Holistic and Holy Transformation: The Practice of Wesleyan Discipleship and Transformative Learning Theory

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Faculty of Humanities

2016

Tammie Marie Grimm

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures

Research carried out at
Nazarene Theological College
Manchester
Contents

Chapter Outline .................................................................................................................. 2
Tables and Figures.............................................................................................................. 6
Abbreviations.................................................................................................................... 7
Abstract .......................................................................................................................... 8
Declaration........................................................................................................................ 9
Copyright..........................................................................................................................10
Acknowledgements.........................................................................................................11

Chapter One: The Dilemma of Disciple Making ......................................................... 13
  Introduction ......................................................................................................................13
  The Need for Transformation ........................................................................................13
  Classical Christian Discipleship .....................................................................................17
  Wesley’s Model of Discipleship .......................................................................................20
  Transformative Learning Theory ....................................................................................24
  Methodology and Chapter Outline .................................................................................27

Chapter Two: Discipleship in Christian Education .................................................. 33
  Introduction ......................................................................................................................33
  United Methodist Christian Religious Educators ........................................................35
  Other Methodist and Wesleyan Christian Educators ..................................................39
  Transformative Learning and Christian Education .....................................................45
  Conclusion ....................................................................................................................50
Chapter Three: The Practice of Wesleyan Discipleship

Introduction

Defining the Practice of Discipleship
- The Presence and Role of the telos
- The Presence and Role of Virtue
- The Presence and Role of the ethos
- The Presence and Role of the Disciplines

Building a Framework for Wesleyan Discipleship
- The Relationship of Virtues and Disciplines
- The Relationship of ethos and telos
- The Construction of a Discipleship Matrix

Discipleship as Holy Transformation
- The Process of Sanctification
- Divine Grace and Human Effort
- A Lifelong Endeavour

Conclusion

Chapter Four: The Fragmentation of Discipleship

Introduction

Imbalances in the Transformed Life
- Tending Towards Quietistic Traps
- Tending Towards Nominalistic Traps
- Tending Towards Legalistic Traps
- Tending Towards Antinomianistic Traps

Partial Visions of the Transformed Life
- Tending Towards Pietistic Traps
- Tending Towards Enthusiastic Traps
- Tending Towards Formalistic Traps
- Tending Towards Rationalistic Traps

Conclusion
Chapter Five: Transformative Learning Theory (TLT)…………………………. 115

Introduction ........................................................................................................115

Adult Education....................................................................................................115
  Context for Learning .........................................................................................116
  Learning Theories ..............................................................................................120

Transformative Learning.......................................................................................123
  Defined ..............................................................................................................123
  Philosophical Foundations .................................................................................124

Core Components of TLT....................................................................................126
  The Role of Experience ......................................................................................126
  The Role of Critical Reflection ..........................................................................129
  The Role of Rational Discourse ........................................................................131

Development of TLT .........................................................................................131
  The Initial Wave of the Theory ........................................................................131
  The Integrity of a More Unified Theory ............................................................133
  The Influence of Emancipatory Educators .......................................................134
  The Inclusion of Extra-Rational Knowledge ...................................................136
  The Insight of a Planetary Worldview ...............................................................143
  Identifying Growing Edges for Further Development ....................................145

Conclusion .........................................................................................................146

Chapter Six: The Practice of Wesleyan Discipleship and TLT in Dialogue……..148

Introduction ......................................................................................................148

Theological Reflection on TLT regarding the telos ..........................................148

Theological Reflection on TLT regarding Virtue ..............................................153

Theological Reflection on TLT regarding the Disciplines ............................157

Theological Reflection on TLT regarding the ethos .......................................163

Conclusion .......................................................................................................172
Chapter Seven: The Practice of Transformative Discipleship............174

Introduction ..................................................................................174

Contributions of TLT to Wesleyan Discipleship .........................175
 The Role of a Discrepant Event ..................................................176
 The Role of Critical Reflection....................................................180
 The Role of Rational Discourse.................................................185
 The Coordinated Response.......................................................188

Contributions of Wesleyan Discipleship to TLT .......................191
 Non-formal and Informal Nature of Wesleyan Discipleship ..... 192
 The Presence of a Coherent telos ..............................................194

Conclusion..................................................................................198

Chapter Eight: Christian Education as a Transformative Ministry....199

Introduction..............................................................................199

Diagnosing the Situation..........................................................199

Confronting the Situation........................................................202

Conclusion..................................................................................213

Bibliography ..............................................................................216

Final Word Count:

74,614
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Loci of the Discipleship Matrix</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Vertical Axis</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Horizontal Axis</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Centre of the Discipleship Matrix</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Quietistic Traps</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nominalistic Traps</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Legalistic Traps</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Antinomianistic Traps</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Pietistic Traps</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Enthusiastic Traps</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Formalistic Traps</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rationalistic Traps</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Types of Education</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The Discipleship Matrix and TLT</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>A Theory of Christian Transformation</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations

CEJ  Christian Education Journal

Rules  The General Rules of the United Societies

SDL  Self-Directed Learning

TLT  Transformative Learning Theory

UMC  The United Methodist Church


WTJ  Wesleyan Theological Journal
The subject of this thesis is the nature of Christian transformation as understood through the process of discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition and United Methodism in particular. A basic premise is that contemporary discipleship efforts are perceived as ineffective in spite of the numerous strategies that exist within the field of Christian education. The contention of this thesis is that the current situation is rooted in a failure to address the holistic and integrated nature of Christian transformation, which from a Wesleyan perspective is understood as the process of sanctification. This thesis explores a more holistic vision for discipleship, drawing upon methodology proposed by Richard Osmer to do theological reflection as it engages Wesleyan theology and transformative learning theory (TLT), a contemporary adult educational theory. The result is a contribution to the field of Christian education that has implications for disciple making ministries in the local congregation.

Alasdair MacIntyre’s theory of practice is developed as a means of accounting for the present incoherence within discipleship ministries, and to resource the development of a more holistic approach to the process of Wesleyan discipleship. As a result, discipleship is conceived of as a single complex practice comprised of four inseparably related and integrally connected dimensions: virtues, disciplines, ethos and telos. The theoretical framework also provides insight into contemporary discipleship efforts by systematically isolating each component and investigating the particular emphasis that is stressed, thus truncating the practice of discipleship.

Putting this framework into conversation with TLT provides a way for theological reflection that can broker a cross-disciplinary dialogue between TLT and Wesleyan discipleship. The resulting discourse discerns which relevant aspects of TLT can be appropriated within a Wesleyan context and how TLT contributes to the field of Christian education. Contributions that Wesleyan discipleship can make to the field of TLT are also explored.

The thesis develops an educational theory that views discipleship as a single coherent complex practice that is consistent with the process of sanctification in the Wesleyan tradition. Such a theory overcomes the current situation that results in isolating various discipleship efforts by prompting the field of Christian education to consider discipleship as sanctification that transforms persons and their contexts in holistic ways.
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.
Copyright Statement

I. The author of this thesis (including the appendices and/or schedules to this thesis) owns certain copyright or related rights in it (the “Copyright”) and she has given The University of Manchester certain rights to use such Copyright, including for administrative purposes.

II. Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made only in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University has from time to time. This page must form part of any such copies made.

III. The ownership of certain Copyrights, patents, delights, trade marks and other intellectual property (the “Intellectual Property”) and any reductions of copyright works in the thesis, for example graphs and tables (“Reproductions”), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions.

IV. Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and commercialisation of this thesis, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available in the University IP Policy (see http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfor.aspx?DocID=487), in any relevant Thesis restriction declarations deposited in the University Library, The University’s Library’s regulations (see http://www.mancehster.ac.uk/library/about/regulations) and in The University’s policy on Presentation of Theses.
Acknowledgements

The opportunity to express my appreciation and recognition to those who have contributed to my well-being during the research and writing of this doctoral thesis is both gratifying and daunting. Gratifying because saying ‘thank you’ means I have arrived at a point that has been a long time coming and daunting because I run the risk of neglecting to name someone or of being so profuse that my thankfulness appears diluted. Nevertheless, here goes!

To the holy Trinity, the sovereign God of creation, you are the one that inspired this project within me. Though the route has been far more circuitous than I could have possibly imagined, you consistently provided a way forward. I give you thanks for the following people and communities you have blessed me with during throughout this endeavour:

- For my family—immediate, extended, and even fictive kinfolk, both near and far—but especially my parents for their unwavering support, love, prayers and encouragement to take the dog on rambles in the fields and woods.

- For Phil Meadows and his obedience to the movement of God and taking on both me and this project. I still marvel at how an initial meeting became a two-hour conversation in which he breathed life into my half-extinguished hopes, and handed back to me what has worked out to be the project I wanted to write in the first place.

- For Drs. Mark Maddix, Peter Rae and Joseph Wood, my examiners who offered constructive criticism in a firm but gentle manner to help me improve this work.

- For A Foundation for Theological Education for being there at a critical juncture to help me bridge programs successfully. Special thanks go to Paul Ervin, Steve Moore and Tom Albin for their unconditional acceptance and calm, faith-filled assurance regarding a way forward. And for the John Wesley Fellows for being the supportive and nurturing fellowship they were created to be.

- For First United Methodist Church of Washington, North Carolina and Rev. Ray Whitman and their commitment to support candidates for
ordained ministry who are also pursuing academic credentials.

- For Barbara and Jim Holsinger and their clan, with special appreciation to Sarah for her obedience to the Holy Spirit to think to see if I was willing to sojourn to Hope Valley. I was—and am forever blessed as a result.

- For Alice, Alicia, Amie, Angela, Brian, Cindy, Chuck, Gray, Joy, Josh, Lorraine, Susanna, Tom and Tracey who live on the other end of my mobile phone.

- For the congregations who have nurtured, encouraged and challenged me along this discipleship journey; from Dunellen to Oldwick, to FUMC Lexington, to St. James, Resurrection and especially to Sergeantsville for praying me through.

- For my colleagues, whether they reside in the church or the academy (or both!). There are simply too many to name whom I count as friends and have been conversation partners over the years, but particular gratitude goes to Ken Brewer and Rev. Mike McKay who hosted my first experiences in Wesleyan small groups, and to Bishops Al Gwinn and Hope Morgan Ward who saw no inconsistency in a deacon pursuing a doctoral degree. And especially for my residency group (colleagues and leaders—in both North Carolina and New Jersey!) as well as for the ordained and lay folk in Kentucky, North Carolina, Virginia, New Jersey and those scattered around the globe.

- For the communities I discovered at Cliff College and Nazarene Theological College of the University of Manchester who accepted me and made me feel immediately at home in their midst.

- For all who encouraged me, who spoke wisdom, offered counsel, and gave solace, whether they provided me a night’s lodging, a meal, sent me a note, text or phone call of encouragement, and most importantly, offered prayer on my behalf that I might see this project to completion. May we, by your good grace, Lord, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, continue to grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ for the goodness of your Kingdom in this world.
Chapter One
The Dilemma of Disciple Making

Introduction

The intent of this thesis is to examine the nature of discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition and to understand how transformative learning theory (TLT), a field in contemporary adult education, might be engaged in dialogue to view discipleship as a single, complex practice and all-encompassing endeavour that has implications for congregations. The thesis concerns itself with discipleship efforts in the field of Christian education within The United Methodist Church in North America yet has implications for the broader Wesleyan tradition. The thesis begins with the premise that, despite efforts through numerous strategies and programmes, there is a failure within United Methodism to adequately nurture and encourage adult disciples in Christian transformation in holistic ways. The thesis argues contemporary voices within the field of Christian education may advocate for a Wesleyan understanding of discipleship and some may even employ transformative learning theory (TLT) in their efforts, but they ultimately fail to offer a coherent understanding of what discipleship entails. The thesis locates discipleship as the central practice and comprehensive lifelong endeavour of the Christian life. It argues Christian discipleship implicitly inspires transformation when understood as consistent with the process of sanctification in the Wesleyan tradition. Furthermore, the thesis engages a cross-disciplinary dialogue between educational ministries associated with discipleship and TLT in order to suggest appropriate learning principles in such a manner to address the present situation.

The Need for Transformation

The mission of The United Methodist Church, an inheritor of John Wesley’s movement, is ‘to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world,’ which is grounded in scriptural authority of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20.1 As a denomination, the UMC views the local congregation as the primary location through which persons come to saving knowledge of Jesus Christ,

---

1 The United Methodist Church, The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), 91.
committing their lives to follow Jesus’ command to love God and neighbour and be agents of God’s grace, inaugurating social structures consistent with God’s Kingdom in the world. The denomination’s *Book of Discipline* defines discipleship as ‘faithful membership in the local church [which] is essential for personal growth and for developing a deeper commitment to the will and grace of God.’ However, a comprehensive denominational study commissioned in 2009 and conducted in 2010 by global research analysts Towers Watson indicates eighty-five percent of United Methodist congregations in the United States struggle in the mandate to be faithful disciples who make more disciples. These congregations are considered of low or medium vitality. In 2013, according to the UMC’s General Council on Finance and Administration, more than seventy percent of local congregations did not baptise anyone age thirteen or older, fifty-five percent did not baptise anyone age twelve or under and fifty percent of congregations did not experience any profession of faith. United Methodist Bishop Scott Jones decries the casual attitude that fosters this malaise within congregations, likening the Christian life to membership in a civic club or organisation. He charges that new converts to faith ‘either explicitly or by

---

2. The Towers Watson study and resultant report was sponsored by The Call to Action Steering Team commissioned by the Council of Bishops and the denomination’s Connectional Table. The purpose was to determine ‘clear, data-supported information about vital congregations’ by data-mining and evaluating the ‘millions and millions of data-points generated by the year-end reports submitted by U.S. UM congregations each year.’ In order to identify highly vital congregations, Towers Watson developed a ‘vitality index’ that considered three primary factors: attendance, growth and engagement in order to evaluate the vitality of a given congregation. A methodology of regression-analysis identified one hundred twenty-seven drivers or elements, sixteen of which were determined to be significant factors in highly vital congregations as opposed to medium and low vitality congregations. Of the thirty-two thousand, two hundred and twenty-eight congregations providing data, four thousand nine hundred sixty-one congregations or fifteen percent of the congregations were assessed as highly vital. Of the remaining eighty-five percent of churches, forty-nine percent were medium vital and thirty-six percent were low vital. Amy Valdez-Barker, Appendix in *Vital: Churches, Changing Communities and the World* by Jorge Acevedo (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012), 133-137. For more information on the reports and their findings see The Call to Action, [http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/call-to-action](http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/call-to-action) to access the Steering Team Report at [http://s3.amazonaws.com/Website_Properties/connectional-table/documents/call-to-action-steering-team-report.pdf](http://s3.amazonaws.com/Website_Properties/connectional-table/documents/call-to-action-steering-team-report.pdf) and the Congregational Vitality Towers Watson Report at [http://s3.amazonaws.com/Website_Properties/connectional-table/documents/call-to-action-congregational-vitality-towers-watson-report-with-appendices.pdf](http://s3.amazonaws.com/Website_Properties/connectional-table/documents/call-to-action-congregational-vitality-towers-watson-report-with-appendices.pdf) (accessed 25 April 2015).
3. In an effort to ‘renew focus on discipleship,’ Discipling Ministries created *One Matters Discipleship Award* in April 2015. Sara Thomas, Deputy General Secretary of Discipleship Ministries and Chief Strategist for Vital Congregations states, ‘With the One Matters Discipleship Award, we want to lift up the importance of discipleship and help interpret across the connection what zeros in professions of faith and baptism mean and what moving away from the zeros means,’ in ‘One Matters Award to Encourage Baptisms and Professions of Faith’ entry posted 17 April 2015, [http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/one-matters-award-to-encourage-baptisms-and-professions-of-faith](http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/one-matters-award-to-encourage-baptisms-and-professions-of-faith) (accessed 25 April 2015).
example’ are taught that the Christian life insists on nothing more than passive, optional participation, asking only for occasional attendance, casual giving and allowing persons to behave ‘as they please.’ Additional research conducted by The Barna Group, an organisation that makes no denominational distinctions as it studies religion across the United States, indicated that while forty-four percent of American adults self-identify as Christians, only five percent of American Christians report their lives are significantly changed as a result of their Christian faith. Any possibility of United Methodists contributing to the transformation of the world appears to be stymied despite the importance placed on discipleship and disciple-making efforts.

Compounding the issue facing discipleship is that when discipleship is not equated with faithful membership within a local congregation, it is described as a list of activities consistent with the General Rule of Discipleship, ‘to witness to Jesus Christ in the world, and follow his teachings through acts of compassion, justice, worship, and devotion, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.’ A host of programmes, courses and workshops in Christian education and spiritual formation foster and nurture these acts of compassion, justice, worship and devotion is developed regularly and are offered as discipleship initiatives within many UM congregations. The denomination has created an agency, Discipleship Ministries, which is devoted to offering ministries in the areas of leadership, new church starts, congregational development, spiritual formation and other niche ministries specialised by age, gender and ethnicity. For United Methodists, there are programmes within the denomination designed for nearly every demographic to educate and replicate more disciples. Such programmes target a specific demographic on a given topic, usually meeting in groups for as little as a few hours

---

7 Book of Discipline, 596-7.
9 Cokesbury, a division of the United Methodist Publishing House, retails curriculum from across the denomination and also includes other Christian resources for the wider Christian tradition. Categories for whom materials are targeted include ‘Adults,’ ‘Youth,’ ‘Tweens,’ ‘Children,’ ‘Multiage’ and ‘Multicultural’ at https://www.cokesbury.com (accessed 10 February 2016).
or as long as several weeks, or in some cases, months. Church programmes and denominational initiatives are well intentioned and address a wide range of particular aspects of the Christian life, but participation in such does not ensure disciples experience the kind of transformation that has an impact in their lives or on the lives of others.

When understood as a programme, discipleship becomes a particularised ministry competing alongside the other committees and activities of the church. Often, discipleship is equated with disciple making, and the necessity of being a disciple in all avenues and areas of life is overlooked. United Methodist Bishop Al Gwinn laments, ‘the churches of the Western world have not made discipleship a condition of being a Christian.’ Bishop Hee Soo Jung cautions, ‘No one is able to develop a disciple without first engaging in the process of becoming a disciple himself or herself.’ Both are adamant that discipleship involves adopting the posture of being a follower of Jesus and learning what it means to become like Christ if there is any hope to fulfil The Great Commission or the denominational mission. Furthermore, regional strategist for the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference

---


11 In his annual State of the Church Address, on 10 June 2010, Bishop Alfred Gwinn addressed the North Carolina Annual Conference of the UMC exhorting members of conference to get back to their primary call to be disciples in order to fulfil the Great Commission. Video available at https://vimeo.com/12494982 (accessed 18 October 2010). Discussion of the general state of discipleship occurs between minutes 9:00 and 14:45.

12 Hee-Soo Jung, ‘Strengthening Clergy and Lay Leadership,’ in Jones and Ough, 47.
Christie Latona asserts those ‘struggling to make disciples within the UMC lack a foundational discipling culture’ and insists that a structural solution cannot solve a ‘spiritual crisis.’

Jones suggests a necessary cohesion between being a Christian and doing Christian things should exist within the varied and expansive numbers of programmes when he states, ‘Christian discipleship is a many-faceted way of life.’ Christian discipleship is to participate in an integrated, holistic way of life that identifies participants as disciples of Jesus Christ. However, the wealth of programming designed to reproduce disciples in a variety of shapes, sizes and features, does not necessarily consider discipleship as a condition, or a way of life.

Data collected by The Barna Group indicates forty percent of self-described American Christians participate in a regular Bible study and only eighteen percent say they are totally committed to their spiritual development as Christians. The emphasis on programmes often misleads people into believing that discipleship and the making of disciples is reserved for persons who are trained to do so, or as Jones points out, only an option for lay persons who have available time in their already crowded schedules. The best available data supports the widespread notion within the denomination that transformation—personal or social—is not a significant factor in contemporary congregations.

**Classical Christian Discipleship**

Since Jesus proclaimed the Great Commission, a major task of the Church’s ministry has been devoted to cultivate Christian living for participants who either seek to become Christian or who are already committed to Christianity. In United Methodism, this has been addressed through the field of Christian education. Two practical theologians in the Wesleyan tradition, Dean Blevins and Mark Maddix, discuss the inherent and longstanding connection between discipleship and education:

*Didache*, the Greek term for teaching, serves as a conceptual framework for discipleship that is both faithful to Christian convictions and representative of Wesleyan tradition. Often we use the concept of *discipleship* and *Christian education* interchangeably. *Discipleship* is the older concept of a particular way of living as learners and teachers in rhythm with the Holy Spirit.\(^{16}\)

Classes, workshops and retreats are necessary and helpful moments along the Christian journey during which disciples might be instructed, nurtured, encouraged and supported to faithfully respond to Christ’s call in the many and varied aspects of their life. Discipleship is inextricably an educational enterprise. But to reduce discipleship to mere participation in the educational ministries of the contemporary church negates and perverts discipleship from being a ‘way of living’ as maintained by Jones, Blevins and Maddix. Discipleship that is merely reduced to a course or workshop is a truncation of the Christian life and offers only a partial understanding of the Christian enterprise and a life of faithful discipleship.

Discipleship in its most strict sense is the condition of being a disciple. It is to respond to Jesus’ invitation and exhortation, ‘Follow me.’ As disciples of Jesus Christ, Christians are called to pattern their lives after the example of Jesus and live as Christ lived. John Wesley, eighteenth century religious leader who is credited with beginning the Methodist movement in Britain and the American colonies,\(^{17}\) often drew on biblical imagery describing a Christian disciple as “‘having the mind that was in Christ’ (Philippians 2:5) he ‘so walks as’ Christ ‘also walked’(I John 2:6).’\(^{18}\) A disciple is one who commits, as a result of Christian faith, to follow the example of Christ in every aspect of life. The early Methodist movement had a decidedly different form of catechesis than is used today. Wesley’s use of small groups was educational, instructional and nurturing, inviting people to unite ‘…in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love,

\(^{16}\) Dean G. Blevins and Mark A. Maddix, *Discovering Discipleship: Dynamics of Christian Education* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2010), 17.
that they may help each other to work out their salvation”.19 Philip Meadows notes that Wesley’s development of the Methodist society-band meeting ‘supplied the need for discipleship, prudentially ordered to nurture believers in the pursuit of holy living.’20 Christian discipleship is an endeavour to be lived out in all aspects of life. Christian education is critical to support, nurture and challenge persons in their discipleship, but it does not define the whole endeavour of Christian discipleship.

Authentic Christian discipleship is more than faithful, regular participation in educational programmes and spiritual formation retreats. It is a way of life that faithfully follows the example of Jesus, but not simply out of obedience on the part of the disciple. For Methodists and other members of the Wesleyan tradition, discipleship is a way of Christian living that is made possible by God’s initiating, convicting and nurturing grace. When discipleship is reduced to participation in a church programme it is not only truncated from being a full-fledged way of living, discipleship is understood as happening as a result of human effort. According to Kevin Watson, ‘we would do a great disservice to Wesley’s understanding of discipleship…if we neglected to insist that grace be kept in its proper place at the beginning, middle, and end of all that is said about the Christian life.’21 Discipleship is a comprehensive way of living infused at every stage with divine love. As a Christian disciple, one learns through the power of the Holy Spirit and in the company of other Christian disciples what it means to follow Jesus and undergo the process of transformation to become more like Christ.

Christian disciples participating with the grace and love of God are changed. Transformation is at the heart of the whole Christian enterprise. A repeated theme in the New Testament epistles is the need to conform to Christ, to be transformed from the broken sinful self to the divine image of Christ. Paul exhorts followers, ‘Do not be conformed to the ways of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind’ (Romans 12:2). Blevins asserts that ‘faithful discipleship for Methodism

demands a way of life that is totally transformative.’

Christian disciples seek, accept, and participate with divine grace in ways that are consistent with the life of Jesus. Transformation, then, is not about changing the world, but about changed lives that, in turn, change the world.

Discipleship in the Christian tradition facilities the transformation of persons into mature followers of Jesus. Such an integrative holistic understanding of discipleship contrasts sharply with the contemporary scene that diminishes the nature of discipleship to participation in the numerous and varied programmes that comprise discipleship ministries. Participation in programmes does not constitute a way of living, nor does focus and concentration on a specific aspect of the Christian life engender a holistic or integrative understanding of the nature of Christian living. The evidence suggests an unfortunate and unintended consequence of the current approach to discipleship in the UMC as accomplished through specialised programmes seems to be the exact opposite of what is hoped—the non-transformation of persons and their lives as disciples of Jesus. For contemporary United Methodists who seek to understand discipleship as a transformational way of life, an examination of Wesley and how the eighteenth century people called Methodist approached the Christian life is merited.

Wesley’s Model of Discipleship

The present day United Methodist Church traces its origins to John Wesley, preacher in the Church of England and leader of the Methodist people within the same. Despite the widespread growth of the Methodist movement in England, Ireland and the American colonies over the course of his lifetime, Wesley neither intended to leave the Church of England nor to form a denomination separate from it. In May 1788, he wrote to Henry Moore, ‘I am a Church-of-England man; and, as I said fifty years ago so I say still, in the Church I will live and die, unless I am thrust out.’ Within the same week, he asserted his personal decision is one he saw fit for


the whole of the movement; ‘the more I reflect the more I am convinced that the Methodists ought not to leave the Church.’

While Wesley eschewed birthing a new denomination outright, he did seek a way to help persons to live out their discipleship that united them with God’s grace and with other disciples. From Methodism’s earliest days at Oxford, to his exposure to Moravians on his travels to and from Georgia that eventually lead to an opportunity to visit Herrnhutt where he observed Moravian band meetings, Wesley was interested in finding an appropriate strategy that would help people live out their faith in everyday life. Ultimately, the Methodist Society came into its own when persons began meeting in groups, intentional in supporting each other in their shared desire to grow in Christlikeness. Wesley records,

Thus arose, without any previous design on either side, what was afterwards called a Society—a very innocent name, and very common in London for any number of people associating themselves together. The thing proposed in their associating together was obvious to everyone. They wanted to ‘flee the wrath to come’, and to assist each other in so doing. They therefore united themselves ‘in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they might help each other to work out their salvation’.

In order to support and nurture one another and keep from falling prey to the backsliding that could occur even in the life of the most fervent disciple, Wesley formed a series of three related but different functioning groups; the Society, the class and band meetings within the growing Methodist Connexion.

Yet, despite his ability to develop a network of groups that centred on growing in Christian faith, Wesley rarely used the term ‘disciple,’ and did not employ the term ‘Christian discipleship.’ Who, then, did Wesley discern to be a disciple of Jesus? What did he understand discipleship to entail? Throughout his writings, Wesley was adamant that Methodists were not extraordinary in any respect

---

from other Christians who professed and demonstrated whole hearted love for God.

In his tract, *The Character of a Methodist*, Wesley writes,

> a Methodist is one who has ‘the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him’; one who ‘loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength’. God is the joy of his heart, and the desire of his soul.

Reading Wesley, it is possible to discern ‘Methodist’ is synonymous with ‘Christian disciple’ as an appropriate appellation for a person who seeks to follow the biblical witness of Christ.

Furthermore, Wesley maintained, being a member of the Methodist Society was consistent with the foundational biblical witness of Christian living. In associating the Methodist movement with biblical Christianity, Wesley offered a broader scope as to what entailed Christian discipleship. Methodism, Wesley wrote, adhered to only the common, fundamental principles of Christianity—

> the plain, old Christianity that I teach, renouncing and detesting all other marks of distinction. And whosoever is what I preach (let him be called what he will; for names change not the nature of things) he is a Christian, not in name only, but in heart and in life. He is inwardly and outwardly conformed to the will of God, as revealed in the written Word. He thinks, speaks, and lives according the ‘method’ laid down in the revelation of Jesus Christ. His soul is ‘renewed after the image of God’, ‘in righteousness and in all true holiness’. And ‘having the mind that was in Christ’ he ‘so walks as’ Christ ‘also walked’.

Though the movement and the people called Methodist were distinctive from other sects of his day, Methodism sought only to align itself with the historical Christian witness of biblical faith. Wesley saw no difference between persons called Methodists and persons who observed Christian teaching regarding what it meant to be a follower of Jesus. For Wesley, the name given to Christian disciples was inconsequential. What mattered was the way Christians lived their lives. Discipleship for early Methodists was fundamentally interested in Christlikeness: a holy life that

---

imitated Christ’s attitude and character and recalled Christ’s deeds and actions. Such a life is transformed into the image of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Wesley understood that people followed Jesus’ example through ‘imitating or resembling him in the spirit of our minds. For here the true Christian imitation of God begins. God is a Spirit; and they that imitate or resemble him must do it in spirit and in truth.’ For Wesley, to imitate Christ is not simply doing as Christ did. Being a disciple of Jesus begins with an attitude and character that is Christlike. Persons who know the mind of Christ experience transformation. The whole enterprise of Christian discipleship, of imitating Christ and seeking Christlikeness in expressing love to God and neighbour, is the effect of faith and not a disciple’s own merit. According to Wesley,

It must be allowed to be such a love of our neighbour as can only spring from the love of God. And whence does this love of God flow? Only from that faith which is of the operation of God; which whoever has, has a direct evidence that ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.’

Wesley taught that as a result of faith in God and trust in Christ for salvation, a disciple’s love for God’s gift of grace overflows in the life of the disciple and is manifest in outward displays of love for God and neighbour. Christian discipleship is often made known through the performance of good works, but that is only the second half of the equation. Wesley taught, ‘religion is an inward principle; that it is no other than the mind that was in Christ; or in other words, the renewal of the soul after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness.’ Transformation occurs from the inside out. Through faith in God for the gift of salvation, Christian disciples follow Christ and imitate his example of divine love that they might experience the nature of Christ in their own lives and share God’s love with all of God’s creation.

Yet, current evidence seems to indicate transformation is not occurring, given present Christian educational programmes and initiatives that address various aspects of the Christian life. There is a disconnect between education for knowledge of the

---

29 This thesis will similarly use ‘Christian’ and ‘Wesleyan’ interchangeably as descriptors for ‘disciple’ or ‘discipleship.’
30 Wesley, ‘Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, IX,’ Works, 1:636.
33 Wesley, ‘Thoughts upon Methodism,’ Works, 9:527.
faith and catechism as formation in faith. As a contemporary educational theory, TLT offers insights into the nature of transformation that occurs within the educational endeavour. The insights of TLT may offer more robust ways for United Methodists to approach the numerous and various programmes so that the transformative nature of discipleship might be recovered.

**Transformative Learning Theory**

A theory in the field of adult education, TLT was first proposed by Jack Mezirow in 1978 when he conducted a groundbreaking study focusing on women who returned to graduate school after a hiatus away from the formal classroom. Eventually, his conception of how adults reorder their perception of the world to accommodate their new knowledge and experiences became a theory of adult education in its own right which today generates a quarterly journal and a biannual conference.

Transformative learning posits that learners integrate new ideas, knowledge and experiences that redefine and alter previous perspectives in a fundamental way, resulting in a new understanding of the world. Edmund O’Sullivan, a transformative learning theorist, defines transformative learning as

> a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world.

Transformative learning is concerned with the process of re-ordering the knowledge already attained by a learner, rather than acquiring new knowledge and assimilating it within previously developed schemes.

Transformative learning is considered a uniquely adult learning theory. Adult learners, whether or not they seek formal higher education in universities with advanced degrees, are learners with particular traits and needs that distinguish them from children and adolescents who are yet to complete the formal education that is typically mandated by law in most countries. Educator Patricia Cranton maintains

---

adult learners are voluntary learners who often have a high degree of agency in their own learning, and who are considered collaborative participants, valuing experience and practical knowledge by which they, despite any previous track record to the contrary, come to see themselves as capable learners, able to achieve their own learning goals.\textsuperscript{36}

Learning that is transformative involves an interpretive move on the part of the learners that includes deliberate questioning, profound reflection and creative reordering of how one thinks and participates in everyday life. It can be a very exciting concept, and often when introduced to it, people suddenly see all learning as transformative, even arguing ‘that children can engage in transformative learning.’\textsuperscript{37} But learning new knowledge, consistent with childhood and adolescent development (and can also occur in many adult educational programmes), is not transformative, no matter how exciting or insightful the new knowledge base may be. Stephen Brookfield, an adult educator, laments that the word ‘transformative’ is ‘victim to the twin dangers of evacuation and reification of meaning.’\textsuperscript{38} On one hand, in the cause of evacuation, the word becomes overused and ubiquitous, thereby losing its potency. On the other, ‘the word becomes revered, either imbued with mystical significance and placed beyond the realm of critical analysis or accepted uncritically as a “good thing.”’\textsuperscript{39} Like Cranton, he reports that many who are exposed to TLT argue that any instance of ‘a more informed, nuanced, sophisticated, or deeper, understanding of something’ is transformational; however, it is imperative to maintain that transformation ‘is a fundamental reordering of paradigmatic assumptions.’\textsuperscript{40} Thus, transformative learning is a re-ordering of previous knowledge. As a result, the learner gains a new perspective that fundamentally alters the learner’s viewpoint of the world and any knowledge acquired in consequence is understood in light of the changed perspective. A deconstructive element consistent with critical social theory is often associated with transformative learning.

\textsuperscript{37} Cranton, \textit{Promoting and Understanding}, 1.
\textsuperscript{39} Brookfield, ‘Transformative Learning as Ideology Critique,’ 141.
\textsuperscript{40} Brookfield, ‘Transformative Learning as Ideology Critique,’ 139-140.
Though Mezirow is considered by many to be the pioneer of TLT, his work was contemporaneous with, but addressed a different trajectory than, other adult educators who also were interested in the notion of transformation, notably Paulo Freire, Robert Boyd and O’Sullivan.\footnote{John Dirkx, ‘Nurturing Soul Work: A Jungian Approach to Transformative Learning,’ in The Handbook of Transformative Learning Theory: Theory, Research, and Practice ed. Edward W. Taylor, Patricia Cranton and Associates (San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 117.} As TLT emerged as a field, Mezirow and the first generation of researchers he produced were critiqued for being too rational, for an emphasis on subjects in formal higher education settings (pursuing advanced degrees) and a lack of attention to social change.\footnote{Patricia Cranton and Edward W. Taylor, ‘Transformative Learning Theory: Seeking a More Unified Theory,’ in Taylor, Cranton and Associates, 3.} Mezirow’s position contrasted with that of Freire, Boyd and O’Sullivan. For nearly two decades, TLT was thought of in dichotomies, and was considered as either ‘rational or extra-rational processes, a focus on individual change or a focus on social change, autonomous learning or relational learning.’\footnote{Cranton and Taylor, ‘Transformative Learning Theory,’ 3.} However, Taylor and Cranton point out, since the early 2000s, much as been done within the field to come to an understanding of TLT in more integrative and holistic terms.\footnote{Dean G. Blevins, ‘Renovating Christian Education in the 21st Century: A Wesleyan Contribution,’ CEJ 2, no. 1 (2005): 11.}

As TLT has flourished in adult higher education, other fields, including theological education at the postgraduate level, have begun to seek understanding of transformative learning. Publications within the academy, including various articles, a multi-authored text and the Christian Education Journal (CEJ), examine a number of ways TLT might be understood in the Christian educational context. Blevins remarks that investigations into the Christian theological heritage in order to improve contemporary discipleship efforts ‘should not preclude the benefits of modern educational theory. The idea of returning to medieval practices while jettisoning the contributions of Comenius and Pestalozzi, much less more contemporary theorists, would appear ludicrous.’\footnote{Dean G. Blevins, ‘Renovating Christian Education in the 21st Century: A Wesleyan Contribution,’ CEJ 2, no. 1 (2005): 11.} It is a premise of this thesis that TLT offers insights into discipleship as a transformational educational endeavour. Furthermore, it is appropriate for Christians who, by virtue of Christian living, inhabit the non-formal and informal learning spaces of congregations and everyday life to incorporate
aspects of TLT as a part of their transformational journey. TLT may help Christian educators and congregational leadership consider the nature of the Christian life and discipleship through which disciples experience Christian transformation. Transformative learning offers a means for Christians to dismantle previous conceptions of the world and to re-scaffold thinking in light of new ideas and experiences about the Kingdom of God. Transformative learning encompasses more than just helping Christian disciples to re-think the world. For Wesleyans, it inaugurates new ways of living that are consistent with increasing and deepening love of God and neighbour as the goal of their discipleship.

**Methodology and Chapter Outline**

The methodology that will guide this thesis is adapted from Richard Osmer who advocates engagement with social science as a means of doing theological reflection. Kathleen Cahalan and James Nieman describe practical theology as a discipline of theological discernment involving appropriate action and reflection that seeks a faithful way of life. The discipline of practical theology is in the purview of church and academy, thus involving many varied participants who have particular investment in their distinctive contexts. At the core of practical theology, Cahalan and Nieman contend researchers are involved in two fundamental tasks; 1) discernment or interpreting the situation and 2) proposal or interpreting what might be possible. As this thesis seeks to understand the current situation facing discipleship in an effort to propose a faithful way forward, a robust practical theological method is required.

---
46 Richard Osmer writes, ‘Practical theology as a discipline is an empirically descriptive and critically constructive theory of religious praxis. It is no longer to be viewed as merely a form of applied theology, that its scope has been broadened beyond the work of clergy and the church to religious praxis in its varied forms across society and that it works in an inherently interdisciplinary fashion.’ Richard R. Osmer, ‘Johannes van der Ven’s Contribution to the New Consensus in Practical Theology,’ in *Hermeneutics and Empirical Research in Practical Theology: The Contribution of Empirical Theology by Johannes A. van der Ven*, ed. Chris A.M. Hermans and Mary E. Moore (Leiden, Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 149.


48 Cahalan and Nieman, ‘Mapping the Field,’ 82-3.
Osmer’s approach demands both empirical research methods and theological reflection. Osmer's understanding of practical theology requires the researcher to draw upon both the fields of theology and education, allowing both fields to be integrated and inform one another. Christian educators James Estep, Michael Anthony and Gregg Allison describe such integration as ‘paradigmatic’ in which ‘theology and social sciences cooperatively validated one another’s insights and influence.’

Estep, Anthony and Allison identity five progressive levels of integration that exist between theology and social science. In level 1 or ‘disintegration,’ social science does not consult with or incorporate theology. In level 2, known as ‘segregation,’ theology is exclusively used, rejecting any known social science. Level 3 is termed ‘paradoxical’ in which both theology and social science are used and consulted but are not integrated so that neither field informs the other. Level 4, is considered ‘synthetic’ in which integration is attempted with social science taking a robust lead with theology providing only a ‘veneer.’ Level 5 is paradigmatic and seeks to integrate the ‘field of theology with the social sciences in the service to the church.’

