to follow the examples of these women, Warner offered two sets of ideas about evangelism leading up to her description at the conclusion of the book. The first is a series of six lessons. These lessons present specific understandings about practicing evangelism that each woman developed as she sought to be faithful to her calling in the face of various difficulties.⁷⁴ The second set of ideas is what Warner denominated the "contributions" the women collectively can make to the theory of evangelism. These four contributions provide means for rethinking evangelistic theory such that evangelism is no longer hampered by the kinds of obstacles that the women in the book encountered as they sought to engage in evangelism.⁷⁵

As a history text, Warner's book does not so much seek to supplant or challenge any of the previous United Methodist scholars' views of evangelism as it does to supplement them. Offering an additional way to explore evangelism through the biographies of female evangelists, Warner presented

⁷² Warner, 263.

⁷³ Warner, 267.

⁷⁴ Warner, 268-277.

⁷⁵ Warner, 277-280.

new questions to probe about evangelistic theory and practice alongside of the existing ones.

Elaine A. Heath

Like Warner, Elaine A. Heath also took her starting point from Abraham in writing *The Mystic Way of Evangelism: A Contemplative Vision for Christian Outreach* (2008). It is likely that part of the reason for this influence is that Heath is the McCreless Associate Professor of Evangelism at Southern Methodist University, serving as the successor to Scott Jones in that position. Moreover, since Abraham has remained on faculty at SMU in a different teaching position since his vacating that chair, he and Heath have been in regular conversation about her work. It is little surprise, then, that Heath declared at the beginning of her book, “Evangelism rightly understood is the holistic initiation of people into the reign of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.”⁷⁶ This is a definition of evangelism drawn directly from Abraham.

However, while Heath accepted Abraham’s basic view of evangelism as initiation, she presented significantly different ideas for how to initiate people into the reign of God. For Heath, “the Christian mystics are without exception the first and best teachers of the theory and practice of evangelism.”⁷⁷ This is because God’s holiness is the primary agent transforming the world, and the mystics, for Heath, are the greatest exemplars of how to exhibit God’s holiness and remain in relationship with other people.⁷⁸

Heath’s work is one of practical theology. It began with a brief overview of the theological themes surrounding mysticism and then presented the thoughts and practices of a series of mystics with which to reflect on how evangelism might be better thought about and practiced in the local congregation. Divided into three parts, the first part of the book diagnosed the problem of the church in

⁷⁶ Elaine A. Heath, *The Mystic Way of Evangelism: A Contemplative Vision for Christian Outreach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2008), 13.

⁷⁷ Heath, 14.

⁷⁸ Heath, 13-14.

North America as going through a “dark night of the soul”⁷⁹ and described the failing practices of evangelism engaged in by this chastened church. The second part considered five overarching themes about the Christian faith, presenting the theology and practices from two mystics to help inform each theme. The themes and mystics were: 1. love as God’s meaning informed by Julian of Norwich and Hans Urs von Balthasar, 2. holiness for the sake of the world informed by Phoebe Palmer and Father Arseny, 3. coming home to love by Thomas Kelly and Henri Nouwen, 4. healing informed by Julia Foote and Mechthild of Magdeburg, and 5. the redemption of creation informed by Bonaventure and John Woolman.⁸⁰ The third part of the book provided an imaginative attempt by Heath at constructing what a church that understands itself based on the theology and practices of the mystics might look like. This part was interwoven with a fictional story about a man named Sam and how he is introduced to, and then becomes a part of, such a congregation.

With the mystics as her exemplars of evangelism, Heath offered several practical applications for how local congregations might follow the mystics’ lead. First and foremost they must back away from condemning sin and approach people with the eyes of love that God has for them.⁸¹ Second, the church must resist the urge to claim the trappings of prestige, especially by employing bivocational pastors and by offering theological education in non-standard, non-degree formats that will make it easier for everyone to attain.⁸² Third, the church must learn to pray such that it can view both its own wounds and its own beauty without fear, thus removing the need to put on a “false self” as a mask for itself and others to see.⁸³ Fourth, the church must submit to the Holy Spirit’s direction in who it reaches out to and how it involves them in the life of grace, especially making greater room to care for those who are abused or marginalized.⁸⁴ Fifth, the church should engage in eco-evangelism through teaching

⁷⁹ Heath, 25.

⁸⁰ Heath, 20.

⁸¹ Heath, 124-125.

⁸² Heath, 132-136.

⁸³ Heath, 148-149.

