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Creation Renewed:
Heaven-Earth-Humanity.
A Journey in Wesleyan-Orthodox-Confucian
Theological Interculturation

PETER K. H. LEE

The title, “Creation Renewed: Heaven-Earth-Humanity,” has a Christian overtone—based on scriptural sources (Revelations 21:1ff.; Isaiah 65:17–25), with reverberations from John Wesley’s preaching (sermons like “The New Creation,” “The New Birth,” etc.). Significantly, the 18th-century Anglican clergyman found in certain ancient Eastern Orthodox (“Orthodox” in the following) fathers’ teachings congenial to his thinking his favorite subjects like holiness and perfection. The Orthodox view of *imago Dei* (image of God), for one thing, gives the clue to the rebinding of the Divine and the human, as is affirmed in the doctrine of Deification (*Theosis*). That divinity and humanity (on earth as in heaven) would be bound up in some way, Wesley would resonate to that. As to Confucianism, the Englishman John Wesley in those days could not have known anything about it, but by 21st century if by

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chance his spiritual descendants known as Methodists, now spread all over the global village, hear that the heaven-earth-humanity configuration has a Confucian orientation, some of them might pick up their ears and listen. The same compounded motif, on the surface of the wording, may not strike a chord in the Orthodox theologians' heart at first, yet if they are open-minded enough to be engaged in conversation with Protestant Christians, in this case Methodist thinkers, on subjects of common concern, the occasion might arise that these partners in dialogue will open themselves up to hear more about the Confucians' cosmology and anthropology, with echoes of certain beliefs from their respective traditions.

We are here anticipating the prospect of a three-way, interreligious or faith-culture dialogue; nay, what is projected is more than interreligious dialogue (which is common in this age of religious pluralism), or faith-culture intellectual dialogue (as is fashionable in some academic circles); there is a theological perspective to it too. The subtitle calls this "a journey in theological interculturalization" (which is less-known). But have no fear, this is no academic shibboleth;¹ the proposed project indeed presupposes certain disciplined and agile thinking and communication ability, but that is all within reach of those who are gathered here.

Before the journey begins, allow me to disclose my identity (from here on using the first-personal pronoun). When addressing an audience or the readers, the second-personal pronoun will be used. For, of significance is the personal identity of the participants of a conversation or dialogue or what I call a theological interculturalization undertaking. The attachment of the word "theological" to "interculturalization" is to indicate that a theological dimension is explicitly involved.

Of Chinese parentage, I was born and raised in Hong Kong, where as a third-generation Christian I was baptized as an infant in the Angli-

¹ An explanation is given here for the unfamiliar cumbersome terminology. "*Interculturalization* suggests theological and anthropological interaction that desires greater inclusivity and interdependency among different religious perspectives and secular cultural viewpoints for human well-being everywhere in the world. There is a dialogical dialectic between faith and culture within a paradigm of authentic interculturalization. The concept of interculturalization envisions that we view 'truth' as a shared reality in the midst of pluralism and diversity." See Thomas G. Grenham, "Interculturalization: Exploring Changing Religious, Cultural, and Faith Identities in an African Context," *Pacifica* 14 (June 2001): 193. The word "theological" is added on the subtitle to show that the interculturalization process allows for a theological frame of reference, and to indicate that it is not merely interested in comparative study of religions or falling into religious relativism.

can Church where I sang in the choir. I went to the US to pursue my higher education; and after college I stumbled into a Methodist Church (before the United Methodist Church came into being) which made me feel more at home than the Episcopal Church I attended in which I felt uneasy about too much of a gulf between the clergy and the laity. I quickly warmed up to the Methodist ethos and John and Charles Wesley's thought. Indeed my erstwhile spiritual awakening paralleled in an amazing way with the Wesleyan brothers'. Subsequently I entered a Methodist school of theology (Claremont). Following that I was ordained in the United Methodist Church, and served in two brief pastoral appointments before going to graduate studies (at Yale and Boston, ending up with a doctorate in the field of ecumenics and world religions). My Methodist pedigree is hardly questionable (more on the "liberal" side), while my mind is stretched out broadly, to embrace an ecumenical outlook and interest in world religion. Back in Hong Kong, I again received pastoral appointments before taking up academic posts, first as a college chaplain-lecturer, then as the director of an ecumenical study center (where the dialectics of faith and culture, and interreligious dialogue were on the daily menu), later on as a professor in a Lutheran theological seminary. I am now retired, both in my capacity as a minister and that as a professor, yet I still avail myself to be useful to both the church and theological circles, while I keep on learning.

Forgive me for too long an autobiographical diversion, but if it serves a purpose it is to feel that I have a secure footing as I get into serious conversation in a gathering of mostly Methodist-friendly theological minds most of whom are ready at the same time to open themselves up to wider horizons.

I. A BASKETFUL OF GIFTS OF GRACE

Yes, indeed, I begin with an altogether familiar Methodist theological center-piece, the Wesleyan theology of grace. That sounds like an easy enough subject for a gathering of Methodist theologians to deal with, yet it is really not that simple. I do not intend to go into the intricate theological arguments that have sprung up in Methodist history, in inside circles as well as in relation to the outside. I rather think of Wesleyan teachings on grace (John's to begin with, but augmented by

Charles and further elaborated on by others) as forming a very rich heritage; grace not so much in terms of theological categories to be analyzed, but grace as a spiritual quality with nuanced manifestations. Instead of treating grace as thought categories to analyze and follow step-by-step, I am more inclined to think of grace, in the Wesleyan heritage, like a cluster of luscious grapes hung together by a live vine. So I toyed with the idea of writing a book with “A Basketful of Gifts of Grace” as the title. I am offering this image in front of this audience of Methodist theologians to show that I do take Wesleyan teachings on grace to heart by emphasizing grace in the Methodist heritage as a rich bundle of gifts with multiple shapes and colors.

Still, I want to show the wide scope of Wesley’s understandings of grace, with its finely nuanced manifestations. This will be useful in our discussion which follows. Retaining John Wesley’s grace language, let me present the prototype Wesleyan grace spectrum in simple diagrammatic form, as follows:

Grace

Preventing—Justifying—Regenerating—Sanctifying—Perfecting→[God’s Glory]

(Prevenient)

(Prevenient Grace)

[Responding → Responsible Grace]

The diagram, with thanks to the help of present-day Wesleyan scholars, is meant to show:

1. Grace is a continuous process, a progression, as suggested by the continuous tense of the infinitives (-ing ending), as qualifiers of grace. The bold-type words are intended to reflect the prototype Wesleyan experience and language of grace as a process (although they used the abstract nouns more than the infinitives in the continuous tense).