Osmer argues that practical theological interpretation involves a fourfold movement of hermeneutical understanding and appropriate response for practitioners, regardless of whether their primary context is the academy or the congregation. Gordon Mikoski notes Osmer’s methodology ‘can neither engage the empirical study of contexts without serious theologically normed reflection and intervention, nor can it simply be content with theological reflection absent

---

49 Richard Osmer writes, ‘What is meant by the empirical in practical theology is quite broad and flexible. Perhaps most simply, it can be described as “disciplined attention to some form of contemporary human experience with the intent of learning something new.” It encompasses insights emerging in the midst of practices like pastoral counselling, interreligious dialogue, spiritual direction, and community development, as well as research using methods of the social sciences.’ Richard R. Osmer, ‘Empirical Practical Theology,’ in Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction, ed. Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 61.


54 Estep, Anthony and Allison, A Theology for Christian Education, 34.


engagement with empirical attending and analysis.\textsuperscript{57} A guiding question accompanies each of the four tasks which are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive/Empirical</td>
<td>What is going on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive Task</td>
<td>Why is it going on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative Task</td>
<td>What ought to be going on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic Task</td>
<td>How might we respond?\textsuperscript{58}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each task is distinct, yet there is mutual influence in which the tasks actually ‘interpenetrate’ one another and the whole process can have a spiralling relationship.\textsuperscript{59} Not only does Osmer require an informed integration of theology and social science that is applicable both within the church and the academy, his methodology provides an approach through which a researcher can work systematically. As such, this interpretive practical theological method offers structure to the progression of this thesis and its chapter outline.

The first chapter of the thesis presents data supporting the claim that despite current efforts in discipleship ministries, transformation is largely insignificant for most UM congregations.\textsuperscript{60} The chapter compares the present approach to discipleship with historical approaches of Christianity and the Wesleyan tradition that fostered the transformation of its participants. It further suggests TLT might be a helpful conversation partner in facilitating the transformation of disciples. The chapter draws on Osmer’s first movement, the descriptive empirical task, which calls for gathering information in order to ‘discern patterns and dynamics’ that seek to describe the presenting context.\textsuperscript{61}

Chapter two continues the descriptive empirical task and investigates the ways in which contemporary North American Christian educators within Methodism have approached discipleship as a discipline in the academy and a ministry within the church. It will also examine current conversations of theological practitioners who use TLT. The result is a picture of Christian education that offers only partial

\textsuperscript{58} Osmer, Practical Theology, 4.
\textsuperscript{59} Osmer, Practical Theology, 10.
\textsuperscript{60} The research of this thesis will not entail first hand quantitative empirical research but draw upon the data of other field researchers to detail the current situation.
\textsuperscript{61} Osmer, Practical Theology, 5.
visions of discipleship which contributes to the lack of transformation occurring within the lives of disciples.

Chapter three proposes a theoretical interpretive framework which will guide the overall project to its completion. Osmer suggests the interpretive task develop a theoretical framework to act as a map that seeks to ‘understand and explain certain features’ of the territory charted in the descriptive empirical phase of research. He further states that ‘conceptual mapping typically begins by identifying the basic concepts of a theory, the concepts setting forth the core features of the model. Subsidiary concepts that elaborate the basic concepts are then identified, noting the relationship of one concept to another.’ The chapter draws upon Alasdair MacIntyre’s definition of practice, offering an appropriate guide to understand the fragmentation present within current Wesleyan discipleship efforts. Specifically, MacIntyre’s definition and understanding of ‘practice’ as a comprehensive and integrated pursuit of a perceived good will be examined. Four components, virtues, spiritual disciplines, ethos and telos, will be identified as ‘root metaphors’ that will be analysed and constructed into a theoretical framework entitled the Discipleship Matrix. The framework serves as a guide that explains today’s issues confronting discipleship and provides a template in which discipleship can engage TLT in cross-disciplinary dialogue in the normative movements of the thesis.

Chapter four demonstrates how the Discipleship Matrix explains the isolation and atomisation that occurs within current discipleship efforts by examining Wesley’s eighteenth century context. The purpose is to gain clarity about how privileging one or two elements of the Discipleship Matrix while neglecting the others results in a skewed approach to discipleship. An examination of Wesley’s context places the Discipleship Matrix in a larger hermeneutical framework and demonstrates that fragmentation is a perpetual danger within the Christian life.

Chapter five involves Osmer’s normative task and examines TLT because the thesis contends the educational theory might offer insight to the present situation of non-transformation and be a dialogue partner with Wesleyan discipleship. Osmer

---

62 Osmer, Practical Theology, 80.
63 Osmer, Practical Theology, 116.
64 Osmer, Practical Theology, 114.
insists the normative movement of practical theological interpretation takes place along the lines of 1) exploring models of good practice, 2) seeking relevant ethical principles to guide action and 3) reflecting theologically to interpret the situation.65 Chapter five examines TLT on its own merits to discover its foundational philosophies, inherent goals and pedagogical strategies, examining the contributions of Jack Mezirow and transformative learning theorists. The landscape of contemporary adult education will be examined to describe the evolution of TLT from its beginnings as a rational enterprise to a more integrated field that takes seriously the role of emotions, intuition and other extra-rational senses, including spirituality.

Chapter six will develop a cross-disciplinary dialogue between Wesleyan discipleship and TLT, analysing how both fields approach transformation so mutual dialogue can be established and relevant aspects of TLT can be appropriated. Osmer defines cross-disciplinary dialogue as ‘a special form of rational communication in which the perspectives of two or more fields are brought into conversation.’66 Osmer maintains that in a practical theological conversation, the insights of social science are subject to theological reflection. Social sciences do not share the same premises or commitments as Christian theology, so the knowledge and insights of the field cannot be ‘appropriated as a system, but in bits and pieces.’67 Osmer refers to this method of cross-disciplinary dialogue as ‘ad hoc’ due to its specific purpose for practical theological ends.68 The ad hoc cross-disciplinary dialogue is by no means indiscriminate. Only the elements of TLT that are coherent with Wesleyan discipleship can be appropriated and integrated in a scheme that seeks to illuminate and revitalise discipleship in the Wesleyan spirit. Chapter six will primarily analyse TLT in light of Wesleyan discipleship in order to determine which elements of transformative learning have coherency with Wesleyan discipleship and have implication and meaning for Wesleyan discipleship. In the course of cross-

65 Osmer, Practical Theology, 130-132.
66 Osmer’s preferred term for dialogue across disciplinary fields is ‘cross-disciplinary.’ Interdisciplinary dialogue is a type of cross-disciplinary dialogue bringing two fields into conversation. Both terms can be used interchangeably. Osmer, Practical Theology, 163-4.
67 Osmer, Practical Theology, 170.
68 Osmer, Practical Theology, 170.
disciplinary conversation, aspects of Wesleyan discipleship that offer insight into the field of TLT are also identified.

Chapter seven develops a strategy of action that brings about the desired goal of this thesis. It draws on Osmer’s pragmatic task of ‘forming and enacting strategies of action that influence events in ways that are desirable.’ Osmer contends that the pragmatic task of congregational leaders is to affect change in the contexts in which they serve. The pragmatic task is divided into two parts. Chapter seven explores how TLT illuminates discipleship efforts consistent with the Wesleyan tradition. In addition, this chapter also identifies ways in which discipleship principles can help TLT develop into a more robust field and how the Discipleship Matrix can be understood as a rule of life that offers guidelines for those who seek to foster holistic, transformative discipleship in the lives of Wesleyan disciples.

Chapter eight completes the pragmatic task which Osmer states requires the ability to ‘see things “whole.”’ The chapter brings the thesis to its conclusion, reiterating that contemporary efforts to help persons experience transformation as disciples of Jesus Christ are largely ineffective as a result of various approaches currently present within educational ministries. The Discipleship Matrix provides a framework for a coherent, integrated theory of holy transformation which is understood by Wesleyans as sanctification. This chapter contends that the Discipleship Matrix has significance for Christian education that depicts the Christian life in holistically transformative ways as disciples pursue Christlikeness. Presented in the chapter are a series of questions developed from the Discipleship Matrix that prompt Christian educators and other congregational leaders to examine the nature of, and relationship among, the various ministries offered in their settings in order that disciples might genuinely experience transformation. The questions generated are consistent with TLT, pressing leadership to engage in critical reflection and rational dialogue so disciples might undergo transformation or continued growth in Christ as a result of intentional participation.

---

69 Osmer, Practical Theology, 176.
70 Osmer, Practical Theology, 10.
Chapter Two
Discipleship in Christian Education

Introduction

This chapter continues the descriptive-empirical task of gathering information describing the present context confronting Christian discipleship and the situation of non-transformation. It examines United Methodist and Wesleyan scholars, predominately in the United States, who address adult learning in the field of Christian education and discipleship ministries. It also surveys scholarship that considers the usefulness of transformative learning for Christian faith. The purpose of this review is to examine prevailing approaches that form the foundation of educational and discipleship initiatives within United Methodism. It reveals the differing aims and purposes of educational and discipleship ministries as well as the scope and nature of transformation indicative to each. Educational ministries in Methodist congregations may draw upon other traditions; however, this review will be limited to authors who write as United Methodists or Wesleyans. Because TLT addresses how adults are transformed, literature that focuses on the education and nurture of children and youth will not be included.

Scholarly literature that addresses transformation through United Methodist educational and ministry efforts can be grouped into two broad categories: 1) United Methodists who write in the field of Christian religious education about faith formation for mainline American Protestantism and 2) other scholars who approach Christian formation through a distinctively Wesleyan lens. Educators Charles Foster,1

---

Margaret Ann Crain, Jack Seymour and Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore do not write in explicit discipleship language, but have produced a prolific body of work over the past several decades that has helped shape the broader field of Christian religious education. Michael Henderson, Sondra Matthaei, Mark Maddix and Dean Blevins also write within this field, but are more focused as they examine Wesley’s life and ministry in order to discern pertinent features necessary for living as faithful disciples. Scholars favour particular themes each deems critical for faithful living, e.g. Christian identity and vocation, the practices of faith, the role of community and the nature of transformation. These themes are reflected in congregational curriculum and initiatives that contribute to the current programming efforts within contemporary discipleship.
United Methodist Christian Religious Educators

Charles Foster is a United Methodist with a long career as a Christian educator in both the local congregation and the academy. Writing extensively on societal changes over the twentieth century, he stipulates congregations, or the community of faith, are the locus through which persons are educated in faith and for citizenship by ‘nurturing hope vital enough to invite people into the human vocation of praising God and serving neighbour for the sake of the transformation of the world.’ For him, transformation is primarily a social phenomena, occurring within a congregation which celebrates diversity and incorporates all members, thereby demonstrating and inaugurating justice in the world. Foster understands that ‘event-full’ opportunities within the congregation form disciples in faith. Event filled opportunities encompass the regular gatherings, occasional rituals and unexpected events that summon the congregation to assembly. Regular gatherings include weekly worship, Sunday school and celebrations that mark the liturgical year; occasional rituals mark the major passages through life such as baptism, marriage and death; while unexpected events include incidents of catastrophic loss that cause disruption within the congregation and the community. Foster stipulates that diversity with respect to race, ethnicity, varied socioeconomic status, gender and age groups is to be embraced by congregations, the richness and fullness of which help inspire and transform the way communities understand themselves as the body of Christ in the world. His most recent work argues that the congregation is a catechetical centre, adaptive to the challenges that lie ahead by being contextually relevant as they mentor, build up and equip the diversity of gifts within it in order to establish, nurture and develop faith from one generation to the next.

Foster has helped congregations, regardless of denominational background, view their life together as an educational ministry. He writes as a United Methodist, but makes no distinctive claims about the Wesleyan tradition. Instead, he seeks to be

9 Foster, Educating Congregations, 137.
10 Foster, Educating Congregations, 37.
11 Foster, Embracing Diversity; Foster and Brelsford, We are the Church Together.
12 Foster, From Generation to Generation.
a voice in religious education for American mainline Protestantism.\textsuperscript{13} His commitment to intergenerational ministries necessarily involves adults, whose role as religious educators is to guide youth and children in the development of their faith. Though the scope of congregational life can lend itself to the language of discipleship as a ‘way of life,’ he does not write as such. His focus on event-centred worship and advocacy of multicultural diversity functions as a specific lens through which educational ministries and programmes are offered. For Foster, the purpose of educational ministries is helping persons be formed in the Christian faith. The expectation is persons nurtured in faith will be transformative agents in the world. Yet, scant attention is given to how persons actually experience transformation as they seek to rise to the adaptive challenges of transmitting the faith to the next generation.

Margaret Ann Crain, a doctoral student of Foster, is also a United Methodist whose work stands solidly within the Protestant mainline tradition and does not specifically draw on Wesleyan theology. Instead of the community of faith, her focus is on the individual, specifically, the religious educator. She approaches the field of religious education in terms of ethnography, advocating that Christian educators should become ‘interpreters among interpreters,’ listening and looking for the examples of God’s presence in the lives of people.\textsuperscript{14} In Crain’s view, meaning is constructed through a person’s life and experience. Persons change throughout their lives, emerging and adapting according to their understanding of God’s movement in their lives. The role of the educator is to help persons discern and discover their identities (who they are as people of God) and vocations (what they are meant to do with their lives). Transformation is not an explicit term Crain uses, but she contends the goal of Christian educators is ‘wholeness with justice.’\textsuperscript{15} Wholeness refers to relationships between persons with one another, in all their diversity, with God and with creation. Educators facilitate this vision by creating hospitable spaces among

\textsuperscript{13} Scott Kisker describes American mainline Protestantism as ‘a bland, acceptable, almost civil religion, barely distinguishable from other traditions’ including such denominations as Presbyterians, Episcopalians or Lutherans. Scott Kisker, \textit{Mainline or Methodist: Rediscovering our Evangelical Mission} (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2008), 13.
\textsuperscript{14} Crain, ‘Listening to Churches.’
\textsuperscript{15} Seymour, Crain and Crockett, \textit{Educating Christians}, 167.
persons that honour the differences that exist among them, yet creates relationships, seeking to include the contributions of all members, especially those at the margins.

Beyond the Christian educator, Crain’s work also addresses the ministry of the United Methodist deacon.\textsuperscript{16} She understands United Methodist polity and discipline to be an evolving reflection of the collective experience of deacons, considering their varied calls and ministry contexts.\textsuperscript{17} Her focus on the role of Christian educators or deacons as leaders within the congregation can become abstracted from the ministry of all Christians. Crain’s commitment to discovering how a person’s experience shapes his or her identity and vocation means she does not advocate specific content for teaching and instruction. Congregational leaders need only be mindful to practice the presence of God and seek an awareness of God’s direction as they attend to the ongoing task of helping persons learn about themselves and their places in God’s creation.

Jack Seymour, another prolific United Methodist author, has sought to strengthen the guild of Christian religious education by serving as journal editor of Religious Education and producing a corpus of published work that offers a variety of approaches to education in the congregation.\textsuperscript{18} He asserts religious education occurs in any number of primary motifs having to do with social transformation, faith community, spiritual development and religious instruction.\textsuperscript{19} His use of models and approaches actually identifies divisions that exist within Christian education and general education. While no one model can encapsulate the whole project of religious education, Seymour suggests religious educators primarily function within one or two frameworks.\textsuperscript{20} Seymour understands the field of Christian religious

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Crain and Seymour, \textit{A Deacon’s Heart}; Crain, \textit{The United Methodist Deacon}.
\item Crain, \textit{The United Methodist Deacon}, ix.
\item Seymour, \textit{Mapping Christian Education}; Seymour and Miller, \textit{Theological Approaches to Christian Education}; Seymour and Miller, \textit{Contemporary Approaches to Christian Education}.
\item Education for social transformation prepares persons for responsible citizenship by promoting justice consistent with God’s kingdom purposes. A model of faith community focuses on nurturing persons in their development as human agents designed for relationship with others. Spiritual development is concerned with how persons are formed to know both the inward self and the outside world. Religious instruction seeks to educate persons in biblical faith with the goal of persons connecting their life of faith with faithful living in the world. Seymour, \textit{Mapping Christian Education}, 19-20.
\item In his earlier texts, Seymour identified five primary motifs: religious instruction, faith community, liberation, spiritual development and interpretation. The number of approaches and the differing names assigned to each specific approach illustrates the varied ways Christian education is considered by persons familiar with the field.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
education to be inclusive of a wide variety of approaches educators take, though each
approach has distinctive aims, methods and content that distinguish them from one
another, thereby exacerbating tendencies for educators to advocate particular
initiatives or programmes. For Seymour, transformation is ‘both the goal and the
process of education and will be realised when God’s justice and love is fully
embodied.’

Seymour’s latest work seeks to establish hope and justice in a world that
could easily give in to despair. He insists Christian religious education is ‘an
imperative so that faithful people can follow Jesus into public living.’ He contends
the way of Jesus, both for the historical figure and those who choose to follow and
live in a way consistent to him, entails six dimensions: loving God and neighbour,
living in God’s grace, looking for the realm of God, calling people to the banqueting
table, resisting the time of trial and proclaiming the resurrected one. For Seymour,
the role of Christian religious education is to guide congregations in discovering the
content and processes of the way of Jesus that they might dismantle unjust structures
and begin to institute lives of full-bodied freedom. His recent work echoes language
used in current disciple-making ministries, uncovering the practices that characterise
the way of Jesus. Yet, his work shies away from making distinctive Wesleyan claims,
instead seeking an audience within the broader Christian tradition.

Mary Elizabeth Mulino Moore is a fourth United Methodist whose extensive
body of work has shaped the field of religious education over the past few decades.
Like others mentioned, she eschews specific detailed claims of a Wesleyan legacy.
As a process theologian, she argues there is a two-way street between process
theology and religious education. She contends religious education needs to be
understood as ‘traditioning education.’ Traditioning education passes on a tradition,
re-envisioning that tradition for the present moment even as it seeks transformation
for the future. For her, teaching is a ‘holy practice in response to the Holy One who
gifts the world with grace and power beyond imagination.’ All of life is of

---

22 Seymour, *Teaching the Way of Jesus*, 45.
23 Seymour, *Teaching the Way of Jesus*, 151.
24 Moore, *Teaching From the Heart*.
25 Moore, *Education for Continuity and Change*.
26 Moore, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*, 220.
educational value and the possibilities for transformation are endless. Transformation is dynamic—a constant process. She understands education is the vehicle that drives transformation which is constantly unfolding, revealing more about the nature of transformation as it emerges.

Moore seeks to find unity not just in theology and education, but in the sacred and secular as well. Her suggestion to view every act of teaching and act of life as having sacred worth is commendable and offers exciting possibilities. However, such an expansive understanding of the sacred can make the holy generic and mundane. An inclusive embrace of all that is educational offers little guidance as to what is considered formative and necessary for transformation. Moore’s understanding that transformation occurs with continually emerging tradition might appear inviting, but is elusive, remaining amorphous and undefined. Learners are not offered a particular vision of what transformation looks like nor given concrete moorings by which they can navigate their faith journey.

United Methodist scholarship in the area of Christian religious education reflects the myriad approaches in which persons learn about God and God’s actions in the world. A consistent theme running throughout is that religious education serves a common goal of social transformation, which entails a vision of justice that integrates all of God’s creation. Persons are formed as Christians and nurtured and taught within a community with the expectation that their Christian formation will empower them to become agents of transformation in the world. Education is understood as a process that helps facilitate the goal of transformation, but how that process is attended to is unclear, indistinct and open to interpretation. No explicit reference is made to personal transformation, except that personal change is a continually dynamic process that evolves according to a person’s context.

**Other Methodist and Wesleyan Christian Educators**

In contrast to United Methodist educators who write for the generalised field of religious education, another group of scholars rely on their Wesleyan heritage as a lens through which they approach discipleship ministries of the church and congregation. The work of Michael Henderson engages the early Methodist
movement and contemporary learning theory. He refers to Wesley’s society, class and band meetings as an ‘instructional system’ that arose as a result of Wesley’s intention to help persons undergo spiritual transformation within the cultural and historical context of the day. Henderson contends the overall effectiveness of Wesley’s instructional system of the interlocking groups stems from the fact that each group could be distinguished from the other Wesleyan groups. By virtue of their differing functions, each group fostered a particular domain of learning within participating members. Henderson understands the early Methodist society meeting as primarily cognitive in function as it instructed persons in the basics of faith, the class meeting as behavioural, focusing on personal experience, and the band to condition the affect, helping persons grow in their commitment to express true holiness by growing in love and holiness for God and one another. Henderson especially champions the role of the class meeting as a unique vehicle that Wesley expressly developed for Methodism, whereas the society and band meetings were adopted and adapted from other religious groups contemporaneous to Wesley. Henderson attests, ‘the class meeting which Wesley developed was the instrument by which preaching and doctrine were harnessed into spiritual renewal.’

Henderson’s engagement of Wesleyan small groups and learning theory is insightful. However, categorising each group by a particular learning domain undermines the interpenetrating and holistic nature of how early Methodists were nurtured in the faith. Though Henderson acknowledges the context of community in which discipleship happens, he focuses on how modern learning theory works in the lives of individuals to foster personal transformation. As a result, he neglects to develop a vision of how a community might be transformed as a result of intentional discipleship.

United Methodist Sondra Higgins Matthaei’s contribution to the discipline of Christian Education includes a historical examination of John Wesley’s educational enterprise and its ramifications for faith formation today. She proposes ‘a Wesleyan ecology of faith formation composed of relationships, structures, practices, and

---

30 Matthaei, *Making Disciples*.
processes grounded in John Wesley’s understanding of the Trinity, the church, and salvation.”\textsuperscript{31} For Matthaei, discipleship is predicated on Christian identity, or knowing oneself to be a Christian. Christian identity yields Christian vocation, which is the response one makes as a result of experiencing divine kinship and affinity.\textsuperscript{32} Tracing Wesley’s growth and development through his formative experiences, Matthaei considers how his mother, Susanna, along with William Law and Peter Bohler, shaped Wesley’s understanding that holiness is fully trinitarian and thus involves an ecology of faith formation that is not easily reduced to a single element or even tandem elements. Interpreting particular chapters in Wesley’s own faith journey as various stages of development and nurture he underwent, Matthaei offers insights into how Christian faith is conveyed and transmitted, transforming both the individual and his or her context. She constructs a framework exploring the dynamics of belief and practice that occur on three different levels as disciples are invited to communion, experience deepening communion and participate in full communion.

Matthaei’s work understands discipleship to be a transformative process. For her, Christian identity is transformative, changing disciples even as it nurtures persons to persevere in faith. She values the role of relationship, focusing on the personal relationships Wesley had with other individuals who inspired him in his Christian growth and maturity. She suggests that any teaching ministry of a congregation is a natural consequence of doctrine. Furthermore, faithful transmission of doctrine through teaching preserves a community from one generation to the next. However, Matthaei does not address how a community functions to faithfully nurture persons in their discipleship.

Another scholar whose Wesleyan faith informs his writings is Mark Maddix, a member of the Church of the Nazarene. He contends Wesley’s approach towards education in faith was consistent with his theological commitments: persons experience transformation as they are instructed and formed in faith throughout their lives in a variety of ways.\textsuperscript{33} Maddix understands spiritual formation, or the revelation

\textsuperscript{31} Matthaei, \textit{Making Disciples}, 12.
\textsuperscript{32} Matthaei, \textit{Making Disciples}, 22.
\textsuperscript{33} Maddix, ‘John Wesley and a Holistic Approach to Christian Education.’
of God in the lives of believers, as a vital component often neglected by mainline Christian education programmes. In a recent volume of essays edited with Diane Leclerc, Maddix examines how Wesleyan theological commitments help nurture the spiritual life in ways that are formative and transformational. Spiritual formation that is Wesleyan occurs through responding positively to God’s initial offer and continued supply of divine grace. Furthermore, the process of Christian discipleship (which is to conform to image of Christ) is a lifelong, communal process. Maddix’s text illustrates programmatic tendencies already present within the field: entries are grouped thematically, exploring what Wesleyans consider critical to spiritual formation such as Bible reading and study, a disciple’s pursuit of sanctification and Christian perfection, the means of grace, the role of community (whether it be small groups or the larger corporate body of the congregation and Church), prayer and contemplation. Though the text advocates that the chapters address various aspects of discipleship ministries, the text lacks a discussion of how ministries might be integrated and experienced holistically. Additionally, contributors offer insights on instruction and nurture in the faith for adults, including those with families and other age specific ministries for young children, adolescents and college students. The result is a wide ranging discussion of discipleship that is comprehensive in scope, but does not address how the various topics raised cohere in an integrated life of faith.

Maddix contributes a second volume, coauthored with Dean Blevins, that draws on the shared Wesleyan perspective of the authors and their expressed commitments as practical theologians to religious and Christian formation. Blevins and Maddix understand discipleship and Christian education to be synonymous terms that draw on a two thousand year tradition of ‘spiritual formation, catechetical guidance, pastoral leadership, compassionate service and missional engagement.’ Their intent is to guide persons committed to faith formation through considering the theological and theoretical principles that are at the heart of ministries dedicated to Christian education and formation in faith.

---

34 Leclerc and Maddix, ‘Wesleyan Integration’; Maddix and Thompson, ‘Scripture as Formation.’
35 Leclerc and Maddix, Spiritual Formation.
36 Blevins and Maddix, Discovering Discipleship.
37 Blevins and Maddix, Discovering Discipleship, 17.
Their text lays out how Christian tradition and Wesleyan distinctives ground their understanding of discipleship as a three-fold movement that is formative, discerning and transformative, thus designed ‘to form persons into the people of God, guide them to discern the direction of God’s work in the church and the world, and empower them to be transforming agents for the sake of the Gospel.’ The result is a contribution that offers a Wesleyan vision for ongoing, lifelong discipleship that utilises classic and contemporary educational theory. Alongside the Wesleyan theology that informs their Christian faith, the authors offer an outline of developmental and learning theories that undergird many educational ministries in congregations. Additionally, the authors include sections proposing how discipleship might be envisioned for Christian communities, specifically for congregations with Sunday School, including appropriate age groups from early childhood through older adult, and the associated training, leadership and tasks that come with it.

Maddix contends Wesleyan discipleship is holistic, in that it necessarily spans the breadth of age-specific ministries, and includes a wide range of educational and formational experiences that seek personal conversion and individual progress towards sanctification. His understanding of holistic refers to a comprehensive approach to encompass all age groups. He does not provide an understanding of how a disciple is holistically nurtured in faith and experiences transformation into Christlikeness other than participating in the full range of ministries throughout their lifetime.

Dean Blevins’ work, like that of Maddix and Matthaei, represents a move towards Christian education as formational discipleship. For him, the ancient notion of catechesis grounds the educative ministries in the mission of the church to form persons for Christian faith and living. He is concerned about the theological formation of individual Christian disciples who are in necessary relationship with God and other Christians in community together. He has written on how Wesley’s means of grace consist of a set of practices, creating an ecology of their own merit that collectively, and with regular participation, communicates and reveals divine

38 Blevins and Maddix, Discovering Discipleship, 93.
grace to participants.\textsuperscript{40} For Blevins, the instituted, prudential and ordinary means of grace help construct a framework by which persons are formed as Christians, grow proficient in their discernment of what constitutes a genuine life of faith and are eventually transformed into holiness of heart and life. Blevins proposes the means of grace (specifically, the Lord’s Supper) offer a way for the various Wesleyan ecclesial bodies to approach discipleship as a more robust endeavour than each would claim by virtue of the specific tradition each claims for its own.\textsuperscript{41} Drawing on recent learning theory that embraces alternative ways of knowing (e.g. Gardner’s multiple intelligence theory), Blevins demonstrates that the means of grace constitute a pedagogy that communicates divine grace, helping participants come to new knowledge of themselves, God and their position within the world.\textsuperscript{42} Transformation happens to persons and Christian communities who are recipients of God’s grace and is facilitated by participation in the means of grace. He maintains that participation with God and the ability to discern God’s actions in the world has transformative implications for society and all of creation. Other contributions Blevins makes to the field of Christian education includes his examination of transformative learning as it relates to Christian educators, which will be reviewed in the context of TLT.

Blevins is adamant that Wesley’s means of grace and theological commitments are essential to a life of faithful discipleship. For him, holiness of heart and life, understood as conformity to the character and action of Christ, is both a goal and process of education. The three approaches—formation, discernment, and transformation—are categories describing the ways persons are discipled and nurtured in continued Christlikeness. Though communities are important to discipleship efforts, Blevins gives little attention to how persons are discipled in community other than acknowledging it as the location in which the means of grace are offered. More work would be helpful in relating how the community nurtures discipleship in persons and helps fosters the desired transformation into Christlikeness.

\textsuperscript{40} Blevins, ‘The Means of Grace: Toward a Wesleyan Praxis of Spiritual Formation.’
\textsuperscript{41} Blevins, ‘Communities of Holiness, Communities of the Spirit.’
Practical theologians who draw on their Wesleyan heritage primarily view education in terms of discipleship, which is to be nurtured and formed in faith by following the example of Christ. Though there are exceptions, most discuss transformation as personal with societal consequences. Persons experience change as they embrace their Christian identity and cooperate with divine grace, which has consequent effects for the community and world. As a group, practical theologians view the Wesleyan movement as relevant for contemporary discipleship efforts, though each emphasises different aspects. Some argue that discipleship encompasses a full range of spiritual practices, while others champion the presence of a nurturing community and others stress the need for God’s sanctifying grace. Regardless of what is understood as necessary, the components of discipleship remain discrete pursuits and lack holistic integration with one another.

Collectively, United Methodist and Wesleyan educators assert that transformation is a desired outcome of educational and discipleship ministries. Transformation has different connotations for Christian religious educators than for Wesleyans who embrace a discipleship approach for educating people in faith. Within mainline Protestantism, education advances a vision of justice that inspires persons to inaugurate a transformed society for the enjoyment and participation of all creation. Wesleyans, on the other hand, agree that transformation has social ramifications, but it necessarily involves the transformation of individuals as they pattern their lives after Christ. Both groups include relevant educational principles and theories in their concepts of teaching faith to others. However, neither group addresses how transformation actually occurs through the educational process. An examination of literature that addresses TLT in a theological context reveals how current scholarship has appropriated TLT for Christian faith and understanding.

**Transformative Learning and Christian Education**

The discipline of adult education has produced scholarly articles on transformative learning since it was first conceived by Jack Mezirow in the 1980s. As an area of research and scholarship, transformative learning largely remained focused on the formal educational environment that occurs in higher education. Still,
TLT has captured the attention of Christian religious educators of most traditions, including those in the Wesleyan tradition. A handful of articles written in the early 2000s have been augmented by an edited book authored by seminary faculty as well as a special edition of the 2013 *Christian Education Journal* which focused on transformation, featuring several articles that consider the role of transformative learning for Christian practitioners of education.

In a 2003 article, Francis Payette examined the need for Christian educators to assist in the process of transformation. Relying only on Mezirow, she identifies core components of his earliest theory (critical reflection and rational dialogue) often critiqued for its favouring cognitive and rational components of learning and ignoring other aspects of personhood that also are integral to change. Yet, she acknowledges the need for Christian disciples to dismantle resistance that might arise through more than a simply cognitive, rational enterprise. Payette suggests that a personal encounter with the trinitarian God in prayer and discernment can foster a resultant change not merely in thinking but ‘in perceptions, behaviours, and loves.’ Her suggestions would benefit from further engagement with the wider field of TLT rather than sole reliance on Mezirow’s earliest work.

In a 2007 paper presented to her colleagues, United Methodist Beverly Hall posited that educational theory and corporate practices, namely TLT and appreciative inquiry, are avenues worth exploring for the benefit of faith formation in the Wesleyan tradition. Much of her essay synthesises two secular theories about fostering change for adults. She imagines the usefulness of transformative learning within the local congregation, but only in conjunction with appreciative inquiry. She offers no Wesleyan distinctiveness about what that looks like. Hall’s reliance on TLT rests only on Mezirow’s earliest work, making no references to others who also contribute to a more robust understanding of the nature of transformative learning. Though both Hall’s paper and Payette’s article are limited in their scope of

---

44 Payette, ‘The Role of the Holy Spirit.’
understanding TLT, both demonstrate an interest within practical theology to engage TLT as a way of understanding more about the nature and process of transformation for Christian life and faith.

In 2008, Mary Hess and Stephen Brookfield edited a volume of essays written by junior faculty at Luther Seminary as a result of a grant given to explore the dynamics of teaching and learning in the academy over a two year period. Brookfield, whose voice is widely recognised in the field of TLT, admits he initially hesitated to participate in the project as he believed himself to be unqualified to offer substantive guidance for persons operating in the religious educational context of the seminary environment. Brookfield records his fears were unfounded when he discovered that ‘the problems and questions raised were those familiar to all teachers of adults.’ The essays contained in the volume discuss aspects of transformative learning, mostly from the perspective of the educator. Topics covered include what it means for seminary professors to teach authentically and with conviction, to engage in dialogue with students and to employ a reflective practice in their teaching for the benefit of student learning as well as their own pedagogical development. These experiences help foster transformation within both teacher and learner. Other entries facilitating transformation discuss the role of trust in student and teacher relationships, crossing the boundaries of race and gender and what it means when professors do not share the same experiences as their students with respect to economic advantages or generational differences. The text does not consider non-formal and informal contexts that nurture Wesleyan disciples, yet it is noteworthy for the inclusion and participation of secular adult learning theorist Brookfield, thereby further offering support to Christian practitioners who seek to utilise contemporary educational theory in their discipleship efforts.

In 2013, CEJ featured a special focus issue on transformative learning featuring contributions from Christian education scholars and practitioners across the field. The articles span an array of contexts and cover a range of topics for educators interested in inspiring transformative learning in their students. Curtis Young

---


47 Hess and Brookfield, *Teaching Reflectively*, xiii.
proposes a five-phase process of transformational learning that occurs within the congregation.\(^{48}\) Young’s desire is for pastors to foster transformative learning through their leadership role within congregational life as they teach, preach and counsel congregants. His work focuses on how transformative learning applies to the informal teaching ministries of the church, but his proposal to reframe TLT rests squarely on Mezirow’s earliest work (often criticized for its emphasis on rationality) as well as the work of religious educator James Loder. Young understands transformative learning to be instrumental in recovering a biblical understanding of Christian living, not just to teach truth of God’s revelation, but as a learning process that results in a profound change in the life of a disciple. Young’s work demonstrates that congregational ministry is an appropriate setting to explore transformative learning principles, as long as it is subject to theological reflection. However, his understanding of TLT is limited to Mezirow’s earliest work and his primary concern is to demonstrate how congregational leadership can foster transformed individuals, not how congregational ministries can become a locus of transformation for participants.

In his article, Byron Anderson names three particular practices he asserts are conducive to yielding transformation: contemplative-looking, contemplative-reading and contemplative-play.\(^{49}\) He refers to these as ‘focal points’ because of the ability of each to concentrate the attention of the participant, just as a focal lens does in narrowing light, and for their ability to reveal ancillary aspects about the spiritual life, as light refracts from a focal lens. Anderson’s article does not directly engage TLT, but he advocates that contemplative practices can be transformative in a Christian educational culture that is inundated with an overwhelming quantity of information. He offers no distinctive ideal of what transformation will yield, only that contemplative practices offer a means for disciples to transform.

Beverly Johnson-Miller posits conversational teaching is both a framework that explains and a process through which transformative learning occurs.\(^{50}\)

Conversation is the medium through which social interaction is brokered, creating relationship, community, meaning and knowledge. Knowledge and conversation involve more than an intellectual transmission between teacher and learner. Conversational teaching that invites transformation involves the ‘deep internalised engagement with truth, reality and possibility.’\(^{51}\) In a theological context, it also includes communication with God through prayer and discernment for understanding scripture. Johnson-Miller offers no paradigmatic ideal of what transformation looks like and only describes the ways in which conversation aids in that transformation.

Ellen Marmon’s contribution to the special edition of *CEJ* considers how Mezirow is relevant for curriculum design.\(^{52}\) She indicates that her interest in TLT is borne of the inherent transformational aspects present in the Wesleyan tradition with which she identifies.\(^{53}\) Her article explores how personal experience, the ability to be critically reflective and developing authentic relationships are each important to the transformative process. Marmon illustrates how biblical figures such as Ezra, Paul and Priscilla exemplify transformative learning principles. However, Marmon neglects the full scope of transformative learning as an integrative theory, concentrating primarily on Mezirow’s foundational work of TLT. Despite locating herself within the Wesleyan tradition, Marmon does not utilise Wesley, relying instead on scriptural stories to do her theological reflection.

Marmon contributed an earlier article to *CEJ* on transformative learning based on the experiences of her seminary students engaged in field education.\(^{54}\) Her work probes the ways in which graduate students come to new understandings about themselves as a result of a ‘disorienting event’ of a field placement that forces them to encounter persons with different socio-economic or cultural backgrounds. Her research concerns students in the formal educational setting. Yet, Marmon recognises that learning often occurs as a result of informal educational moments, such as conversations and dialogue students have with family or other friends as they process their experiences aloud and later reflect upon them with colleagues.

\(^{51}\) Johnson-Miller, ‘Conversational Teaching,’ 388.
\(^{53}\) Marmon, ‘Connections with Adult Education,’ 424.
Finally, Blevins contributes an article on neuro-education and the neuroscientific study of religious experience for transformative learning. Blevins explores the role of deep learning as well as the emotional aspects and role of community in fostering transformation. His work analyses a more holistic and integrative understanding of transformative learning that has been supported by theorists since the early 2000s. Therefore, Blevins includes cognitive, emotional and social domains of neuroscience and how the transformative process can be understood from a neurological point of view. His work demonstrates an interest in understanding transformation within Christian disciples that also engages cutting edge scientific research as well as educational theory.

Across the field of Christian education, authors have engaged TLT and sought the relevance of the theory within their context. More often than not, scholarship is focused on how TLT is employed by practitioners in the academy. Discussions of transformative learning within the congregational setting typically limit TLT to Mezirow’s work or pair TLT with another theory to facilitate change. Wesleyan educators excited about the potential TLT offers do not explicitly draw on their Wesleyan heritage. More work is needed that investigates the ways in which Wesleyan congregational ministries can appropriate TLT as it supports and nurtures the transformation of Christian disciples and helps inaugurate Kingdom alternatives in the world.

**Conclusion**

The descriptive empirical task of this thesis demonstrates Christian religious educators and practical theologians are open to and use educational theory to inform their approach to Christian religious education. However, an examination of contemporary United Methodism reveals practical theologians do not articulate a coherent or complete understanding of what is entailed in Wesleyan discipleship or the nature of Christian transformation. Practitioners focus on discrete aspects of the educational endeavour, such as the role of the community of faith, the formation of individuals, the need for social justice and age appropriate or intergenerational

---

The resultant picture of Christian education lacks cohesion and integration. Some educators acknowledge discipleship is all-encompassing, yet none offer a vision of how the various aspects are integrated in a holistic life of faith. Consequently, congregations are able to pick and choose what programmes they offer. Likewise, congregants are able to opt for themselves what aspects of their discipleship they want to pursue. Without an integrative concept that enhances how identity and vocation, the means of grace, the role of community and a goal for transformation cohere and constitute ‘a way of life’ within the academy, congregations only offer an incomplete picture of what transformative Christian discipleship entails.