⁸⁴ Heath, 159-162.

about stewardship of the earth and money, practicing care of the creation in its own activities and in participation in the community, and taking a prophetic stance against any ideologies, practices, or organizations that harm creation.⁸⁵

It is worth noting that Heath has done more than publish her ideas about evangelism. As the Director of the Center for Missional Wisdom, she has been instrumental in the creation of the New Day communities (<http://peopleofnewday.com>). These are small, indigenous worshiping communities that seek to live according to a rule of life that follows many of the ideas and practices she advocated in her book. While it is not new for evangelism scholars to be engaged in evangelistic activities, Heath's leadership of this emerging group of communities takes this involvement to a new level. Heath may well be on the cutting edge of evangelism scholarship in this, demanding that scholars of evangelism must also be practitioners of it. This will certainly provide new vistas for evangelism scholars to test and refine their theories of evangelism as they engage in them.

Leonard Sweet

Leonard Sweet, who serves as the E. Stanley Jones Professor of Evangelism at Drew University and as a distinguished visiting professor at George Fox University, is perhaps the most widely known of United Methodist scholars of evangelism. He has a sizable presence in published works and via electronic communication, including his own website (<http://www.leonardsweet.com/>) and substantial engagement with a popular audience through social media (blogging, Facebook, Twitter, podcasting, etc.). Sweet is an interpreter of cultural trends and seeks to provide resources at the popular level to help Christians make sense of how the church must position itself to minister effectively as the culture changes around it. To this extent, Sweet is not as interested in participating in the scholarly conversations about the nuances of defining evangelism, preferring to find more whimsical and metaphorical ways to express himself in hopes of better communicating with a popular audience.

⁸⁵ Heath, 171.

Additionally, as a popular speaker and retreat leader, Sweet joins Heath as a United Methodist scholar of evangelism who is also a practitioner of the style of evangelism he propounds.

Sweet's book *Nudge: Awakening Each Other to the God Who's already There* (2010) fits very much with Sweet's goals of reaching a popular audience. Even so, it clearly laid out Sweet's own definition of evangelism. According to Sweet, "Evangelism is nudging people to pay attention to the mission of God in their lives and to the necessity of responding to that initiative in ways that birth new realities and the new birth."⁸⁶ This fits with Sweet's long-held contention that evangelism is best understood as an act of semiotics, meaning that evangelism is about recognizing the signs of God's presence in the world and in people's lives.⁸⁷ Sweet spent a significant portion of the first chapter explaining the intersection of "nudge evangelism" and semiotics. Semiotics gives evangelists the capacity to recognize and properly interpret the signs of God's presence around them; nudging is the way evangelists prompt others to see and receive these signs.⁸⁸ The goal of these nudges is to lead people to place their faith in Jesus Christ.⁸⁹ Notably, while Sweet did not acknowledge it, this view of evangelism sounds similar to Klaiber's view of evangelistic preaching as a means of provoking, inviting, and petitioning people to accept God's saving activity.⁹⁰

Sweet undergirded his idea of "nudge evangelism" with three basic premises: "1. Jesus is alive and active in our world. 2. Followers of Jesus...recognize where he is alive and moving in our day. 3. Evangelists nudge the world to wake up to the alive and acting Jesus."⁹¹ In laying bare his underpinnings, Sweet also made clear his Wesleyan theology by pointing toward the role of the evangelist as one who awakens others to God's grace (Charles Wesley's famous sermon "Awake, Thou That Sleepest" is perhaps the most apt example of this connection). In this way, Sweet is in the

⁸⁶ Leonard Sweet, *Nudge: Awakening Each Other to the God Who's already There* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010), 28-29.

⁸⁷ Sweet, 18.

⁸⁸ Sweet, 60.

⁸⁹ Sweet, 40.

⁹⁰ Klaiber, 175.

⁹¹ Sweet, 65.

company of his fellow United Methodist scholars, as all have the clear imprint of Wesley on them. For many of them, however, the emphasis has rested on Wesley's call to perfection. From Outler forward, these authors have reminded their readers of the importance of evangelism including the process of launching people toward sanctification either by initiating them into a deeper relationship with God or by drawing them into an alternative community forged by the virtues of the Holy Spirit. Sweet has focused on the other end of the Wesleyan spectrum, *viz.* of how to awaken people so that they are prepared to enter intentionally on the route to sanctification.