2. *Preventing* is an English word in older form meaning “come before” (*pre*=before, *venio*=come). The old word is displayed on the diagram to keep to the continuous tense. The modern form of the word is *prevenient*, the meaning of which is “coming before.” At one time prevenient grace was not given much attention because it is “pre-faith,” that is, pre-justification by faith. But it is increasingly re-recognized by Wesleyan scholars to be an important step, the initial step, of the whole grace-progression. The Wesley brothers’ moments of their quickened

conscience and of awakening to their unrighteousness were actually prerequisites to their faith-experience and re-birth.² Furthermore, prevenient grace is a relevant factor in considering Christian faith in relation to non-Christian faiths.³ That is why on the diagram prevenient grace (non-bold type, in that prevenient grace in that context is hard to nail down) appears again at the end. The end, on my diagram, is open-ended, not closed or finalized in an explicit way, but it leads to a glorious future (the word “glorification” does appear in John’s writings and Charles’ hymns often enough).

3. Regenerating grace is inserted between justifying and sanctifying grace to indicate that regeneration involves both justification and sanctification, even if Wesley may not have always explicitly made that kind of neat placement. Nevertheless, in his mind, regeneration is equivalent to new birth, and new birth overlaps both justification and sanctification. Justification frees us from bondage to sin, while sanctification frees us to grow in grace. Wesley says in his sermon “The Scriptural Way of Salvation”: “At the same time that we are justified, yea, in that very moment, sanctification begins. In that moment we are ‘born again,’ ‘born from above,’ ‘born of the Spirit.’”

4. Perfecting grace as a concluding part of a continuous process would save us from the trouble that “perfection” (implying a completed state of affairs) got John Wesley himself into, no matter how hard he tried to get out of it (notwithstanding his famous tract, “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection”). There is an ingenious Confucian way to characterize the “going-onto-perfecting” process, borrowing an expression from the opening sentence of the Confucian classic, *The Great Learning* (Daxue): “Do not rest until you reach the highest good.” Here is an “interface”⁴ for Confucian thought to come in. I shall come back to that later on.

² For discussions on prevenient grace, see Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 83–90; 226–229; 245–246. Also Kenneth J. Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley’s Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 38–45; Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 27–41.

³ Runyon, *The New Creation*, 218–220.

⁴ If you are experienced in computerizing, you know what “interface” means or what it involves. *Interface* refers to an electric circuit, connection, or program that joins one device or system to another (*Oxford Advanced Learners’ English-Chinese Dictionary*, 8th ed. [Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2013]). As interface equips you to operate a computer to join or connect devices and programs so as to effectuate communication, as in the internet; so you are equipped to interface religio-cultural tradi-

5. “Responding grace” naturally leads into “responsible grace” (not bold-typed because it was not in Wesley’s erstwhile vocabulary), yet it is given a place of prominence here (between brackets in the diagram), as notable Methodist theologians (like John B. Cobb, Jr.⁵ and Randy Maddox⁶) have done, considering it to be a promising contemporary expression for enhancing the Wesleyan ethos. “Responsible grace” implies human beings’ ability to respond to God, and that naturally leads to responsibility under God. That would help resolve some of the historical issues involving human freewill and God’s sovereignty. Also that has important implications for mission and social ethics, but we cannot go into that now.

Assurance, Holiness, Christian Perfection, Entire Sanctification are important traditional Wesleyan theological categories, all related to grace, but they will not be dealt with in this paper. Speaking in metaphorical language, in my imaginary “basketful of gifts of grace” they are not part of the bundle of gift-items (like a bunch of vine-fruits such as grapes), but are nice articles placed beside the basket, like stone carvings or sheaves of leaves, to enhance the appealing qualities of the gifts to be offered.

One more hint we can get from the imagery of a basketful of gifts. Supposing the gifts are fruits, then a fruit, like an apple or pear, usually has light-reflection dot on the surface, and that make the fruit come to life. Ah! That is like the image of God reflecting the touch of divine grace. In fact, that leads up to the next subject, the idea of *imago Dei*.

II. DEIFICATION: BY WAY OF RESTORING THE *IMAGO DEI* IN THE HUMAN PERSON

I owe it to Albert Outler for calling attention to the wide interest of John Wesley in the early Eastern Orthodox fathers in a lecture given by him in the early 1960s at a Methodist scholars’ meeting which I sat in

tions and philosophical systems through certain connecting links or joints or even gaps.

⁵ John B. Cobb, Jr., *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995).

⁶ Maddox, *Responsible Grace*.

as a graduate student.⁷ Indeed, several generations of Methodist scholars are indebted to the venerable professor for such a reminder. Consequent to Professor Outler's prompting, I got interested in reading Orthodox theology. Later on I even tried out teaching an introductory course in Eastern Orthodox Theology.

There is no point in flaunting my knowledge of Eastern Orthodox thought, which is at best rudimentary, except for the need to identify certain key ideas. Deification/*Theosis* is certainly a prominent Orthodox doctrine. A standard statement is that of St. Athanasius: "God became man so that men might become gods." [Please excuse the masculine-gender language used by the venerable fathers, in this context as well as in the following.] God became man, no problem: that is the Incarnation. Men become gods? That can be perplexing. It sounds like Hinduism, with its numerous divinized gods and goddesses. Then a woman student in the class remarked, could it mean that men and women have a spark of the divine in them? I responded approvingly, "something like that;" "but a spark re-ignited," I added. The point is, Eastern Orthodoxy is a profuse vineyard, and leeway should be allowed for nuanced interpretation. In this instance, the spark has been becoming dimmer and dimmer because of human degradation; but the spark, the dimmed original *imago Dei*, can be re-ignited by the divine fire, because it has not gone out. It is this kind of imaginative interpretation, tempered by reason, that makes the reading of Orthodox literature more rewarding (as in my teaching of the course). Another notable Orthodox quotation, from Cyril of Alexandria: "We are all called to take part in divinity, becoming the likeness of Christ and the image of the Father, by participation." "The likeness of Christ" and "the image of the Father" can be resolved in the Trinity, bringing along the Spirit, who will restore the damaged image to the likeness of Christ. Orthodox fathers like to speak of participation in, or to take part in, or to be participants of, the divine nature, with reference to deification [in line with the word *imago Dei*, we might as well preferably use the word "deification" rather than "*theosis*"]. The expressions, "to take part in divinity," "participation in it," and "participants of divine nature," as I found out, are different English translations of the same notion at the end of the scriptural passage, II Peter 1:3–4, which is often used by Orthodox

⁷ The lecture is presumably the same or rewritten piece, "John Wesley's interests in the early Fathers of the Church," in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991).

theologians to explain deification. Depending on the different English versions, the human side (having escaped from corruption) will once again become part of the divine (which is incorruptible). In what sense? In terms of being? action? relationship? spiritual communion? mystical union? sharing of God's energies? All rich possibilities! But none by itself all-sufficient!