The next movement of the thesis, the interpretive task, will determine a theoretical framework that not only accounts for the present approach to contemporary discipleship efforts but understand how the situation might be addressed in an effort to foster Christian transformation. The framework will serve as an appropriate road map to consider how the various aspects in Wesleyan discipleship are integrated and how they contribute to the transformation of persons and the broader social context.
Chapter Three
The Practice of Wesleyan Discipleship

Introduction

Osmer’s interpretive movement requires a framework be developed that can account for the current situation and will act as a road map to navigate forward through the rest of the project. An appropriate interpretive map for Christian discipleship requires more than simply considering the perceived failure of Christian educational efforts that does not yield transformed disciples. The framework also attends to the historical tradition of Christian faith, demonstrating that the church has faced similar circumstances when it fails to treat discipleship as a robust endeavour of the Christian life. This chapter explains how the work of Alasdair MacIntyre can be appropriated to develop a theoretical framework demonstrating Christian transformation is the result of an undivided life that integrates its various elements: Christian identity and vocation, the classic disciplines of Christian faith and the role of Christian community. The framework presented in this chapter explains how discipleship can be understood as a single, complex essential practice of Christian faith. In addition, the theoretical framework offers insight into the nature of fragmentation that is the consequence of the various approaches to discipleship in the field of Christian education.

Defining the Practice of Discipleship

Osmer acknowledges that MacIntyre’s virtue theory project has deeply influenced a neo-Aristotelian approach to practical theology.¹ MacIntyre’s work offers an analysis of the history of moral thought in Western civilisation that theologians across the disciplines accept as a credible explanation of how modernity contributes to issues facing the contemporary church.² His working premise is that

---

during the Enlightenment, the conception of the human telos, an understanding of an ultimate good for human life, was discarded and, as a result, contemporary moral and ethical discourse has devolved into a cacophony of emotivism. Therefore, current attempts at ethical conversation are fundamentally fragmented, lacking an internal integrity that provides coherence. Practical theologians and ethicists who take virtue ethics seriously contend that bereft of an overarching, transcendent good that gives purpose to the pursuit of faith and knowledge, Christian communities are ineffective in shaping the character of their members, fostering ‘an individualistic, utilitarian moral outlook.’

MacIntyre’s influence is evident in the writings of ethicists Stanley Hauerwas, Brad Kallenberg, Joseph Kotva and others who regard Christian virtues and character as primary lenses with which to view and discuss theological ethics. Their attraction to MacIntyre is not to reverse the effects of the Enlightenment, but to help Christians think through the value of retrieving the concept of the telos for the Christian life so communities might navigate post-modern waters more authentically today. Three practical theologians, Bryan Stone, Jonathan Wilson and Kenda Creasy Dean, contextualise MacIntyre to help shape their proposals for robust recovery of essential Christians principles. Stone asserts that in the case of evangelism, once Christianity became acceptable in Constantine’s rule, it fused itself with the political structure of the Roman Empire and became a legitimate part of the social and economic system, thereby experiencing a loss of its original telos. He writes, ‘the telos of the church…becomes its “usefulness” to the empire (or nation) and its “way of life.”’ As a result, he contends, ‘the most evangelistic thing the church can do today is to be the church—to be formed imaginatively by the Holy Spirit through core practices such as worship, forgiveness, hospitality, and economic sharing into a distinctive people in the world, a new social option, the body of Christ.’ For Stone, MacIntyre helps the church frame itself as a distinct body, different from both God’s Kingdom and from the world’s institutions, that has both failed to bear witness to

---

4 Osmer, ‘Empirical Practical Theology,’ 68.
and fulfilled the Gospel throughout the ages. To understand church history is to realise the church has been co-opted by cultures throughout the centuries with the result that today’s contemporary church is a mere shadow of what it was originally called to be. Wilson suggests MacIntyre’s work is helpful for the church to understand what it means to live faithfully in this post-modern pluralistic world. Living faithfully is a ‘new monasticism’ by which the church can ‘recover its telos, the living tradition of the Gospel, the practices and virtues that sustain that faithfulness, and the community marked by faithful living in a fragmented world.’

In her work with youth, Kenda Dean also draws on MacIntyre, arguing that in seeking after wholesomeness rather than Christ as the ultimate end or telos, ministry has become culturally relevant and not theological. Each theologian demonstrates that the Christian community’s particular vision, or lack thereof, is manifest in the practices and character of that community.

Additionally, an ecumenical initiative, led by Dorothy Bass and Craig Dykstra, has channeled the research of theologians across the disciplines to explore particular Christian practices that, ‘when woven together, form a way of life that is faithful and has integrity.’ Bass and Dykstra identify twelve specific Christian practices and indicate that these ‘practices’ contribute cohesively to a comprehensive way of life that is identifiably Christian. It is this woven together ‘way of life’ that describes Christian discipleship. Bass and Dykstra’s understanding of Christian practices is grounded in MacIntyre's understanding of ‘practice’ as a way of living a virtuous or moral life. MacIntyre defines practice as

\[
\text{any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.}
\]

---

7 Wilson, *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World*, 64.
8 Dean, *Practicing Passion*.
For Dykstra, practices are not merely instruments that provide a moral way of living; practices bear ‘epistemological weight’ and help form and nurture persons not only in what they do within the world but that they know through experience about the world as well. Christians participating in practices of faith come to knowledge about the nature of God’s grace in the world. Christian practices educate persons in faith much in the same way that Blevins asserts that the means of grace offer participants ways of knowing about God and God’s actions in the world.

For this thesis, MacIntyre’s definition of practice can be appropriated to develop a theological framework to understand the nature of transformation that occurs in Christian discipleship as a single, overarching practice. Rather than identify a list of activities and refer to them as practices (in the plural) as Bass and Dykstra do, MacIntyre’s definition of practice (in the singular) can be developed to demonstrate how particular features cohere in a comprehensive way of life of discipleship that transforms participants. MacIntyre’s definition of practice refers to four features (telos, virtues, ethos and disciplines (activities)) that can be appropriated by Christians and understood within the context of Christian discipleship. MacIntyre’s conception of practice demonstrates these features are logically related and integrated with one another. If any element of this framework is ignored or if the logic that integrates it is undermined, fragmentation results. This theoretical framework appropriating MacIntyre locates discipleship within the Christian tradition and offers an interpretive framework that demonstrates discipleship is the essential practice and overall endeavour of the Christian life that contributes to the life and welfare of the whole body of Christ, regardless of age group. However, the framework is subject to fragmentation (as observed in contemporary culture), thereby losing its transformative effect. For the present moment, it is the coherence and integration that will be examined.

---

The Presence and Role of the telos

The *telos*, according to MacIntyre, is the vision of ‘man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realised-his-essential-nature,’ or the purposed end of human life. Within a practice, the *telos* refers to the standards that constitute excellence for that particular activity. The notion of *telos* is important for Christians who adhere to the doctrine of sanctification. Kotva states, ‘sanctification is a teleological concept. More specifically, sanctification involves the growth and transformation of oneself and one's character toward a partially determinate picture of the human good or end.’ Sanctification is critical to Wesleyans who teach the purpose of faith in God is not simply salvation but to grow in God’s perfecting love until the heart knows nothing but love for God and neighbour. For Wesley, sanctification is teleological in that it occurs as a disciple experiences growth and maturity in Christian faith and the purposed end of the Christian life: Christlikeness. Wesley taught that when a person experienced forgiveness and justification, through God's pardoning love, they were initially sanctified. He preached, ‘No man is sanctified till he believes; every man when he believes is sanctified.’ Wesley maintained that sanctification, once initiated in the life of a disciple, was the perpetual and continual process of having one's heart continually refined by God.

The *telos* (or goal) of Christian living is to have a heart that perfectly loves God and neighbour just as Jesus did. Entire sanctification is to be like Christ both in nature and in deed. Kotva asserts Jesus is the archetype of what a fully sanctified human looks like:

Christ became the human paradigm because he realised our full human potential. He resisted selfish temptations, identified with the weak and oppressed, made love his motivation and guide, responded in love to both friends and enemies, was obedient to God (even to death), and found self fulfilment in relationship with God rather than autonomy. In short, the same way of being and acting that moves Christians to see God in Christ is what

---

12 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 52.
14 The fullness of Christ’s nature as *telos* for Christian disciples is such that it invites myriad expressions. At times, Wesley used the term ‘entire sanctification’ to refer to the whole work of sanctification as process and goal, or ‘Christian perfection’ to connote having attained Christ’s ideal nature. Likewise, the divine nature that Christian disciples pursue as they seek Christlikeness is alternatively referred to as the *imago Dei*. Each term carries different connotations, but in essence describes the realisation of Christ in the life of the disciple.
makes Christ our model and paradigm. In his complete identification with humanity, humanity reaches its goal in him.\textsuperscript{16}

The goal of the Christian life, to live a life like Christ, can be described in terms of the \textit{imago Dei} or perfection. Each term refers to the fully sanctified life of Jesus that Christians are aiming for as the \textit{telos}, but connotes different aspects. Kenneth Collins writes, ‘entire sanctification…is love replacing sin, love conquering every vile passion and temper. The \textit{imago Dei}, especially the moral image, has been renewed, in its glory and splendour.’\textsuperscript{17} In seeking Christlikeness, the image of God is restored in the life of a believer. A Christian disciple undergoes the process of sanctification even as she seeks entire sanctification whilst she undergoes continual development and maturation of the \textit{imago Dei} as a result of fundamental change upon receiving it at new birth. Stanley Hauerwas posits that Christian perfection is the attempt to have a ‘singleness of intention, the constancy of character, that makes our behaviour consistent with a life devoted to God.’\textsuperscript{18} Sanctification is to be so filled with the Spirit of God as to have no other distraction or purpose than to love God and to demonstrate his love to neighbours. To be made perfect in love for God and love for neighbour is to experience entire sanctification by imitating Christ. Imitating Christ’s attitudes and actions certainly determines a worthy \textit{telos} for the Christian disciple.

The \textit{telos} according to MacIntyre is ‘systematically extended.’ By this, MacIntyre means the goal or purpose of a practice is never fully accomplished. Rather, it is a goal that is ‘enriched by [those] extensions of human powers.’\textsuperscript{19} A person continues to grow in realising fulfilment of the \textit{telos}. Dykstra describes the \textit{telos} as ‘what human life is really all about, what its best purposes are, what we should strive for in life are all made larger and greater.’\textsuperscript{20} The goal is not an achievement that is completed upon being realised; it is dynamic and becomes greater as a result. Though Wesley taught and maintained it was possible for

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16} Kotva, \textit{The Case for Virtue}, 80.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Kenneth J. Collins, \textit{The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley’s Theology} (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 177.
\item \textsuperscript{19} MacIntyre, \textit{After Virtue}, 193.
\end{itemize}
Christians to experience entire sanctification, a disciple’s capacity to love as Christ only becomes more expansive. Collins notes, ‘there is no place in Wesley’s theology for the notion that “one has arrived,” spiritually speaking. Those whose hearts have been made pure by the blood of Christ must continue to grow.’21 Hauerwas concurs that sanctification is a goal that expands, saying, ‘a theme often associated with the idea of sanctification is the concept of growth or development.’22 Determining a *telos* or necessary good as the goal of human existence grounds MacIntyre’s overall virtue theory project and establishes sanctification as the point and purpose of Christian living. Establishing sanctification as the desired goal, a *telos* for the endeavour and practice of Wesleyan discipleship, the other constituent elements of MacIntyre’s definition will cohere around its purposed end: growing in ever deepening love for God and expressing that love to neighbours.

*The Presence and Role of Virtue*

In order to secure a particular *telos*, MacIntyre posits that virtue, ‘an acquired human quality,’ are necessary both to possess and exercise in order to secure the *telos*.23 Lack of virtue prevents realisation of the *telos*. Virtue refers to those interior attributes that describe the nature of a disciple’s character. A non-exhaustive list of Christian virtues includes the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Virtues are the qualities of Christ that characterise his mind and the manner in which he acted in the world. The fruit of the Spirit is not just another way to discuss virtuous living. Christian virtues are the result of faith in Christ. Wesley, however, typically used the term ‘affections’ or

---

‘dispositions’ or even ‘tempers of the heart’ rather than ‘virtue’ to describe human qualities. Maddox notes, Wesley did not attribute virtue to humanity but to divinity:

While it is important for us today to recognise the nature of the fruit of the Spirit as tempers, Wesley’s own concern was that his people recognise that these are truly fruit of the Spirit. That is, these dispositions to truly Christian action are not inherent human possessions. They emerge in conjunction with the empowering Presence of the Holy Spirit.

Christian virtue, or fruit of the Spirit, is manifest within the Christian disciple who participates in the imago Dei because these virtues are consistent with the divine nature.

The virtues or the character of a Christian cannot stand apart from the telos of Christianity. Christian virtue and character must be consistent with the imago Dei reproduced in the Christian disciple. Emulating the imago Dei inspires Christian virtue. Hauerwas asserts, ‘the Christian life cannot be specified by a set of virtues to be achieved apart from their arising as a response to Jesus Christ…it is first and foremost adherence to this man, Jesus Christ, as the bringer of God's order in his person and work.’ Hauerwas contends that sanctification has a direct bearing on the virtues or overall character of a Christian disciple:

Sanctification involves the determination of a man's ‘person,’ his most basic being. It is not a shallow or surface change of a man's way of life, but rather it affects a man at the very heart of his existence. It is the determination that gives a singleness to his being. Second, this determination or qualification of man's being cannot be reduced to any one disposition or act, but rather it represents a general orientation of our own being.

Gregory S. Clapper notes that Wesley’s list of affections and dispositions might easily be referred to as virtues. However, there is a connotation that virtue is the ‘disposition to behave, and... does not suggest the “transitive” element of “affection,” nor the engagement of the heart, the centre of experience that “affection” does.’ Because this thesis seeks to appropriate MacIntyre’s work into a Christian context he considers virtues as qualities required to achieve the telos, this thesis will use MacIntrye’s terminology over Wesley’s preference for the term dispositions or affections. Gregory S. Clapper, John Wesley on Religious Affections: His Views on Experience and Emotion and their Role in the Christian Life and Theology (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1989), 85. Also, Steve Johnson comments on contemporary debate within scholarship as to Wesley’s use of ‘tempers’ and ‘affections’ and the relationship between the two terms. Johnson notes that affections and tempers are the result of being focused on a particular goal such as the love of God and is manifest in the life of a disciple through regular and consistent nurture of God. Steve Johnson, John Wesley’s Liturgical Theology: His Sources, Unique Contributions and Synthetic Practices (University of Manchester, 2015), 48-58.


Hauerwas, Character and the Christian Life, 182.

Hauerwas, Character and the Christian Life, 201.
Sanctification, or growing in Christlikeness, has direct bearing on the disciple that he might be able to begin to acquire and achieve attributes that assist in the overall goal. According to Maddox,

for Wesley, then, the Spirit’s work of sanctification was not merely a forensic declaration of how God will treat us…Neither was it a matter of directly infusing virtues in Christian lives. It was a process of character-formation that is made possible by a restored participation of fallen humanity in the Divine life and power.28

Christian virtues are not simply personal attributes a disciple possesses as a result of her own merit, but are cultivated in cooperation with a community whose members also seek to renew the *imago Dei* in their lives as well as to work by divine grace to realise more of God’s kingdom on earth. Christians pursue a *telos* because the virtues contributing to overall character allow them to see the value of the end that fosters further pursuit of the *telos* or sanctification. In this thesis, virtue refers to those interior qualities associated with character and are understood in Christian terms as the fruit of the Spirit.

*The Presence and Role of an ethos*

For MacIntyre, the role of community is essential to a practice and its corresponding values and purposed end. The cultivation of virtue towards its purposed *telos* is necessarily a ‘socially established cooperative human activity.’29 MacIntyre asserts that by engaging in a particular practice, participants ‘enter into a relationship not only with contemporary practitioners, but also with those who have preceded us in the practice.’30 Ethos constitutes the culture of a community; it encompasses the actions and values to which a community adheres.

The community’s *ethos* recognises which traditions contribute to realising the common good or goal. Dykstra claims, ‘communities do not just engage in practices; in a sense, they are practices.’31 Over time and across cultures, Christian communities display a particular character for which they are known besides doing the things that they do. From a Christian viewpoint, *ethos* specifically refers to the

30 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 194.
31 Craig Dykstra, ‘Reconcieving Practice,’ 173.
culture that governs faith. Hauerwas claims, ‘the Gospel concerns not merely how we ought to understand ourselves but also how we ought to live and order our being.’ Discipleship as a practice of Christian faith is not simply an individual pursuit of a goal, but an endeavour that is shared corporately with a community.

Ethos, for Wesleyans, was structured in terms of The General Rules of the United Societies which governed early Methodist societies. The Rules were an agreed upon set of standards by which all members of the Methodist societies agreed to 1) do no harm, 2) do good, 3) attend on the ordinances of God. The early Methodists received their name because they methodically engaged in disciplines and held each other accountable in small groups or society meetings. David Watson asserts the society meeting and the Rules that superintended them was the ‘basis for everything by which Methodism was known during its formative years.’ In many ways, the Rules comprised a ‘rule of life’ by which Methodists agreed to live and organise themselves as Christian persons living in eighteenth century British society. The Rules served as an organising principle for the means of grace, and demonstrated ‘the extent to which the performance of good works is integral to our salvation, and the neglect of the same is detrimental to or even destructive of our faith.’ Conversely stated, ethos connotes that there are harmful activities from which a Christian abstains so as to avoid stagnation or derailment in faith. Positively phrased, there are guidelines which encourage and affirm a way of Christian living that fosters a deepening progression in faith. Ethos, then, for the purposes of this thesis, refers to the rule of life that governs the specific context in which disciples engage in specific activities or disciplines.

The Presence and Role of the Disciplines

As much as MacIntyre’s conception of practice describes a way of life that is purposed towards a particular goal that fosters both virtue within individuals and a sense of shared communal identity, it is imperative that practice also includes

32 Hauerwas, Character and Christian Life, 183.
35 Watson, ‘Aldersgate Street,’ 36.
participation in an activity. According to MacIntyre, a practice consists of activities that ‘are partially definitive of’ and contribute to a ‘coherent and complex human activity’ in which persons are actively engaged.\textsuperscript{36} Dykstra asserts a practice ‘necessarily involves a group of people doing something in relation and response to one another.’\textsuperscript{37} The activities that comprise practice are not discrete or random, but are coherent and make sense not only to the comprehensive practice but to the goal of the practice as well. Kallenberg comments that the activities need to be ‘complex enough to be challenging, and coherent enough to aim at some goal in unified fashion.’\textsuperscript{38} Communities are an integral link to learning the practice and insuring the transmission of the activities that comprise the practice from one generation to another. Dykstra notes a practice concerns activities that are ‘possible for people to teach it to and learn it from one another.’\textsuperscript{39} The dynamic nature of the \textit{telos} that is systematically extended as it is realised means that novices and mature disciples all benefit with repeated and sustained engagement in activities as a community.

Classical disciplines of the Christian life are purposed towards cultivating the Christian to a more mature relationship with Christ. Classic Christian disciplines are synonymous with what Wesley called ‘means of grace.’ Wesley described means of grace as ‘outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end—to be the \textit{ordinary} channels whereby he might convey to men [divine] grace.’\textsuperscript{40} Disciplines include ‘works of piety,’ or those actions directed towards God such as prayer, worship and celebrating Eucharist, and ‘works of mercy,’ or actions directed towards others, such as feeding the poor, visiting the imprisoned and sheltering the homeless. By engaging in disciplines, Christian disciples participate in actions consistent with the way Christ walked. Furthermore, disciplines open participants up to the presence of divine grace. Richard Foster describes the classical disciplines of the Christian faith as spiritual because they allow room for God’s transcendence to operate within participants and provide a way for participants to discover more about

\textsuperscript{36} MacIntyre, \textit{After Virtue}, 187.  
\textsuperscript{37} Dykstra, \textit{Growing in the Life}, 68.  
\textsuperscript{38} Kallenberg, ‘The Master Argument,’ 21.  
\textsuperscript{39} Dykstra, \textit{Growing in the Life}, 69.  
\textsuperscript{40} Wesley, ‘Means of Grace,’ \textit{Works}, 1:381.
God’s divine nature.\textsuperscript{41} For the purposes of this thesis, disciplines are regarded as any and all activities Christians engage in to demonstrate love for God and for neighbour.

MacIntyre’s definition of practice, when Christianly considered, provides a conception of discipleship as a central, if not the central, practice of Christian faith. In using MacIntyre, it is possible to locate discipleship as an ongoing practice within the Christian tradition. Practice vis a vis MacIntyre prevents discipleship from being reduced to an activity. Nor can discipleship be conceived as technical performance of a group of activities by individuals or even congregations. To do so would disconnect the activity of the disciplines from its ultimate intended purpose: to grow in Christlikeness. In this conception, all of the disciplines in which Christian disciples participate contribute to the practice of discipleship.

\textbf{Building a Framework for Wesleyan Discipleship}

When considered within the Christian context, MacIntyre provides insight to conceiving discipleship as the essential practice of Christian faith. The four aspects of his definition of ‘practice’ can be appropriated and developed into a framework that illustrates the necessary relationship between all four component elements in the practice of discipleship. The framework will be constructed from two pairs of tandem or dialectic relationships; the first between virtues and disciplines depicted on a vertical axis and the second between \textit{ethos} and \textit{telos} on a separate horizontal axis. The intersecting vertices create a theoretical framework visually represented and referred to within the confines of this thesis as the \textit{Discipleship Matrix} (Figure 1). The resulting framework will illustrate the relationship between the four components and demonstrate the \textit{Discipleship Matrix} is a conceptual map that shows how the various

elements championed by different educators and practical theologians can have cohesion and integration. While MacIntyre’s definition may hold the four components of the Discipleship Matrix together, a Wesleyan understanding of the practice of Christian discipleship means that the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit permeates the framework as well. For Wesley, a Christian disciple lives and moves by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. He preached that the believer walked “‘after the Spirit’. Both their thoughts, words, and works are under the direction of the blessed Spirit of God.” The related components that comprise the practice of discipleship in the Discipleship Matrix can be understood as coherent through MacIntyre’s definition of practice as well as a theological lens that considers the role of the Holy Spirit in the transformation of disciples. Thus, interpretive framework locates discipleship within the Christian tradition and will help explain the nature of the present situation confronting discipleship is systematically examined.

The Relationship of Virtues and Disciplines

Many earnest Christian disciples, in the early stages of faith, submit to classic disciplines because they are instructed by mature Christians that they ought to do so. Over time, they may believe that prayer, worship and service help them grow in the fruit of the Spirit and serve to make God’s goodness evident in their lives. However, the production of Christian virtue is not necessarily the result of a one-way, linear trajectory. Joseph Cunningham observes this connection in Wesley, ‘the fruits of holy living are manifested us by the Spirit, as human agents actively seek to embody them in practice. Abiding in the Spirit, our character is re-bent towards God’s eternal and beneficent nature.’ Maddox comments, ‘holy actions do not occur “naturally” or by simple desire—they are motivated and patterned by holy tempers.’ Christian virtue precedes Christian action, thus inspiring a disciple to engage in the disciplines. Kotva agrees, ‘there is an important sense in which “being” proceeds “doing.” That is, people with certain dispositions, attitudes, and beliefs will tend to act in certain

44 Maddox, Responsible Grace, 178.
kind of ways.’ Christian disciples respond to their love for God and desire to share God’s love by engaging in the disciplines that demonstrate the nature of divine love.

Yet, at the same time, neglecting or avoiding a particular discipline until a Christian disciple is inclined or motivated to do so as a result of Christian virtue undermines the nature of discipline and the agency of the Holy Spirit to work by grace through the disciplines. Preaching on the disciplines, Wesley refutes the idea that it is preforming the activity that conveys grace, but the presence of God, ‘the opus operatum, the mere work done, profiteth nothing; that there is no power to save but in the Spirit of God, no merit but in the blood of Christ; that consequently even what God ordains conveys no grace to the soul if you trust not in him alone.’ Foster asserts, ‘God has given us the Disciplines of the spiritual life as a means of receiving his grace. The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us.’ The disciplines offer disciples opportunities to encounter God’s divine love so that his grace can work to transform their lives from their natural, sinful state to one that cultivates the virtues and character of Christ. It is not the discipline or that activity in and of itself that forms and shapes persons into Christlike character. Robert Mulholland explains, ‘when we continue to offer the discipline, that discipline becomes a means of grace through which God works and moves to transform that dead portion of our body into life in the image of Christ.’ While the action of the discipline itself has no merit on its own terms, the witness of Christian faith is that God regularly uses these disciplines so that Christian disciples may mature and grow in Christlikeness. According to Mulholland, ‘the classical disciplines serve to bring our lives into, and hold our lives in, God’s environment for wholeness in Christ.’ It is in continual supplication to the disciplines that God acts, on God’s own divine terms, to work within the Christian disciple and continues the process of transformation through the production of the fruit of the Spirit.

There is a mutually reinforcing relationship that exists between virtues and disciplines. Within the Discipleship Matrix, virtue is held in dialectic relationship with discipline.
with the disciplines (Figure 2). The connection is evidenced in Wesley’s preaching, ‘being filled with faith and with the Holy Ghost, [Christian disciples] possess in their hearts and show forth in their lives, in the whole course of their words and actions, the genuine fruits of the Spirit of God.’\textsuperscript{50} Christian virtue motivates initial, continued and sustained engagement in disciplines. Participation in the disciplines provides Christian disciples with opportunities manifest in the virtues consistent with Christlikeness. Still, neither the performance of a practice nor the acquisition or maturation of a virtue is the effect of human achievement; it is divine grace that does the work. Leclerc asserts, ‘grace changes our character, if we receive it and cooperate with it. The result will be actions that parallel that character.’\textsuperscript{51} Yet, often times, by participating in the actions, activities and ministries in which Christ engaged, Christian disciples seek to cultivate the virtues and character of Christ. Christians are not known by their perfunctory performance of a discipline, but by the character that imbibes that action. The fruit of the Spirit qualify the discipline. Divine grace made available through participation in the disciplines transforms the Christian disciple further and further so the inward being and outward actions are fused with one another and understood in terms of Christlikeness. Leclerc claims, ‘not only our actions but also our inclinations have been affected to such a degree that we act out of a Christlike character.’\textsuperscript{52} Christian virtues and disciplines occur within persons who are assisted by divine grace to grow in Christlikeness and are consistent with one another.

\textit{The Relationship of ethos and telos}

The second dialectic of the Discipleship Matrix represents the general nature that characterises Christian life in the communities and the ends for which the mission is purposed. \textit{Ethos}, or the means of discipleship, is in tandem relationship

\textsuperscript{50} Wesley, ‘The First-fruits of the Spirit,’ \textit{Works}, 1:237.
\textsuperscript{52} Leclerc, ‘Being Whole,’ 56.
with telos, or the ends of discipleship (Figure 3).

*Ethos* refers to the parameters that shape Christian life and community, while *telos* refers to the point and purpose of Christian life: being made like Christ, holy and sanctified. *Ethos* and *telos* form a dialectic with one another since the means of discipleship, being supported by and supportive of a Christian community dedicated to living out the Christian practices of faith and growing in virtuous living, serves the end of the Christian life to grow in ever deepening love for God and neighbour. Hauerwas claims though we have a conception of knowing what Christlikeness involves, we only begin to understand its significance by experiencing it in the company of others:

> the telos of the Christian life is not a goal that is clearly known prior to the undertaking of the journey, but rather we learn better the nature of the end by being slowly transformed by the means necessary to pursue it. Thus, the only means to perceive rightly the end is by attending to the lives of those who have been and are on the way.\(^\text{53}\)

Growth in Christlikeness is not possible for any Christian unless he or she is engaged in a pattern of living that continually supports and nurtures a community of believers in that pattern of living consonant with its goal. Wesley understood this dynamic and accounted for the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit within the Methodist Society that came together to seek ‘the power of godliness’ in order to grow in faith.\(^\text{54}\) The means of Christian discipleship must be consistent with the ends of Christian discipleship.

The *telos* seeks renewal in the *imago Dei*, and continued growth towards entire sanctification. Wesley preached that sanctification is to be made ever more perfect in love for God and neighbour, saying, ‘this is the sum of Christian perfection: it is all comprised in that one word, love. The first branch of it is the love of God: and as he that loves God loves his brother also, it is inseparably connected with the second, “Thou shalt love they neighbour as thyself.”’\(^\text{55}\) For Wesley, this is

---

\(^{53}\) Hauerwas, ‘Characterising Perfection,’ 128.


the single aim and purpose for which humanity is meant. Seeking the love of God is a single-minded, all-encompassing pursuit of the Christian disciple, allowing divine love to affect her whole life in order to continually progress in God’s sanctifying love. Hauerwas points out, ‘it is an inherent contradiction to claim to be a Christian without that claim making a difference in our lives and how we live.’

Christian disciples need to organise their lives in such a way that not only progresses them towards entire sanctification, but allows them to cooperate with the divine grace they receive and to live out their commitments consistent with God’s perfect love.

As a means to help persons grow in love for God, Wesley valued the role and nature of intentional Christian community. He understood the nature of Christian religion to be socially conceived and socially sustained: ‘when I say [that Christianity] is essentially a social religion, I mean not only that it cannot subsist so well, but that it cannot subsist at all without society, without living and conversing with other men.’ Christian community makes a difference in how disciples live and pursue their continued growth in faith. Wesley credited the Methodists as a unique group of persons who insisted on the pursuit of holiness and relied on ‘the inspiration of the Holy Ghost in order to [do] any good thought or word or work.’ He conceived of the Rules as a way for persons to live out their Christian commitments through the power of the Holy Spirit and continually pursue God’s perfecting love. The Rules were never understood to be absolutes, or an end unto themselves.

Thompson points out Wesley desired ‘the rules to be seen for the purpose he believes they are intended: as true means to the end of loving God and neighbour.’ The ethos, the way in which Methodists ordered and lived their lives, was for the express purpose of helping one another progress in entire sanctification, the telos of Christian life. The ethos and telos are in tandem, a mutually reinforcing relationship within the Discipleship Matrix.

---

56 Hauerwas, ‘Characterising Perfection,’ 124.
The Construction of the Discipleship Matrix

The framework of the Discipleship Matrix is fully constructed when the two dialectics intersect (Figure 4). MacIntyre’s definition of practice secures the two vertices together, securing the four constituent elements of the Discipleship Matrix (virtue, ethos, disciplines and telos) to cohere as a unified whole. The nexus of the four elements can be understood as the practice and endeavour of Wesleyan discipleship, or the process of sanctification: a transformational, co-operative enterprise involving human effort and divine grace.

Discipleship as Holy Transformation

The Discipleship Matrix provides a conceptual map that illustrates the relationship between components of MacIntyre’s definition of practice. As a theoretical framework, the Discipleship Matrix addresses ancillary aspects of Christian discipleship rather than just the four features it borrows from MacIntyre. First, the endeavour and practice of discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition is a transformative experience that affects all aspects of a disciple who seeks to become more like Christ made possible by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. Second, the endeavour and practice of discipleship is a cooperative enterprise of human effort and divine grace. Third, Christian discipleship is a lifelong undertaking in which a disciple’s growth and maturity in Christlikeness is both individually and corporately conceived. Not only do these principles find affinity with MacIntyre, they also illustrate why the endeavour and practice of discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition can be understood as the process and pursuit of sanctification or holy transformation.

The Process of Sanctification

MacIntyre’s definition of practice as an aspect of virtue ethics is an appropriate way to discuss discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition because virtue ethics reflects an overall objective of Wesleyan discipleship which is to acquire and grow in a character or nature that it is intended to be (imago Dei) but abstracted by...
primal sinful human nature. In terms of Christian theology, as a result of original sin, humans are subject to their own devices which cause them to live apart from God. Yet, forgiveness and reconciliation with God is possible through God’s pardoning and justifying grace in conjunction with a seeker’s repentance. Being a disciple establishes a relationship with Christ; the imago Dei is restored but not entirely accomplished. The process of sanctification has begun, even if it is not yet entirely completed. Wesley writes:

> and at the same time we are justified, yea, in that very moment, sanctification begins. In that instant we are ‘born again’, ‘born from above’, born of the Spirit’. There is a real as well as relative change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel the ‘love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us’, producing love to all mankind, and more especially to the children of God; expelling the love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honour, of money; together with pride, anger, self-will, and every other evil temper—in a word, changing the ‘earthly, sensual, devilish’ mind into ‘the mind which was in Christ Jesus’. \( ^{61} \)

Justification is a change that takes root in the lives of Christians. Sanctification is the continual process of growth in love and character of God by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit which continually mature disciples in increasing Christlikeness. Discipleship is the disciplined and faithful response of experiencing new life in Christ and continually growing in Christlike nature and obedience. Sanctification, or holy transformation—to grow in Christlikeness—occurs through Christian discipleship. If the telos of discipleship is considered to be entire sanctification, then the other three components of the Discipleship Matrix (the virtues, disciplines and ethos) contribute towards continual growth in sanctification.

In seeking a particular end, a telos, which is to be entirely sanctified, a person gradually experiences ever progressive transformation. The pursuit of a telos radically affects a disciple’s character as well as his actions. A person does not become a disciple of Jesus in order to mimic Christ but to become like Christ, to have the mind that was in Christ and to walk in the way he walked. Dykstra comments, ‘our identities as persons are constituted by practices and the knowledge and relationships they mediate. Some of these are so central to who we are that we

---

60 Kotva, Christian Virtue Ethics, 17.
cannot give them up without being transformed.' As Wesley notes, the process of sanctification transform faithful disciples from seeking their own personal selfish natures to seeking the nature and goodness of God;

   From the time of our being ‘born again’ the gradual work of sanctification takes place. We are enabled ‘by the Spirit’ to ‘mortify the deeds of the body’, of our evil nature. And as we are more and more dead to sin, we are more and more alive to God. We go on from grace to grace, while we are careful to ‘abstain from all appearance of evil’, and are ‘zealous of good works’, ‘as we have opportunity doing good to all men’; while we walk in all his ordinances blameless, therein worshipping him in spirit and in truth; while we take up our cross and deny ourselves every pleasure that does not lead us to God.

Sanctification is an ongoing, ever progressive, gradually all-consuming process of being completely transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit into Christlikeness. A disciple’s identity, his way of being and the way in which he comports himself, is fundamentally altered. Growth in grace occurs because the disciple is obedient to the grace made available by the Holy Spirit. In terms of the Discipleship Matrix, the process of sanctification involves the maturation of the whole life of the disciple and is purposed towards the end goal of entire sanctification.

   For eighteenth century Methodists, recovering the imago Dei meant nothing short of holiness. Wesley considered holiness as the ‘recovery of the image of God, a renewal of the soul after his likeness.” God’s nature is holy: to have perfect, unblemished love. Humanity’s fallen, sinful, prideful nature is the anthesis of divine holy love. Wesley’s insistence that Methodists seek the holy nature of God was grounded in scriptural teaching. Wesley preached,

   The command of God given by St. Peter, ‘Be ye holy, as he that hath called you is holy in all manner of conversation,’ implies a promise that we shall be thus holy if we are not wanting to ourselves. Nothing can be wanting on God’s part. As he has called us to holiness he is undoubtedly willing, as well as able, to work this holiness in us.

By responding to Jesus and following him as disciples, Christians are called into holiness to share in God’s divine nature. For Wesley, it is always the disciple’s

---

62 Dykstra, ‘Reconceiving Practice,’ 173.
response to God’s invitation and the realisation that God, through the agency of the Holy Spirit is already active in the life of the disciple:

That this ‘testimony of the Spirit of God’ must needs, in the very nature of things, be antecedent to the ‘testimony of our own spirit’ may appear from this single consideration: we must be holy of heart and holy in life before we can be conscious that we are so, before we can have ‘the testimony of our spirit; that we are inwardly and outwardly holy. But we must love God before we can be holy at all; this being the root of all holiness. Now we cannot love God till we know he loves us: ‘We love him, because he first loved us.’ And we cannot know his pardoning love to us till his Spirit witnesses it to our spirit. Since therefore this ‘testimony of his Spirit’ must precede the love of God and all holiness, of consequence it must precede our inward consciousness thereof, or the ‘testimony of our spirit’ concerning them.66

Though God initiates restoration of his divine image and beckons humanity into holiness, being restored to God’s image requires disciples to deny their own interests and seek after God’s intention for creation. Holiness is an on-going, co-operative effort between humanity and divinity that God enables as disciples faithfully and obediently seek it.

Disciples are, by simply receiving the divine image within themselves, transformed. Christian transformation constitutes the process of sanctification and lies at the centre of the Discipleship Matrix. Holy transformation occurs when a person accepts divine grace and becomes a Christian disciple. According to Wesley, ‘coming to Christ…“must infer a great and mighty change”. It must infer, not only an outward change, from stealing, lying, and all corrupt communication; but a thorough change of heart, an inward renewal in the spirit of our mind.’67 Christians lead a life that is recognisably different. Wesley was convinced the change is effected from the interior out:

I believe it to be an inward thing; a change from inward wickedness to inward goodness; an entire change of heart of our inmost nature from the image of the devil (wherein we are born) to the image of God; a change from the love of the creature to the love of the Creator, from earthly and sensual to heavenly and holy affections—in a word, a change from the tempers of the spirits of darkness to those of the angels of God [as] they are in heaven.68

Change that occurs in the heart and the affections are all interior aspects of character that provide a source of identity. Disciples, by virtue of being born again and restored in God’s image, are no longer controlled by their sinful human nature but ruled by God’s divine love. They are identified as children of God.

Wesley understood God’s grace to impact the interior life of the Christian disciple, which then affects the outward lives and exterior actions represented by the vertical axis of the Discipleship Matrix. Inward Christlikeness results in outward displays of love for God and God’s creation. The imago Dei cultivated within the disciple is demonstrated and made known to others through Christian action and ministry. Using Christ’s Sermon on the Mount as an illustration for transformation, Wesley commented that Jesus ‘has shown what Christians are to be. He proceeds to show what they are to do also: how inward holiness is to exert itself in our outward conversation.’\textsuperscript{69} A disciple’s heart may be a reservoir for God’s love and holiness, but God’s goodness cannot be reserved within the heart; it pervades a disciple’s entire life. Wesley continued, ‘the love of God and of all mankind, flowing from faith in Jesus Christ…and by these it produces all holy actions, whatsoever are lovely or of good report; whatsoever works of faith and labour of love are acceptable to God and profitable to man.’\textsuperscript{70} Love for God and the goodness of God overflows from the heart of the disciple and is manifest as Christlike deeds. Christian disciples change their behaviour as a result of their new life in Christ. They follow in the footsteps of Jesus, ministering to the sick, offering comfort and aid to those who are distressed. Christian disciples walk in the way Christ walked because they have the mind that was in Christ. The totality of a disciple’s life is affected. Discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition is holistic and involves the whole person—heart and life.