To the extent that Sweet has a methodology, it is that of a how-to guide in spiritual formation. With the goal of inspiring readers to become "nudge evangelists," Sweet's book is a compilation of pithy insights with illuminating anecdotes and a great many practical applications for why people do or do not successfully engage in the activities he advocates. Most of these insights revolve around the extent to which people are spiritually formed. While nudge evangelism is evidently simple – just pointing out to others the signs of God that are already there at opportune moments – it demands a substantial amount of personal transformation in order to engage in it. Only one who is in tune with God's action in the world is prepared to read and interpret God's signs well to others. As Sweet explained, "This book is designed to help you pay attention to the variety of signs and signals God gives us about what God's up to and what's up ahead."⁹²

The bulk of the book is given over to what Sweet termed "the Semiotic 5."⁹³ These are practices that Sweet associated with each of the five senses. Each of these five practices has a chapter dedicated to it, and each of these chapters are filled with explanations of how Christians should be formed in such a way that they engage in these practices as part of their regular existence. Again, Sweet deployed the insight, anecdote, and practical application formula in these chapters. His exemplars are a wide range of eclectic figures that have either spectacularly succeeded or failed in these practices so as to make his

⁹² Sweet, 59.

⁹³ Sweet, 137.

points about these practices as clear as possible to the reader. He also frequently used his own life experiences as examples.

To further enhance his book as a means of supporting the practice of evangelism, Sweet included several references to a website that includes additional material to be read along with the book (<http://www.nudgethebook.com>). This material can be downloaded as a pdf file and contains questions and exercises for studying the book within a small group. This material also demonstrates how Sweet seeks to be an evangelist even as he writes about evangelism.

Conclusion

United Methodist scholars of evangelism have provided a substantial addition to the growing scholarly conversation about evangelism. Minimally the following observations can be made: 1. They have taken a clear stand that evangelism should be accepted as a field of its own. 2. They have demonstrated that it is a multifaceted field, capable of being helpfully explored through numerous methodologies, including those that belong to theology, history, ethics, and spiritual formation. 3. They have likewise demonstrated that the study and practice of evangelism is aided by considering evangelism from multiple theological perspectives. 4. They have insisted that evangelism cannot and should not be reduced to a single set of practices or theories that fail to take in the entirety of how God interacts with human beings to awaken them, justify them, and draw them to holiness. 5. They have made clear that neither scholars of evangelism nor evangelists have any business judging the eternal states of individuals. 6. They have argued that the Christian community, especially as it exists in specific congregations, is both in need of being evangelized and is in need of recognizing its vocation as the primary actor carrying out God's work of evangelizing others. 7. They have made it plain that human efforts at evangelism must be tied into God's own mission in the world. 8. They have contended that Jesus of Nazareth is the exemplar for understanding and practicing evangelism, pointing to his ministry as normative for the content, the ethics, and the activities of evangelism. 9. They have pointed

convincingly to the fact that the study of evangelism should not be separated from the practice of evangelism. This is true both in terms of seeking to define evangelism and in the actual vocation of the professors of evangelism.

It is on this last point that United Methodist scholars may indeed have helped usher the study of evangelism into its next phase. With scholars such as Heath and Sweet not only publishing about their views of evangelism, but also publicly putting those views to the test by engaging in experimental practices that fit with their views, they are setting a new standard for evangelism scholars in the years to come. It may be that, going forward, evangelism scholars will be judged as much on the extent to which they are seeking creative means of practicing their views of evangelism as they are on their publications and ideas.

Beyond offering a new means of determining the effectiveness of evangelism scholars, the United Methodist emphasis on scholar-practitioners also creates a helpful bridge between mainline evangelism scholars and evangelical evangelism scholars. Evangelicals have long appreciated the importance of their evangelism scholars having significant experience in the ministry or evangelism. As United Methodist scholars begin to weave their practice together with their scholarship, and especially as their practice is forged on the pattern of Jesus' own ministry, they will provide a vision of evangelism that is both recognizable and enriching for evangelicals to explore. This may spur more sustained and fruitful dialogue between mainline and evangelical scholars of evangelism.

Another question worth considering in looking at the future of evangelistic studies is whether the relationship between evangelism as a field of study and the various fields from which its scholars have borrowed (theology, history, ethics, etc.) will become reciprocal. As evangelism studies mature, will historians begin to borrow from evangelism books such as Warner's or will ethicists make use of Stone's work? The potential is for a mutually reinforcing cycle as evangelism scholars make use of methodologies from classical fields and classical scholars are able to glean greater insight into their

own fields of study from the work done in evangelism.

Finally, it may be that the interdisciplinary nature of the study of evangelism as undertaken by United Methodist scholars may help to prompt theological education away from the classical segmentation of theology, history, ethics, Bible, etc. in favor of a more integrative curriculum. Especially if evangelism scholars become more engaged in evangelistic practice, this may be the vanguard of what a new, apprentice-type of theological education may look like, with scholar-practitioners engaging students to learn about the Christian faith as they embody it.

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