In the course in Orthodox theology we went onto the theme of *imago Dei*, surely. Having pored over many a page of Orthodox writings, I came to the consensus understanding that the image of God originally given to the human person in Creation is marred or defaced, consequent to the fall of Adam, human beings' ancestor. The image can be restored or repaired by the working of the Holy Spirit, by renewing man/woman, to be like Christ (or Christ-like), or to the likeness of Christ. Some Orthodox fathers speak of "likeness of God" rather than "likeness of Christ." Or, are the two expressions complementary? There is room for discussion. So is the subtle distinction, or approximation, between "image of God" and "likeness of God." At any rate, the Eastern Orthodox conception about the image of God is somewhat different from that in Western theological traditions (like Augustinianism, Lutheran orthodoxy, and Calvinist orthodoxy) which regard human nature as totally depraved, so that the originally bestowed divine image is shattered or destroyed altogether with some souls. In that respect John Wesley's position wavered, but there is evidence that at certain points he was attracted to the side of Eastern Orthodoxy more than the Western orthodoxies.

I have followed rather closely Wesley's appeal to the Bible in his preaching to highlight the image of God. Way back in 1730, eight years before his Aldersgate episode of 1738, Wesley preached a sermon entitled "The Image of God." The sermon is straightforward enough about the Genesis declaration on God creating man in His own image. The sermon is interesting in a number of ways. First, Wesley fills rich contents into the metaphor of the image: intelligence, will, virtue, righteousness, immortality, etc. in creation. Second, come the tragic fall of Adam, and moral corruption befalls men and women henceforth; and the image of God in them is said to be "disordered," "diseased," and "disposed?" [meaning not altogether clear], but not totally destroyed. Third, the seed of immortality in the divine image is not lost forever, and the goodness of the original image can be recovered or restored, by the death of Christ conquering the death brought about by Adam, whereby "glorious change" is brought about, as is shown in humility, new understanding, reformed will, and refined virtues, etc. We can see

that there are more than a few traces of resemblance between John Wesley and Orthodoxy.

In another sermon, “The New Birth” (preached in 1760), Wesley connects the new birth with the image of God motif. The sermon begins with an even more enriched conception of the image of God by looking at the image in three aspects—the natural image, the political image, and the moral image. The natural image is the originally endowed image including immortality, understanding, freedom of will, and various affections. The political image refers to human beings as the governor of the earth, having dominion over the fishes of the sea, the fowl of the air, and the cattle of the field. The moral image includes righteousness, holiness, and love; justice, mercy, and truth. Next, the human person, though endowed with the image of God, is not immutable, and indeed humankind persistently goes afoul as a result of their ancestor Adam’s fall. Thus human nature is corrupted, and humankind is separated from the Creator, who is immortal and the source of immortality. For all practical intents and purposes, fallen men and women are spiritually dead. They must be born again. The New Testament episode of Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus about “being born again” is introduced. Rebirth or new birth is a new birth of the spirit. Now the enlightening part of Wesley’s sermon comes, for me, in the analogy of a new-born baby having ears, eyes, and other organs, at birth, hearing, seeing, and sensing, for the first time, the brand new objects of the world into which she is born. Most tellingly as an analogy, just as the new-born baby breathes the air of the world for the first time, the newly born person lets the Spirit of God breathe into her to give her new life.

Theodore Runyon, picking up from the sermons, “The New Birth” and “The New Creation,” elaborates on the threefold image (natural, political and moral) to be included in the new creation, in his book entitled *The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology Today*.⁸ I read the book with great interest, which enhances my understanding of the image of God in John Wesley’s thinking, in relation to the new creation. At first-reading of Runyon’s book I thought that new creation refers to mainly current ecological concern and inclines to a sympathetic view of liberation ethics. But on further reading I have noted the spiritual dimension too, and spiritual renewal at that, both personal and the whole creation, from a Wesleyan perspective brought up-to-date. I congratulate Professor Runyon.

⁸ Published by Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.

III. WESLEY AND EASTERN ORTHODOXY

On the subject of Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy, Ted A. Campbell has rendered the valuable service of careful research into John Wesley's involvement in the study of Christian antiquity.⁹ The sweep of ancient Christian resources with which Wesley came into contact is indeed impressive, showing how broad-minded he was in his quest for broader theological understanding. Appendix 2 of Campbell's book lists the wide range of Greek and Syrian fathers' resources to which Wesley made references. Scholars differ in their assessment of the extent to which Wesley was impacted by the Orthodox fathers. Kenneth J. Collins, for instance, minimizes the influence of the Greek fathers on Wesley.¹⁰ While that question may have historical significance, what is of great interest to me is that, as a faithful follower (three centuries later) of Wesley, I do, at first-hand reading, find certain congeniality between Wesleyan thinking and that of certain Orthodox thinkers, who do speak to me as well as Wesley. For the limited scope of this paper, let me pick up three names at this point: Gregory of Nyssa, Macarius, and Ephrem Syrus.

Gregory of Nyssa

His name is not on the list of Campbell's Appendix 2; however, his name actually figures prominently in association with the name Macarius. Macarius' name is put on a high plane in the list of John Wesley's ancient heroes. He wrote in his journal (for July 30, 1736), "I read Macarius and sang." Wesley even edited an abridged volume of Macarius' homilies. The real authorship of the homilies ascribed to Macarius, an Eastern Orthodox monk, at first thought to be from Egypt, then in the Syrian region, has been questioned. Greek classics scholar Werner Jaeger argued that the real author was Gregory of Nyssa, one

⁹ Ted A. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change* (Nashville: Kingwood Books, 1991).

¹⁰ See Kenneth J. Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 198–200.

of the Cappadocian Fathers of the 4th century.¹¹ The scholarly dispute has not been definitively settled, but the name Pseudo-Macarius has been given to the Macarius assumed by John Wesley and students of ancient literature of his days. Regardless of the resolution of the authorship question, Gregory of Nyssa's influence on Macarius, pseudo or otherwise, is undeniable.

Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–c. 394) was one of the three great Cappadocian Fathers (the other two being Basil the Great, his elder brother, and Gregory of Nazianzen, a close friend). The trio was men of profound faith and great learning as well as dedicated churchmen rendering distinguished service. Wesley mentioned two of the names but, curiously, not Gregory of Nyssa. This last name, however, surfaced in connection with Wesley's favored ancient Orthodox writer, the supposed Macarius.

Gregory of Nyssa was a voluminous writer, covering a wide range of subjects.

In connection with this paper, what interests me most is his view on *imago Dei*, which forms the foundation of the great corpus of his teachings.¹² As the crowning achievement of the work of creation, man as a microcosm displays the same order and harmony of the macrocosm, the universe. However, this ancient philosophical idea is surpassed by the Christian doctrine of the image of God in man.

Man is the faithful image of his Maker principally by reason of his soul, and more precisely because this soul possesses reason, freedom of the will, and supernatural grace. Gregory uses the term "image" as the comprehensive expression for man's entire endowment of divine gifts, his original state of perfection.¹³

As I read this summary statement, I detect the notion of progression from separating from evil; to purifying of, and freeing from, passion; to achieving blessedness and attaining attributes of the kind that form in man the likeness of God. Here again is the movement from being like

¹¹ See note of this dispute in the introduction to *Pseudo-Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*, trans. and ed. George A. Maloney SJ, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist, 1992), 3.

¹² Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 3, *The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature, From the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classic, Inc., 1992), section on "Gregory of Nyssa," 254–296.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 292.

God to perfecting the image of God, thereby magnifying the glory of God forever more, indeed “from glory to glory” (the title of a tract of his).

Gregory’s writings betray a notable mystical strain in his writings. Though a great intellect, he did not want to be constrained by rational knowledge, which cannot reach the divine. There are the avenues of transcendent Wisdom, the vision of Beauty, and the virtuous life lived in Goodness. Is this a trace of Neo-Platonism? Most likely. But more than that, the Beatific Vision is indicated; that is mystical intuition.

Before leaving Gregory of Nyssa, there is an intriguing reference which I must note. He uses the Greek word *epectasis* to describe the movement of perpetual ascent and infinite growth. He writes:

Let us change in such a way that we may constantly evolve towards what is better, being transformed from glory to glory, and thus always improving and ever becoming more perfect by daily growth, and never arriving at any limit of perfection.¹⁴

For Gregory, every ending is a beginning, and every arrival is a new departure.

Well! At this point, two Confucian notions immediately come to mind. First, the expression from the first sentence of the Confucian classic *The Great Learning* quoted previously, about “not stopping until the highest good is reached.” Second, the expression from another great Chinese classic, the *I Ching* (The Book of Changes), “life-life re-creation without end” (生生不息, *shengsheng buxi*). This well-known expression has not been introduced in this paper until now. The *I Ching* is not exclusively a Confucian book, but Confucius is said to have compiled the *Xici* (a *Commentary* which has been attached as an important part of the whole *I Ching*). In the *Xici*, there is the dictum, 生生之謂易 (*shengsheng zhi wei yi*; vol. 1, chap. 5), meaning “life-life re-creation is the essence of Change (The Book of Changes).” In the context of the whole book, “life-life re-creation without end” breathes on every page. I will come back to these two Confucian notions later on. Here are two instances of “interface” opening the way for Chinese Confucian thought to converse with Eastern Orthodoxy. I shall return to those instances later.

¹⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, “On Perfection,” cited by Charles J. Healey SJ, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction to the Heritage* (Staten Island: Alba House, 1990), 44–45.

Pseudo-Macarius

Meanwhile, let us turn to the supposed author of the homilies attributed to Macarius, now given the name, Pseudo-Macarius. It is generally agreed among scholars that, whoever he was, he was a monk, who lived in the northeast region of Syria during the middle of the 4th century.¹⁵ From the writings, which consist of fifty homilies and a “Great Letter,” the author was evidently the head of a monastic community, for the homilies and the letter were addressed to members of the community by their superior. The linguistic characteristics, the geographical and cultural environment implied in the writings, and the historical references, all point to that particular region of a certain historical period.

There are several collections of the Macarian materials. So are there different translations in several languages. As is known in Methodist circles, John Wesley made an abridgement of an English translation of the Macarian homilies (known as “Macarius the Egyptian” at that time).¹⁶ The authorship question and research on the manuscripts are beyond my ken. It is sufficient for me as long as the manuscripts originated from the hands of a person or persons of flesh and blood, and the ideas and literary style flowing from those hands have life and spirit and a ring of truth.

Indeed what interest me are the main ideas and the linguistic-literary style of the homilies and the so-called Great Letter. I have read the whole corpus of materials translated by Fr. George Maloney. They are highly readable. Firstly, the writings have a spiritual quality, called “spirituality of the heart” by the translator. Secondly, the literary style, which is joined up with the spirituality of the heart just mentioned, has much appeal to me. Thirdly, the ideas, which are expressed in a language congenial to them and which are inseparable from the spiritual quality, sound familiar enough, given the Methodist background, and, coincidentally, the perspective of a Confucian-heart school of thought (there is such a school, as distinguished from the rationalist school).

First of all, with respect to the ideas, I can only make a few samplings here.

¹⁵ See the introduction to Maloney, *Pseudo-Macarius*, 1–32.

¹⁶ Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, 45.

Grace. Grace is strewn all over the places. What is interesting is that grace is not discussed in categorical terms; rather, as a quality, malleable and elusive. For example,

Grace, indeed, is unceasingly present and is rooted in us and mingled with our nature from our earliest years. It is as something natural and real which adheres to a person as though it formed one substance. Still, it operates in a person in various way, depending on one's co-operation as far as this is given. At times the fire flares out and burns with more vehement flames. At other times it burns more gently and slowly. The light that it gives off flames up at times and shines more brightly. At other times it goes down and barely gives off any light. So it is with the lamp of grace. It is always burning and giving off light, but when it is especially trimmed, it burns more brilliantly as though intoxicated by the love of God. But again, by a certain dispensation of God, the light is still there but barely shines. (Homily 8)¹⁷

Justification and Sanctification

Christians from one aspect are similar to lamps with oil in them, that is, all the fruits of justification. But if the lamp be not enkindled from that of the Godhead within them, they are nothing. The Lord was "the burning lamp" (John 5:35) by means of the Spirit of the Godhead which abided substantially in him and set on fire his heart according to the humanity. Take the example of a dirty old pouch filled with pearls. So too Christians in the exterior man they possess the "pearl of great price" (Matthew 13:46).