Wesley’s belief and confidence in the scope of God’s transforming power was so great that he extended it to the good works Christians did to demonstrate God’s holy love. He asserted,

\begin{quote}
[Christ] hath shown how all our actions likewise, even those that are indifferent in their own nature, may be made holy and good and acceptable to God, by a pure and holy intention. Whatever is done without this, he
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{69} Wesley, ‘Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount III,’ \textit{Works}, 1:517.
\textsuperscript{70} Wesley, ‘Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount IX,’ \textit{Works}, 1:642-3.
largely declares, is of no value before God. Whereas whatever outward works are thus consecrated to God, they are, in his sight, of great price.\textsuperscript{71}

Works of piety and mercy, when demonstrated by disciples, are more than dutiful actions performed by obedient followers. Mulholland comments, ‘spiritual disciplines are acts of loving obedience that we offer to God steadily and consistently, to be used for whatever work God purposes to do in and through our lives.’\textsuperscript{72} Disciplines are not just ways in which a disciple might receive God’s grace, but are also demonstrations of the \textit{imago Dei} coming to greater visibility in the life of the disciple. The process of sanctification illuminates the life of the disciple to be more like Christ. God uses the disciplines not just to shape and mould the disciple who submits to them, but also to demonstrate God’s glory or extend his grace even further to others. When a disciple offers a cup of water to the thirsty or provides shelter to the homeless, his actions are more than simply extending humanitarian aid. A Christian’s act of mercy is a means of grace that not only strengthens the \textit{imago Dei} in the disciple’s heart and life, but actively extends God’s love and compassion to the suffering. By responding to a need in a tangible and concrete way, motivated by the love and compassion of God operating within, the manifest action is one of faithful discipleship and an offer of God’s grace to the world.

Because discipleship is a holistic way of living that comprises a disciple’s being (or identity) and a disciple’s doing (or actions), the way in which a Christian comports his life in the world is transformed. Wesley preached that the fruit of the Spirit, which is borne in a disciple’s character, envelop his actions, ‘producing humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long suffering, patience, deadness to the world; and every right disposition of heart toward God and toward man.’\textsuperscript{73} The disciple’s actions, motivated by the love of God, are endowed with the same attributes that motivate him. The virtues which identify a disciple as a child of God not only motivate him into action, they characterise his actions as well. How a disciple lives and how a disciple’s actions are understood is transformed; what a

\textsuperscript{71} Wesley, ‘Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount VI,’ \textit{Works}, 1:573.
\textsuperscript{72} Mulholland, \textit{Invitation to a Journey}, 103.
\textsuperscript{73} Wesley, ‘Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount IX,’ \textit{Works}, 1:642.
disciple does becomes an extension of God’s grace and mercy that was first demonstrated to the disciple by God’s pardoning and reconciling love and grace.

Finally, a life of discipleship transforms why a disciple lives the way they live. Wesley asserted that a disciple was motivated by the love of God to love and minister on behalf of God’s goodness and glory; ‘his one desire is the one design of his life, namely, “not to do his own will but the will of him that sent him”. His one intention at all times and in all things is, not to please himself, but him whom his soul loveth.’ As a result of faith and love for God, a Christian is no longer ruled by self-interest. Her desire is to serve God and extend God’s love into the world. Whether a ministry provides shelter or sustenance to the poor or helps alleviate the suffering of sick and infirm, the point and purpose of the ministry is to glorify God. Christian disciples, empowered and emboldened by the Holy Spirit, discover how the good news of Jesus Christ can be extended into the world. Ministries, each important in their own right, all share in the larger and greater purpose of letting God’s love be known in the world. Wesley exhorted, ‘let us labour to convince all mankind that to be a real Christian is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and to serve him with all our strength; to love our neighbour as ourselves, and therefore do unto every man as we would he should do unto us.’ There are classic ministries that transcend time and cultures, yet the creative agency of the Holy Spirit inspires Christian disciples in every era and context to give unique and specific expression that consistently serves God’s will.

Engaging in the practice and endeavour of Wesleyan discipleship is to undergo sanctification or holy transformation. The process of sanctification is holistic, involving the disciple’s inner character and outward actions and comportment. No longer controlled by the corrupt nature of sin, the imago Dei is restored and experiences gradual and increasing renewal as God’s sanctifying grace is made available to the disciple pursing holiness or purity of intention. Growth towards the telos of the Discipleship Matrix is initiated and sustained by God’s love and Christlike character as it is accepted by and exercised in the life of the Christian disciple. Consequently, the divine love has a transformative effect on who a person is

as a child of God, what they do to be faithful to the love they experience, how they comport themselves to demonstrate God’s love and why they seek to share God’s love with others. A disciple who seeks the renewal of the imago Dei experiences all-encompassing transformation.

**Divine Grace and Human Effort**

MacIntyre’s definition of practice maintains human effort is involved ‘in the course of trying’ to attain its telos. A practice connotes an ongoing and continuing exercise that furthers an event as opposed to completing and achieving an event by its performance. Wesley understood human effort, prompted by divine grace, was required as well, ‘God worketh in you’ therefore you must work: you must be ‘workers together with him’ (they are the very words of the Apostle); otherwise he will cease working. But, Wesley maintained, though initiated by God, the work of salvation and Christian living is a divine-human partnership: ‘He will not save us unless we ‘save ourselves from this untoward generation’; unless we ourselves ‘fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life’. Wesley understood humanity as responsive to and cooperative with divine grace, working to help achieve the ends that God desires.

In order to assist persons in their continued progress in sanctification, Wesley developed a network of groups that operated within the Methodist society as a means to aid the spiritual life. He knew that as much as God’s grace was available, persons needed help to work out their own salvation and to continue in the process of being sanctified. The ethos of the Discipleship Matrix illustrates how the community encourages and helps support the individual disciple to pursue the telos. Answering his own rhetorical questions about the degree of transformation a disciple experiences by God’s divine grace, Wesley responded, ‘but are we then entirely changed? Are we wholly transformed into the image of him that created us? Far from it: we still retain a depth of sin; and it is the consciousness of this which constrains us to groan for a full deliverance to him that is mighty to save.’ Though changed

---

and renewed with the *imago Dei*, the natural state is not completely expired. The world, the ways of sin and death, are distractions that can derail a disciple's pursuit of entire sanctification. Wesley cautioned that though Christ reigned, disciples have ‘a will not wholly resigned to the will of God. They know they are in him, and yet find an heart ready to depart from him, a proneness to evil in many instances, and a backwardness to that which is good.’ Wesley recognised that something was necessary to help disciples stay the course and follow Jesus. No new believer filled with love for God intends to betray God, but Wesley knew neglecting relationship with God was a reality that could derail faith.

As a result, Wesley capitalised on the benefits of Christian community. He understood that while the decision to accept God’s grace and follow Jesus is a personal one, discipleship is as communal and corporate as it is individual. Support and nurture for the Christian journey occurs in the company of others. In Christian community, a disciple can find encouragement and challenge from other disciples. Wesley’s system of Society, class, band and even select band meetings that structured the people called Methodist provided particular communities for members to grow in Christian faith towards increasing Christlikeness. In order to encourage and challenge one another to grow in Christian faith, members agreed to abide by what would eventually be known as the Rules. Wesley noted that after a time, members ‘began to “bear one another’s burdens”, and “naturally” to “care for each other”. As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endear'd affection for each other.’ Disciples drawn together in faith and with the common purpose of growing in their discipleship abide together and begin to experience genuine Christian community. A hallmark of Wesleyan discipleship is a community that supports and nurtures the common endeavour and pursuit of sanctification. Thus, the horizontal axis of the Discipleship Matrix represents how the *ethos* pursues the *telos* as well as encouraging and supporting members in their goal of the same.

While human effort is necessarily needed in the process of sanctification, Wesleyans maintain that transformation in Christlikeness, or entire sanctification, is

---

ultimately the work of God’s grace and love. Wesley taught that though a disciple may be guided ‘step by step through all the means which God has ordained; not according to our own will, but just as the providence and the Spirit of God go before and open the way.’ The inclusion of divine grace is not accounted for in MacInyre’s concept of practice. In virtue ethics, what motivates growth in character and dedication to particular activities is human desire to fulfil the telos. Kotva writes, ‘the telos, as an ideal of human excellence, is always in front of us, always calling us forward toward a fuller realisation of the human good.’ Growth toward the telos occurs because persons continually pursue it. In the practice of discipleship, growth is initiated and completed as a result of divine grace in cooperation with human endeavour. Maddix describes how discipleship is a cooperative effort between divine grace and human effort:

Christian spirituality describes a particular way of responding to the Spirit of God, who reveals Jesus Christ to the world and uniquely to his followers. ‘Being a disciple,’ or ‘discipleship,’ is another word for Christian spirituality and focuses on the transformation of the human person into the likeness of Jesus Christ. It is the result of the cooperation of our whole lives with the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, who is alive and working in the whole person—body and soul, thoughts and feelings, emotions and passions, hopes, fears, and dreams.

It is God’s grace that initiates and continues to inspire and enable cooperation that allows the disciple to grow and develop. Human will, desire and performance must be preceded by and act in accompaniment with divine grace for lasting sustained in sanctification.

Discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition is ultimately a cooperative endeavour of divine grace and human effort. Though God’s love and Christlike character may manifest fruit of the Spirit and other Christian virtues in the life of a Christian disciple, it is incumbent upon each disciple to be faithful and responsible with the measure of God’s love and grace received. Discipleship is an endeavour and practice on behalf of the individual to faithfully utilise divine grace and not neglect or disregard it. The organisation of the Methodist Societies and the Rules which

---

84 Kotva, Christian Virtue Ethics, 106.
structured them were conceived by Wesley as a means to help persons faithfully and responsibly live into the grace each disciple received. While God’s grace may initiate and complete the work of entire sanctification, a disciple must be an active participant in the pursuit of sanctification. A Christian community which the disciple contributes to and benefits from is essential to assisting a Christian disciple engaging in the ongoing transforming work of discipleship.

**A Lifelong Endeavour**

MacIntyre maintains that a practice necessarily involves a community in the pursuit of the same goal. Virtue ethics provides a way of understanding the endeavour of Wesleyan discipleship in both personal and communal terms. Kotva asserts,

> Virtue ethics is both individual and corporate. Its task and hope is that the individual will move toward his or her telos, toward the true human good. But the good is not conceived solely in individual terms. Virtue theory views relationships and corporate activity as essential to both the true human end and the journey toward that end. Thus, for example, the individual’s moral improvement requires the presence of others. Similarly, the significance of many virtues (e.g., justice and generosity) depends on social connections.

For as much as a person seeks to restore the *imago Dei* in his life as a result of divine grace, Christian discipleship requires the body of Christ. A disciple cannot function effectively on his own. Christian discipleship requires the support and nurture of a community, and necessarily involves the disciple contributing to the overall health and well being within the body of Christ.

Participation in a life of Christian discipleship is appropriate for any person who wants to be in relationship with God, regardless of maturity in faith. Wesley taught that a disciple’s desire for Christ was insatiable:

> From the time we begin to hunger and thirst those appetites do not cease, but are more and more craving and importunate till we either eat and drink, or die. And even so, from the time that we begin to hunger and thirst after the whole mind which was in Christ these spiritual appetites do not cease, but cry after their food with more and more importunity. Nor can

---

they possibly cease before they are satisfied, while there is any spiritual life remaining.  

Because sanctification is a deepening, ongoing expression of a Christian’s responsibility to God’s empowering grace, a disciple can never completely quench her desire for God. No matter how long an earthly life might be, whether a Christian measures her life in Christ from infant baptism or a new birth experience in adulthood, discipleship is a lifelong endeavour. Until a disciple is ushered into the unveiled presence of God, the temporal life of a Christian is neither fully satisfied or satiated. Discipleship is a persistent seeking after God and is the necessary, continuous response of any Christian, whether they be young and inexperienced or mature and practiced in faith.

Therefore, Wesley welcomed Christians of all stages of faith into Methodist societies. Wesley went so far as to invite and include persons who, prompted by the most nascent awakenings, sought relationship with God but had not yet experienced new birth:

> There is one only condition previously required in those who desire admission into these societies, ‘a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins’. But wherever this is really fixed in the soul it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation.  

Those seeking salvation were invited to and participated in the society meeting so they might, in time and by God’s prevenient grace, experience repentance and be divinely justified by God’s gracious forgiveness. Wesley expected the dread of eternal damnation to give way to faith and wholehearted love for God, and for the believer to bear the marks of faith consistent with a new life in Christ.

Wesley understood that while the *imago Dei* was restored to the Christian, it was not as fully indelible on some as it was on others: ‘all the commandments of God he accordingly keeps, and that with all his might. For his obedience is in proportion to his love, the source from whence it flows.’ As a disciple matures in faith, love for God is made greater and deepened. Just as sanctification is made

---

88 Wesley, ‘Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount II,’ *Works*, 1:496.
deeper and continually extended in this lifetime without being fully completed, discipleship is never totally accomplished. Deepening love for God and neighbour means a disciple attends more fully and faithfully to his expression of love continually and throughout his lifetime.

The endeavour and practice of discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition is an ongoing, lifelong process. The nature of the renewal of the imago Dei in humanity is one that is never fully completed during this lifetime and thus a continuous endeavour. Additionally, a community of disciples contributes to the perennial nature of discipleship. Disciples do not simply benefit and develop by their participation in a Christian community, they contribute to the health of the whole group and offer opportunities for other disciples to gain insight and mature in their faith as well. Discipleship is an endeavour in the life of an individual as he progresses in sanctification as well as for the community of which he is part.

Conclusion

The life of Christian discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition is one of ongoing, lifelong transformation. Disciples experience transformation as they are restored in the imago Dei, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Such transformation is both holistic and holy, composing an inward way of being like Christ that is reflected in an outward way of doing like Christ. The pursuit of Christlikeness is a human endeavour made possibly by God’s sanctifying grace and occurs in a community that supports and nourishes the ongoing holy transformation of others. Christian discipleship is progressively and continually holy, not limited to a single participant, but inclusive of others a disciple meets on her Christian journey. Sanctification is fostered within a community that submits to agreed upon parameters as to what will help as well as what will hinder the manifestation of the imago Dei in disciples. Such a community can sustain, nurture, encourage and challenge one another in their common life in Christ. Finally, the endeavour and practice of Christian discipleship is lifelong. All persons, at any stage of faith, even seekers, can engage in Christian discipleship as they, in cooperation with divine grace, share in God’s love and offer his love to the world.
MacIntyre’s definition of practice offers an interpretive framework as to what constitutes Christian discipleship. His definition features four distinct components (virtues, ethos, disciplines and telos) that, when considered in a Christian context, offers a comprehensive understanding of Christian discipleship as the essential practice of Christian faith. Appropriating MacIntyre’s definition of practice, Christian discipleship can be defined as a coherent, complex, holistically transformative and lifelong endeavour that draws upon the historic witness and tradition of Christianity. Christian virtues are realised in the pursuit of Christian perfection or Christlikeness which is appropriate to, and partially definitive of, the disciplines that comprise it. The result is that a disciple’s pursuit of sanctification in a community that cultivates and nurtures the virtues and disciplines consistent with Christ’s example is further extended by divine grace. Such a faceted and nuanced definition can be understood and examined with the help of a theoretical framework called the Discipleship Matrix. The Discipleship Matrix is a framework by which virtues, telos, disciplines and ethos contribute to a cohesive and integrated way of life consistent with faithful discipleship or holy transformation. This chapter has established an interpretive framework that demonstrates that Christian discipleship is consistent with MacIntyre’s definition of practice. Further examination of this interpretive framework within the Christian tradition will help explain the present situation that causes fragmentation by bifurcating the axes that secure the conceptual map. Furthermore, the Discipleship Matrix will serve as a conceptual map that this thesis will explore through subsequent movements, offering insight into the normative movement that engages the practice of Wesleyan discipleship in cross-disciplinary dialogues with TLT and provides the pragmatic task with a rule of life by which disciples can address the current situation of non-transformation and evaluate their discipleship.
Chapter Four
The Fragmentation of Discipleship

Introduction

A purpose of the Discipleship Matrix is to provide an interpretive framework that explains the current situation confronting discipleship efforts. The construction of the Discipleship Matrix in the previous chapter indicates that discipleship is an essential practice of faith that integrates specific features of the Christian life into a coherent whole that transforms participants in Christlikeness as they progress in sanctification. Yet, the contention of this thesis is that contemporary efforts and initiatives in Christian educational ministries are ineffectual at transforming disciples because the approaches are isolated as they emphasise one or two features of the practice of discipleship and neglect or exclude others. This chapter will examine the Discipleship Matrix through the lens of Christian history by systematically isolating a particular component of the interpretive framework to illustrate how favouring one aspect of the Christian faith to the exclusion of others can distort the fullness of life of faith.

MacIntyre attests a practice is consistent with a particular tradition.\(^1\) When appropriated for the Christian context, it is possible to locate the endeavour and practice of discipleship within any era of Christian history. By examining Wesley’s eighteenth century context through the lens of the Discipleship Matrix, it is possible to see that within the Church of England, as well as Moravians and other religious groups contemporaneous with Wesley, emphasised certain features of the Christian faith and neglected others. Determining how the Discipleship Matrix can be distorted by uneven attention to its features within Wesley’s context provides an opportunity to reflect on the isolation that occurs in contemporary Christian educational efforts. Wesley, like William Law, Peter Molther and other leaders of eighteenth century religious movements, preached and wrote on particular doctrines while contemporary educators concern themselves with how belief is made manifest in the life of faith, so there is some variance between the two approaches. Using the

---

\(^1\) MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 194.
Discipleship Matrix, it is possible to systematically bifurcate the axis of each dialectic and divorce the tandem elements from one another, thereby ignoring other component elements in order to discern how Christian communities in the eighteenth century could tend to drift towards a theological trap that is not nuanced or balanced by the other elements that comprise the Discipleship Matrix. Such an examination is relevant to the contemporary scene and offers insight into how dangers of the eighteenth century are comparable to contemporary approaches to misconstrue the nature of discipleship as being something other than holistic, integrative and wholly transformative.

The Discipleship Matrix is a conceptual map devised for the purposes of this thesis. Yet, Wesley understood a perennial danger of Christian faith is to favour a particular aspect of the Christian life and faith and subvert others, resulting in a lapse that distorts or perverts the nature of Christian faith. Observing how inward righteousness can be separated from the duties of exercising religion, Wesley preached,

it has been the endeavour of Satan from the beginning of the world to put asunder what God had joined together; to separate inward from outward religion; to set one of these at variance with the other. And herein he has met with no small success among those who were ‘ignorant of his devises.’

After the English Reformation, it was not uncommon for a religious group or community to be designated with a particular name that described their teaching or doctrine. Richard Heitzenrater describes the religious context into which Wesley was born and raised, pointing out that Puritans were those English Calvinists who sought to ‘purify the church of its non-scriptural corruptions’ while Pietists placed an ‘emphasis on piety and holy living’ and nonconformists or dissenters ‘refused to subscribe to the Thirty Nine Articles.’ Titles were not usually self-ascribed but conferred by others, and a name was often intended to caricature a group for its theological position. Heitzenrater notes, in the eighteenth century, ‘terms and names were generally used by the opposition to designate what they considered to be

---

3 Heitzenrater, People Called Methodists, 8.
4 Heitzenrater, People Called Methodists, 19.
5 Heitzenrater, People Called Methodists, 17.
dangers in the other parties’ positions; one would hardly claim to rely on work-righteousness or claim to be an antinomian.” Typically, a particular doctrine a group might value was subsequently stressed and could be perceived as a detriment by others.

It should be noted that the exercise of identifying tendencies of the Christian life within the matrix is not intended to discredit the whole of a particular tradition. Though a particular moniker might have been intended to identify a possible error, it can also aptly describe and depict a general trait or specific characteristic that captures a notable attribute of that particular movement. For example, the label ‘Methodist’ that was first fixed on Wesley’s Holy Club at Oxford was meant to be pejorative. Though originally used by others in derision, Stephen Seamands notes, it ‘fit this group well because of its extremely strict, regimented, methodical involvement in religious activities.’ Wesley eventually adopted its use but during his lifetime distinguished his version of methodism from others that were also similarly labeled. For this thesis, the names used within the Discipleship Matrix describe general tendencies that arise from the group’s theological position even as they identify an error of faith when the whole of the Christian life is ignored in favour of a particular tenet. The result will be a map that illustrates how an element of the Discipleship Matrix, divorced from its dialectic partner, can result in error. The exercise of examining eighteenth century church history has relevancy to contemporary situations that distort the nature of the Christian life from a holistic, integrative endeavour that fosters holy transformation.

---

6 Heitzenrater, People Called Methodists, 18.
8 For the purpose of distinguishing the error from the general theological emphasis, this thesis employs the suffix ‘-istic’ over ‘-ism’ and uses a lower case to signify an extreme that might be, but is not necessarily, present within a group described by such a name. For example, pietistic is contrasted with Pietism, the former referring to an error of faith and the latter referring to perennial groups that arise throughout Christian history stressing personal piety.
9 Wilson argues that while the Gospel and mission of the church remain constant, the cultural context in which the Gospel is lived out does change. Knowing and living with Christian history is more than recounting interesting facts and tidbits of information. Christians must live with the church’s history in order to live authentically to the Gospel. By not paying attention to the history of how the church has subverted the Gospel in previous ages, ‘we will become victims of our past’ unable to ‘recognise the betrayals of the Gospel that have taken place’ repeating and perpetuating them in a new and different context. Wilson, Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World, 4.
Imbalances in the Transformed Life

The first dialectic to bifurcate and divorce its tandem elements from one another is the vertical axis on which virtue and spiritual discipline are positioned. Wesley considered separating the virtues that characterise faith and the actions that exemplify it as an assault on Christian religion:

By this very device of Satan that faith and works have been so often set at variance with each other. And many who had a real zeal for God have for a time fallen into the snare on either hand. Some have magnified faith to the utter exclusion of good works…Others, eager to avoid this dangerous mistake, have run as much too far the contrary way.\(^\text{10}\)

Wesley and the people called Methodist may have derived their name for the regular adherence to spiritual disciplines that demonstrated love for God and neighbour, but Wesley consistently maintained the necessity of fruit of the Spirit, or growth in Christian virtue and character that both motivated and was consequential to the means of grace. Wesley understood the tendency of religion to prize a doctrine of grace that rejected the law and the necessity for good works. Likewise, he maintained, it was easy to reverse the situation and advocate for the necessity of good works without requiring a coordinated development of character. Wesley saw both as detrimental to the intents and purposes of Christian doctrine and practice.

Tending Towards Quietistic Traps

Striving after virtues consistent with Christ and neglecting the classical spiritual disciplines of the Christian life results in quietism (Figure 5). Quietism is an idea inherent in the mystic spirituality of the Catholic Church that Christ needed only to be contemplated in order for Christian faith to be experienced.\(^\text{11}\) Quietism understood that spirituality was a matter of divine grace and completely free of the law and commandments.\(^\text{12}\) Though Wesley had been exposed to early Christian

\(^{10}\) Wesley, ‘Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount VII,’ Works, 1:592-3.
\(^{11}\) Rack, Reasonable Enthusiast, 170.
mystics, in the early days of the Oxford Holy Club, Wesley was introduced to more contemporary mystics by his associate John Clayton. Clayton recommended to Wesley works by Malebranche and William Law. Wesley was already familiar with a Kempis, Fénelon and others. However, Law, with whom Wesley struck up a correspondence and often met personally, introduced Wesley to *Theological Germanica*. Heitzenrater notes that Wesley’s relationship with Law ‘marked the beginning of Wesley’s contact with a wide range of continental Catholic mystic writings.’ Wesley’s appreciation of the mystic tradition is evident in his interest in growing in Christian perfectionism. As a result, Wesley struggled with how mystics of his day abandoned the need for demonstrative actions that were consistent with the disciplines or means of grace. In his journal he recorded portions of a letter he wrote to the Moravians at Herrnhut which express concerns he held with regards to how mysticism was manifest by his contemporaries:

> You receive not the ancients, but the modern mystics, as the best interpreters of Scripture, and in conformity to these you mix much of man’s wisdom with the wisdom of God; you greatly refine the plain religion taught by the letter of Holy Writ, and philosophise on almost every part of it to accommodate it to the mystic theory…And they have, in truth, greatly lessened, and wellnigh destroyed brotherly love from among us.

Ultimately, Wesley broke ties with Law because Wesley could not rectify the lapse of attention to certain practices that Law neglected in striving after Christian virtue. Yet, the proclivity for mystical and quietistic tendencies continued to surface throughout the growth of Methodism, thwarting persons in their pursuit of sanctification. Recalling his difficulty many years later, Wesley described the presence of mystical and quietistic tendencies within the nascent society:

> But as much as we endeavoured to watch over each other, we soon found some who did not ‘live the gospel’. I do not know that any hypocrites were crept in…But several grew cold, and gave way to the sins which had long easily beset them. We quickly perceived, there was many ill consequence of suffering these to remain among us. It was dangerous to others, inasmuch as

---

all sin is an infectious nature…It laid a stumbling-block in the way of others, and caused the truth to be evil spoken of.\textsuperscript{16}

Though Wesley prized Christian virtues consistent with the mind of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit, he was convinced that virtue alone was inadequate to sustain a full fledged faith that sought Christ’s perfection. Holiness of heart requires an accompanying holiness of life. Virtues are not simply inner dispositions but motivating dispositions that extend to coordinating human response and action. If persons abandoned long held traditional practices of Christian faith, holiness of both heart and life was soon in jeopardy. Quietists or mystics who did not engage in classical spiritual disciplines consistent with Christian character truncated their faith and aroused suspicion for secretive ways.

The absence and disregard for Christian community, as well as the quietistic disinclination to engage in spiritual disciplines (either demonstrating love of God or love for neighbour), was irreconcilable in Wesley’s eyes. In 1764, Wesley listed his objection to the mystics:

I began Mr. Hartley’s ingenious ‘Defence of the Mystic Writers’. But it does not satisfy me. I must still object (1) to their sentiments. The chief of them do not appear to me to have any conception of Church communion. Again, they slight not only works of piety, the ordinances of God, but even works of mercy. And yet most of them, yea, all that I have seen, hold justification by works. In general, they are ‘wise above what is written’, indulging themselves in many unscriptural speculations. I object (2) to their spirit, that most of them are of a dark, shy, reserved, unsociable temper. And that they are apt to despise all who differ from them as carnal unenlightened men. I object (3) to their whole phraseology. It is both unscriptural and affectedly mysterious.\textsuperscript{17}

Wesley’s frustrations were based on contradictory doctrine as well as personal conduct which he considered to be unchristian. The form of mysticism he often encountered was contrary to the nature of a God who revealed himself in scripture

\textsuperscript{16} Wesley, ‘A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists,’ \textit{Works}, 9:260. Wesley does not specify to whom he refers, but his public break with the Moravians at Fetter Lane was well known. Rack characterises the stillness controversy which led to the Wesleys separating from the English Moravians as fuelled by an over reliance of justification by grace that disqualified any need for works and the ‘Quietist tradition of mystical waiting on God in a state of effortless dependence.’ Rack, \textit{Reasonable Enthusiast}, 206. Heitzenrater concurs that what Wesley found objectionable with the Moravians and forced the separation was the Moravian penchant for ‘universal salvation, antinomianism and quietism.’ Heitzenrater, \textit{People Called Methodists}, 144.

\textsuperscript{17} Wesley, ‘Journal 13,’ \textit{Works}, 21:442-3.
and desired to be known through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Wesley found such teaching intolerable and inconsistent with scriptural teaching.

Pursuit of virtue to the exclusion of Christian disciplines has a detrimental effect that limits a Christian’s ability to demonstrate love for God or share God’s love with others, and results in quietistic tendencies that truncate the full practice of faith. Quietistic errors are not the only purview of the eighteenth century but occur in contemporary movements that stress personal development while neglecting the exercise of faith in the public sphere. Christian educators discussed earlier in this thesis do not as a rule subscribe to Christian formation that completely ignores engagement in the disciplines. However, Pew Research Centre indicates an insidious form of modern day mysticism can be associated with persons who identify as ‘spiritual but not religious.’ Their research reports a growing percentage of people who regularly relate an experience of spiritual peace or who describe well-being or a sense of wonder about the universe. At the same time, there is a noticeable drop in Americans who attend religious services, pray daily or find religion to be important. To merely experience the transcendent goodness of being human without intentionally participating in the cultivation of character is to neglect the fullness of what it means to be and to live like a moral person, much less alone to be or to do like Christ.

_Tending Towards Nominalistic Traps_

Conversely, embracing of the outworking of faith in the spiritual disciplines at the expense of Christian virtue produces a nominalist mindset (Figure 6). Nominalism literally means to exist in name only and is a perennial issue in religious

---


practice and is described in 2 Timothy 3:5 as having ‘the outward form of godliness but denying its power.’ Wesley considered most English subjects to be nominalists:

None can deny that the people of England in general are called Christians. They are called so, a few only excepted, by others, as well as by themselves. But I presume no man will say that the name makes the thing, that men are Christians barely because they are called so.21

For Wesley, ‘Christian’ was not a title to be inherited or transferred by merit of citizenship, inheritance or ecclesial affiliation. Throughout the history of Christendom, blurring the lines between established church and state could result in nominalist tendencies. Wesley believed Christian faith could transcend nations and this belief helped fuel his mission to the colony of Georgia, but under no circumstances could nationality denote faith. Wesley preached, ‘why then, let us confess that we have never yet seen a Christian country upon earth.’22 Because the institutional church was subject to malaise, vital religion suffered. In early eighteenth century England, the general tendency for institutional nominalism created a vacuum of faith from which religious societies such as the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge sprang. It is in this climate of nominalism within the Anglican Church that Wesley was inspired ‘to reform the nation, and in particular the Church, to spread scriptural holiness over the land.’23

In his sermon Almost Christian, Wesley decries nominalists for participating in religious life that offers nothing in the way of spiritual sustenance or vital religion. A nominal Christian only appears to have ‘the outside of a real Christian. Accordingly, the “almost Christian” does nothing which the gospel forbids.’24 Not only does the almost Christian abstain from what is proscribed, they also engage in actives that are prescribed. They ‘hath the form of godliness uses also the means of grace; yea, all of them, and at all opportunities.’25 Yet, despite proper behaviour, the nominalist does not bear fruit of the Spirit. The ‘almost Christian’ stands in contrast to the ‘altogether Christian,’ who participates in spiritual disciplines, understanding them to be a means of grace that offers its adherents divine grace that sustains the

---

22 Wesley, ‘Scriptural Christianity,’ Works, 1:173.
interior life of the believer. In another sermon, Wesley described a nominalist as someone looking for prestige and respectability:

He who ‘having a form of godliness, denies the power thereof’; yea, and probably reviles it, wheresoever it is found, as mere extravagance and delusion. Meanwhile the wretched self-deceiver thanks God that he ‘is not as other men are, adulterers, unjust, extortioners’. No, he doth no wrong to any man. He ‘fasts twice a week’, uses all the means of grace, is constant at church and sacrament; yea, and ‘gives tithes of all that he has’, does all the good that he can. ‘Touching the righteousness of the law’, he is ‘blameless’; he wants nothing of godliness but the power; nothing of religion but the spirit’; nothing of Christianity but the truth and the life.  

To engage in the externalities of religion without encountering the faith was problematic for Wesley. Christian faith is not about social status, but about being a child of God and acting in accordance as the *imago Dei* is renewed in the believer.

Wesley’s ordination as an Anglican priest meant that he often encountered this error he abhorred, not just among congregants, but especially among his colleagues. Wesley considered the malaise in the university, responsible for providing education and training for Anglican clergy, detestable. In a sermon delivered before the Oxford elite, Wesley denounced the nominalist tendencies in university:

Let it not be said that I speak here as if all under your care were intended to be clergymen. Not so; I only speak as if they were all intended to be Christians. But what example is set them by us who enjoy the beneficence of our forefathers; by fellows, students, scholars; more especially those who are of some rank and eminence? Do ye, brethren, abound in the fruits of the Spirit, in lowliness of mind, in self-denial and mortification, in seriousness and composure of spirit, in patience, meekness, sobriety, temperance, and in unwearied, restless endeavours to do good in every kind unto all men, to relieve their outward wants, and to bring their souls to the true knowledge and love of God? Is this the general characters of fellows of colleges? I fear it is not. Rather, have not pride and haughtiness of spirit, impatience and peevishness, sloth and indolence, gluttony and sensuality, and even a proverbial uselessness, been objected to us, perhaps not always by our enemies, nor wholly without ground? O that God would roll away this reproach from us, that the very memory of it might perish for ever!

---

Wesley saw no connection between the outward performances of the clergy to consequent Chrisfaith tian attributes and virtue. He lamented that the prevailing attitudes esteemed by the clergy elite were actually contrary to the gospel. Religious performance and rank is no guarantee of having Christlike virtues and disposition.

Christians who participate in the classical disciplines of Christian faith should expect to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit. However, to believe that mere adherence to religious duties constitutes a religious life without fostering Christian character as a result is to abridge the fullness of Christian faith and court nominalism. United Methodist Bishop Jones asserts that church membership and mere participation does not necessarily yield persons of Christian character and true faith. Furthermore, Kenda Creasy Dean contends moralistic therapeutic deism, the idea that a personal, ongoing relationships with God is largely unnecessary, is ‘a moral indictment on American congregations, not teenagers.’ Barna research indicates that more than half of American self-described Christians surveyed indicate they read the Bible on their own, attend worship at least once a month and have participated in spiritual disciplines. Yet, most report it has no significant impact of their worldview or approach to daily life. Simply participating in Christian disciplines does not foster a fully formed or transformed Christian disciple.

**Tending Towards Legalistic Traps**

Now that the vertical axis has been explored, it is possible to consider the horizontal axis on which ethos and telos are positioned. When separating ethos from telos and focusing on the means while neglecting the purposed end of those means, a picture of legalism emerges (Figure 7). Legalism is to be so caught up in the principles or the rules of religion for the sake of the rules that the rules become an end in and of themselves. Within the **Discipleship**

---

Matrix, legalism is to make the rules that order the Christian life into a matter of religious duty. From the Pharisees that admonished Jesus and his disciples for breaking Sabbath law to the Roman Catholic Church that Luther protested, legalism is a perennial trap for vigilant Christians to avoid, yet, many are susceptible. Wesley understood its dangers and preached,

But in the process of time, when ‘the love of many waxed cold,’ some began to mistake the means for the end, and to place religion rather in doing those outward works than in a heart renewed after the image of God. They forgot that ‘the end of’ every ‘commandment is love, out of a pure heart, with faith unfeigned.’

Legalism, in contrast to nominalism, is to place religious efficacy on the rule of life that orders faith and confuses the rules as proof of faith. Even Wesley and the Oxford Methodists were not safe from charges of legalism for their development of and adherence to the Rules as the discipline that guided Methodist societies.

Despite the connotations that ‘methodism’ has with legalism, Wesley was very aware of the necessity of keeping the means of religion connected to their proper purposes—to worship and give glory to God by becoming Christlike. His sermon the Means of Grace instructs Christians to do no wrong, to do good and attend on God’s ordinances. Yet, Wesley explains the dangers of trusting discipline that orders the means of grace to progress in faith. As important as the rules and disciplines are, their purpose is not completion and competency, but to provide a way to draw Christians into relationship with God. When discipline is not purposed toward the telos of faith (growing in Christlikeness) and is valued as an end of itself, the means by which disciplines are guided become problematic:

But we allow that the whole value of the means depends on their actual subservience to the end of religion; that consequently all these means, when separated from the end, are less than nothing, and vanity; that if they do not actually conduce to the knowledge and love of God they are not acceptable in his sight; yea, rather, they are an abomination before him; a stink in his nostrils; he is weary to bear them—above all if they are used as a kind of ‘commutation’ for the religion they were designed to subserve.

---

The rules and discipline that guide faith, when valued for themselves and not purposed towards God, have no efficacy. Wesley considers the activities to not simply lose all meaning, they also become detestable to God. For Wesley, church order and religious duty have a purposed end: to demonstrate love for God. Keeping the means purposed towards the end continually invites a person to progress in sanctification by divine grace. However, the danger in keeping the rules for the rule’s sake does nothing to help a person progress in faith, or to grow in sanctification. Instead, a disciple becomes a rule abiding legalist, proficient in adherence to the rules that guide faith.

To demand adherence to the letter of the law for the sake of the law, which repudiates the intent for what the law is created, is to be legalistic. When taken to this extreme, even Wesley’s General Rules meant to guide individuals and the early Methodist societies become their own end, and can result in a moral code that must be scrupulously maintained. Robin Maas notes that within contemporary United Methodism, the recovery of Wesley’s class meeting through Covenant Discipleship Groups or Accountable Discipleship is often regarded as a good thing. However, legalism, through an emphasis on adherence to the group rules is an ‘ever present danger whenever deeply earnest Christians attempt to get specific and intentional’ about their discipleship.\(^{33}\) When the letter of the law subjugates the spirit of the law, or the importance of relationship that knits a community together and dependence on God’s grace is devalued or even damaged in order to maintain the rules, legalism results. Faithful discipleship that holistically transforms persons into Christlikeness depends upon more than simple obedience to the rules that structure the life of a Christian community.

**Tending Towards Antinomanistic Traps**

The opposite extreme of legalism is when Christians mistakenly believe they are free from the rule of Christ. Antinomanism is the error of seeking sanctification, the *telos* or end of Christian life, without attending to the rules that guide Christian

---

living (Figure 8). Antinomianism, classically understood, refers to the idea that the law or rules of religion do not need to be followed as a greater good is possible. Wesley referred to it as ‘the doctrine which makes void the law through faith.’ Christians as early as the Apostle Paul are accused of being antinomian for teaching that Christians are by grace set free from the need to observe moral law. Following the Reformation, Lutherans and Calvinists were subject to antinomianism charges because of their adherence to faith alone. Heitzenrater notes that some Calvinists and Lutherans ‘carried sola fide to such an extreme, and who, by their radical opposition to legalism (viewing law and grace strictly as a dialectic), promoted moral laxity.’ Faith alone often meant not having to adhere to good works that attended to a full expression of living in the way that Christ lived.

In the eighteenth century, antinomianism had several connotations. While Wesley could never be accused of moral laxity (or promoting it), he was nonetheless susceptible to charges of antinomianism by Anglicans because he did not tend to support the Anglican church wholeheartedly and sometimes understood his calling to be a reformer within the established Church of England. Gunter explains,

> Whereas the Anglicans saw the Methodists as ‘ecclesiastical antinomians’ who were willing to set themselves above canon law, Wesley saw the Moravians and Calvinists as ‘moral antinomians’ who played down the necessity of keeping the moral law for salvation. Failure to keep the moral law, which is antinomianism in the purest sense of the word, but when the Methodists appealed to the responsibility of their divine calling as a ‘higher law,’ they freely proceeded to ignore established canon and at times civil laws as well.

Wesley acknowledged there were times he ‘leaned towards antinomianism.’ However, he refuted full complicity with any wayward teaching. Wesley did not

---

35 Romans 3:8.
36 Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodist, 12.
fully adhere to established codes of conduct that governed clergy etiquette, preaching in the jurisdictions of other Anglican preachers whether he had been invited or not. He explained, ‘I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear the glad tidings of salvation.’ In addition to ignoring parish boundaries, he authorised Methodist societies to gather at meeting houses that were not property of the Church. Yet, it was important to him that the people called Methodist remained in the Church of England. Wesley considered himself a lifelong member of the Church of England and maintained that persons in Methodist societies were necessarily so as a matter of Methodist discipline. Otherwise, Methodists had no way of adhering to the third Rule, which instructed Methodists to attend to the sacraments by being baptised and regularly receiving the Lord’s Supper. From this point of view, the linking of Wesley with antinomian thought is limited to his lack of deference to the conventions of the Church of England and not about preaching negligence in Christian living.

Wesley could be considered an ‘ecclesiastical antinomian,’ because he resisted the conventions of the Church of England. However, as Gunter noted, Wesley could not be included with Calvinist and Moravians guilty of ‘moral antinomianism’ in the literal sense of the word. However, Wesley’s understanding of sola fide and his Aldersgate experience could get him accused of antinomianism as more commonly understood. Gunter notes, ‘in his early sermons on justification by faith alone, there are quite a few instances in which this fideism, if not properly explained, could imply an open door for antinomianism.’ While Wesley believed and maintained that faith was not contingent on good works, he found that his doctrinal stances on sola fide needed to be balanced and nuanced. His experiences with mystics as well as English Pietists cautioned Wesley of the need for spiritual disciplines to grow in Christlikeness and increase in Christian perfection.

Curiously, it is Wesley’s stress on the doctrine of sanctification that led to charges of antinomianism. Gunter notes, it is ‘a strange irony, namely, that Wesley’s

40 Gunter, Love Divine, 11.
41 Gunter, Love Divine, 69.
supreme emphasis on holiness of heart and life also proved to be an occasion for antinomianism.’

Thus Wesley finds himself accused of antinomian charges, not just with regards to civil law, but doctrine. Gunter observes, ‘in addition to fideism, which absolved men of performance on the basis of Christ's imputed righteousness, perfectionism produced antinomianism by virtue of the conclusion that “perfect people” could not sin.’ However, it is Wesley’s insistence on the need to continually attend to spiritual disciplines and to keep the Rules as a means to progress in sanctification that keeps Wesley from being a full-fledged antinomian, regardless of his understanding on how sola fide and Christian perfection worked together. He was steadfast and maintained that in order to progress in sanctification, Christians could not neglect spiritual disciplines or abstain from the ordinances of Christ.

Antinomianism desires the ends of the Christian life without attending to the means that foster it. Contemporary antinomianism takes its form when Christians preach that God’s grace is not only sufficient for salvation, but it eliminates the need to experience qualitative change and to participate in a Christian lifestyle. Maas writes that ‘the flip side of the [legalistic] coin’ is to deny attention to the rules, or the means, that serve the ends of faith.

In the contemporary church, a coalition of United Methodists known as Love Prevails demonstrates a tendency towards antinomian thinking in their advocacy for celebrating and telling ‘a story of love and inclusion’ that undermines precepts that form the life of the denomination.

Partial Visions of the Transformed Life

Just as it is possible to divide each dialectic and isolate the complimentary elements of the Discipleship Matrix from one another to discern how the nature of faith can be distorted, it is also possible to explore each quadrant of the Discipleship Matrix. Each quadrant represents a particular vision of Christian life and faith. When taken to an extreme and isolated from the whole of the Discipleship Matrix, rather

---

42 Gunter, Love Divine, 272.
43 Gunter, Love Divine, 42.
than adhering to an all encompassing, holistic vision of Christian faith and
discipleship, a partial and misguided view of the Christian life emerges. The exercise
will identify traps within eighteenth century English religious life that flirted with or
lapsed into error and establish how these tendencies still manifest themselves today.

Tending Towards Pietistic Traps

Starting in what would be the northeast quadrant, bordered by the boundaries
of virtue and telos, are pietist landscapes lying between quietism and antinomianism
(Figure 9). Rack describes ‘pietism’ as a broad
characterisation of ‘a complicated and many-
sided movement of religious renewal’ that sought
to address the inner spiritual life and the need for
holy living. Heitzenrater notes that though
separate, ‘Puritans, Nonconformists and
Arminians’ in England were included within the
seventeenth century movement that stressed
personal piety along with German Lutherans on
the continent. Philip Jacob Spener, a front runner of German pietism outlined the
six desires of piety that would influence Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians to
whom he offered refuge and patronage. Spener outlined the six ‘desires of piety’
which held a certain appeal for Wesley regarding its emphasis on holy living. Spener
advocated 1) a life grounded in authority of sola scriptura, 2) the priesthood of all
believers, 3) valuing evangelical zeal over rational debating skill, 4) a practical focus
on Christian living more than intellectual development, 5) preaching aimed at
salvation of listener, not instruction or correction and 6) ministerial instruction about
the moral and spiritual qualities of the pastor. Heitzenrater describes the German
Pietist theology that was embraced by Spener, Zinzendorf and others as ‘heart
theology’ as it reacted to rational tendencies championed by more formal theological
expressions.

46 Rack, Reasonable Enthusiast, 162.
47 Heitzenrater, People Called Methodists, 19.
48 Heitzenrater, People Called Methodists, 19-20.
49 Heitzenrater, People Called Methodists, 20.
Wesley was indebted to the Moravian German Pietists for helping him discern his own faith with certainty.\(^{50}\) The Moravians played a crucial role in helping Wesley understand his own Christian faith. His first real exposure to the Moravians was on his trans-Atlantic voyage to the colony of Georgia in 1735-6. He would later visit them in Hernutt, Germany following his Aldersgate experience in 1738. He was deeply impressed with their use of band meetings as a means of support and accountability in living out their faith.\(^{51}\) Despite Wesley’s attraction to German Pietism, he was troubled about the lack of attention to discipline among the British Moravian set. Eventually, a boundary was breached involving the English Moravians when it came to the stillness controversy in the Society at Fetter Lane. Rack argues that the stillness controversy was contributed to by a conflation of quietist and antinomian teaching:

> Behind the stillness affair lay two traditions which tended to reinforce each other: the Lutheran notion of justification by grace through faith which had always tended to produce pathological suspicions of anything that might allow for an element of ‘works’ in salvation; and the Quietist tradition of mystical waiting on God in a state of effortless dependence.\(^ {52}\)

Though it was the stillness controversy that drove Wesley to eventually part from the Moravians, it was because of their devotion to inward personal holiness that this quadrant is represented by pietistic extremism.

It was through Philip Molther, who arrived from Germany to the Fetter Lane Society in London, that the doctrine of ‘stillness’ was taught as a way to obtain faith.\(^ {53}\) Wesley recorded instances of Molther’s controversial teaching in his journal. He was especially concerned to hear ‘that believers need not, and unbelievers may not, use them; that these are not obliged, and those are not permitted, so to do; that these do not sin when they abstain from them, but those do sin when they do not abstain.’\(^ {54}\) Molther urged that members of the Fetter Lane Society desist from participating in the means of grace, even the Lord’s Supper, until they were believers.\(^ {55}\)

---

\(^{50}\) Heitzenrater, *People Called Methodists*, 60.

\(^{51}\) Heitzenrater, *People Called Methodists*, 85.

\(^{52}\) Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 206.


\(^{54}\) Wesley, ‘Journal 3,’ *Works*, 19:156.

\(^{55}\) Heitzenrater, *People Called Methodists*, 106.
The ‘stillness controversy’ did anything but make Wesley sit still. He understood stillness as detrimental to a person growing in grace and holiness. On Friday, 25 April 1740, his journal records an opportunity to speak with Molther at length over what constituted stillness:

My brother and I went to Mr. Molther again and spent two hours in conversation with him. He now explicitly affirmed (1) there are no degrees in faith; that none has any faith who has ever any doubt or fear, and that none is justified till he has a clean heart, with the perpetual indwelling of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost; and (2) that everyone who has not this ought, till he has it, to be still; that is, as he explained it, not to use the ordinances, or ‘means of grace’, so called. He also expressly asserted (1) to those who have a clean heart the ordinances are not a matter of duty. They are not commanded to use them; they are free; they may use them, or they may not. (2) That those who have not a clean heart ought not to communicate, because God neither commands nor designs they should (commanding then to none, designing them only for believers) and because they are not ‘means of grace’, there being no such things as means of grace, but Christ only.56

Wesley and Molther were of differing opinions regarding two particular doctrines: degrees of faith and instructions on the use of means of grace. Molther taught that salvation granted faith that would not develop further while Wesley maintained it was possible to grow in Christlikeness and become perfect in faith as a result of being saved. Wesley also sharply disagreed with Molther over Molther’s disregard for the means of grace and ordinances. Wesley, in contrast, saw the means of grace as a Christ-instituted ordinance, something Christians need to do and are meant to do because Christ participated in them during his earthly ministry. Wesley did agree with Molther and other Reformers that faith was not contingent upon the ordinances, but he did not imagine that they were unnecessary and should be discarded. The differences between Wesley and Molther hinged on their understanding of what sola fide meant. To the contemporary reader familiar with Wesley’s teachings on prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace, as well as his insistence to engage in spiritual disciplines, it is obvious that Molther was incompatible with Wesley. However, it would take several months for Wesley to work through these differences and come to the decision that would separate the Moravians and the people called

56 Wesley, ‘Journal 3,’ Works, 19:147.
Methodist. Gunter characterises Wesley’s hesitations as part of a discernment process:

Wesley was coming to the conclusion that this ‘stillness’ was certain to result in antinomianism among the societies if it were allowed to prosper. Wesley moved very cautiously, perhaps because he was himself not totally certain of where fine lines of theological distinction needed to become bold marks of demarcation.57

Though Wesley did not move decisively in the early weeks of the stillness controversy, he did, nonetheless, have the opportunity to continue to engage Molther while working out his own theology for clear articulation.

Finally, in 1740, Wesley was able to break with Molther and the Fetter Lane Society with a clear conscience for their teaching on stillness and ignoring the disciplines as a means for growing in Christlikeness. His account of his final break was recorded in his journal:

You have often affirmed, ‘that to search the Scriptures’, to pray, or to communicate, before we have this faith, is to seek salvation by works, and that till these works are laid aside, no man can receive faith.

I believe these accusations to be flatly contrary to the Word of God. I have warned you hereof again and again, and besought you to turn back to the law and the testimony. I have borne with you long, hoping you would return. But as I find you more and more confirmed in the error of your ways, nothing now remains but that I should give you up to God.58

Wesley simply could not tolerate the total abandonment of ordinances instituted by Christ or means of grace commonly sought to express love for God. Wesley would eventually articulate the depth and breadth of his disagreements with the Moravians delineated in ten different propositions in a document called A Short View of the Difference Between the Moravian Brethren, Lately in England and the Reverend Mr John and Charles Wesley.59 Though Wesley could articulate finer points in his later published work, the driving concern behind his final departures from Fetter Lane was with regard to the lack of attention given to spiritual disciplines.

Christians who embrace ‘heart theology’ and pursue love of God in all things are consistent with the pietist tradition. But devotion to God that denies the efficacy

---

57 Gunter, Love Divine, 87.
59 Gunter, Love Divine, 100.
of Christian activity and engagement with the world courts pietistic error. Just as Wesley understood piety was a double edged sword that needed to be navigated carefully, so too must contemporary disciples be wary of the appeal to nurture the inner spiritual life surrounded by the company of other Christians who are dedicated to the same task lest love for neighbour and ministry to the world be neglected. The Walk to Emmaus movement is a retreat seminar designed to spark spiritual renewal in the lives of participants so that they might ‘be ready to become more active disciples of Christ in their churches and in the world.’ However, the focus on the inner spiritual life can become problematic given attendees must be sponsored and are subject to screening prior to selection. Ronald Crandall characterises the insularity of some communities as ‘elitist’ and even ‘mysterious and secretive’ when they eschew forms of ministry designed to demonstrate love for neighbour. The idea that one grows closer to God by abstaining from classical disciplines of Christian faith within the presence of a likeminded community that intentionally withdrawals from the world is an error of piety.

Tending Towards Enthusiastic Traps

Populating the southeast quadrant, lying between the poles of telos and spiritual disciplines, bordered by antinomianism and nominalism, is enthusiasm (Figure 10). Strictly speaking, Gunter asserts enthusiasts are persons who ‘believed themselves to be “in God” in an unusual way.’ Enthusiasm garnered any number of particular meanings in the eighteenth century, but it always carried connotations of disapproval. Gunter comments that ‘to call one an enthusiast in the eighteenth century was roughly the

---

60 The Walk to Emmaus is a spiritual renewal retreat popularly offered through the United Methodist Church. It is based on the Cursillo Movement begun in the Roman Catholic Church in the mid twentieth century. Since the 1980s, the Emmaus Movement has become an international ecumenical movement in nearly two dozen countries. Ronald K. Crandall, ‘The Cursillo/Walk to Emmaus Movement: An Apostolic Model,’ *Journal of the Academy of Evangelism in Theological Education* 4, (1988): 60.

61 Crandall, ‘The Cusillo/Walk to Emmaus,’ 64.

equivalent of referring to one’s neighbour today as a “religious fanatic.”” Enthusiasts were understood to be persons who seek union with the divine and prize displays of divine presence by public manifestations of spiritual experience often in loud and unruly ways.

Rack, however, understands the term to be more broadly used in Wesley’s day. Not only did it have religious meaning, it had social implications as well. He argues, “enthusiasm” was the bugbear of decent and ordinary Anglicans, and was a charge which in many ways included all the others, for it implied not only religious excess but also social subversion.” Wesley’s ministry working on the peripheral edges of the parish meant he flirted with these associations. But it was for some of the public ways the Spirit manifested itself in some of Wesley’s followers, as well as the inward testimony Wesley taught was possible by the Holy Spirit that soon earned him the label of enthusiast. In his sermon, The Nature of Enthusiasm, Wesley noted this very fact: “aim at the religion of the heart, if you talk of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, then it will not be long before your sentence is passed: “Thou art beside thyself.””

Wesley’s doctrine of assurance and his claims that persons could be perfected in this life certainly helped land him in the crosshairs of his opponents and opened him up to this charge of enthusiasm. For his part, though, Wesley defended the charge and turned the tables by defining enthusiasm and its errors by his own terms. According to Outler, Wesley used the same sermon to ‘suggest that the real equation is with nominal Christianity.’ He classified several types of enthusiasts, those who were either immature in their Christian faith, impressed by outward manifestations of the Spirit, or neglected the spiritual disciplines he ascribed in the Rules that structured the Methodist societies. Of the ‘nominalist enthusiasts,’ Wesley wrote,

The most common of all the enthusiasts of this kind are those who imagine themselves Christians and are not. These abound not only in all parts of our land, but in most parts of the habitable earth. That they are not Christians is clear and undeniable, if we believe the oracles of God. For Christians are

---

63 Gunter, Love Divine, 15.
64 Rack, Reasonable Enthusiast, 275.
66 Heitzenrater, People Called Methodists, 149.
holy; these are unholy. Christians love God; these love the world. Christians are humble, these are proud. Christians are gentle; these are passionate. Christians have the mind which was in Christ; these are at the utmost distance from it. Consequently they are no more Christians than they are archangels. Yet they imagine themselves so to be; and they can give several reasons for it. For they have been called so ever since they can remember. They were ‘christened’ many years ago. They embrace the ‘Christian opinions’ vulgarly called the Christian or catholic faith. They use the ‘Christian modes of worship’, as their fathers did before them. They live what is called, a good ‘Christian life’, as the rest of their neighbours do. And who shall presume to think or say that these men are not Christians? Though without one grain of true faith in Christ, or of real, inward holiness! Without ever having tasted the love of God, or been ‘made partakers of the Holy Ghost’!68

In this description, Wesley denounces persons who suppose they are Christians because they engage in Christian practices. For Wesley, participation in Christian life does not manifest authentic Christian belief in inner lives. Despite appearances, Wesley cautions, these nominalists are just as much enthusiasts because they believe themselves to be close to God when they are in actuality no spiritually closer to God than heathens.

Wesley agreed with the popular notion that enthusiasm was ‘a religious madness arising from some falsely imagined influence or inspiration of God.’69 He had previously encountered enthusiasts and recorded his experiences with them in the course of his ministry in his journal:

I was with two persons who I doubt are properly enthusiasts. For, first, they think to attain the end without the means, which is enthusiasm, properly so called. Again, they think themselves inspired by God, but are not. But false, imaginary inspiration is enthusiasm. That theirs is only imaginary inspiration appears hence: it contradicts the law and the testimony.70

It should be noted that enthusiasm of this type does differ from the Church of England enthusiast, because these enthusiasts Wesley wrote of believed themselves superior to the means of religion, whereas nominalist enthusiasts of the Church of England believed themselves to be in God by virtue of their outward religious lives.

---

For Wesley, the definitive mark of an enthusiast was irrationality and inability to give reason for their faith:

Every enthusiast then is properly a madman. Yet his is not an ordinary, but a religious madness. By religious I do not mean that it is any part of religion. Quite the reverse: religion is the spirit of a sound mind, and consequently stands in direct opposition to madness of every kind...And so the enthusiast is generally talking of religion, of God or of the things of God; but talking in such a manner that every reasonable Christian may discern the disorder of his mind. Enthusiasm in general may then be described in some such manner as this: a religious madness arising from some falsely imagined influence or inspiration of God; at least from imputing something to God which ought not to be imputed to him, or expecting something from God which ought not to be expected from him.71

Regardless of whether enthusiasts were of a stoic Church of England variety or espoused eccentric manifestations, Wesley cautioned his followers:

Beware you do not run with the common herd of enthusiasts, fancying you are a Christian when you are not. Presume not to assume that venerable name unless you have a clear, scriptural title thereto; unless you have the mind which was in Christ, and walk as he also walked.72

Wesley taught that the inward testimony of the Spirit was accompanied by manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit in a person’s life. Any outward evidences of faith would be characterised by fruit of the Spirit, which is consistent with a Christlike nature. Wesley affirmed that any outward Christian actions were not only inspired by Christ, but characterised by them as well.

Enthusiasm prizes an individual’s demonstration of divine presence through particular and often dramatic manifestations of the Holy Spirit within that individual as evidence of faith. Randall Stephens characterises the holiness, pentecostal and charismatic movements of twentieth century to be one of the ‘most significant recent

developments in world Christianity.' Stephens cites the presence of the Aldersgate Renewal Movement within the UMC as a contemporary expression of Methodist charismatics embracing a neo-pentecostalism. The mission of the Aldersgate Renewal Movement is ‘to equip the local church to minister to the world in the power of the Holy Spirit.’ Stress on the active agency of the Holy Spirit is evident in their sponsorship of the Methodist School for Supernatural Ministry that ‘provide[s] dynamic learning experiences that educate’ in the power of the Holy Spirit. While the efficacy of the Holy Spirit should never be undermined in Christianity (and specifically the Methodist tradition), neither should it be championed to the neglect and detriment of other displays of faith. To do so is to be ensnared by some of the same errors Wesley confronted in the early Methodist movement.

_Tending Towards Formalistic Traps_

Continuing in a clockwise direction to the southwest quadrant, the region bordered by _ethos_ and practices is the hybrid of legalism and nominalism which manifests itself as formalism (Figure 11). In Wesley's day, anyone who ascribed to works-righteousness doctrines would find themselves in this territory. Yet, Calvinists and Lutherans and others who operated from a

---

73 Stephens describes the difference between the holiness, pentecostal and charismatic movements as primarily one of timing and of birthing its own denomination. Holiness and pentecostalism of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth differed in their emphasis of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Holiness denominations such as the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Free Methodist Church and the Salvation Army stressed going on to perfection in their emphasis of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Such manifestations included being baptised in the Spirit, the ability to speak and/or interpret tongues, and ecstatic worship. Charismatic movement is associated with mainline denominations in the mid-twentieth century that championed experiences including the ‘in-filling’ of the Holy Spirit, ‘prayer languages and ‘free’ worship styles. Randall Stephens, ‘The Holiness/Pentecostal/Charismatic Extension of the Wesleyan Tradition,’ in _The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley_ ed Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 262-3.


sola fide stance would locate Wesley and other Arminians in this quadrant, because they 'stressed the disciplines of the Christian life, the necessity of holy living, and the importance of conversion.' While classical Christian disciplines have always been a hallmark of Methodism, to make faith contingent solely upon the performance of good works denies the discipline as a means of grace. Formalism, though not a religious movement per se, can be characterised by an adherence to works-righteousness teaching and belief that humanity has the power to enact social change through the church.

Wesley’s insistence and adherence to sola fide should have meant he could not be confused with others who naturally occupied the formalist’s quadrant. However, the Minutes Controversy of 1770 would certainly land him there. In an effort to combat antinomianism, Wesley tried to reconcile the need for disciplines and salvation by sola fide, and might be a circumstance in which Wesley may have overstated his viewpoint:

We have received it as a maxim that ‘a man is to do nothing in order to justification’. Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find favour with God should ‘cease from evil and learn to do well’. Whoever repents should do ‘works meet for repentance’. And if this is not in order to find favour, what does he do them for?

Another passage read,

As to merit itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid: we are rewarded according to our works, yea, because of our works. How does this differ from for the sake of our works? And how differs this from secundum merit operum? As our works deserve? Can you split this hair? I doubt, I cannot.

In the Minutes controversy, Wesley was insistent that pursuit of holiness of heart and life required faith and action. He could not relinquish the need for good works, no matter the degree of faith in the life of a seeker or believer. As Rack characterised, ‘the Catholic pursuit of disciplined progress in real, achieved holiness reinforced what he had inherited from the High Church tradition…this persisted through his

77 Heitzenrater, People Called Methodists, 12.
79 Wesley, ‘Annual Minutes, 1770,’ Works, 10:393.
rediscovery of justification by faith.\textsuperscript{80} Gunter asserts, ‘the Minutes obviously went farther in the direction of works-righteousness than he really believed acceptable.’\textsuperscript{81} Wesley did not believe that faith was earned by good works, but he did maintain that they were necessary to grow in Christlikeness. Gunter explains further, ‘he concentrated on the “active pursuit of holiness” as the antidote to the antinomianism which he believed was implied in unconditional election. To the Calvinists this sounded like moralistic works-righteousness.’\textsuperscript{82} Wesley’s doctrine of perfection was aiding confusion as to the role of good works. Adding fuel to the controversy is the fact that ‘Wesley stated his position on the disputed points with far less caution.’\textsuperscript{83} In spite of this controversy so late in Wesley’s ministry, Wesley was not a supporter of works-righteousness, which was often considered an error of the Roman Catholic Church.

Formalism thus understood within the Discipleship Matrix tends to elevate the role of community and their collective action as evidence and the guarantor of faith. It undercuts divine agency and personal character development into Christ as active features of the life of faith. Contemporary movements within the UMC that stress the need for social change through Christian advocacy and community involvement includes networks such as Methodists Federation for Social Action and UM Action.\textsuperscript{84} Though each coalition champions goals that are opposed to the other, both groups advocate for the advancement of their particular social agenda for the good of the denomination and society. In consequence, little attention is given to the work of divine grace in the lives of individuals.

\textit{Tending Towards Rationalistic Traps}

The final quadrant of the Discipleship Matrix is bordered by the boundaries of ethos and virtues and occupies the landscape within formalism and quietism, which is characterised by rationalism and can be taken to the extreme of deism (Figure 12). Deism posits that the notion of God and the created order is based on

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{80} Rack, \textit{Reasonable Enthusiast}, 401.
  \item \textsuperscript{81} Gunter, \textit{Love Divine}, 253.
  \item \textsuperscript{82} Gunter, \textit{Love Divine}, 274.
  \item \textsuperscript{83} Rack, \textit{Reasonable Enthusiast}, 454.
  \item \textsuperscript{84} Methodist Federation for Social Action, \url{http://mfsaweb.org} (accessed 9 March 2016) and UM Action, \url{https://theird.org/publications/um-action} (accessed 9 March 2016).
\end{itemize}
rational thought alone. The advent of the Enlightenment saw the rise of scholastic theists who inferred that the world was divinely created and the supreme being who created it could be rationally known.\footnote{Rack, Reasonable Enthusiast, 30.}

Descartes and Leibniz epitomised this rationalist ideal that typically rejected ideas of supernatural involvement in the world. Heitzenrater describes the significance of Enlightenment thought that would come to bear on Wesley and his ecclesial contemporaries:

[They] saw no conflict between their scientific or philosophical observations and their religious assumptions or conclusions. These early stages of ‘enlightened’ thinking were pervasive and influential enough at the end of the seventeenth century to bring many philosophical issues (such as epistemology) to the forefront of religious discussions for several generations. Every serious theologian would have to deal with these issues.\footnote{Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodists, 19.}

The role of secular thought that downplays or disregards the role of the sacred in humanity has remained a consistent, and at times, a growing force for Christian intellectuals to contend with since Wesley’s day.

Though Wesley was aligned with or accused of nearly every tendency represented in the Discipleship Matrix, he had neither association with nor affection for deism. This is not to say that Wesley had no appreciation for the role of reason in faith. He adamantly believed that rational faculties could help persons in matters of faith, but he was not about to overestimate their merits; ‘although our desire of knowledge has no bounds, yet our knowledge itself has.’\footnote{Wesley, ‘The Imperfection of Human Knowledge,’ Works, 2:568.} Reason, Wesley maintained, might be able to help persons understand aspects of divinity, but the human capacity for knowledge could never perceive the full mysteries of the divine.

Wesley valued the role of rational thought in its proper pursuit of faith. He saw it as conducive to formulating theological positions based on careful readings of

\begin{figure}[h!]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{Figure12}
\caption{Rationalistic Traps}
\end{figure}
Scripture and early church writers. In his sermon, *The Case of Reason Impartially Considered*, Wesley demonstrates a desire to find a stance between enthusiasm and rationalism. Wesley was in favour of finding a middle ground that neither trampled the role of rational faculty nor esteemed it beyond its worth:

While they are strongly impressed with the absurdity of undervaluing reason, how apt they are to overvalue it! So much easier it is to run from east to west than to stop at the middle point! Accordingly we are surrounded with those—we find them on every side—who lay it down as an undoubted principle that reason is the highest gift of God. They paint it in the fairest colours: they extol it to the skies. They are fond of expatiating in its praise: they make it little less than divine. They are wont to describe it as very near, if not quite infallible. They look upon it as the all-sufficient director of all the children of men, able by its native light to guide them to all truth, and lead them into all virtue. 88

Reason had a definite and proper role to play in the life of a Christian disciple. However, elevating reason to a status in which it rivals the divine numinous of God is to overestimate its merits. Wesley maintained that belief in an awe inspiring God was the very foundation of rational thought. The idea that pure reason results in knowledge without the spark of divinity was abhorrent: ‘they that are prejudiced against the Christian revelation, who do not receive the Scriptures as the oracles of God, almost universally run into this extreme. I have scarce known any exception: so do all, by whatever name they are called, who deny the Godhead of Christ.’ 89 The role of reason in the Christian faith was to discern theological thought based on Scripture and other inspired writers of the faith. Reason, when subject to God, could help a disciple discern. Reason’s role in a Christian’s faith was not to jettison divine mysteries that could not be explained and required faith to believe.

Wesley objected so fiercely to the deists’ rational stance to deny divine or supernatural powers that he argued on behalf of mediums and other members who dabbled in the occult. In a letter to an associate he wrote, ‘While I live I will bear the most public testimony I can to the reality of witchcraft. Your denial of this springs originally from the Deists; and simple Christians lick their spittle. I heartily set them

at open defiance.\textsuperscript{90} To deny the divine presence and mysteries of God was not only beyond Wesley’s conception of faith; it was an anathema.

Rationalism within the Discipleship Matrix champions the role of reason and collective knowledge that eschews the role of divine agency or religious practices. The presences of the religious ‘nones’ (those who self-identify as atheist, agnostic or are religiously unaffiliated) in America is interpreted by some as present day deism.\textsuperscript{91} Pew Research indicates that most nones believe in God but do not participate or find value in religious or spiritual practice.\textsuperscript{92} A full fledged life of faith does not merely acknowledge the possibility of engaging the mysteries of faith, but embraces and participates in them to learn more about the nature of God and growth in grace towards Christlikeness.

\section*{Conclusion}

Examining the historical tradition demonstrates that there is an inherent danger to isolating one or more components of Christian discipleship from the whole. The interpretive framework helps illustrate that focusing on one or two components to the exclusion of others yields a skewed version of Christian life and faith. Fragmenting the Christian life by concentrating on specific aspects and neglecting others yields formation in a particular direction, but it does not inspire holistic transformation. The practice and endeavour of Wesleyan discipleship, also understood as the process of sanctification, cannot be pursued when the Christian life is subject to fragmentation. Just as eighteenth century Christians needed to heed Wesley’s warnings of straying too far in any particular direction, so too, must contemporary Christians consider the importance of attending to all aspects of the Christian life.

Though Wesley did not envision a Discipleship Matrix to explain the practice and endeavour of discipleship, he managed to avoid extremes by conjoining

\textsuperscript{90} Wesley, \textit{The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley}, 7:300.
viewpoints. Instead of finding himself on any particular extreme end of the spectrum, Wesley seemed to embrace both extremes at once. Heitzenrater notes,

> The eclectic methodology that underlies much of Wesley’s work...entails the holding together of ideas or emphasis that appear to come from opposing sides of the religious spectrum. In a given controversy, Wesley at times found himself having to defend or emphasise one side of such a tandem set, often at the apparent expense of the other side.\(^93\)

Collins posits that the cohesive nature of Wesley’s theology could often frustrate others, saying, ‘Wesley developed a theological style that not only was sophisticated in its attempt to hold a diversity of truths in tension, but also has on occasion puzzled his interpreters, both past and present, precisely because of that diversity.’\(^94\) The religious doctrines Wesley managed to integrate could prove daunting for many theologians who lost sight of the whole theological landscape that Wesley drew upon. Heitzenrater points out, ‘if one side of this balance is lost, or one side is overemphasised, the wholeness of the basic Wesleyan position is destroyed.’\(^95\) To lose either aspect of the dialectic is to do a disservice to the way Wesley urged his followers to live.

While Wesley’s writings and public statements may have made him appear to alternately emphasise one side or the other to find a balanced middle ground, his understanding of the necessity of a lived faith to pursue entire sanctification allowed him to straddle the extremes and find centre. Heitzenrater asserts,

> Wesley embodied ideals and qualities not always easily held together or reconciled. Part of the enigma of Wesley is characterised by the frequent portrayal of him in such guises as a ‘radical conservative,’ a ‘romantic realist,’ or a ‘quiet revolutionary.’ While these designations seem to be inherently inconsistent, they do speak to the tension and balance that is a basic element of Wesley’s life and thought.\(^96\)

Wesley was able to hold together what might appear to be irreconcilable doctrines because he emphasised and maintained that disciples need to live out their own faith even as they receive support for their Christian journey within the corporate church.

---


\(^95\) Heitzenrater, *Elusive Mr. Wesley*, 29.

\(^96\) Heitzenrater, *Elusive Mr. Wesley*, 28.
As a result, Wesley avoided isolating the nature of the Christian life from its robust holistic transformative nature by occupying the extreme centre.

Wesley was aware of human tendencies to favour an aspect of Christian life over another. In a statement before he died, Wesley indicated the integrity and robustness of Methodism relied on four pillars that needed attention in equal regard. A personal account of Mr. Robert Miller, presented to an assembled meeting of Methodist preachers in 1820, detailed:

The first time I had the pleasure of being in company with the Rev. John Wesley was in the year 1783. I asked him what must be done to keep Methodism alive when he was dead: to which he immediately answered, ‘The Methodists must take heed to their doctrine, their experience, their practice, and their discipline. If they attend to their doctrines only, they will make the people antinomians; if to the experimental part of religion only, they will make them enthusiasts; if to the practical part only, they will make them Pharisees; and if they do not attend to their discipline they will be like persons who bestow much pains in cultivating their garden, and put no fence round it, to save it from the wild boar of the forest.’

The four pillars Wesley names are different from the elements that comprise the Discipleship Matrix. Yet, the principles of favouritism and disregard that lead to error and heresy by preferring a particular aspect to the neglect of others is the same.

The Discipleship Matrix, the theoretical framework developed for this thesis, offers insight into what occurs when four component features of MacIntyre’s definition of practice are not integrated with equal measure and attention. The isolation that occurs by focusing on one or two component features of the Discipleship Matrix and neglecting the others leads to religious error and failure of authentic transformation in the lives of adherents. Participants who concentrate on particular aspects of the Christian life and neglect others are formed in features of faith but do not experience nuanced and holistic transformation in Christlikeness.

97 It is acknowledged that Mr. Miller’s account of his conversation with Wesley three decades earlier may not be entirely accurate and the publication of his quote is subject to hagiography especially as it is published after Wesley’s death. However, the content of the quote demonstrates that Methodism, as Wesley advocated, seeks to encompass and integrate its doctrines, experiences, practice and discipline in an integrated, holistic way of living. Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp, eds., A History of The Methodist Church in Great Britain, vol. 4 (London: Epworth Press, 1998), 194.
Using the *Discipleship Matrix* to view the various influences of Wesley and Methodism, it is possible to gain perspective about the tendencies and traps Wesley encountered that could have subverted the Methodist movement if he had favoured certain aspects of Christian faith and ignored others. Contemporary efforts at Christian education and discipleship ministries are easily fragmented when the integrity of the whole *Discipleship Matrix* is disregarded. Distortions of even the most well intentioned religious groups can tend towards error and a failure of holistic Christian transformation can occur no matter the era of church history in which one lives.

The next movement of the thesis, the normative task, will investigate TLT and how applicable insights from the field might be of use to Christian educators committed to fostering holistic discipleship in the life of disciples.
Chapter Five
Transformative Learning Theory

Introduction

According to Osmer, once the groundwork of surveying the situation and establishing relevant particulars that explain the situation is complete, it is appropriate to address the question of ‘What ought to be going on?’ With an interpretive framework that explains the current situation confronting discipleship, it is possible to examine what should be happening to facilitate transformation in the discipleship process. The motivating premise of this thesis is that TLT offers insights into the nature of transformation and can be of use in the practice of discipleship. The normative movement examines models of good practice, seeking relevant principles and engaging theological reflection in order to guide resultant action appropriately. The first stage of the normative movement entails a descriptive analysis of TLT. This chapter initially explores two questions regarding adult educational theory. First, what makes adult education uniquely for adults (as opposed to the education of children)? Secondly, how do adults learn? In answering the second question, as a means to locate TLT within the larger field of adult education, the three adult learning theories comprising the field of adult education will be reviewed. Of these three, TLT will be discussed in detail, examining its development as a theory over the past few decades, and identifying key aspects of the learning theory that explains the nature of transformation in order to determine if it offers pertinent insights for contemporary discipleship efforts.

Adult Education

Until the latter half of the twentieth century, adult learning was simply an aspect of learning and development in the field of education. Prior to then, Sharan Merriam, Rosemary Caffarella and Lisa Baumgartner contend adult educators relied ‘primarily on psychological understandings of learning in general to inform their practice.’ Over the past five decades, however, understanding the needs, goals and

---

1 Osmer, Practicing Theology, 4.
2 Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, Learning in Adulthood, 83.
learning styles of adults has warranted its own field of academic research.\textsuperscript{3} Merriam explains, ‘to be a profession or a discipline adult education had to develop its own knowledge base, and that knowledge base has to be distinct and unique from other areas of education.’\textsuperscript{4} Adult education is a dynamic field invested in any number of methodological studies that have generated a host of theories and learning models.\textsuperscript{5} Broadly speaking, adult education can be understood as ‘an organised effort to assist learners who are old enough to be held responsible for their acts to acquire or enhance their understandings, skills, and dispositions.’\textsuperscript{6}

**Context for Learning**

One reason for the proliferation of strategies and techniques with regards to adult learners is that educational theorists and learning specialists recognise that learning occurs in a wide variety of settings. In addition to the formal educational classroom traditionally associated with teaching and learning, there are also both non-formal and informal settings in which education can happen (Chart 1).\textsuperscript{7}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Formal</strong></th>
<th><strong>Non-formal</strong></th>
<th><strong>Informal</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting</strong></td>
<td>higher education, college and universities</td>
<td>civic, religious, business and corporate</td>
<td>'the world is my classroom'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mandated/ Voluntary</strong></td>
<td>typically voluntary after secondary school</td>
<td>typically voluntary but may be necessary for job placement or career advancement</td>
<td>purely individual choice to learn from lessons life may teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accreditation Bodies and Boards?</strong></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>various government and state agencies</td>
<td>Possible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 1
Types of Education

\textsuperscript{3} Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, *Learning in Adulthood*, ix.
\textsuperscript{4} Sharan B. Merriam, ‘Something Old, Something New: Adult Learning Theory for the Twenty-First Century,’ *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* (2001), 93-94.
\textsuperscript{5} Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, *Learning in Adulthood*, 83.
\textsuperscript{7} Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, *Learning in Adulthood*, 423-437.
Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner characterise the formal educational setting as ‘highly institutionalised, bureaucratic, curriculum driven, and formally recognised with grades, diplomas, and certificates.’

Formal learning is associated with required learning mandated by the government (such as primary and secondary schooling), but also includes university education at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. In contrast, non-formal learning is understood to be ‘short-term, voluntary, and have few if any prerequisites’ and includes settings such as civic or religious institutions in the local community.

Non-formal learning often involves a formally designed curriculum as well as a trained teacher or facilitator, though its focus may be ‘on social action and change for the benefit for some part of the community.’

Lifelong learning in informal settings was also considered as educators expanded their focus from childhood and adolescent learning to include adult learning. Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner write, ‘the notion of lifelong learning has also opened up our thinking of learning as broader than what goes on in school.’ Informal education is characterised by an absence of the ‘externally imposed curriculum of either formal or nonformal educative programmes’ and occurs in settings with family, friends and associates which can be considered valid learning environments.

Informal education broadens ‘the wide variety of learning activities and sites where [learning] can occur.’ The field of education has proliferated as it expands research into a wide variety of settings and encompasses embodied learning, relational learning, arts-based learning, storytelling, the emotions and spirituality in addition to the traditional learning theories once confined to cognitive, affective and behavioural domains.