As many lights and burning lamps are lighted from fire, but the lamps and lights are lighted and shine from one nature, so also Christians are enkindled and shine from one nature, the divine fire, the Son of God, and they have their lamps burning in their hearts and they shine before him while living on earth, just as he did. For it says, "Therefore your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness" (Psalms 45:7). For this reason he was called Christ in order that we also, being anointed with the same substance and one body. Again it

¹⁷ Pseudo-Macarius, Homily 8, in Maloney, *Pseudo-Macarius*, 81. Subsequent citation of the translated version will be cited as "Maloney, nn" where nn denotes the page number.

says: “Both he that sanctifies and those that are sanctified are all of one” (Hebrews 2:11). (Homily 43)¹⁸

Spirit. Invariably Spirit is tied to prayer, purity, and perfection.

Everyone should push himself to beg the Lord to make him worthy to receive and find the heavenly treasure of the Spirit in order to be able easily and promptly to fulfill all the commandments of the Lord, without blame and with perfection. . . . The person who has found the Lord, the true treasure, by seeking the Spirit, by faith and great patience, brings forth the fruits of the Spirit. . . all righteousness and the command of the Lord which the Spirit orders he does by himself, purely and perfectly and without blame. (Homily 18)¹⁹

Image and Likeness of God

See how great are the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon. But the Lord was not pleased to find his rest in them, but in humanity alone. Man, therefore, is of greater value than all other creatures, and perhaps I will not hesitate to say, not only visible creatures, but also those invisible, namely, “the ministering spirits” (Hebrews 1:14). For it was not of Michael or Gabriel, the archangels, that God said: “let us make men to our image and likeness” (Genesis 1:26), but he said it concerning the spiritual make-up of the human, I mean, the immortal soul. (Homily 15)²⁰

All these terminologies and concepts, which are familiar to Wesleyan language, are part of the Eastern Orthodox vocabulary from antiquity on. From the hands of a Syrian monk, who lived more than fourteen centuries prior to Wesley’s time (or whoever it was that wrote the spiritual homilies credited to the name Macarius), the words and descriptions come alive again, even to the ears and hearts of men and women of this day, among them Methodists of Far East Asia.²¹

¹⁸ Ps.-Macarius, Homily 43 (Maloney, 222).

¹⁹ Ps.-Macarius, Homily 18 (Maloney, 141–146).

²⁰ Ps.-Macarius, Homily 15 (Maloney, 108–129).

²¹ The name Hoo-Jung Lee, of the Methodist Theological Seminary, Seoul, South Korea, immediately comes to mind. See his article, “Experiencing the Spirit in Wesley and Macarius,” in *Rethinking Wesley’s Theology: For Contemporary Methodism*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1998), 197–212.

Amazing interface connection over a long time-span and a wide space-distance! Note, further, the nodal points of interface for trans-continental and cross-cultural theological interculturalization suggested in terms of language style. The style expressed in the language of the Macarian homilies is that of a language of the heart, coming out of, and speaking to, a spirituality of the heart.²²

Ephraem Syrus

The name Ephraem Syrus is frequently mentioned by Wesleyan scholars alongside Macarius as two early Eastern fathers who made deep impressions on him in spirituality. John Wesley's connection with Macarius is better known, in that he edited an abridgement of Macarius' homilies. In the previous section of this paper I indicated my own comprehension of Macarius' impact on him as on myself through my first-hand reading of the primary source materials. Wesley's connection with Ephraem Syrus is less pronounced. I have diligently searched for further hints possibly from the Wesleyan scholars' research work, not to much avail, however, except for a scant notation in Albert C. Outler's article, "John Wesley's Interests in the Early Fathers of the Church," with vague reference to subjects like love, perfection, etc.²³ Happily in my personal library is a volume of Ephrem the Syrian's hymns translated by Kathleen E. McVey. Professor McVey was my neighbor at Princeton Theological Seminary where I spent a year (1996–1997) as a visiting professor. I have treasured the book not only because it was given by the author but also because I have enjoyed reading the hymns from time to time.

My apology for these personal references, but it is meant to suggest that what connection I might discover between Wesley and Ephrem Syrus (from here on I shall use this spelling of the name Ephrem instead of Ephraem, to be in line with the spelling adopted by the book which I am reading directly) is a personal venture, and, furthermore, what appropriation I might have of the hymns is personal experience.

²² George A. Maloney, translator and editor of the *Pseudo-Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*, has a section on "Spirituality of the Heart" in the introduction of the book: *Pseudo-Macarius*, 3–4.

²³ In Oden and Longden, *The Wesleyan Theology Heritage*, 106–107.

Ephrem Syrus' life is better documented than Macarius'.²⁴ He was born c. 306 in Nisibis, a major commercial and political center in northeast Mesopotamia, a region of which Syria was a part. The population of Nisibis was multi-racial. A thriving Christian community was established there, and the community members were Syriac-speaking. This Syriac-speaking Christian community was surrounded by other Christian groups, including Gnostic Christians and Jewish Christians, and there were other religio-cultural groups as well. Syriac, we should know, was a dialect of Aramean, the language spoken by Jesus and his immediate disciples, and by the 3rd and 4th centuries it became the third international language of the Christian Church. Ephrem, growing up and living in Nisibis, spoke and wrote in Syriac. If his spoken and written works (mostly hymns, for which he was best known) have something important to communicate, whether to Christian groups or non-Christian people, Syriac served as a powerful medium of communication, in his vicinity as well as when he moved from place to place. By virtue of that, Ephrem's influence in the literate world of his days was increasingly recognized by his contemporaries. He finally settled in Edessa, an important Christian center, where he was in the service of the church as deacon, choir-master, teacher and above all, an acclaimed hymn writer. Ephrem's influence in the literate world of his days was widely recognized, even among his Latin- and Greek-speaking Christian contemporaries. He died in 373 in Edessa. In recognition of the sanctity of his life and of his blessed legacy to posterity, he was canonized a saint.

What strikes one most as soon as one opens the pages of the collection of Ephrem's hymns is the profusion of imageries jumping out from sentence after sentence to meet one's eyes. The imageries are from varied sources: the Scriptures, the cultural soils of Middle East, everyday life, whether rustic or urbane, and so forth. Just a few quick samplings:

The name of oil is indeed His symbol
and the shadow of the name, the Anointed.
The shadow of His name indeed fell upon their sick,
And they were cured.
In sleep oil stole the fatigue of sleeping bodies,

²⁴ Brief information of Ephrem's life and time is distilled from the preface of and introduction to *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*, trans. and introduced by Kathleen E. McVey, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist, 1989).