Educators recognise the learning environment of adults is uniquely different than formalised institutional learning designed for children and adolescents. Patricia Cranton posits adult learners and their environments characterise five particular traits. Adults are 1) considered to be voluntary learners who 2) seek self-direction as they 3) pursue knowledge that is experiential and practical in 4) collaborative and

---

10 Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, *Learning in Adulthood*, 32.
13 Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, *Learning in Adulthood*, 49. 
participatory environment that more often than not 5) raises the self-esteem of the successful learner.\textsuperscript{14}

Firstly, adult learners are considered voluntary. In their research, Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner report that adults chose to enrol in a course or a class for job training or career preparation designed for improving their position or to help navigate a personal or family ‘life transition.’\textsuperscript{15} Additionally, adults often participate in learning environments to better pursue leisure sports, art interests, address health concerns or for religious and civic responsibilities. Adult learning is considered voluntary because, regardless of the formality of the learning context, the learner (usually) has completed compulsory educational milestones mandated for children and adolescents by the state. However, motivation to engage in the learning endeavour is not necessarily equal for all learners or even across a learner’s lifetime. Cranton notes it is not unusual for adult learners to ‘feel obligated’ because they understand their participation is mandatory for their job performance or other extenuating circumstances.\textsuperscript{16} Although adults are considered voluntary learners, intrinsic motivation is not consistent from adult learner to learner or even from learning event to learning event.

A second component to adult education is its self-directed nature. Adult learners, regardless of context, often have a role to help ‘plan, carry out, and evaluate their own learning.’\textsuperscript{17} Whether in formal graduate school study or community based programmes, the specifics of a learning programme can be negotiated or determined by the adult learner in consultation with the instructor or teacher. During the 1970s, as adult learning became a legitimate discipline, self-directed learning garnered a deserving share of the literature and research as ‘SDL’ models came into use in both formal and informal learning settings. In SDL, the adult learner has active agency in the learning endeavour, collaborating with teachers and instructors to establish criteria for evaluation. Cranton points out self-directed learning is more than a philosophy of teaching or a learning theory: ‘self-direction came to mean a characteristic of a person (similar to autonomy), a method of teaching, a

\textsuperscript{14} Cranton, \textit{Promoting and Understanding}, 2-6.
\textsuperscript{15} Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, \textit{Learning in Adulthood}, 63.
\textsuperscript{16} Cranton, \textit{Promoting and Understanding}, 3.
\textsuperscript{17} Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, \textit{Learning in Adulthood}, 107.
developmental goal, and several other variations on these themes.’ Today, SDL continues to be a prominent area of study in the field of adult education and a concept familiar to most adult educators.

Thirdly, according to Cranton, adult learning is understood to be experiential and practical in nature. Seminal leader of modern education John Dewey wrote, ‘all genuine education comes about through experience.’ Another educational pioneer, David Kolb, understood experience to be foundational to the learning process. Researching learner preferences, he developed a model of experiential learning and a Learning Style Inventory (LSI) that is often used to evaluate learning preferences. Kolb posits that experience has been a companion to adult learning throughout history; human ‘survival depends on our ability to adapt not only in the reactive sense of fitting into the physical and social worlds, but in the proactive sense of creating and shaping those worlds.’ Dewey and Kolb make no distinctions about experience being a hallmark of adult education. However, Cranton points out the importance of experience for adult learning is ‘based on the assumption that adults have immediate problems to solve and that they wish to apply their learning directly to their workplace or to their personal lives.’

Additionally, educational environments for adults are associated with ones that are collaborative and participatory. Collaboration is twofold, between the instructor and students as well as among the students themselves. According to Cranton, ‘educators describe themselves as facilitators rather than teachers, and they

---

18 Cranton, Promoting and Understanding, 3.
20 Another widely used learning style assessment is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator which evaluates learning style on psychological preferences rather than experience. Other learning style assessments are based on learner’s visual, auditory and kinaesthetic preferences. Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner note that learning styles may be culturally influenced and reflect dominant biases in a particular setting. Furthermore, they write, ‘despite the lack of uniform agreement about which elements constitute a learning style it seems apparent that learning style inventories, unlike most cognitive-style instruments, have proved useful in helping learners and instructors alike become aware of their personal learning styles and their strengths and weaknesses as learners and teachers. What must be remembered in using these instruments, however, is that each inventory measures different things, depending on how the instrument’s author has defined learning style.’ In addition, they write, ‘for those who use learning-style instruments regularly as part of their education and training must impress upon their learners that their learning styles are not the only, nor necessarily “the best way” for them to learn. In addition, they also need to dispel the myth that these styles are “fixed and” change very little.’ Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, Learning in Adulthood, 408-9.
22 Cranton, Promoting and Understanding, 4.
seek to establish a co-learner role with their students.’

Good educators of adults often see themselves ‘on an equal footing with students’ with the understanding that their adult students are not a tabula rasa but appreciate the ‘prior knowledge and experience of learners [as] a basic assumption’ of their practice as educators.

The educator’s role is to challenge the learner, motivate, coach and offer fair assessment in their student’s endeavours. Therefore, collaboration among students is fostered by instructors who ‘expect [students] to develop deeper understandings and meanings of the research and theory being studied, particularly as it relates to themselves and their particular practice settings.’

The experiences of adult students are valuable, and when shared can contribute to learning of other students as well as the instructor.

Finally, Cranton asserts, a core element of adult education is that the student’s self-concept should be high or, at least, the student’s estimation of their ability to learn should be raised throughout the experience. Even though adults are often considered voluntary learners, it is not uncommon for adult students to be resistant as they enter into a learning environment. Hopefully, when individuals ‘view themselves as active and competent learners,’ they are better able to address not only the context they wish to master but their own selves as participants engaged in the educational endeavour with their teachers.

**Learning Theories**

A focus on the distinctive characteristics of learning in adulthood provides parameters for the field of adult education, but it was the proposal of three particular learning theories in the 1970s that established adult education as its own field of research. Since their inception, Malcolm Knowles’ andragogy, Alan Tough’s SDL and Jack Mezirow’s TLT have continually provided educators and researchers with insight in the the adult learning endeavour. Each theory contributes to the body of

---

research in adult education, but remain distinct from one another in how adults acquire and use knowledge in the context of their lives.

Andragogy (the art and science of helping adults learn), in contrast to pedagogy (the art and science of helping children learn), ‘became a rallying point for those trying to define the field of adult education’ in the 1970s.\(^{28}\) Knowles developed six assumptions regarding adult learners that have been subject to critique and debate.\(^{29}\) Initially, even as andragogy enjoyed acceptance in many circles, some educators questioned ‘whether [it] could be considered a “theory” at all.’\(^{30}\) More current conversations contest ‘whether andragogy is a science, a discipline, or a technology.’\(^{31}\) Knowles himself posited in 1989 that his work could be best understood as ‘a model of assumptions about learning or a conceptual framework that serves as a basis for an emergent theory.’\(^{32}\) Despite the debate within the field, andragogy captured the attention of practitioners and was considered to be ‘the primary model of adult education for over forty years.’\(^{33}\)

Alan Tough and his work on self-directed learning was championed by researchers ‘both inside and outside the field of adult education.’\(^{34}\) As a field of study, SDL scholars write along any of three trajectories: 1) the goals of self-directed learning, 2) research that examines the process of self-directed learning and 3) how applications of self-directed learning in particular contexts foster further research and development of the theory. SDL continues to capture the imagination of researchers and practitioners in adult education. Merriam asserts that ‘self-directed learning helped bring to the fore the importance of informal learning that occurs when we go about our daily lives.’\(^{35}\)

In 1978, Jack Mezirow pioneered what was to become the field of TLT with a landmark study focusing on women who returned to graduate school after a hiatus away from the formal classroom. His work eventually became a theory of adult

\(^{28}\) Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, *Learning in Adulthood*, 85.
\(^{29}\) Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, *Learning in Adulthood*, 84.
\(^{30}\) Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, *Learning in Adulthood*, 85.
\(^{31}\) Merriam, ‘Something Old, Something New,’ 94.
\(^{33}\) Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, *Learning in Adulthood*, 90.
\(^{34}\) Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, *Learning in Adulthood*, 105.
\(^{35}\) Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, *Learning in Adulthood*, 94.
education in its own right garnering a journal of the same name and a biannual conference. Merriam commented that in three journal editions dedicated to updates on adult learning, ‘the only constant...is a chapter in each on transformative learning.’

Transformative learning is understood as an explicitly adult concept because it is more than ‘a formative process that includes assimilation of beliefs concerning oneself and the world, including socialisation and learning adult roles.’ Adulthood, Mezirow contends, ‘is perceived as a transformative process, involving alienation from those roles, reframing new perspectives, and reengaging life with a greater degree of self-determination.’ Transformative learning is distinguished from other forms of learning because it is not simply about acquiring new knowledge or skills. In the process of transformative learning, new knowledge might be gained, but there is a reassessment of what has been learned previously. If knowledge constitutes scaffolding that a learner might climb to see further from a higher vantage point than before, transformative learning requires the learner to rearrange previous planks of the scaffolding to accommodate new scaffolding, not simply to add new scaffolding onto what has been previously assembled. Jennifer Berger points out the ‘definition of transformation requires that someone changes not just what he or she thinks but how he or she thinks about things.’ The result is that the learner does not necessarily see simply further than before, they see differently. The learner may see new things that were in their line of vision all along, just hidden or obscured. Cranton affirms transformative learning is distinctly a ‘prerogative of adults,’ in that ‘only in adulthood [do] people develop the reflective judgment necessary to assess their own reasoning about their habitual expectations.’

Developments in the discipline of adult education over the past fifteen years have investigated how spirituality, embodied learning and narrative learning contribute to adult education. These new avenues of research are rich and diverse.

---

36 Merriam, ‘Adult Learning Theory for the Twenty-First Century,’ *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* (2008), 93.
37 Mezirow, ‘Preface,’ in Mezirow and Associates, xii.
38 Mezirow, ‘Preface,’ in Mezirow and Associates, xii.
41 Cranton and Taylor, ‘Seeking a Unified Theory,’ 4-5.
Yet, andragogy, SDL and TLT are considered foundational bulwarks to the field. Merriam contends these ‘three theories or models of adult learning are distinct in that each has been developed and promoted by adult learning interested in differentiating adult learning from the learning of children.’

**Transformative Learning Defined**

By no means is Mezirow the sole voice within transformative learning. However, his acknowledged position as progenitor of the field makes his work crucial to examine and determine how other scholars have contributed to the field. For Mezirow,

Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action.

It is important to note transformative learning does not happen for all adults, even if an instructor employs transformative learning practices. Laurence Cohen writes that transformation is a ‘reassessment of the self, [that] must come from within.’ Students need to ‘reexamine their basic, personal meaning perspectives before they can critically reflect sufficiently to experience a reassessment.’ Cranton characterises transformation as an adult capacity in that ‘a certain amount of self-direction is required for an individual to take the steps of moving into a critical questioning of beliefs, assumptions and perspectives.’ In this sense, transformative learning is voluntary. It is necessary for a learner to engage the event that challenges or disrupts their experience, not ignore it or dismiss it as another adult might do given similar circumstances.

---

42 Merriam, ‘Something Old, Something New,’ 93.
43 Mezirow, ‘Learning to Think Like An Adult,’ 7-8.
45 Cohen, ‘I Ain’t So Smart and You Ain’t So Dumb,’ 64.
46 Cranton, Promoting and Understanding, 7.
Philosophical Foundations

According to Taylor, ‘transformative learning is first and foremost about educating from a particular worldview, a particular educational philosophy.’ Mezirow acknowledges that ideas from constructivism, humanism and critical social theory are woven together and integrated into transformative learning, but contends it ‘does not derive from a systematic extension of an existing intellectual theory or tradition.’ He does note the possibility for transformation originates in a particular context that assumes and depends upon ‘values such as freedom, equality, tolerance, social justice, civil responsibility and education.’

Constructivist assumptions that truth or reality is found within the self are foundational to TLT. Mezirow defines constructivism as a conviction that meaning exists within ourselves rather than in external forms such as books and that personal meanings that we attribute to our experience are acquired and validated through human intervention and communication.

Educators who adhere to a constructivist notion assert that ‘learners share their experiences and resources with each other to create new knowledge.’ In an adult learning environment that values shared learning experience, not only can a learner create knowledge from within himself, but it is also possible to construct new knowledge from vicarious experiences shared by other learners.

Closely related to constructivism are the ideals of humanism, which assigns a high degree of ‘freedom and autonomy’ to the persons to pursue ‘individual and specific human needs.’ Humanism can be understood as a project of the Enlightenment and as a result has ‘assumptions rooted in Western perspective.’ Aspects of the Cartesian project can be interpreted as limitations at best or problematic at worst for the Christian faith, yet humanism (and the resulting pursuit of knowledge) is highly valued by writers and researchers in liberal arts and education.

---

48 Mezirow, Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning, xiv.
49 Mezirow, ‘Learning to Think Like An Adult,’ 16.
50 Mezirow, Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning, xiv.
51 Cranton, Promoting and Understanding, 5.
A third strand braided into the underlying assumptions of transformative learning is critical social theory. Stephen Brookfield encapsulates critical theory’s main tenets as

grounded in three core assumptions regarding the way the world is organised: 1) that apparently open, western democracies are actually highly unequal societies in which economic inequity, racism, and class discrimination are empirical realities; 2) that the way the state of affairs is represented as seemingly normal, natural, and inevitable (thereby heading off potential challenges to the system) is through the dissemination of dominant ideology; and 3) that critical theory attempts to understand this state of affairs as a prelude to changing it.⁵⁴

With respect to transformative learning, Merriam and Kim write, ‘a critical stance has the goal of not only understanding a phenomenon but also analysing the power dynamics of a situation. By critiquing the status quo, it is hoped that people can become empowered to transform their situation.’⁵⁵ The implication of critical social theory for transformative learning is that not only will the learner undergo transformation, but that there are beneficial transforming effects for that learner’s social context as well.

Mezirow’s conception of TLT and its flourishing into its own field of study is the end result of

culturally specific conditions associated with democratic societies… TLT shares the normative goals of the Enlightenment of self-emancipation through self-understanding, the uncovering of systematically distorted communication, and the strengthening of the capacity for self-determination through rational discourse.⁵⁶

Mezirow’s stance is clear and unapologetic; his conception of TLT was formulated on Western ideals which may seem culturally confining to some critics. Though the field has broadened since its initial conception, transformative learning relies on learners and educators who are open to and foster notions of creative autonomy, and

---

⁵⁶ Mezirow, ‘Preface,’ xiv.
who seek to dismantle inept or moribund structures that confine in favour of ones that liberate and empower persons to achieve their potential.

**Core Components of TLT**

As TLT has expanded, researchers have debated the number of components involved in transformative learning. Taylor, Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner all acknowledge three essentials or ‘core elements’ and agree experience, critical reflection and discourse, all present in Mezirow’s conception of the theory, are fundamental to the theory.

**The Role of Experience**

Fundamentally, transformative learning ‘is about making sense of our experiences,’ particularly those experiences that disrupt or challenge what we know or think we know.\(^{57}\) Cranton and Taylor assert transformative learning rests on the idea that ‘we uncritically assimilate perspectives from our social world, community and culture.’\(^{58}\) Cranton proposes each learner has a ‘set of expectations based on formative childhood experiences and those expectations continue to act as a filter for understanding life.’\(^{59}\) When a learner encounters a situation that does not comply with expectations, the learner either dismisses or questions the event. When an adult chooses to question or investigate her experience, she may be at the start of a transformative learning event. Cranton and Wright explain, ‘transformative learning theory is based on the idea that we construct personal meaning from our experiences and validate that meaning through discussion with others.’\(^{60}\) As an educational endeavour, transformative learning will involve the support and challenge that comes from others.

A frame of reference is how learners interpret experiences. For Mezirow, a frame of reference can be understood ‘as a “meaning perspective,” the structure of assumptions and expectations through which we filter sense impressions. It involves

---

cognitive, affective and connative dimensions.\textsuperscript{61} Stated another way, Cranton describes a frame of reference as ‘the web of assumptions and expectations through which we filter the way we see the world.’\textsuperscript{62} Learners may be cognisant of, or oblivious to, their frames of reference, which they ‘uncritically assimilate [their] values, beliefs, and assumptions from [their] family, community and culture.’\textsuperscript{63} For Mezirow, ‘a frame of reference is transformed when we become critically reflective of the premise of the problem and redefine it.’\textsuperscript{64} Mezirow refers to frames of reference as ‘intentionally or incidentally learned philosophical, economic, sociological, and psychological orientations of theories as well.’\textsuperscript{65} Frames of reference are often innately constructed as a result of living in a particular culture and can be understood as a learner’s worldview.

Mezirow posits frames of reference have two dimensions: habits of mind and points of view. For him, habits of mind entail ‘a set of assumptions—broad, generalised, orienting predispositions that act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of experience.’\textsuperscript{66} Cranton characterises habits of mind as ‘a way of seeing the world based on our background, experience, culture, and personality.’\textsuperscript{67} The worldview that expresses the inclinations and tendencies persons often display as they approach a particular situation in life whether or not it involves a problem to be solved can be understood as a habit of mind. As such, it involves certain tendencies to consider life from particular philosophical, religious, economic, sociological and psychological orientations even if a learner is not aware of it. Habits of mind are often ‘unexamined’ and thereby typically ‘create limitations and form boxes of which we are unconscious.’\textsuperscript{68} Thus, when examined in the educational process, habits of mind are open to change and being re-scaffolded.

The second dimension of a frame of reference is the point of view, which is the expression of the habit of mind. Mezirow defines point of view as ‘sets of immediate specific expectations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and judgements’ that

\begin{itemize}
  \item Mezirow, ‘Learning to Think Like An Adult,’ 16.
  \item Cranton, \textit{Promoting and Understanding}, 22.
  \item Cranton and Taylor, ‘Seeking a Unified Theory,’ 7.
  \item Mezirow, ‘Learning to Think Like An Adult,’ 17.
  \item Mezirow, ‘Learning to Think Like An Adult,’ 17.
  \item Cranton, \textit{Promoting and Understanding}, 24-25.
  \item Cranton, \textit{Promoting and Understanding}, 28.
\end{itemize}
formulate how persons interpret circumstances and help guide any resulting action. Cranton refers to point of view as ‘habitual, implicit rules for interpreting experience.’ Point of view determines what a person sees in a given scenario and how a person tends to act in that situation. Whether or not a person is aware or has reflected upon their point of view is immaterial; all persons function from a particular point of view that determines how they operate in a situation.

In most learning theories, new knowledge either expands the learner’s frame of reference as it assimilated or is discarded as irrelevant. Transformative learning is to change the orienting dispositions to make the learner’s frame of reference more dependable. The frames of reference a learner acquires throughout her formative years are not necessarily able to accommodate or assimilate new experiences encountered as an adult. A dependable frame of reference becomes ‘more inclusive, differentiating, permeable (open to more viewpoints), critically reflective of assumptions, emotionally capable of change, and integrative of experience.’ A frame of reference that has undergone transformation is more dependable because it no longer operates under knee-jerk assumptions. The learner can think through her pre-dispositions to not just enlarge her worldview, but to change it in the process of accommodating new experiences. Frames of reference offer the learner a sense of identity. As a consequence of being substantiated by experiences over time, frames of reference are ‘often emotionally charged and strongly defended.’ Cranton points out, ‘maintaining a meaning perspective is safe.’

Initially conceived, Mezirow proposed that transformation follows a ten step process:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions
6. Planning a course of action

---

69 Mezirow, ‘Learning to Think Like An Adult,’ 18.
70 Cranton, Promoting and Understanding 22.
71 Mezirow, ‘Learning to Think Like An Adult,’ 4.
72 Mezirow, ‘Learning to Think Like An Adult,’ 19.
73 Mezirow, ‘Learning to Think Like An Adult,’ 18.
74 Cranton, Promoting and Understanding, 23.
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspectives.  

Mezirow maintains transformation of a frame of reference may be ‘epochal (involving dramatic or major changes) or incremental.’ A disorienting dilemma may be so sudden and incisive that it causes the learner to consciously re-evaluate his assumptions in response to a specific event. Conversely, a change may be gradual, barely perceptible in incremental changes as the result of many incidents. Taylor describes the change as the result of a ‘series of cumulative transformed meaning schemes or as the result of an acute personal or social crisis.’ Scholars posit epochal transformations seem to come with ‘significant life experiences and how we deal with them…but transformations in consciousness seem to involve cultivation of daily attempts at living deeply.’ Regardless of the time frame in which transformation takes place, Mezirow advocates that frames of reference are made more dependable as a learner engages in reflective discourse which ‘involves a critical assessment of assumptions.’

The Role of Critical Reflection

Critical reflection is a second essential component of transformative learning theory. Critical reflection is more than just thinking about personal experience; it involves a highly cognitive process that examines ‘underlying beliefs and assumptions’ of a learner’s experience of the world. Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner characterise critical reflection as a process examining ‘long-held, socially constructed assumptions, beliefs, and values about the experience or problem.’ Closely related, Taylor describes it as ‘questioning the integrity of deeply

---

75 Mezirow, ‘Learning to Think Like An Adult,’ 22.
79 Mezirow, ‘Learning to Think Like An Adult,’ 11.
80 Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, Learning in Adulthood, 145.
81 Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, Learning in Adulthood, 145.
held assumptions and beliefs based on prior experience.'

Cranton’s conception of critical reflection is a ‘process of reconsidering experience through reason, and reinterpreting and generalising the experience to form mental structures.’ He asserts critical reflection involves three types of reflection: content, process and premise, each involving its own type of questioning. Content reflection asks, ‘what is going on?’ and questions the actual experience itself. Process reflection asks, ‘how did it happen?’ and looks into to problem solving and dealing with the situation. Premise reflection poses the question, ‘why is it happening?’ and seeks to understand what caused the situation to rise in the first place. A critically reflective person will consider his experience along several avenues of deliberation, analysing his experiences in order to make rational sense of them.

Brookfield contends critical thinking is a hallmark of adult learning and has written extensively on the subject. He posits that critical reflection is ‘at the heart of what it means to be a developed person living in a democratic society.’ Critical thinking is imbued by constructivist and humanist thinking. Brookfield writes, ‘critical thinkers are wary of individuals who claim either universal truth for themselves or access to some reified and otherwise inaccessible fount of wisdom.’ However, he asserts critical thinkers can be persons of great faith by virtue of rational reflection they have done with regards to their faith.

A common misconception about critical thinking is that it precludes commitment to any ideas, actions, or purposes...as critical thinkers, we can still hold passionately to certain beliefs, actions, and causes… arrived at after skeptical scrutiny and after being repeatedly tested against reality as we understand it; and this commitment is all the more strong because it has passed through the fires of this critical analysis.

The crucial component to critical reflection is whether or not a person can rationally comprehend her support or non-support of a particular idea.

---

82 Taylor, ‘Fostering Transformative Learning,’ 7.
83 Cranton, Promoting and Understanding, 33.
85 Brookfield, Developing Critical Thinkers, 21.
86 Brookfield, Developing Critical Thinkers, 23.
The Role of Rational Discourse

A third essential component of transformative learning theory is rational discourse or dialogue. Rational dialogue is more than mere conversation. Taylor asserts it ‘is the essential medium through which transformation is promoted and developed.’ Mezirow refers to rational discourse as a ‘specialised use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of justification of an interpretation or belief.’ Mezirow states further that ‘rationality refers to assessing reasons supporting one’s options as objectively as possible and choosing the most effective means available to achieve one’s objectives.’

Rational dialogue allows a learner to engage her own learning experience by articulating for herself in the company of others discoveries or insights that result from the learning experience. Dialogue helps express what can be understood, so it can also help identify the ‘edge of meaning,’ or a transitional zone of what cannot be articulated and adequately expressed, requiring further exploration until new knowledge and understanding results. Rational discourse speaks to the collaborative participatory nature of adult learning. To engage in rational discourse requires an environment ‘emphasising relational and trustful communication.’ Taylor asserts ‘it is through building trusting relationships that learners develop the confidence to deal with learning on an affective level, where transformation at times can be perceived as threatening and an emotionally charged experience.’ Therefore, it is incumbent upon teachers who foster transformative learning to do all that they can to facilitate an environment in which all participants believe they contribute to the learning endeavour.

Development of Transformative Learning Theory

The Initial Wave of the Theory

Within a decade of his initial study, Mezirow postulated transformative learning as a theory within adult education. During the 1990s, a ‘first wave’ of

---

88 Mezirow, ‘Learning to Think Like An Adult,’ 10.
89 Mezirow, ‘Learning to Think Like An Adult,’ 10.
scholars contributed research to build on what was seen as Mezirow’s groundbreaking theoretical work. Yet, TLT as initially conceived was not without critique. Cranton notes that scholars within the field were distressed with Mezirow’s lack of attention to concerns for social change, power issues, or cultural context and, at the same time, stressing the necessity for rational thought. Merriam, writing with Gabo Ntseane, indicates, ‘rational thinking is a particularly Western concept, a product of Descartes’ mind–body split and the Enlightenment’s emphasis on science and rationality.’ Cranton and Wright noted:

many adults (and this would be especially true of literacy learners) have not developed the kind of capacity for articulating and criticizing their assumptions that Mezirow describes. Such learners often have had difficult early school experiences, or they may come from families and communities where discourse of this nature is not a part of daily life.

Additionally, educators postulated that transformative learning could take place in settings that valued other non-rational types of learning. Merriam and Kim note arts-based learning that encompasses ‘cognitive, affective, relational and intuitive knowing through experiential learning’ is particularly suited for TLT. Despite critiques, however, most studies and research in transformative learning have remained in the purview of higher formal education.

During the initial wave of development, theorists in the emerging field had a tendency to think in terms of dualisms. Scholars wrote about transformative learning being either ‘rational or extra-rational, reflective or imaginative, cognitive or emotional, individual or social’ and positioned themselves on a particular side of the dichotomy. Other scholars, notably Paulo Freire and Robert Boyd, whose work also contributes to transformative learning theory, were associated with the developing theory even though their work and research is independent of Mezirow’s work.

92 Cranton and Taylor, ‘Seeking a Unified Theory,’ 12.
93 Cranton and Taylor, ‘Seeking a Unified Theory,’ 11.
94 Merriam, Promoting and Understanding, 39.
96 Cranton and Wright, ‘The Transformative Educator as Learning Companion,’ 34.
In 2000, Mezirow published an edited volume aptly titled *Learning in Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. At that juncture, Mezirow acknowledged the complexity of what transpires within a transformed learner. He offered brief attention to ‘other ways of making meaning, including intuition, imagination, and dreams.’ He also affirmed that the role of feelings in the transformative learning process ‘is often an intensely threatening emotional experience.’ More recently, Mezirow acknowledged he neglected imagination, intuition and emotion in his original conception and asserts ‘a great deal of insight into the role of imagination is needed and overdue.’ Today, Mezirow continues to contribute to the field and he is in dialogue with other theorists, valuing their input even while maintaining his own distinctive voice.

*The Integrity of a More Unified Theory*

Cranton and Taylor postulate a ‘second wave’ of scholars responded against the dichotomies that were fissuring the field and began to seek a ‘unified theory’ of transformative learning over the last decade. They indicate the idea is not to build an all-inclusive theory, but to move ‘toward the integration of various factions of the theory and into a more holistic perspective.’ In a unified theory of TLT, distinctive categories operate as facets of transformative learning that ‘can and should coexist within a holistic perspective.’ The field is more reflective of the various contributors ‘maintaining the diversity of approaches that are so important to the complexity of the field of adult education.’

A more unified theory of transformative learning means accommodating a variety of viewpoints. As a result, learning for social change is a major component in understanding TLT today. Just as other adult educators have embraced learning that occurs in non-formal and informal settings, transformative learning theorists are seeking to understand learning in various contexts. Researchers are also concerned

---

100 Mezirow, ‘Learning to Think Like an Adult,’ 6.
102 Cranton and Taylor, ‘Seeking a Unified Theory,’ 12.
103 Cranton and Taylor, ‘Seeking a Unified Theory,’ 5.
104 Cranton and Roy, ‘When the Bottom Falls Out,’ 87.
with how emotions and spirituality play key roles in reordering prior ways of experiencing the world. Today, TLT offers a way for persons to understand their unconscious emotions and psyche as well as coming to terms with how they view their place within the planet’s ecological system and the spiritual nature of the cosmos.

The Influence of Emancipatory Educators

Social action and change is ancillary to Mezirow’s conception of TLT. He maintains, transformative learning experiences ‘may only very indirectly lead to change in a specific social practice or institutionalised ideology, or they may not lead to collective action at all.’ For Mezirow, how a learner chooses to engage socially as a result of his transformative learning experiences is individually determined; it is not incumbent for a learner to engage in social action.

His position contrasts with Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, whose work predates Mezirow and is completely independent of the development of TLT. Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner describe Freire’s context in 1960-70s Brazil as one of ‘poverty, illiteracy, and oppression.’ For Freire, the end goal of education is liberation which means radical social change. Brookfield, a contemporary and colleague of Mezirow, also asserts that social change is a necessary outcome of transformative learning. Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner maintain that Freire, especially, has the perspective that ‘personal empowerment and social transformation are inseparable processes.’ For Freire, Brookfield and other emancipatory educators, to transform a person’s understanding of themselves is to perform a political act which necessarily has socially transformative implications.

Similar to Mezirow, Freire understood education to occur in formal learning environments. Freire perceived education to serve the interests of those in power ‘because it domesticates the oppressed.’ Freire eschewed banking education as a pedagogy in which an ‘all-knowing’ teacher deposits knowledge into students who are viewed as passive repositories designed to store knowledge. Instead, Freire

\[106\] Mezirow, Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning, 211.
\[107\] Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, Learning in Adulthood, 140.
\[108\] Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, Learning in Adulthood, 140.
\[109\] Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, Learning in Adulthood, 140.
championed conscientization, a process involving consciousness-raising in which teachers and learners work together as co-learners to understand their experiences. Through dialogue with their teachers, learners engage in ‘action and reflection...upon their world in order to transform it.’\(^{110}\) In advocating a co-learner role for teachers, Freire, like Mezirow, maintained that dialogue is ‘indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality.’\(^{111}\) For Freire, the ability to articulate experience is key for learners to understand the learning experience. He contrasts how one form of education inhibits while the other liberates:

> Whereas banking education anaesthetises and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness; the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality.\(^{112}\)

Rationality is concomitant with the ability to dialogue intelligently.

Brookfield agrees with Freire that social change is the desired result of transformative learning. In collaboration with John Holst, he asserts that transformative learning helps to bring about ‘the organisation of society and the economy so that people protect and share the abundant resources that could be at the disposal of all.’\(^{113}\) Brookfield, similarly to Mezirow, understands social change to be a cognitive, rational process in which ‘adults learn to challenge dominant ideology, uncover power, and contest hegemony.’\(^{114}\) For Brookfield,

> moving toward more cooperative, collective, democratic, and socialist ways of thinking and living requires a transformation in the ways we think, the ways we act towards one another, the ways we organise society and politics, the ways we distribute the resources available to us, and the ways we understand the purposes of life.\(^{115}\)

---


\(^{111}\) Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 83.

\(^{112}\) Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 81.


\(^{114}\) Brookfield, ‘Critical Theory and Transformative Learning,’ 131.

\(^{115}\) Brookfield, ‘Critical Theory and Transformative Learning,’ 143.
For him, critical social theory is ‘crucial for scholars of transformative learning to consider if transformative learning is to avoid sliding into an unproblematised focus on the self.’

A critical theory of adult learning is clearly a theory of social and political learning. It studies the systems and forces that shape adults’ lives and oppose adults’ attempts to challenge ideology, recognise hegemony, unmask power, defend the lifeworld, and develop agency.

Freire and Brookfield are by no means the only scholars who advocate that TLT has social implications. However, their understanding that change occurs through discourse and critical reflection makes transformative learning a highly rational process. Other academics contributing to TLT during the first wave of the emerging field argued that transformative learning does not always concern empirical or theoretical knowledge that is a result of rational, cognitive, technical learning. Instead, they contend that TLT could occur unconsciously and often involves knowledge that stems from arts, myth, fable, meditation, drama, emotions as well psycho- and sociocultural dynamics. How persons come to new understandings of themselves and the world in alternative pathways which are more subliminal is also the purview of researchers in transformative learning theory.

**The Inclusion of Extra-rational Knowledge**

Learning that is not explicitly rational is referred to as ‘extra-rational’ learning or knowledge. Taylor maintains extra-rational learning primarily involves ‘an awareness of feelings and emotions in the reflective process.’ But extra-rational knowledge need not be to the exclusion of rational knowledge. Cranton and Roy depict a unified theory of transformative learning as embracing processes that are ‘rational, affective, extrarational, experiential, or any combination of these depending on the characteristics of the individual and the context in which the transformation takes place.’ Taylor characterises the inclusion of extra-rational

---

118 Taylor, ‘Fostering Transformative Learning,’ 11.
120 Cranton and Roy, ‘When the Bottom Falls Out,’ 90.
knowledge into TLT as addressing the ‘whole person’ and all the learning domains along with the more rational components as necessary to have a ‘holistic orientation’ that addresses the whole person that constitutes the learner.\textsuperscript{121}

Robert Boyd contributed research that initially included extra-rational knowledge as important to the transformative process. He is credited with applying Carl Jung’s concepts to adult education in small group learning formats that are both formal and non-formal.\textsuperscript{122} In the last two decades, John Dirkx has furthered Boyd’s work in an effort ‘to understand more deeply and fully the unconscious forces that characterise dynamics of small adult learning groups.’\textsuperscript{123} Their psychoanalytic approach seeks to demonstrate how symbols and unconscious images can play a role in the transformative learning process.

For Boyd, transformative learning is defined as ‘a fundamental change in an individual’s personality involving conjointly a resolution to a personal dilemma and the expansion of consciousness resulting in a more fully realised personality integration.’\textsuperscript{124} Following Jung and Boyd, Dirkx contends that learning is highly personal and involves ‘differentiating one’s selfhood to gain perspective about both the self and their social context’ to be a centrepiece of depth psychology and the process of transformation.\textsuperscript{125} Cranton and Roy explain, ’individuation is the process by which we become aware of who we are as different from others.’\textsuperscript{126} Furthermore, ‘individuation does not focus on “me first” but rather on understanding how a person fits in with or does not fit in with others around him or her.’\textsuperscript{127} Individuation, then, is a two-fold process by which persons seek to understand their whole beings as differentiated individuals as well as discovering how they are integrated with others. Individuation is neither about seeking uniqueness as one’s own individuality nor is it about putting self first as in individualism. For Boyd, Jungian perspectives are

\textsuperscript{121} Taylor, ‘Fostering Transformative Learning,’ 10.
\textsuperscript{123} Dirkx, ‘Nurturing Soul Work,’ 117.
\textsuperscript{126} Cranton, and Roy, ‘When the Bottom Falls Out of the Bucket,’ 91.
\textsuperscript{127} Cranton, and Roy, ‘When the Bottom Falls Out of the Bucket,’ 91.
contrasted with Freudian views. Instead of experiencing ‘hang-ups’ or ‘psychic distortions’ that need to be overcome (which is consistent with Freud), Jungian scholars ‘tend to understand many of the powerful emotional issues that arise within the learning environment, at least in part, as intrinsic aspects of being human.’

Boyd offers a way for persons to make sense of even negative extra-rational experiences by integration rather than seeking to subdue what might be otherwise considered a distorting complex or problematic obsession.

As a psychoanalytic approach to learning, depth psychology is more typically the purview of counsellors and social workers rather than educators in the classroom. Regardless of the formality of the learning context, ‘the therapeutic process often leads clients to a transformed sense of identity or shifts in worldview.’

Dirkx, working with Regina O. Smith, states, ‘a goal of transformative learning informed by depth psychology is to develop a dialogical relationship with one’s unconscious.’

Just as dialogue is key to transformative learning that is rational, so is the dialogue within one’s self paramount to understanding the subconscious. Emotions, according to Boyd, Dirkx and others embracing this realm of learning, have a legitimate place in the transformative learning process. As Dirkx explains, ‘the expression and experience of emotion within the learning experience provide an opportunity for establishing a dialogue with those unconscious aspects of ourselves seeking expression through various images, feelings, and behaviours within the learning setting.’

Instead of dialogue between two different learners, the dialogue Boyd and Dirkx seek to establish is between the conscious and the unconscious.

Educational theorists who are more concerned with cognition than affective ways of knowing and learning do not always have adequate terminology to express what happens in the emotional realm. Dirkx writes,

To understand and work with these emotions, we need a kind of language to develop a conscious dialogue and relationship with those aspects of the psyche expressed through these emotions. The language and processes of critical reflection (Mezirow, 1991) do not

---

130 Dirkx and Smith, ‘Facilitating Transformative Learning,’ 59.
131 Dirkx, ‘Engaging Emotions in Adult Learning,’ 22.
seem well suited to working with these extrarational, unconscious processes and dynamics. The main way we work with unconscious psychic content is through the language of the imagination, expressed through images.\textsuperscript{132}

Cranton, working in collaboration with others, points out persons coming to TLT from a psychoanalytic point of view understand critical reflection in terms of discernment. ‘Rather than \textit{reflection}, they described \textit{discernment} as the central process in transformation. In this view, transformation is a personal inner journey of individuation—learning through the psychic structures that make up the Self.’\textsuperscript{133} When considering the psyche and emotional context, the line between critical reflection and discernment is indistinct; ‘it is not critical reflection that is at the centre of transformative learning but discernment—a holistic orientation including receptivity, recognition, and grieving.’\textsuperscript{134}

As evidence of his commitment to a more unified theory of transformative learning, Mezirow affirms psychological dialogue between consciousness and unconsciousness and acknowledges ‘transformation involves participating in dialogue with the unconscious aspects of the psyche.’\textsuperscript{135} A learning event may be triggered by a flash of insight or an ‘Aha!’ moment. Dirkx claims ‘insights or epiphanies are examples of the ego making conscious connections with psychic content that was previously unconscious.’\textsuperscript{136} Such events can evoke forceful emotions and even elicit visceral experiences. Communication that illuminates the consciousness to the inner aspects of the psyche can constitute a disorienting event, which Mezirow conjectures initiates a transformative learning scenario.