And while it anointed, in baptism it stole sin,
 The weariness of sleeping bodies it stole, the sins of
 waking bodies it stole. (Hymns on Virginity, No. 4)²⁵

Who has ever seen two harps,
 One silent and one endowed with speech?
 But the silence of that one, its preaching,
 was not heard by rational creatures.
 For the silent one persuaded by deed,
 but the one endowed with speech persuaded by sound,
 By words and by deeds both,
 They proclaimed the Lord of all. (Hymns on Virginity, No. 29)²⁶

It may be just common sense instruction, yet it is in poetic form. In translation it may not be easy to have the rhymes in place, but the rhythmic flow is there and the imageries are striking.

If you are interested in theological themes, there are plenty. For example,

[Nativity]
 Glory to Him who became earthly
 Although heavenly by His nature!
 By His love he became first-born to Mary
 Although He is first-born of Divinity.
 He became in name the child of Joseph
 Although He is Child of the Heavenly One.
 He became by His will a human
 Although He is God by His nature.
 Glorious is Your will and Your nature!
 Blessed is Your glory that put on our image!
 (Hymns on the Nativity, No. 23)²⁷

[Deification]
 Glorious is the Wise One who allied and joined
 Divinity with humanity,
 One from the height and the other from the depth.
 He mingled the natures like pigments
 And an image came into being: the God-man.
 (Hymns on the Nativity, No. 8)²⁸

²⁵ McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*, 278–279.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 392.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 188.

[Resurrection]

His body was newly mixed with our bodies
 And His pure blood has been poured into our veins.
 And His voice into our ears, and his brightness
 into our eyes.
 All of Him has been mixed into all of us
 by His compassion.
 (Hymns on the Nativity, No. 8)²⁹

[Creation Renewed]

He renewed the sky since fools worshipped
 All the luminaries. He renewed the earth
 That had grown old because of Adam.
 A new creation came to be by His spittle,
 And the All-sufficient set straight bodies and minds.
 (Hymns on the Nativity, No. 17)³⁰

Professor Runyon, noted Wesleyan scholar, author of *New Creation*, would appreciate this. So do I, a Wesleyan spiritual descendant from East Asia, who is putting “Creation Renewed” on the title of this paper. Let us go on with more of Ephrem’s “symbolic theology.”

Ephrem has written three hymns with the symbolism of three harps. In one hymn (No. 28 of the Hymns on Virginity) the three harps represent Old Testament, New Testament, and nature. The second hymn (No. 29) carries on with figures from the Old and the New Testaments (Moses and the resurrected Lazarus) and creation (of which the human person is the crown). The third hymn (No. 30) has Christ playing the harps producing music pleasing to the ears of the healthy (cured people) and unpleasant to the unhealthy (like the jealous Saul disliking David’s music on the harp), but eventually all the music sounds blend into harmony, as even the cursing on the fig tree and the howling of the roaring sea in the end come to a gloriously harmonious ending.

Last but not least, a hymn (No. 26 of the Hymns on Virginity) singing of a list of women in the New Testament who are characterized as the brides of Christ, each teaching valuable lesson: Martha and Mary (sisters of Lazarus) remembered for having fed Jesus and receiving instructions from him, the former praised especially for her outspokenness and service; the sinful woman who anointed Jesus; the woman

²⁸ Ibid., 119.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 156.

healed from hemorrhage as a sign of cure from hidden anger; the poor widow giving two mites as a model of generous offering; the woman by the well who broke the racial boundary limiting God's love. Finally, of course, Mary, the mother of Jesus, to whom was praised:

Blessed are you, woman, who while
our Lord was on earth, saw Him on high.
Your love was exalted and broke through heaven
and saw the Son on the right hand.

According to Kathleen E. McVey, who translated into English a large bulk of Ephrem the Syrian's hymns, he has left a great legacy in hymnology to not only Eastern Christianity but Christianity in the West as well. I am not a hymnologist, but, for a Far Eastern Asian Methodist who is interested in the cross-fertilization of cultures and religions, or theological interculturalization as I call it, the Middle Eastern hymn-writer of over fifteen centuries ago has left a trail for me, and perhaps a few others too, to walk further on. In what direction next?

IV. HEAVEN-EARTH-HUMANITY RENEWED: IN DYNAMIC HARMONY OR AS A WAY OF SALVATION

There are really many signs for us to follow. For one, what about the hint given by Ephrem in one of his hymns (No. 17, Hymn of Nativity) where he refers to "restoring the whole creation" thereby renewing the sky and the earth that have grown old (strophe 11 & 12), following the renewing of old Adam's body and mind by "setting straight the bodies and minds" [of the wearied]? Splendid! That points to the heaven-earth-humanity harmony leitmotif of Confucianism. This is not an unimaginable "interface" communication nodal point, despite the wide cross-continental gulf and the long historical span of time.

So, enter Confucianism! "Heaven-humanity in harmony, Heaven-humanity in harmony"—that is a song echoing in the corridors of Chinese history through centuries. Chinese culture and Confucianism are not synonymous, but Confucianism is main-stream Chinese culture.

All Chinese (*Han*³¹ or otherwise) have streaks of Confucian culture in their consciousness (or collective unconsciousness). Amazingly, Confucianism has been a notable cultural factor in Korean history too, as it is in some neighboring countries of China where Chinese have migrated. But, have no fear you are getting into “cultural imperialism” or a complicated philosophical system. Actually all of us here can get a taste, a good taste, of Confucianism right away—through a few epigrammatic sayings from the Confucian classics which you can readily grasp.

I think it is by now a saying familiar even to people in the West, that “within the four seas we are brothers [and sisters].” That is from the Confucian classic *The Analects* (The Book of Sayings), compiled by the disciples of Confucius, the first Confucian, who lived twenty-five centuries ago (five centuries before Christ). But most people do not know the paragraph before that saying, which consists of a question asked by one of the disciples of Confucius, “What is *ren* (仁 benevolence or kindness or humaneness, the foremost virtue)?” The answer, “When you go abroad, treat everyone as a great guest, and employ people as though they will assist you in a great sacrificial ceremony.” I think that, without going into a learned exegesis, you already have an idea of what *ren* is. Because you do, you can understand why within the four seas all are brothers and sisters.