Regardless of whether or not an insight is a disorienting event, the significance of a learning event is to probe the unconscious and discover meaning. Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner explain, ‘to integrate the emotional and spiritual parts of learning into ourselves, we must makes sense of the symbols and images in our psyche.’\textsuperscript{137} This means paying attention to events that are not

\textsuperscript{132} Dirkx, ‘Engaging Emotions in Adult Learning,’ 20.
\textsuperscript{133} Cranton and Wright, ‘The Transformative Educator,’ 35.
\textsuperscript{134} Cranton and Roy, ‘When the Bottom Falls Out,’ 90.
\textsuperscript{135} Mezirow, ‘Transformative Learning Theory,’ 25.
\textsuperscript{136} Dirkx, ‘Nurturing Soul Work,’ 118.
\textsuperscript{137} Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, \textit{Learning in Adulthood}, 139.
necessarily logical and perceived rationally. It involves what Cranton and others refer to as *mythos*. She explains,

*Mythos* is a facet of knowing that we see in symbols, images, stories, and myths. We experience soul through art, music, and film; it is that magic moment that transcends rationality and gives depth, power, mystery, and deep meaning to learning. In nurturing soul, we pay attention to the small, everyday occurrences in life; understand and appreciate images; and honour the complex, multifaceted nature of learning.\(^{138}\)

Analytic evidence and concrete data is not necessarily the most ideal to probe the psyche and the affective domain. More fruitful avenues include ‘metaphors and parable-like stories that…connect in an imaginative way, rather than intellectually, with the emotional issues represented in this process.’\(^{139}\)

Dirkx has elaborated on his own earlier psychological work, investigating what he calls ‘soul work.’ He is especially motivated to know more about why some classroom discussions ‘can seem forced and somewhat lifeless, without much spirit or heart’ while others are engaging and animated.\(^{140}\) For Dirkx, the engagement is more than just preference for a particular topic; it is about the soul, which ‘has to do with authenticity, connection between heart and mind, mind and emotion.’\(^{141}\)

In referring to ‘soul work’ over the unconscious of the psyche, Dirkx moves away from therapeutic means to a more holistic consideration of the student engaged in the learning process. For Dirkx, ‘our soul work—our learning—is to recognise, elaborate, and differentiate them as a means of developing a deeper understanding of our experience in the context of adult learning.’\(^{142}\) To consider the soul is to consider that an aspect of learning has a spiritual quality. He asserts, ‘the act of learning [is] an inherently spiritual act, at least in potential. It borders on the sacred, flirts with it, invites in the sacred, if we allow it.’\(^{143}\) Education that is spiritual is not necessarily religious education, nor is it transcendent in focus or content. Merriam, Caffarella

\(^{138}\) Cranton and Wright, ‘The Transformative Educator,’ 35.

\(^{139}\) Dirkx, ‘Engaging Emotions,’ 23.

\(^{140}\) Dirkx, ‘Nurturing Soul Work,’ 123.

\(^{141}\) Dirkx, ‘Nurturing Soul Work in Adult Learning,’ 83.

\(^{142}\) Dirkx, ‘The Power of Feelings,’ 69.

and Baumgartner qualify this as a specifically adult activity; ‘as adults move into midlife and beyond, there is an inward turning to contemplate the meaning of life and spiritual aspects of oneself.’\textsuperscript{144} The spiritual aspect that Dirkx refers to is an interior aspect of being human—related to, but not necessarily the same thing as the unconscious, which was the focus of Boyd’s work.

This inner world seems to carry a power in one’s life that stands in quiet contrast to our public acknowledgement of its presence in our individual and collective lives. Certainly, it reveals its presence through art, poetry, music, theatre, and film (Hockley, 2001). Often, we are drawn to such works in inexplicable ways, held captive by them for varying lengths of time, seemingly spellbound by there messages—our inner worlds refracted through the lens of image and metaphor and story. But, in teaching and learning, it also reveals itself in more subtle ways. As we read, we are drawn to certain passages in the text and not others. We seek to understand and make sense of a statement of fact.\textsuperscript{145}

As an educator teaching in a university setting, Dirkx is open to investigate the spiritual aspect of being a human engaged in a transformative learning event. He is not alone in understanding the learning as a sort of spiritual quest. Jane Vella affirms spiritual aspects of learning and claims ‘every educational event is a movement towards a\textsuperscript{146} metanoia, the passage of spirit from alienation into a deeper awareness of oneself. A spirited epistemology is based on the belief that all education is directed toward such a transformation.’

Just as emotions are mediated between the unconscious and the conscious in Boyd’s psychoanalytic approach to education, Dirkx relies on emotions to help bridge the gap between the soul and cognition. He contends the ‘soul beckons to a relationship between the individual and his or her broader world. Our emotions and feelings are a kind of language for helping us learn about their relationships.’\textsuperscript{147} Furthermore, Dirkx asserts ‘the primary focus of soul work is the establishment and elaboration of a conscious relationship with one’s unconscious.’\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{144} Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, \textit{Learning in Adulthood}, 199.
\textsuperscript{146} Jane Vella, ‘A Spirited Epistemology: Honoring the Adult Learner as Subject,’ \textit{New Directions for Continuing Education} 85 (2000), 10.
\textsuperscript{147} Dirkx, ‘Nurturing Soul in Adult Learning,’ 82.
\textsuperscript{148} Dirkx, ‘Nurturing Soul Work,’ 120.
learning is transformative in that ‘it connects us to the immediacy of our present experience, and though this process, leads us into an experience that transcends more limited, ego-based views of the world.’

Elizabeth Tisdell also explores spiritual aspects of transformative learning for adults. She recognises that adult education, specifically higher education, ‘has focused on knowing through rationality,’ and contends ‘learning and constructing knowledge is also embedded in people’s growth, development, and new experiences.’ In considering emancipatory education, Tisdell maintains that to challenge power relations based on race, gender, or class, it is simply not possible to teach only by the tools of rationality and critical thinking. These are emotional subjects for people. To teach for personal and social change also requires a way of engaging people’s hearts and spirits.

Whereas Mezirow acknowledges an emotional component to educating adults, Tisdell explores this aspect of the endeavour in terms of spirituality. Tisdell contends there are many definitions of spirituality and offers seven assumptions regarding the nature of spirituality in relationship to education:

1. Spirituality and religion are not the same, but for many people they are interrelated
2. Spirituality is about an awareness and honouring the wholeness and the interconnectedness of all things through the mystery...referred to as the Life-force, God, higher power, higher self, cosmic energy, Buddha nature, or Great Spirit
3. Spirituality is fundamentally about meaning making
4. Spirituality is always present (though often unacknowledged) in the learning environment
5. Spiritual development constitutes moving toward greater authenticity or to a more authentic self
6. Spirituality is about how people construct knowledge through largely unconscious and symbolic process, often made more concrete in art forms such as music, art, image, symbol, and ritual which is manifest culturally
7. Spiritual experiences most often happen by surprise.

---

149 Dirks, ‘Nurturing Soul in Adult Learning,’ 83.
150 Elizabeth Tisdell, Exploring Spirituality and Culture in Adult and Higher Education (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), ix.
151 Tisdell, Exploring Spirituality and Culture, 18.
152 Tisdell, Exploring Spirituality and Culture, 28-29.
Tisdell asserts the learning endeavour ought to give more attention to how persons
make sense of their existence by paying attention to spiritual questions that probe the
meaning of life. She refers to the human spirit and consciousness as “forms” that
transform persons in their ways of being and operating within the world. She
contends that love and death are “the most significant” transformative learning
experiences in life, yet receive limited and tangential attention in educational
research. She advocates to include neuroscience and consciousness studies that stand
on the cutting edge of understanding how the psyche works.

The Insight of a Planetary Worldview

From connections made within the inner worlds of the psyche and soul, to
those made within the human spirit on a cosmological scale, Edmund O’Sullivan
posits “that any in-depth treatment of “transformative education” must address the
topic of spirituality and that educators must take on the concerns of the development
of the spirit at a most fundamental level.” Developing the Transformative Learning
Center at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto,
O’Sullivan and his colleagues distance themselves from Mezirow, asserting that “our
approach to transformative learning is distinctly ours—related to, but also
distinguishable from, the approaches of other educators, activists, and theorists.”
O’Sullivan’s conception of TLT is not so much contra-Mezirow as much as it
elaborates and expands notions of transformative learning theory beyond individuals
and human society to encompass the entire planetary ecosystem.

O’Sullivan is concerned with how learners position their selves in the totality
of life’s context on the planet and within the cosmos of life. O’Sullivan contends the
twenty-first century must be one of “deep transformation if there is to be a next
century in a human earth context.” He understands the goal of transformative
learning theory to reorganise the entire system and create “a new story from one that

---

156 Amish Morell and Mary Ann O’Connor, ‘Introduction’ in Expanding the Boundaries, xv.
157 Edmund V. O’Sullivan, ‘Deep Transformation: Forging a Planetary Worldview’ in Taylor,
Cranton and Associates, 165.
is dysfunctional and rooted in technical-industrial values’ to one that recognises ‘the interconnectedness among the universe, planet, natural environment, human community and personal world.’\textsuperscript{158} However, humanity cannot simply create a new story by walking away from what we inherited and help propagate. According to O’Sullivan, humanity must learn to survive, critique and create, which is to undergo transformation.

O’Sullivan maintains that surviving is the first step of transformative learning. Survival is not simply perseverance in living, but understanding ‘how the matrix of community life can either enhance or detract from the growth of the spirit.’\textsuperscript{159} For O’Sullivan, this means coming to not just intellectual terms, but also emotional terms with ‘our present dysfunctional industrial system.’\textsuperscript{160} Survival means to confront the ‘denial, despair, and grief’ that is not typically associated with the learning process.\textsuperscript{161} O’Sullivan is adamant that accounting for the ecological crisis of the planet constitutes ‘the survival task of transformative learning.’\textsuperscript{162} In many ways, realising the magnitude of the present ecological crisis amounts to a disorienting event on a cosmological scale.

The second movement of transformative learning with a planetary worldview calls for a ‘resistance education that moves in the direction of cultural criticism.’\textsuperscript{163} For O’Sullivan, this step involves analysing power structures that have alienated humanity from one another and as stewards of the planet. O’Sullivan critiques modernist Western European industrial thinking that ‘has led to a profound disenchantedness with the natural world.’\textsuperscript{164} He also contends that ‘we no longer have a coherent conception of ourselves, our universe, and our relation to one another and our world.’\textsuperscript{165} O’Sullivan posits that humans are so saturated with information, consumerism and other anathema of contemporary life that we are ‘an unconscious civilisation,’ impervious to our own condition.\textsuperscript{166} Finally, like other emancipatory

\textsuperscript{159} O’Sullivan, \textit{Educational Vision for the 21st Century}, 263.
\textsuperscript{161} O’Sullivan, ‘Deep Transformation,’ 166.
\textsuperscript{162} O’Sullivan, ‘Deep Transformation,’ 166.
\textsuperscript{163} O’Sullivan, ‘Deep Transformation,’ 167.
\textsuperscript{164} O’Sullivan, ‘Deep Transformation,’ 167.
\textsuperscript{165} O’Sullivan, ‘Deep Transformation,’ 168.
\textsuperscript{166} O’Sullivan, ‘Deep Transformation,’ 167.
educators, O’Sullivan advocates that transformative education must confront patriarchy as well as ‘the deep structure of hierarchal power and violence’ by examining ‘such areas as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.’167 For O’Sullivan, resistance education and critical pedagogy is imperative to understanding and critiquing the human condition.

Finally, transformative learning on a cosmological scale means to develop ‘themes of education for planetary consciousness, education for integral development, education for quality of life, and education and the sacred.’168 For O'Sullivan, transformative learning theory with a planetary worldview fosters the spiritual, transcendent qualities that revere life in all its diversity and unique habitats. O’Sullivan talks about planetary reform, but he understands it to be a personal endeavour:

a visionary context for transformative learning, we must articulate a planetary context for learning, expressed in such a way that it can effectively challenge the hegemonic culture of the market vision and can orient people in practice, in their daily lives, to create and sustain an environmentally viable world, starting now.169

Thus, O'Sullivan and his contemporaries understand transformative learning to be as emotional and spiritual as it is rational. Furthermore, transformative learning is an emancipatory endeavour that centres on individuals who will collectively have a global impact.

Identifying Growing Edges for a Holistic Theory

During the last decade, as TLT progressed through its second wave in search of a more unified theory, Mezirow helped navigate the waters he originally charted. In 2006, at the Sixth International Transformative Learning Conference, Mezirow and Dirkx, facilitated by Cranton, engaged in dialogue about the field of transformative learning theory. Both scholars understood their work to be ‘complementary rather than contradictory,’ and representative of the dichotomies that divided transformative learning theorists in the 1990s.170 Today, Mezirow does not

170 Dirkx and Mezirow, ‘Musing and Reflections,’ 137.
discount the role of extra-rational ways of knowing, but is adamant that in order for learning to be transformative, it must entail rational discernment and not rely on assumed beliefs and values that are the result of a learner’s particular location and context.

Transformative learning theory continues to enjoy interest within the field of adult education as an area of research and theoretical analysis. However, as Cranton and Taylor point out, ‘much of the research is redundant, with a strong deterministic emphasis of capturing transformative experiences and replicating transformative pedagogy in various settings.’ Though the setting may vary from the online classroom or workplace training for organisational change or leadership development, ‘most research today continues to be based on Mezirow's work rather than newer perspectives.’ Despite the fact that many of these new perspectives emerged as bona fide voices for critiquing Mezirow, the predominant amount of research rehashes Mezirow's conception of transformative learning that takes place in formal and non-formal settings.

In the last decade, TLT has managed to amend the dichotomies that once divided the various perspectives and become more unified. However, research into transformative learning that takes place in more informal contexts and through alternative teaching methods such as mentoring, storytelling, arts based learning, grief therapy and other avenues are ripe for researchers to explore. Knowing more about how adults come to new ways of doing and being in the world in a wide variety of settings and through various ways of teaching offers further insight to TLT.

**Conclusion**

This chapter explains basic foundations and core concepts of transformative learning in order to begin an interdisciplinary conversation with Wesleyan discipleship. As a learning theory, transformative learning is concerned less about the acquisition of new knowledge and more about the way in which adult learners restructure previous learning to gain new insight into a situation or reorganise the way in which they understand the world. Transformative learning provides insight into

---

171 Cranton and Taylor, ‘Seeking a Unified Theory,’ 12.
172 Cranton and Taylor, ‘Seeking a Unified Theory,’ 16.
the nature of transformation and how adults can process their experiences and perceptions in ways that foster transformation. TLT furnishes Christian disciples with educational principles about what happens in the transformative process. TLT offers an integrative way for Christian disciples to consider who they are, what they do and their particular circumstances in light of the example of Jesus. In order to understand how TLT can inform Wesleyan discipleship that occurs in congregational and everyday life settings, theological reflection needs to occur. A cross-disciplinary dialogue between Wesleyan discipleship and TLT will be the second half of this normative movement to determine what should happen in the process of transformation.
Chapter Six
The Practice of Wesleyan Discipleship and TLT in Dialogue

Introduction

For Osmer, the normative movement necessarily involves theological reflection on good practice. As a result of examining TLT, it is appropriate to engage in cross-disciplinary dialogue discerning how TLT might benefit Wesleyan discipleship. Cross-disciplinary dialogue does not seek to simply fuse the two fields together, but to determine which aspects of social science can be appropriated for the practical theological conversation at hand. Therefore, it is necessary to determine the pertinent aspects of TLT relevant for further engagement with Wesleyan discipleship through theological reflection. The Discipleship Matrix, the interpretive framework constructed for the purpose of understanding the component elements and dynamics involved in Wesleyan discipleship, can guide interdisciplinary dialogue with TLT, prompting theological reflection to discern which aspects of TLT can be appropriated. Given that TLT practitioners acknowledge ‘growing interdisciplinary interest in transformative learning’ that is further reflected by Christian educators and practical theologians who engage TLT, this dialogue will also identify ways Wesleyan discipleship contributes to TLT for further research and more robust development.¹

Theological Reflection on TLT Regarding the telos

The telos may represent the ‘endpoint’ or goal of the interpretive framework, but it also serves as a starting point for a dialogue between Wesleyan discipleship and TLT in order to appropriate TLT within the Discipleship Matrix. Wesleyan discipleship and TLT share a commitment to transformation. The nature, motivating factors and ultimate goal of transformation may differ within each field, but both regard transformation to be a sought after or assumed goal. Both Wesleyan discipleship and TLT maintain transformation is not simply an inward change of belief and attitude; it corresponds with an outward change that has implications for society.

Wesleyan discipleship and TLT can be brought into dialogue with one another in that both assert the transformation of culture is related to the transformation of the individual. From the perspective of the adult educator, Taylor and Snyder write,

transformative learning is found at the intersection between the personal and the social, where a transformation is a reciprocal process (Scott, 2003)—a product both of others (social recognition, relationships) and of personal change—which potentially leads to a greater sense of individual responsibility for and about others (social accountability).\(^2\)

For emancipatory educators, transformation is only complete if the society is changed as a result of the individual transformation.

For Wesley, the continual and ever-present growth in sanctification is not simply for the benefit of the individual disciple or his or her own local community of believers. Blevins cautions, ‘transformation, within our sacramental/communal setting, is never just for personal benefit; it is to redeem the broader creation.’\(^3\)

Transformation has social implications that are made known when spiritual disciplines are practiced corporately. God’s grace cannot be confined and is made available to the world, helping to inaugurate the Kingdom of God in the public realm.

Transformative learning shares Wesleyan discipleship’s commitment to social change. However, Tisdell asserts the nature of change ‘focuses specifically on social transformation rather than individual transformation.’\(^4\) Emancipatory educators who embrace TLT advocate that learning is only transformative if it results in an accompanied outward change that benefits society. Very often, emancipatory educators embrace critical theory that views reality as perpetuating hegemonic structures that are inherently unjust. As a result, many transformative educators are highly committed to redistributing dominant power structures that oppress larger portions of the population in exchange for emancipatory ones. Practitioners within Wesleyan theology may have similar commitments, but those commitments need to

---


\(^3\) Blevins, ‘Communities of Holiness,’ 103.

be derived on theological grounds, not secular commitments to humanism or critical social theory.

For disciples who inherit Wesley’s vision, transformation of society is concurrent with the transformation of the individual. Neither one is privileged over the other. Theodore Runyon claims Wesley understood the consequences of spiritual renewal of the individual had societal implications for all of humanity that extended to ‘the renewal of the creation and all the creatures.’ Transformation of one does not happen without the transformation of the other. Societal change occurs because individuals have experienced change:

To be a Christian is not to seek self-fulfilment. It is to receive a direct commission to go into the world, and to join the Risen Christ in the task of proclaiming God’s salvation and the power of the Holy Spirit. In a very profound sense, it is to realise the importance of one’s own selfhood as long as suffering and oppression remain in a world which rejects the salvation offered in Christ.

The difference is subtle but distinct. For the educator, transformation occurs because society has been changed. For the theologian, transformation occurs with the individual’s participation in God’s gracious activity in creation. Education demands that society be affected in order for transformation to occur. Much of Christian theology asserts transformation begins with the individual disciple, who in faithful response to the divine grace provided, offers himself to the world. Both Wesleyan discipleship and TLT are conversant in this regard, but any cross-disciplinary dialogue needs to acknowledge this distinctive point.

Furthermore, the telos of Wesleyan discipleship is to be sanctified by God and to become Christlike through the power of the Holy Spirit. For Wesley, the whole point and purpose for the Christian life was:

- to recover the image wherein we were formed; to be like the Most High. This, this alone, is the one end of our abode here; for this alone we are placed on the earth; for this alone did the Son of God pour out his blood; for this alone doth his Holy Spirit watch over us.

---

7 Wesley, ‘The One Thing Needful,’ *Works*, 4:358.
Blevins comments, ‘the goal of Wesley’s educational efforts, holiness of heart and life, may actually hold a clue for a Wesleyan understanding of transformative Christian education. Holiness of heart and life may be part of the process of education as well as the goal of education.’

Christian disciples participate in intentional ways of living that teach in explicit or implicit ways what it means to cooperate in a divine human relationship. Discipleship is a Christian way of living that is grounded in theological reflection so that persons may grow in sanctification. Persons seek the teachings of Christ and participate in Christlike actions so they may truly become more like Christ. Sanctification, or growing in ever deepening love of God and sharing God’s love with our neighbour, is the goal of the Christian life.

Ultimately, TLT is about realising human potential to solve a problematic experience that confronts the learner. Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner assert, ‘the goal of transformative learning is lifelong personal development.’ Learning is its own intrinsic reward. Mezirow writes, ‘there are no fixed truths or totally definitive knowledge...the human condition may best be understood as a continuous effort to negotiate contested meanings.’ Transformative learning seeks to develop within learners the ability to understand presenting issues and confront the systematic inequalities that inhibit persons and communities from actualising their human potential. Emancipatory educators align themselves with the primary premise that something is amiss with the current state of affairs that education can help solve.

Regardless of foundational claims (neo-Marxism, cosmological consciousness or psychological), at the heart of TLT is a constructivist, humanistic understanding of the world, that human knowledge can be employed to continually evaluate and negotiate the construction of the world in a more just society.

Transformative learning and Wesleyan discipleship inherently disagree as to what motivates and fosters transformation. Because transformative learning is grounded in constructivist and humanist thought, transformation is a result of human achievement and dedication. Brookfield asserts that as the handmaiden of TLT, ‘critical theory has a transformative, metamorphosing impulse.’ One person can

---

8 Blevins, ‘Renovating Christian Education,’ 23.
10 Mezirow, ‘Learning to Think Like an Adult,’ 3.
change the world—provided she recognises injustice and works diligently to dismantle it. However, Christian discipleship always understands that the transformative element is the result of divinely inspired grace.\(^\text{12}\) Wesley taught that it is not the activity of the discipline, but the presence of God that makes all the difference: ‘in using all means, seek God alone. In and through every outward thing look singly to the power of his Spirit and the merits of his Son. Beware you do not stick to the work itself; if you do, it is all lost labour.’\(^\text{13}\) Participating in spiritual disciplines and Christian ministries alone will not foster Christlikeness. Divine grace through the power of the Holy Spirit is made available by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Faithful discipleship demands the disciple’s cooperation with grace afforded by the Holy Spirit in order for transformation to happen. Any cross-disciplinary dialogue between Wesleyan discipleship and TLT must acknowledge that one’s motivation for change is at odds with the other.

Despite inherent differences, Wesleyan discipleship and TLT can converse in cross-disciplinary dialogue. Both are lifelong endeavours that seek a brighter, more just and equitable future in which a compassionate humanity works harmoniously with all creation. However, any cross-disciplinary dialogue between the two fields must acknowledge an underlying difference. Transformative learning’s reliance on constructivist thought ‘assumes there is no single, objective reality. Reality for an individual is his or her interpretation of it; thus there are multiple possible constructions or interpretations of reality.’\(^\text{14}\) Mezirow writes, ‘in the absence of fixed truths and confronted with often rapid change in circumstances, we cannot fully trust what we know or believe.’\(^\text{15}\) TLT eschews the idea that there is a particular mandate for humanity to obey. TLT reflects a secular atheism present in the academy which contends life is a series of negotiations in which humanity examines, questions and inaugurates its current understanding of the world. Conversely, Wesleyan disciples adhere to Christian doctrine and theology which understands humanity to be reliant on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and that all of creation is ultimately subject to the will of the triune God of the universe in order to be transformed as

\(^\text{12}\) LeClerc, ‘Being Whole: Holiness and Sanctification,’ 53.
\(^\text{15}\) Mezirow, ‘Learning to Think Like an Adult,’ 4.
God desires. This stance represents a fundamental issue for Wesleyan discipleship and its cross-disciplinary dialogue with TLT. Interdisciplinary dialogue between the two fields may be pursued, seeking to understand which aspects of TLT can be appropriated to help faithful disciples endeavour for transformation, but always in cooperation with and never apart from God’s initiated and continuing grace.

**Theological Reflection on TLT Regarding Virtue**

Within the *Discipleship Matrix*, virtue refers to the character or attitude of the disciple. Gregory Clapper asserts the proper attitude of Christians constitutes an ‘orthokardia [which] is nothing more than an embodiment of the fruit of the Spirit of Galatians 5:22ff, or the living-out of Romans 14:17 where the Kingdom of God is described as righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The orthokardia is nothing else than what is contained in the Sermon on the Mount.’ In the Wesleyan tradition, possession of Christian virtue is not possible without God’s action through testimony of the Spirit:

> and here properly comes in, to confirm this scriptural doctrine, the experience of the children of God—the experience not of two or three, not of a few, but of a great multitude which no man can number. It has been confirmed, both in this and in all ages, by ‘a cloud of’ living and dying ‘witnesses’. It is confirmed by your experience and mine. The Spirit itself bore witness to my spirit that I was a child of God, gave me an evidence hereof, and I immediately cried, ‘Abba, Father!’ And this I did (and so did you) before I reflected on, or was conscious of, any fruit of the Spirit. It was from this testimony received that love, joy, peace, and the whole fruit of the Spirit flowed.  

What is valued and esteemed is that the disciples have personal attributes or qualities that are godly, endowed by the Holy Spirit and emulate the characteristics of Christ. Within TLT, there is no such comparable list of definitive virtues, but what is esteemed are learners who undergo transformation with the result that their understanding of the world is ‘more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change.’ Learners with these qualities are able to reconstruct or reorganise their experience of the world to make them more dependable and

---

16 Clapper, *John Wesley on Religious Affections*, 156.
accommodating to further experiences. Though what is valued within each field is
different, both Christian discipleship and TLT regard attitudes and inner qualities that
characterise persons as capable of undergoing transformation.

TLT, like much of adult education, recognises knowledge is not simply
confined to the traditional domains of learning (cognitive, affective and behavioural),
but it also includes ‘other ways of knowing, extra-rational learning, whole person
learning, and multidimensional learning.’\(^\text{19}\) The predominance many theorists place
on cognition and rationality is still evident by categorising these alternative ways of
knowing as ‘extra-rational.’ Mezirow’s early work, often criticised for its emphasis
on cognitive learning, was considered a highly rational discipline. After initial
development, Mezirow acknowledged that transformative learning is not a purely
rational exercise that happens in isolation from extra-rational thought or emotional
response. As his colleague Dirkx points out, transformative learning involves
subliminal thought,

Unconscious aspects of our lives are most influential in our decision making
and actions. To the extent that we remain aware or unconscious of the factors
or issues that influence our decisions and behaviours, we remain susceptible
to being buffeted by the emotional forces that may be activated through our
interactions with others or our environment.\(^\text{20}\)

Today, domains are understood as integrative of one another. Taylor states, ‘emotions
are inherently cognitive...They often act as a trigger for the reflective process,
prompting the learner to question deeply held assumptions.’\(^\text{21}\) The inner life of the
learner is multidimensional and ‘involves multiple domains on a significant level—
emotional, rational, physical and perhaps spiritual as well.’\(^\text{22}\) The ability and
opportunity to understand and evaluate a learner’s unconscious, often non-volitional,
responses to events and circumstance is crucial to the possibility for transformative
learning. Transformative learning seeks to help learners become aware of and
understand the unconscious responses so they might be more reflective, honest and
tolerant.

\(^\text{19}\) Cranton and Taylor, ‘Seeking a Unified Theory,’ 14.
\(^\text{20}\) Dirks and Smith, ‘Facilitating Transformative Learning,’ 59.
\(^\text{21}\) Taylor, ‘Fostering Transformative Learning,’ 10-11.
Similarly, the Christian virtues that are necessary for Christian disciples to develop Christlike identity are not exclusively rational or extra-rational. Runyan states that ‘the Gospel addresses the whole person, the feeling and affective side as well as the rational and reflective, never the one without the other, but always combined in the unifying event of knowing and responding’ to God’s grace. Faith seeks understanding and growing in Christlikeness involves Bible study or at least rudimentary knowledge of God’s goodness and love. But knowledge of God is not merely a function of cognition to learn doctrine and recite catechism. As much as developing the intellect to know and understand the attributes of God is virtuous, to know and emulate those attributes in a life of faithful discipleship is equally important. In his evaluation of the groundbreaking DISCIPLE Bible study course, Stephen Rankin comments that ‘cognitive grasp stands secondary and in service to discipleship. Each week [the curriculum] contains some point that draws attention to attitude.’ Knowing God as a disciple is more than knowing about God as a scholar. Knowledge of God includes the ‘spiritual senses,’ writes Runyon, and ‘can sense the presence and activity of God.’ In Wesley’s words, ‘the testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the souls of believers, whereby the Spirit of God directly testifies to their spirit that they are children of God.’ A disciple’s ability to develop his intellect and love God with his mind can never happen at the exclusion of either his heart or soul.

A significant move in the field of education during the late twentieth and early twenty-first century is the inclusion of spirituality in the learning process. Spirituality within adult education does not preclude or demand a particular faith tradition or religious doctrine. Catherine Zeph describes spirituality as the ‘awareness of something greater than ourselves, a sense that we are connected to and in relationship with all human beings in community and with all of creation.’ Spirituality in the field of adult education is to have knowledge of and experience with transcendent elements of life. Awareness of and engagement with the

27 Zeph, ‘Spiritual Dimensions Lay Ministry Program,’ 80.
transcendent can prompt a learner to reorganise her understanding of the world in ways she did not previously consider.

However, the inclusion of spirituality as an epistemological category does not make TLT completely compatible with Christian discipleship. Adult education seeks a “‘secular’ or ‘public’ spirituality,” which shies away from any form of religion as providing authoritative meaning in life or the source of ultimate good. Gillen and English explain, ‘the spiritual dimension of adult education is often broader and more central to human experience than religion.’ Often times, spirituality in secular education is amorphous and refuses to make truth claims. As an ‘extra-rational’ epistemology, spiritual ways of knowing are not readily accepted or esteemed within the field of education. One difficulty is that spirituality lacks a definitive definition, making it a nebulous concept that defies concrete qualification. Ethical and moral concerns for both educators and learners arise when spiritual aspects are included in the curriculum. Therefore, even when secular educators seek to foster or integrate spirituality into the learning experience, they typically make accommodations in which no one system of religious thought receives prominence.

Christians cannot adopt a spiritual system simply because it is accepted by secular researchers. Christian theology has specific commitments which can be at odds with secular values, especially ones that emanate in contemporary educational theory. Wesleyan discipleship must be grounded in the triune God of the universe who is made known as the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all creation. Wesleyan discipleship is explicitly spiritual and all disciples are dependent on divine grace for their knowledge of God and transformation into Christlikeness by the power of the Holy Spirit. Any cross-disciplinary dialogue between Wesleyan discipleship and TLT with respect to spirituality must acknowledge that each field has vastly different understandings of spirituality.

Christian discipleship and TLT can and do engage in cross-disciplinary dialogue regarding the ways in which disciples learn the attributes and virtues of Christ. While Wesleyan discipleship refers to character or virtue that is shaped and

29 Marie A. Gillen and Leona M. English, ‘Controversy, Questions, and Suggestions for Further Reading,’ *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2000, 85.
developed by engagement in a wide variety of disciplines, TLT refers to points of view that are developed by the learning process. Both value the inner dimensions of learners and the internal processes that foster transformation of persons. Both have a healthy and generous understanding that the construction of knowledges involves both rational and a wide variety of ‘extra-rational’ ways of knowing and yet, adult educators acknowledge that transformation does not occur simply because of new knowledge or a change of belief. Examining the practices of transformative educators, Snyder and Taylor remark, ‘changes of habit do not happen automatically. They require ongoing attention, thought and practice.’ Practical theologians also affirm there is a reciprocal relationship between the nurture and cultivation of virtue and sustained attention to practicing spiritual disciplines. Blevins states, ‘by faithful (i.e. intentional) participation, persons are shaped into Christian character and transformed by their new doxological identity.’ Regardless of whether humanist motivations or divine grace is credited in the transformation of the inner qualities of a person, both transformative learning and Wesleyan discipleship maintain that transformation is the result of sustained purposeful practice.

Theological Reflection on TLT Regarding the Disciplines

Within the interpretive framework devised for this thesis, ‘disciplines’ refer to those activities persons regularly engage in to both facilitate transformation and as a result of their transformation. In Wesleyan terms, disciplines are called ‘means of grace,’ and are activities associated with the Christian life that cultivate a love for God such as prayer, worship and Bible study, and those that help a disciple show God’s love for neighbour such as visitation, almsgiving and ministering to the poor. No matter what the activity, the disciplines must be imbued with the Holy Spirit to cover a measure of divine grace. Wesley preached, ‘We allow…that all outward means whatever, if separate from the Spirit of God, cannot profit at all, cannot conduce in any degree either to the knowledge or love of God.’ Further on, in the

31 Blevins, ‘Communities of Holiness,’ 100.
same sermon, he cautioned against believing the actions of the discipline to efficacious in their performance,

> Whosoever therefore imagines there is any intrinsic power in any means whatsoever does greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God. We know that there is no inherent power in the words that are spoken in prayer, in the letter of Scripture read, the sound thereof heard, or the bread and wine received in the Lord’s Supper; but that it is of God alone who is the giver of every good gift, the author of all grace; that the whole power is of him, whereby through any of these there is any blessing conveyed to our soul.\(^{33}\)

As Blevins points out, not all disciplines and activities of Christians ‘automatically qualify as a means of grace. God’s transformative grace must be evident with the practice, particularly manifested in holiness of heart and life.’\(^{34}\) The disciplines are activities through which God’s grace is made available to both the novice and mature disciple; they foster continued maturation in faith that the disciple may demonstrate Christlike character.

Wesleyan discipleship relies on classical disciplines to confer the Holy Spirit in order to constitute a learning plan or curriculum for disciples to foster transformation within their self as well as within their local and global context. Blevins writes,

> Christian discipleship includes efforts for peace and justice, visits or relocations to impoverished areas for deeper understanding of the human condition, service learning, and alternative Bible studies that explore real life situations in dynamic interplay with the Bible.\(^{35}\)

The disciplines that constitute the ‘learning plan’ to foster Christlikeness within disciples are consistent with goals for a transformed society. Wesleyan discipleship offers the hope that as an act of faithful discipleship, disciples might help to dismantle injustice even as they minister to persons subjected to it and learn Christlikeness in the process.

Transformative learning educators also employ particular skills and processes to help learners come to a new understanding about themselves and the world in which they live. Whereas Christian discipleship relies on classic disciplines that have

---

35 Blevins, ‘Renovating Christian Education,’ 23.
helped disciples grow in faith for two thousand years, because transformative learning relies on constructivist thought and assumes reality is multi-dimensional, a particular learning plan or formal curriculum for transformation cannot be offered as it can be suggested for Christian discipleship. If TLT has a specified set of ‘best practices’ that facilitate change in a learner and their community, it would include 1) a discrepant event, 2) critical reflection and 3) rational dialogue. Each learner or learning community committed to transforming a particular injustice must seek out possibilities and discover aspects within their particular context that can be utilised to dismantle what is wrong even as they seek to construct a new way of living.

A learner’s journey towards transformation is possible because of a disorienting dilemma that disrupts the learner’s previous experience of the world. The discrepant event is often an external encounter in which the learner confronts a reality that is foreign or with which he is unfamiliar and promotes an internal crisis with which the learner decides to engage. In his studies of community change, Daloz describes this encounter as ‘a constructive engagement with otherness.’ Yet, simple exposure does not prompt a transformative learning event. It is necessary for a learner to develop ‘a strong attachment with someone previously viewed as “other” than themselves.’ The learner must be invested in the situation in order to seek change. Daloz maintains, ‘there had to be some sense of emphatic connection with people different from themselves.’ Therefore, discrepant events typically prompt interrelated processes, critical reflection and rational dialogue, that may result in transformative learning.

Taylor describes critical reflection as ‘questioning the integrity of deeply held assumptions and beliefs based on prior experience. It is often prompted in response to an awareness of conflicting thoughts, feelings, and actions.’ Through critical reflection, learners are able to distinguish what they feel in response to a disorienting dilemma, in order to evaluate prior experiences in light of the discrepant event to have a more inclusive understanding of the world. Critical reflection is not a purely

---

37 Daloz, ‘Transformative Learning for the Common Good,’ 110.
38 Daloz, ‘Transformative Learning for the Common Good,’ 110.
rational process. Taylor states emotions and other extra-rational aspects are required for a learner to develop ‘an awareness of feelings and emotions in the reflective process—is inherent in critical reflection.’\textsuperscript{40} Critical reflection is the ability and opportunity to intellectually evaluate emotional and unconscious responses to events and circumstances. The need to be rationally discerning does not make critical reflection devoid of emotion. Indeed, critical reflection requires deep thinking about emotions and other dimensions of personhood, drawing on extra-rational thought and multi-dimensional learning.

In order for a person to authentically discern and engage a discrepant event, dialogue is crucial. Rational dialogue is the ability of a learner to articulate discerning thoughts as part of the transformative learning process. Taylor contends rational dialogue, like critical reflection, is not confined to the rational domain. Instead, ‘dialogue is much more than having an analytic conversation; it involves an acute awareness of learners’ attitudes, feelings, personalities, and preferences.’\textsuperscript{41} Rational dialogue occurs when a learner assesses her experiences both previous to and as a result of the disorienting dilemma, seeking to understand how they relate to one another. Taylor continues, ‘dialogue becomes the medium for critical reflection to be put into action, where experience is reflected on, assumptions and beliefs are questioned, and habits of mind are ultimately transformed.’\textsuperscript{42} In order to dialogue authentically and intelligently, a learner has to engage the internal processes of reflection or discernment. Not all dialogue is external. Dirkx and Smith contend journaling can replicate rational dialogue when actual conversation is not possible. The journaling process ‘is more of an activity of the heart and is informed by the imaginal method used in depth psychology.’\textsuperscript{43} It requires the articulation of thoughts into words and external expression for understanding both the learner and others participating in the transformative context.

The process of critical reflection and rational dialogue in response to a disorienting event in TLT emphasises the necessity for Christian disciples to discern God’s steadfast movement in a constantly fluctuating world. Disciples who are new

\textsuperscript{40} Taylor, ‘Fostering Transformative Learning,’ 10.
\textsuperscript{41} Taylor, ‘Fostering Transformative Learning,’ 9.
\textsuperscript{42} Taylor, ‘Fostering Transformative Learning,’ 9.
\textsuperscript{43} Dirkx and Smith, ‘Engaging Emotions in an Online Context,’ 61.
to Christian faith as well as mature believers will perennially face circumstances that will call into question what they know about the world as well as what they know about God’s kingdom. Discernment provides an opportunity for disciples to engage their context and react with their faith rather than acting on blind faith alone. There are circumstances when blind faith is applicable, but the processes of critical reflection and rational dialogue provide opportunities for disciples to seek the best appropriate response that demonstrates love for God and love of neighbour in a rapidly changing world.

Unfortunately, critical thinking that integrates the affective domain in the learning endeavour can be a stumbling block for any learner, even Christian disciples. In his study of the DISCIPLE Bible series, Rankin observes that many disciples will resist responding to integrative questions in the prescribed curriculum. Rankin comments, ‘breakdown often occurs, precisely because the questions and exercises aim at the heart.’ It is not easy to sort through feelings and offer a cogent response, especially when a person’s experience of God involves extra-rational capacities that are not often articulated, much less examined. Furthermore, as Blevins notes, critical thinking is not simply the oneness of the learner but for those facilitating the learning experience, ‘[it] can be a difficult task for student and teacher alike. It takes courage to release one’s control of knowledge and trust the Holy Spirit to guide.’ For the Christian disciple, the discernment process is never an isolated intellectual exercise. It always involves the presence of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, critical thinking for the Christian involves more than critiquing society, it also seeks possibility and discovery of how God is moving in the world. Blevins explains,

Theologically, creative discernment acknowledges the power of the Holy Spirit to empower new structures for the sake of conveying God’s free grace, so that the presence of Jesus Christ might be revealed in the most remarkable places and during the most mundane practices.