Now *ren* is the premier virtue, and actually in classical Confucian thought, *ren* is the first in a list of “the four beginnings of humanness” 人之四端. That comes from Mencius, called the “second sage” of Confucianism. What are the four beginnings or primary principles? They are *ren* 仁, *yi* 義, *li* 禮, *zhi* 智. *Ren* is benevolence, the feeling of commiseration or compassion. *Yi* is righteousness, dislike of what is evil or righteous indignation. *Li* is propriety, proper behaving (outward behavior as well as inner attitude) in relating to others. *Zhi* is wisdom, knowing what is right and what is wrong. Later on Confucian scholars and moralists wrote elaborate commentaries on these primary principles, but Mencius himself thought that most people have an innate sense in this regard, and only minimal words were used in the introductory sections of *Book of Mencius* (notes taken by his disciples). Let us be content with these scanty, pristine strokes of classical Confucian instructions for our purpose here. Many more valuable Confucian mor-

³¹ *Han* is the largest ethnic group of the Chinese people and has played a dominant role in Chinese history. The written Chinese language is *Han* language, and it survives, in part, in Korean written language as well as Japanese written language.

al teachings can be cited (including more famous passages from Mencius and Confucius), but there is no need for further ado now. Suffice it to say that Confucianism has evolved into a highly developed ethical-cultural system, a worthy legacy to world civilization.

Coming back to those four principles or beginnings just mentioned, Christian people of our days from the West or East (Far East or Eastern Orthodoxy), including followers of Wesley, all who are but slightly acquainted with world culture, would not find those just-mentioned Confucian words and concepts strange, I am sure, given possible nuanced differences in meaning, as is true in all cross-cultural situations. To go on just a little further, you may have heard of the Chinese' reference to "Heaven-Human in Harmony" (天人合一, or Unity of Heaven and Human), or popularized notions such as human beings (on earth) must be abiding to *tian* (天, the sky or heavens) or something of a higher order. Anyway, it is the idea of humans (on earth) and heavens (up high) in accord, the reverse being humans and heavens in discord. If "heavens" (plural) mean the natural sky above us, not the spiritualized "Heaven" (capitalized), that is closer to Chinese naturalist-humanist thinking than spiritualized thinking, whether in philosophical thought or in the thinking of men and women on the streets. What I am lifting up is the lofty idea of "Heaven-Earth-Humanity in Harmony." The capitalized letters of the alphabet are meant to indicate the dignity of the idea. Indeed the idea is highly dignified in Chinese classical thinking. Heaven, Earth, and Humanity are traditionally called the "Three Abilities" (三才, or Three Powers/Talents) and if you conceive of the trio in harmony or unity, you hit upon an age-old ideal of the Chinese people. In the Chinese classic, the *I Ching*, Heaven, Earth, and Humanity are the archetypes, which, in their infinite configurations, are in dynamic harmony. That is the leitmotif of the great Chinese classic and an archetypal ideal of Chinese culture.

But how has the ideal enfolded in history? That is a great question for learned scholars. Let me, instead, turn to an actual historical incident that took place on June 4th, 1989 in Tiananmen Square, Beijing.

That is the incident of mass-demonstration staged by hundreds and thousands of Chinese students and scholars in Tiananmen Square (*Tiananmen* means "the gate of heavenly peace"), Beijing, demonstrating against corruption in the Chinese hierarchy and calling for democracy and reform. The demonstration had been going on for more than a month. Then on June 4th before dawn, a row of tanks equipped with machine-guns rolled out to the streets and killed or injured hun-

dreds of unarmed people. Thus a peaceful demonstration ended in blood bath.

The news was broadcast and televised in Hong Kong, a British colony to be returned to China in 1997. The news was received as shocking by the public. Almost instantly people in Hong Kong staged rallies to express grief over the tragedy and condolences for the victims. There were huge placards reading 天怒人怨 (“anger from heavens and lament among humans”), 神人共哀 (“gods and humans grieving together”), etc. Expressed in those placards are the sentiments of god and humanity grieving in empathy. By implication, the heaven-humanity accord is broken. For all intents and purposes it is the heaven-earth-humanity in harmony ideal (considering the fact that human beings lived on earth) that is shattered.

And that is a shattering experience for me personally! For days and weeks afterwards, I sighed in front of my students and friends that the Heaven-Earth-Humanity in Harmony is a wonderful ideal in the books and the heads of scholars, but it has never been realized in the history of China.

Then came the televised view of one of the persecuted scholars now in exile in the US (for, following the June 4th incident, survived demonstrators were persecuted and a large number of them fled abroad). The view showed that this particular scholar, Yuan Chiming by name, was converted to the Christian faith as he wept under the cross hung in a Catholic hospital’s hallway over a statue of Mary. He testified that for the first time in his life (here-to-forth a non-believer) he wept under a cross, and after his conversion, followed by a period of theological education, he began a fruitful ministry among Chinese scholars in exile and students studying abroad. I do not mean to dramatize this personalized religious experience (though it has had far-ranging public consequences). But truth to tell, in my thinking from that time on, the cross is more assuredly than ever before the permanent sign of a crucial historical event whereby Heaven-Earth-Humanity are reconciled, leading to harmony and unification and all the rest.

Here I take Heaven-Earth-Humanity in Harmony as an axis, around which the wheels of a Wesleyan-Orthodox-Confucian interaction (or theological interculturalism as I call it), turn and roll on—and testified in historical happenings.

The Heaven-Earth-Humanity in Harmony ideal is too good to be true in real life. There must be some cracks somewhere. The great “fault” (in common language, but fortified by geological language) is in the “fall” of humanity (in biblical language). There is no need to

sermonize or theologize further except to say that the fall has never been taken seriously by the Chinese, Confucian scholars in particular. The Chinese, Confucians not excepted, had better take note of that now. Huge masses of Chinese in Communist China are apparently taking the cross to heart, for there are unprecedented awakenings as evidenced by amazing growth in the Christian Church (30 to 80 million Christians in China now, by various counts, though there are problems in such an eruption of church development). I am not evoking the topics of church growth and revivals for a popular church pep-talk. It is a sober subject of renewal of humanity that I want to bring up.

V. THREE-WAY THEOLOGICAL INTERCULTURATION

Not surprisingly, if Confucians speak of Heaven-Earth-Humanity in Harmony, they actually mention the renewal of humanity in the first place. The beginning sentence of the *Great Learning*, which reads, “The Way of Great Learning, is in the brightening up of the bright virtues, in a renewed people, not stopping until the highest excellence is reached” (my own translation, pardon me, an improvement over the old translation by James Legge). It is the idea of renewing (“renovating” in the old translation) the people that I wish to underline in the first instance. The Commentary (by Confucius’ disciple Chang, attached to the Text) for that line adds the reference to words inscribed on the bath tub of a king, “If you can renew yourself one day, then do so from day to day, again every day.” It further adds: “King Kang said, raise up a New People; and the words in the Book of Poetry, the ancient state of Zhou issued edicts for renewing the state.” So there is the allusion to human renewal, brought out in Confucian teachings from the start.

How is human renewal to be carried out? In Confucian terms, characteristically, by human cultivation, that is, cultivation of virtues by human efforts. I let history show whether and how that is true. Pondering over Chinese history, there have been periods of crying for national renewal to be sure, but few have led to success. Too many reactionary forces have been at work. Confucianism has turned out to be more conservative than progressive a cultural force. Nevertheless, curiously enough, Confucianism has not faded out, and Chinese culture has not died out. There must be some enduring life-force hidden somewhere.

But focusing on the contemporary scene, by way of the June 4th incident, the tragic outcome shows that it is the result of fallen humanity, in spite of the Confucian optimistic view of human nature and trusting in human efforts of self-improvement. John and Charles Wesley at a critical point of their life knew that. Eastern Orthodox fathers have also realized that. But the Wesleys, the Orthodox fathers, and all Christian theologians worthy of the name, have found their way out, through the cross and onto greater glory. In theological language, the Orthodox theologians consistently, and John Wesley intermittently, state that, even though the originally good image of God implanted in the human person, is marred or defaced, but not to the extent of being shattered or broken up, so that the damaged image can be restored or mended. Not by self-cultivation, but by divine grace; or, what is the same, by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit.

Confucians would not understand that kind of language, not yet; but they would echo the idea of renovating or restoring the image in the human person. In fact, they like to speak of “brightening up the bright human virtues.” Ah! That is where Confucianism brightens itself up again. For brightening up, polishing up, excellent virtues, and renovating human nature are their fortes, as Confucians claim.

Wesleyans would say to the Confucians, would they not? “Welcome aboard! We do believe that sinners can be justified, by faith, and immediately following that, sanctification begins, thereafter moving on to perfection, until the highest good is reached, as you would say.”

As to virtues, Wesleyans along with all Christians, have plenty to gain from learning more from Confucians, and, vice-versa; mutually, too, Confucians and Christians alike have much to share, in the way of building up virtuous life on the road toward perfection or the supremely good. Incidentally, few Chinese would consider human nature hopelessly depraved. Look at the Hong Kong people, noted for their materialism and self-centeredness, yet in their annual peaceful mass demonstration for well over a score of years, against injustice done on the victims of the June 4th blood bath, and for the rehabilitation of that incidence as a milestone of progress on the road toward democracy and freedom. There is residual goodness in human nature after all.

Thus two more “interface” mechanisms present themselves. First, synergism, widely known in Orthodoxy and acceptable to Wesley,

bridges the gap between divine initiative and human self-sufficiency.³² Confucians—and the pre-justification Wesleys!—take self-effort too seriously, whereas the predestination die-hards (like some “orthodox” Calvinists) allow no room for human freedom even to respond to God’s saving grace for those who are destined to be damned. Second, prevenient grace slips in at points where Christians (like Methodists and Eastern Orthodox people), in dialogue with non-Christians (like Confucians), find converging issues (like the virtuous life and relentless search for excellence). The prevenient grace comes in when grace connects up with innate good conscience and receptiveness to goodness even in non-Christian people. Prevenient grace may not be nicely defined, but then so is the Holy Spirit in unpredictable event. It blows where it wills, even outside familiar territories.

The “all Christians” alluded include Eastern Orthodox people. There is no need to rehearse their story with respect to *imago Dei* and holiness. But about Deification we can say a little more.

Deification/*Theosis* is a very rich doctrine. It has a great deal to offer to Western Christianity. Orthodox theologians, by chance meeting Confucians, with their leitmotif of Heaven-Earth-Humanity in Harmony, would not be shy in singing the Orthodox theme-song of “Heaven-Earth-Humanity in Communion” or some such “grand-narrative” tune. It is not just a matter of intellectual understanding; it involves spiritual communion as well. This is where Orthodoxy, again, has a good deal to offer. Wesley took Orthodox spirituality to heart quite a lot. So are a few Asian Methodist theologians doing that, bit by bit, if not a whole lot yet.³³

Spirituality, in the Christian sense, is where Confucianism falls short. When Confucianism talks about renewal or renovation it is in the humanist and naturalist sense. Scriptural “new birth,” “new creation,” “the new man,” etc., as so convincingly preached by Wesley, refer to

³² Albert Outler is helpful in explaining synergism as a handy means to bridge those gaps. See Oden and Longden, *The Wesleyan Theology Heritage*, 199–201, 206–208.

³³ Besides Hon-Jung Lee already mentioned, Jung-Chun Park, also of Methodist Theological Seminary in Seoul, has written a piece, “Christian Perfection and Confucian Sage Learning: An Interreligious Dialogue in the Crisis of Life,” in *Wesleyan Perspectives on the New Creation*, ed. M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2004), 119–148. Another Asian Methodist scholar, Justin Tan, a Malaysian Chinese now teaching in Melbourne, wrote his doctoral thesis on Eastern Orthodox spirituality. In a paper presented to a Chinese-speaking Methodist theologians’ meeting in Hong Kong, 2011, he argued that John Wesley was markedly influenced by St. John Chrysostom (347–407) whereby Wesley came up with a “third-way” view on the issue of freewill and grace which would speak to those who are Asians.

spiritual renewal. The Eastern Orthodox fathers, in speaking of restoring or repairing the impaired image of God in humankind, leading to deification, or spiritual reunion of the divine and the human, do the same. How will that help the Confucians or those Chinese or Asians with a Confucian cultural background? Besides reading Wesley's sermons and Orthodox writings, to which they scarcely have access, exposure to the New Testament is a key. I do not mean to sound glib, like an evangelist (which I am not), but for all I hear, when millions of Chinese people are beginning to be awakened to the pervasive moral degradation that their nation has fallen into, their "poverty in spirit" will lead them yet to open themselves up to the teachings of the Bible, as millions of them indeed are. Then the Heaven-Earth-Humanity in Harmony is not just book-talk harmony but dynamic, spiritual communion, something like what the Orthodox fathers say; not just theoretical harmony, but a way of salvation as Wesley would have it.

Let me conclude with a three-way "interfacing":

One, the Wesleyan "sanctifying-perfecting-glorifying grace" continuum.

Two, a Confucian double-reference to: (a) "stop only when you reach the highest good" (止於至善); and (b) "life-life re-creation without end."

Three, Gregory of Nyssa's *epectasis*, "from-glory-to-glory."