The constant change in the world that a Christian must navigate is accompanied by the divine presence of an unfailing God who is infinitely creative to be revealed in

---

44 Rankin, ‘DISCIPLE Bible Study,’ 230.
46 Blevins, ‘Renovating Christian Education,’ 22.
life’s circumstances. A Christian disciple seeking to grow in grace and knowledge of Christ will always be looking to know where God is moving, not just in the pivotal moments that mark transitions in life, but in those everyday moments that constitute ordinary time. Because the world changes at an ever-increasing pace, ‘discernment becomes an ongoing task for discipleship within the Christian community.’

Discernment is not a singular process (a task left up to the individual Christian disciple). Discernment has a corporate dimension as well—for local bodies, denominations and the Church universal.

For Wesleyan disciples, rational dialogue is a means of communication and a hallmark of respectful discourse and relationship within a small group. Just as TLT asserts rational dialogue engages internal dimensions of the learner, Christian educators affirm its role in a discerning process. Johnson-Miller writes, ‘conversation makes possible self-awareness, meaning, shared meaning, self-opening, and altered perspective.’ Intentional conversation not only helps disciples articulate their own critical reflection, it also begins to foster community as discernment takes on a public dimension. For Christian educators who value dialogue in an educational context, Johnson-Miller asserts, ‘conversational teaching invokes the presence of Christ, engages the deepest dimensions of life and invites discovery of sacred mystery.’ It is through conversation with one another and with the divine that disciples are able to examine with one another the ways in which God calls persons to live out their vocation.

Cross-disciplinary dialogue with respect to spiritual disciplines in discipleship and the processes involved in TLT does not constitute a mirroring relationship. Simply identifying disorienting events, engaging in critical reflection and rational dialogue are not additional means of grace. Rather, they are avenues by which a disciple or small group of disciples might investigate their participation in the Christian life. Participation in a spiritual discipline for the first time or even in a different context than normal might constitute a discrepant event for some learners.

47 Blevins, ‘Communities of Holiness,’ 102.
48 Johnson-Miller, ‘Conversational Teaching,’ 380.
49 Johnson-Miller, ‘Conversational Teaching,’ 389.
Despite any tendency for learners to want to avoid critical reflection and rational dialogue, both processes are important to the transformative process.

Theological Reflection on TLT Regarding the ethos

In the Discipleship Matrix, the ethos refers to the particular culture that characterises a community facilitating change. Both Wesleyan discipleship and TLT understand that persons undergoing transformation require a particular kind of community that allows participants to experience transformation and be fostered in the transformation desired. The Christian disciple seeking Christlikeness requires a nurturing Christian community that helps foster ever deepening love for God and neighbour. David Watson describes the class meeting, a fundamental unit of the early Methodist movement, as instrumental to the transformation of disciples. For him, the class meeting was not ‘a paradigm for Christian witness to the world—for that was its effect—but rather as a means for seeking obedience to God’s will—for that was its purpose.’ The Methodist societies and their smaller class and band meetings were not designed as an ultimate goal for Christian living, but a means that might facilitate Christian growth and maturity in its participants. Watson claims the environment of nurture and support was the result of its unique function within the Methodist system:

The gatherings evolved distinctive procedures: the sharing of religious experience through testimony; the sense of mutual responsibility between individuals and between the congregation and the minister; the acceptance of personal holiness as the aim of group participation; the insistence on freedom of opinion, with the resultant development of an independent outlook; and what was possibly the most distinctive aspect, the covenant.

The structure of the Methodist Connexion offered an environment for persons to experience Christlike transformation. According to Blevins, ‘Wesley’s creation of various Christian communities provided an alternative form of living in an otherwise difficult world.’

---

50 D. Watson, Early Methodist Class Meeting, 142.
51 D. Watson, Early Methodist Class Meeting, 34.
52 Blevins, ‘Renovating Christian Education,’ 17.
As an academic discipline, TLT also advocates a particular learning environment in order to foster transformation.\textsuperscript{53} Theorists contend an internal crisis within a learner that prompts transformation requires an environment that supports continual transformation. Transformative learning is more likely to occur when the group dynamics of the learning environment support transformation and the relationships among learners and teachers alike are marked by similar commitments for transformation. A transformative learning environment might look different than one that just dispenses information. Beverly Johnson-Miller writes:

Social constructivists place added emphasis on the interaction between learners and facilitators for the development and advancement of higher mental functions. From the pedagogical standpoint of social constructivists, creation of meaning depends on the quality of interaction between the learner, the teacher, and the task at hand.\textsuperscript{54}

At the heart of TLT is some form of critique that seeks to rectify hegemonic structures that are inequitable and unjust. Brookfield asserts that students must engage in some sort of power analysis of the situation or context in which the learning is happening. They must also try to identify assumptions they hold dear that are actually destroying their sense of well-being and serving the interests of others: that is, hegemonic assumptions.\textsuperscript{55}

Merriam and Kim describe critical research as ‘highly political, wherein power is unevenly distributed, leading to some being privileged and others being oppressed.’\textsuperscript{56} Educators often have a desired outcome for learning, but most do not advocate a particular design for their students. To do so would violate the principles of emancipatory education because it imposes the ideals of the educator on the student. The teacher’s role, therefore, is to create an environment in which students might feel safe and secure. Learners are encouraged to examine and question the perceptions that limit them in order that additional insights might cause the learner to think and behave in liberating ways. It is common for many postgraduate

\textsuperscript{53} TLT does not assume that all educational contexts are transformative or even potentially transformative. The purpose of some adult learning environments is to acquire the knowledge necessary for proficient performance of a task. Even if individuals (educators and learners) desire transformation as a goal of the adult learning process, the purpose of the educational event might be at odds with the deep learning required to change how a person views and acts within the world.

\textsuperscript{54} Johnson-Miller, ‘Conversational Teaching,’ 384.

\textsuperscript{55} Brookfield, ‘Transformative Learning as Ideology Critique,’ 126.

\textsuperscript{56} Merriam and Kim, ‘Studying Transformative Learning’ 59.
programmes to stress the ‘importance of critique,’ which can be a goal in and of itself with respect to transformative learning. If a learner can critique, they have acquired a fundamental aspect of learning from the perspective of TLT.

In Wesleyan discipleship, however, critique of the surrounding culture and teaching an alternative way of living consistent with Kingdom purposes are both embraced. According to Blevins, for those who seek to live as faithful disciples of Christ, critique of the surrounding culture does not necessarily inspire Christian living. Discernment requires ‘more than critical analysis; the approach includes a constructive thought and action.’

Wesley’s genius to guide the society, class and band meetings with the *Rules* helped create a discipling culture in which persons both inspired specific Kingdom oriented goals and eschewed the ways of the world that inhibited persons from growth in Christlikeness. Thompson characterises the *Rules* as ‘a disciplined method to the practice of faith within the life of the faith community.’ The first rule, ‘to do no harm,’ critiques of the ways of the world. As the first rule, it demonstrates there are ways of living that are the antithesis of Kingdom purposes. A disciple seeking Christlikeness needed to abstain from such behaviours and actions. For a young disciple new in faith, confronting old habits of the world is deconstructive. Regardless of maturity, disciples may discover a destructive behaviour or tendency that must be excised so they may grow in sanctification. But even as disciples put to death old habits, they are called to clothe themselves in Christ and live in new ways according to the positive examples of the second and third Rules. Blevins contends that practice of the disciplines, in accordance to the *Rules* assists disciples in knowing right from wrong as well as cultivates ‘a type a *phronesis* or daily wisdom that combines virtue with common sense practices, and the finally seeking God’s will.’ More than simply critique, the *Rules* offered a means for the Methodist communities to live out their desire to grow in Christlikeness and sanctification.

The pervasive attitude of hope in Christian discipleship can be at fundamental odds with transformative learning that finds its genesis in critical

---

57 Blevins, ‘Communities of Holiness,’ 102.
research. Because TLT is grounded in critical theory, the basic premise is to deconstruct the prevailing culture and eradicate oppressive elements that seek to dehumanise its citizens. But as a discipling *ethos* illustrates, a transformative learning environment benefits from being one of challenge and nurture. Wesleyan disciples do not simply deplore present conditions. Rather, they seek to participate with the creativity of the Holy Spirit as they inaugurate a liberated and just vision of God’s reign. Still, TLT shies away from offering a particular vision of what transformation looks like, and the dominant paradigm in education is to critique. Tisdell affirms this dual nature of challenge and nurture when she urges her students to ‘Critique, but create!’

Critique and create are two sides of the same coin; envisioning a new future for secular students and Wesleyan disciples. Cross-disciplinary dialogue between Wesleyan discipleship and TLT can certainly be sustained on the matter of critique and deconstruction, but only insofar as critique serves the purpose of shaping a future consistent with the vision of God’s liberation and justice.

Just as the *Rules* established a culture that supported a shared purpose for disciples to pursue sanctification in addition to eschewing the ways of the world, a Wesleyan *ethos* creates a distinctive culture that inspires, supports and nurtures disciples’ transformation in Christlikeness. Cross-disciplinary dialogue with respect to *ethos* can be robust and thorough, but in a direction in which Wesleyan discipleship contributes to TLT. Educational theory might advocate that trusting, collaborative and honest relationships are necessary to the transformative process, but Wesleyan discipleship groups apprehend these qualities in ways from which TLT might benefit. For all transformative educators’ stress on the importance of relationship, Taylor claims there is much not known about how relationships and related elements (trust, honesty, friendship) play a role in transformative learning. They have been discovered more as outcome of transformative learning, with little understanding of how they can be initiated safely in the classroom setting.

---

60 Tisdell, ‘Themes and Variations,’ 27.
There are no specific guidelines for transformative educators to establish and foster positive relationships in their classrooms. Additionally, because Christian transformation primarily occurs in non-formal and informal settings, Wesleyan discipleship is particularly positioned to offer insight into TLT, which would benefit from ‘growing application of research in settings outside the formal education classroom in other learning environments, including workshops and retreats.’

A first way in which Wesleyan discipleship might contribute to TLT concerns the establishment of trusting and honest relationships within a group. Research shows collaborative relationships that exist within the learning environment are crucial for the transformation process. Taylor and Snyder report that for students confronting the possibility of transformation, ‘success or lack of success could rest on the degree of social recognition and acceptance from fellow students.’ Studies indicate that the degree to which a student is able to come to a new understanding of the world and be able to articulate that understanding depends upon the positive relationships they enjoy within the learning environment. Collaborative relationships within the learning environment describe the nature of the relationships among students as well as the nature of the relationship between teacher and student.

Collaborative relationships that support transformative learning must be ones students find trustworthy. Trusting relationships within the learning group are essential to critical reflection and rational dialogue which, as examined earlier, are not straightforward intellectual exercises. Taylor states, ‘through building trusting relationships that learners develop the confidence to deal with learning on an affective level, where transformation at times can be perceived as threatening and an emotionally charged experience.’ Trust amongst the group is paramount for the difficult extra-rational work that comes with examining prior ways of knowing and being that are at odds with new learnings and understandings of the injustices and oppression inherent in the world. Trust is to have confidence that within the learning group, there will be acceptance and support for the learner’s extra-rational experiences.

---

63 Taylor and Snyder, ‘Critical Review of Research,’ 49.
In addition to the importance of experiencing trustful relationships, transformative learning research also points to the necessity of honesty within the learning environment. Baumgartner states, ‘under ideal conditions, people could assess the validity of assumptions. Some of these conditions included having sufficient self-knowledge to avoid self-deception and enjoying an exchange of ideas sans constraints and coercion.’

Transformative learning does not happen by adopting a new world view because of exposure to it in a graduate course. The processes of critical thinking and rational dialogue demand that the learner not just try on new ideas to see how they feel, but to internalise her new knowledge and to consider it from a variety of angles. A learning environment that is characterised by honesty can help a learner engage in this process with integrity.

Christian educators have long understood the value of relationships to help spark meaningful dialogue and deep sharing in small groups. Rankin observes that ‘a discerning and sensitive facilitator’ can help navigate learner resistance to deep thinking and sharing and build trust within the group so participants can grow more accustomed to and comfortable with being vulnerable with one another.

But more than rely upon a particular kind of leader, the functioning of Wesleyan small groups might offer insight for TLT to foster positive, collaborative relationships that inspire, support and nurture transformation.

The Rules established more than a body of proscribed and prescriptive activities for persons seeking Christlikeness. According to Thompson, the Rules served as ‘a check against the early Methodist movement becoming diluted by members whose reasons for participation were something other than the pursuit of holiness of heart and life.’ Members agreed on and covenanted to support one another in their common pursuit of sanctification. But more than that, Thompson argues, ‘they carry a theological importance related to the way in which Methodists could reasonably be expected to experience the sanctifying grace of God in the process of their daily discipleship.’

Steven Manskar adds that, ‘accountability is

---

66 Rankin, ‘DISCIPLE Bible Study,’ 230.
how we make sure our discipleship happens.’ Accountability is a means to maintaining integrity within the individual lives of the disciples as well as in the larger group. Accountability in this sense is not a legalistic checkmark that holds members up for scrutiny as much as it is an opportunity to build trust as the group speaks into the life of the disciple as each member is examined by peers.

Though the necessity of relationship is not explicitly stated in Wesley’s Rules, Henderson observes Wesley was aware of its necessity to the health of any group:

Wesley was convinced that learning is expedited by group interaction, whether the content of that learning is behavioural transformation, redirection of attitudes and motives, cognitive data-gathering, strategic training, or social rehabilitation. It seems that he responded to every instructional need he met by establishing a group, some kind of group. He felt that his own personal growth was largely due to participation in group experiences, and he advocated them for others. Depending on the educational goal to be accomplished, the size and format of his groups varied, but there was always the people-to-people element in his solution to human problems and development.

By sorting persons into society, class and band meetings, Wesley ensured disciples were appropriately challenged with information to reorder their lives under the lordship of Christ, supported and nurtured by other like-minded disciples in their journey and offered opportunities in which they could live out their commitments.

But covenanting to be accountable to the Rules did more than simply create trustful collaborative relationships among participants; it ultimately caused participants to rely on divine grace. Manskar states, ‘watching over one another in love helps disciples stand against the trap of believing and living as though they were self-sufficient.’ In a very particular way, accountability among Christian disciples helps shift the focus away from the individual and from human achievement.

Thompson explains that by being accountable to one another and adhering to the Rules, disciples do not simply agree to a series of directives. Instead, they foster a collective dependency on God for growth in grace, ‘prepar[ing] themselves for the power of grace when that power comes to them by the Holy Spirit.’ The Rules and

---

72 Thompson, ‘Practical Theology of General Rules,’ 11.
the groups superintended by them functioned to create a cohesive ethos that constituted living a Christian life and pursing Christlikeness. Matthaei explains the result of the various constituent parts as contributing to an ecology of faith formation:

What emerged in the Methodist movement was an organisational structure that provided instruction about God’s grace and the Way of Salvation, as well as nurture in the Christian life through acts of piety (personal holiness), and opportunity to practice holy living through acts of mercy (social holiness). Participation in the life of the Methodist community included both critical learning and practical divinity. Each member of the Methodist Society received instruction in the faith and nurture for holy living in a system whose purpose was behavioural change, spiritual growth, personal interaction, and community transformation.73

Developing a culture of a dependency upon God is necessary because disciples are always susceptible to the human proclivities of believing they have done enough and are deserving (or unworthy) of eternal life that only comes through divine grace. The Rules and Wesleyan small groups are dependent upon divine grace to keep them from becoming legalistic. A Wesleyan ethos of discipleship occurs in a community where persons are shepherded and nurtured to learn to follow the examples of living mentors who seek to live like Christ.

A discipling ethos, especially with a reliance on divine grace, is distinctive from a transformative learning culture, but there are congruences. Wesleyan discipleship demonstrates what TLT contends: establishing a culture that supports and nurtures transformation is essential to the transformation process. Taylor and Elias acknowledge,

the overarching challenge for the adult educator may be first to develop in the learning environment a sense of nurturant community, trust, and security, then to introduce disorienting dilemmas and provide opportunities for discourse and reflection that can lead to consideration of new perspectives.74

Depending upon educational context, secular educators may be able to foster cooperative healthy relationships by developing ground rules that learners and educators agree to abide by that structure the learning experience.

73 Matthaei, Making Disciples, 131.
Because Wesleyan discipleship demonstrates learning and transformation occurs within the non-formal and informal setting, it is particularly positioned to offer insight to TLT. Criticisms within TLT reflect that research needs to be well-rounded and more robust in non-formal and informal learning settings. Taylor and Snyder caution that for all the value placed on transformation of the whole learner, ‘research about fostering transformative learning is still most prevalent in formal classroom settings.’ Research into TLT is typically limited to learners in formal educational settings such as graduate school or career development settings. Additionally, ‘these studies generally focus on a particular type of learner’ enrolled in formal and non-formal educational settings. As a field, TLT and adult educational theory largely remains focused on learners who fit an easily researched paradigm of structured coursework in the academy (or its industry affiliate) that have pre-determined start and end points to the educational programme.

The focus on an idealised adult learner creates an opportunity for Wesleyan discipleship to contribute to TLT. Disciples cannot compartmentalise their learning about Christlikeness to a classroom setting or a semester-length course. Elaine Robinson points out matriculation for a Christian disciple begins with the acceptance of grace and the gift of faith, [through which] disciples begin a lifelong process of responding to the promptings of grace, as it roots out sin and enables our growth in love manifest as of love of God and the love of neighbour, or inward and outward holiness.

Discipleship is a lifelong endeavour with no defined course of study that accumulates credits to count towards graduation or certificate achievement. Watson observes that the non-formal learning setting of the Wesleyan class and band meeting which was at the heart of early Methodism functions with only one condition: ‘common people who came to a knowledge of the gospel needed their own particular pattern of spiritual nurture, a building up in the faith which had no prerequisites other than commitment to obedience in the service of Jesus Christ.’ Small groups are non-formal settings that provide a place where disciples can process the

75 Taylor and Snyder, ‘Critical Review of Research,’ 40.
76 Taylor and Snyder, ‘Critical Review of Research,’ 40.
78 D. Watson, Early Methodist Class Meeting, 90.
knowledge and insight elicited within the informal settings of everyday life. Henderson writes, ‘very much like the progressive educators of the twentieth century, Wesley believed that learning comes through experience. Methodism was an experiential system, as opposed to those which primarily emphasised either cognitive acquisition or belief in propositional truth.’ Wesley’s system of interrelated groups allowed disciples to reflect on Christian teaching and experience, which resulted in participants acquiring new knowledge about living Christlike lives.

Lifelong learning that occurs in the informal setting is of interest to transformative learning researchers. Taylor acknowledges the informal learning environment is neglected with regards to research but essential to understanding more about transformative learning. He writes, ‘the journey of transformation needs to be explored in everyday situations, looking at the process of change over a number of years.’ A Wesleyan discipling ethos is particularly poised to offer insights on how trustworthy, honest collaborative relationships can be cultivated among persons to both challenge and support transformation for the long haul of everyday life.

**Conclusion**

Transformational learning theory is appropriate to investigate as a conversation partner for Wesleyan discipleship if theological reflection and perspective is maintained. As a discipline of adult education, TLT has a very different understanding about the agency involved in transformation and the goals towards which transformation is purposed than Wesleyan theology. Christian disciples must also remember and acknowledge the role of the Holy Spirit inherent in their transformation. Despite its differences from Wesleyan discipleship, TLT research illuminates the transformative process that occurs when learners who possess the qualities of openness and sincerity make a decision to authentically deliberate new knowledge and experiences that are imbued with the potential to reshape their way of being in the world. TLT research indicates transformation is facilitated in an environment that nurtures and challenges learners as they negotiate their new

---

understandings of their selves and the world. Such a nuanced response has implications for disciples to integrate rather than isolate the facets of Christian life and faith. Three components of TLT, the discrepant event, critical reflection and rational dialogue, have particular significance for the multifaceted ways Christian disciples respond to experiences that inspire a fundamental change in perspective.

At the same time, discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition offers insights into developing a learning environment that challenges, nurtures and supports transformation as well as how a compelling vision might motivate learners to be transformed. Both disciplines are in a position to glean pertinent aspects that make each other more robust in their approach to transformation. Developing and imagining realistic possibilities for fostering change within Wesleyan disciples will be the focus of the next two chapters.
Chapter Seven
The Practice of Transformative Discipleship

Introduction

Osmer’s final methodological movement is to determine a pragmatic response given the research and theological reflection done to this point. The original intent of this thesis is to discern how the practice and endeavour of Wesleyan discipleship may benefit from interdisciplinary dialogue with TLT. Examining TLT through a lens of Wesleyan theology provides an opportunity to envision a strategy in which conversant elements of Wesleyan discipleship and TLT might be deployed in the lives of persons in congregational contexts committed to holistic, transformative discipleship. This thesis established a theoretical framework, the Discipleship Matrix, as a means to explain the lack of transformation when congregational ministries become programmatic, tending to isolate rather than integrate various aspects of the Christian life. The Discipleship Matrix was also used to facilitate theological reflection with TLT so it could be in cross-disciplinary dialogue with Wesleyan discipleship. Now, the Discipleship Matrix demonstrates how appropriated elements of TLT cohere with Wesleyan discipleship in an integral way of life that assists grace afforded by the Holy Spirit, or holy transformation, of the Christian disciple.

This chapter explores ways in which the discrepant event, critical reflection and rational dialogue can assist Christian disciples to understand their lived experiences in light of their commitments towards increasing Christlikeness. It will also propose ways in which transformative learning researchers might consider the discipleship context to inform the field of adult transformative learning.

In order to illustrate the various ways in which the endeavour and practice of Wesleyan discipleship and TLT might be integrated and operate in light of one another, three imaginative vignettes will be introduced and developed throughout the chapter. Hauerwas argues that discussions of how persons grow in sanctification are abstract at the conceptual level, but find premise when exemplified in the concrete
terms of a life of faith. Each vignette will depict a disciple at a particular stage of faith: a seeker, a committed Christian and a mature believer. The three different vignettes will unfold in stages throughout the chapter, examining the pertinent roles of TLT as it affects the disciple portrayed in each vignette. Though each character and situation was created for the purpose of this thesis, practitioners involved in discipling ministries in congregational and para-church contexts will recognise themes consistent with the respective stages of faith. The vignettes will explore how an intentional, committed approach to the endeavour and practice of Wesleyan discipleship is appropriate to each context, incorporating relevant aspects of TLT.

**Contributions of TLT to Wesleyan Discipleship**

Wesleyan discipleship and TLT share a goal for transformation. Wesleyan theology maintains a distinct goal of transformation is Christlikeness while TLT offers a more generic depiction of a self-actualised learner. Despite becoming ‘a more unified theory’ over the course of the last decade, TLT theorists like Mezirow and Daloz understand transformation as primarily a personal phenomena, while others such as Friere, Brookfield and Holst contend the goal of transformative learning necessarily needs to be emancipatory on a social level. For emancipation learning theorists, transformation as a social phenomenon spans a broad spectrum. Transformation can be as focused as a community dismantling localised hegemony and power dynamics as Friere proposed, or, as O’Sullivan posits, transformation can be as expansive as it is in a planetary worldview in which all of humanity participates in cooperative, supportive unity. Despite the wide range of interpretation regarding who and what is transformed in transformative learning, the theory is congruent with Wesleyan discipleship, which maintains the redemption and transformation of the earth and of creation is ultimately bound to the transformation of individuals as they participate in and contribute to the upbuilding of the body of Christ. Furthermore, three components of TLT, the ‘disorienting dilemma’ or

---

1 Hauerwas states, ‘what is required is the actual depiction of lives through which we can be imaginatively drawn into the journey by being given the means to understand and test our failures and successes.’ Hauerwas, ‘Characterising Perfection,’ 128.

discrepant event, critical reflection and rational dialogue, can be appropriated by Wesleyan disciples and offer insights into facilitating the transformative process.

The Role of a Discrepant Event

Whether disciples engaged in ministry and mission in the world or adult learners in a more formal learning environment, both Wesleyan discipleship and TLT understand transformation occurs within the interior lives of persons as well as in their exterior conduct before the world. TLT posits what Wesleyan discipleship implies: that transformation can occur as the result of particular events that bring persons to the realisation that what they previously believed or thought about life as it presently exists is not necessarily valid or helpful. A disorienting dilemma calls into question previous experience which can, but does not always, precipitate transformation. How Wesleyan discipleship and transformative learning theory approach the discrepant event is an appropriate starting point for determining how TLT contributes to the endeavour and practice of Wesleyan discipleship.

TLT not only accounts for, but depends upon, a critical incident, or collection of moments, in which persons encounter circumstances that challenge their understanding about the nature of the world and their personal participation in it. Wesleyan discipleship assumes a crisis, often referred to as a crisis of faith, occurs in the life of a disciple to inaugurate a change in heart and life. Likewise, the lived experience of the disciple is at the heart of Wesleyan discipleship, as it is in TLT. Traditionally, theology primarily focuses on specific moments related to the order of salvation and progress in faith: seeking, conversion, backsliding and perfection. Yet, Wesleyan discipleship takes the lived experience, and thus the ‘disorienting event,’ for granted; it is implicit, even if it is a fundamental element that spurs discipleship. TLT, however, gives explicit attention to the lived experience of the learner, especially with respect to the ‘disorienting event’ that can effect transformation. The following vignettes introduce three fictional disciples at differing points in the faith journey: the first a seeker, the second a committed believer, and the third a mature disciple, as well as the discrepant events each encounters.
Vignette 1: Stan is a successful sales rep for a medical technologies firm. Unmarried at age 34, he is confident he still has time to settle down. A family tragedy occurs and his teenaged nephew is killed in a traffic accident. At the funeral, his nephew’s friends from youth group describe the character and commitment of their friend. Though they obviously grieve, they also speak with hope and conviction that their friend is with God. Stan is impressed with their maturity and confidence. He is inspired and is compelled to approach the youth pastor about using his resources for a scholarship in his nephew’s name. When they speak, Stan finds himself saying he would also like to volunteer on a regular basis. The youth leader invites Stan to meet for an early morning breakfast to discuss things further.

Vignette 2: Karen, aged 30, is a mother of two children (aged 5 and 3) when she discovers she is nearly 4 months pregnant with her third child. She and her husband, the guy who ran the soundboard in their college ministry, consider this unexpected news to be a blessing from God. Karen made a profession of faith as a young adult in college eight years earlier and was part of a class meeting for students. Since becoming a mother, she has been determined to offer her children the Christian nurture she did not have as a child. She is involved in organising Sunday School, chairing a parent’s group and assisting in other activities both in the church and community. A routine screening reveals the baby has a birth defect: spina bifida. She and her husband have no doubts about keeping the child, after all Scripture teaches that their child is fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps. 139:14), but Karen is plagued with doubts. What did she do wrong? How did she cause her unborn child’s condition? How will she mother a special needs child along with the children she already has and grow them in Christian faith and love?

Vignette 3: Bill is a mature Christian nearing retirement from his job as manager at a local banking institution. More than twenty years ago, he attended an Emmaus Event, and has faithfully participated in a weekly covenantal accountability group
for attendees ever since. He is an active lay leader in his congregation; his activities include but are not limited to a community Bible study, a men’s service group and recreational sport teams. As a result of his commitment to and investment in his church and community, he has passed up promotions that would have meant relocation for his family. He and his wife enjoy close friendships with other members in his reunion group, and their wives. He credits his faith and his accountability brothers as two of several reasons he never fell prey to mid-life crisis or scandal. But as of late, he’s wondering what is lacking in his life with God.

In terms of TLT, the discrepant event or crisis occurs when a person’s lived experience is challenged in some way. Theologically speaking, a crisis occurs when a disciple is confronted by brokenness and sin (within themselves or within the world) that, left unchecked, mars and inhibits God’s goodness and the expansion of God’s reign in this fallen and imperfect world. Crisis can occur in a person who comes to the possibility of the realisation of faith, as in the case of Stan, or it can occur in a more seasoned disciple like Karen or Bill, who face a critical juncture in their faith journey. Other possibilities that qualify as discrepant events exist as well. A disciple might encounter prejudice or injustice and realise in a new way or context that the Kingdom of God is larger and far more expansive than previously imagined or understood. Though Wesleyan discipleship would not describe the Rules in terms of a discrepant event, the ideals of living into God’s holiness by doing no wrong, doing good and attending on the ordinances of God provides an alternative way of living than is found in the secular world. Positively stated, a rule of life like the Rules that commends virtuous living even as it eschews vice, can be regarded as a ‘disorienting event,’ creating an option that otherwise may not be considered. Both Karen and Bill have made intentional choices to live as Christians within their respective communities. In the pursuit of sanctification, covenanted to an agreed standard like the Rules or a contemporary re-formulation offers a particular rule of

3A significant component of the Emmaus experience is the ‘Fourth Day’ covenant group in which retreat participants meet weekly in groups akin to Wesley’s band meeting. Though the Emmaus Reunion Group differs from the class meeting in that it is only open to retreat participants, for the purpose of this chapter the Wesleyan small groups referred to within the vignettes assume the Discipleship Matrix to be functioning at the centre of these communities.
life by which both novice and seasoned disciples can be challenged or inspired to be more Christlike.4

Naming an incident or collection of incidents as a ‘disorienting dilemma’ identifies a moment which can prompt transformation. The act of naming an episode a discrepant event does not change or alter what happens, but it does helpfully define a critical incident by which a disciple might later qualify and against which to evaluate transformation. Transformation does not occur simply because there has been a crisis, but because the learner engages it. Said another way, transformation does not depend upon the nature of the crisis but engagement with the crisis. Stan, Karen and Bill each have the choice to confront their respective situations or be ambivalent to the significance of their predicaments. TLT stipulates the discrepant event, whether it be epochal or a series of incidents, needs engagement through critical reflection and rational dialogue in order to navigate the crisis towards transformation.

Wesleyan discipleship, on the other hand, assumes transformation occurs because disciples set their eyes upon God and Christlikeness. The pursuit and realisation of Christlikeness means a disciple is working to be aligned with God’s goodness and the expansion of God’s kingdom. The process of sanctification is to experience holy transformation. Stan’s story is perched on the brink of this possibility. Though unaware of the possible ramifications, rather than simply being a change agent for the lives of scholarship recipients Stan can afford to sponsor, he and his lived experience of the world can be transformed if he decides to participate in the means of grace and be open to the crisis of divine grace. For Karen and Bill, continued transformation through sanctifying grace occurs as they participate in the disciplines and are cooperative with the divine grace made available to them.

Ultimately, disciples trust, seek and ask the Holy Spirit for the sanctifying grace which guides, enables and perfects. Sanctifying grace by the power of the Holy Spirit inspired, enables and helps complete a disciple’s journey towards

---

4 For purposes of this thesis, a Wesleyan small group will refer to a group covenanting to abide together in adherence to the Rules or some modern day equivalent in contemporary language that fosters Christian character as persons pursue sanctification. Regardless of formulation, the Rules refer to a set of standards by which Wesleyan disciples agree to align themselves with Kingdom values, eschewing worldly pursuits that detract from continued growth in sanctification.
transformation in Christ. Still, there are ways in which growth and transformation can be intentionally sought in cooperation with the work of the Holy Spirit. A Wesleyan small group, which is characterised by disciples covenanting to ‘watch over one another in love,’ affirms a common commitment within the group to one another and to the agreed upon rule of life which aims at continual transformation in Christlikeness. The mutual covenant within the small group creates an ideal forum in which disciples can engage their lived experiences in light of the covenant they have with one another (and with God) through the mutually reinforcing processes of critical reflection and rational dialogue. TLT offers the tools to help process the disconnect that occurs as a result of the discrepant event through critical reflection and rational dialogue. Critical reflection and rational dialogue contribute towards helping persons engage the disciple's lived experience in their commitment to growing in sanctification that causes them to question their experience of the world.

Critical reflection and rational dialogue are related, mutually reinforcing processes. Yet, they function differently from one another and offering distinct possibilities for the Wesleyan small group. Critical reflection is particularly suited to help disciples fully engage accountability aspects of Wesleyan discipleship. Rational dialogue attends to the discernment and spiritual guidance that occurs in small groups. Together, both processes, in the context of the Wesleyan small group, are specific ways in which TLT contributes to the Christian journey in sanctification.

The Role of Critical Reflection

Because critical reflection helps persons evaluate their previous experience of the world in light of new knowledge or experience of it, critical reflection is pertinent to discernment and the accountability process of the Wesleyan small group. The covenantal commitment to ‘watch over one another in love’ describes a situation in which persons are not required to adhere to a rubric of legalistic questions, but agree instead to be in mutual submission to a common set of guidelines that challenge and nurture its members (i.e. the Rules, or something equivalent). Accountability within the Wesleyan small group is multifaceted: disciples to one another, disciples to the guidelines and, ultimately, all disciples accountable to God.
The vignettes demonstrate how critical reflection and the accountability process in Wesleyan discipleship begin to prompt disciples, in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, to move toward increasing Christlikeness.

Vignette 1: Stan meets with Barry, the youth pastor, to discuss the scholarship. He repeats his desire to want to volunteer with the youth group. Barry is open to the possibility and shares that adult workers go through a vetting process. He recommends they meet on a regular basis and commit to read Mark’s Gospel together. Stan agrees. He describes how he wants to know something more about the qualities these kids have that he believes he lacks. All his training and knowledge in sales and marketing has garnered him the success he always wanted for his career, but he is drawn to these teens because they seem to have their personal lives together in ways he does not. Barry suggests Stan consider what it costs Stan to have separate goals for various aspects of his life. Barry recommends Stan use scripture and the qualities he notices in the kids as a lens for what an integrated life looks like and how it compares to his own.

Vignette 2: Karen, despite her outward appearances to trust in God’s plan for her and her family, is afraid she did something to harm her unborn child and wonders what she did wrong to bear a child who will deal with a lifelong medical condition. Though she believes firmly in the basics of faith, she realises her peace, hope and trust in God are fleeting. She doubts her ability to let God have control of her life. She turns to a friend at church, who suggests she find a support group—but Karen balks; how can she possibly add another meeting to her over-scheduled life? Besides, this is a spiritual issue for Karen; her faith is being tested and she does not want to be found wanting. She contacts a friend from the student class meeting she was a part of in college. They plan to meet for lunch. When she arrives, another woman from their college ministry days is there as well.

Vignette 3: With his covenant group, Bill decides to share his unrest even though he knows not what it is he needs or what it is God is asking of him. No one in the group
dismisses Bill’s disquieted soul, nor do they condemn him because he believes something is amiss in his discipleship. Some within the group have known Bill since the Emmaus event and can testify to his life of integrity and intention to grow in Christlikeness. Together, they agree to enter into a time of discernment and commit to fast and pray for Bill so that they might all be able to listen as Bill seeks God’s direction and guidance.

In reflecting critically upon their discipleship, disciples not only need to be honest with one another, they need to be honest with themselves and with God. Critical reflection opens disciples up to examining their lives in full, inviting persons to consider where their lives have integrity and where they may lack. Barry understands Stan is at a crucial juncture in his life and advises Stan to do some careful thought through self-inventory and Scripture reading. Karen, sensing the nature of her trouble is spiritual, decides to contact a college friend she trusts. Bill, also sensing the nature of his undefined moment, shares with his small group. Critical reflection discerns which moments are considered significant for the way in which they either challenge or inspire growth in Christlikeness.

Wesleyan discipleship, which consists of the innumerable moments that occur on a daily basis, requires regular assessment. While particular events may stand out and be noteworthy of critique, the process of reflecting critically as a disciple within the small group sheds light on more typical events of everyday life that are significant but might have been otherwise ignored. Repeated patterns may also be recognised and evaluated as meaningful. Regular engagement in critical reflection upon a disciple’s life in light of standards for Christian living (like the Rules) allows for ongoing discernment about identifying critical incidents that can prompt correction or inspire further growth. Barry does not simply suggest Stan read Scripture, but also asks him to deliberate on his reading in light of his desire to develop the character he admires in the teens.

For Wesleyan disciples who are accountable to one another, a common covenant that challenges and nurtures the individual through daily living can help identify incidents in everyday life and evaluate their significance as those events help
or hinder a person’s growth in Christlikeness. As an ongoing organising principle to
grow in sanctification, the *Rules* provides a rubric by which disciples can compare
their lived experience to that of a disciple’s commitment to Christlikeness. Karen,
having experienced the nurture and benefit of a Wesleyan small group, knows
something is amiss in her walk with God and seeks counsel accordingly. While
Christian discipleship entails the entirety of daily life, not every moment a disciple
experiences during the week or two between meetings can be examined during the
course of a meeting. Critical reflection, especially in light of the mutual
accountability covenant, helps prompt a disciple towards what should be shared with
others and also helps others determine an appropriate response to what is shared.

As noted previously, in TLT, the discrepant event occurs when a person
realises a new understanding or insight that does not fit her lived experience. For the
Wesleyan disciple, this crisis typically occurs at the start of her faith journey or at
other significant life junctures. However, critical reflection in the context of
Wesleyan discipleship can help expand the notion of what constitutes a discrepant
event. For the disciple who chooses to critically reflect on her lived experience in
light of Christlikeness, the discrepant event may be understood as a particular
significant moment in which she failed to live out her discipleship. Or, in the case of
a mature disciple like Bill, the discrepant event may indicate a season of stymied or
lacklustre growth. In the former case, the discrepant event may not be as egregious
as engaging in harmful addictive behaviours, but might be a season in which the
disciple neglects corporate worship. Alternatively, in the latter case, critical reflection
might actually indicate the need for a discrepant event, such as the cross-cultural
experience of going on an international mission trip or even serving at the local food
kitchen, as a means to inspire further growth and progress in sanctification.

Furthermore, the disorienting event need not always be one that reveals negligence
or oversight. An event that precipitates transformation may be one that encourages
and inspires deeper discipleship. When considered from this angle, Bill’s season of
unrest and Karen’s desire to receive counsel from trusted friends reveals a yearning
and a desire to grow more fully in sanctification.
As much as identifying significant incidents in which discrepant events occur is a valid and important aspect of critical reflection, so too is the process of being reflective about those critical incidents. Critical reflection provides an opportunity for disciples to move past reciting a litany of activities to which they agree to be held accountable. Critical reflection can motivate an evaluation of events in light of what is also being sought: Christlike character. Accountability with regards to critical reflection is not simply uncovering what occurred or determining what actions were taken (or not taken) to advance the Kingdom of God, but also how the fruit of the Spirit is being manifest in a disciple’s life. The classic question of Wesleyan small groups, ‘How is it with your soul?’ prompts a disciple to not just consider her actions but her Christian character. Because accountability to the covenant can become performance-based (focusing on the actions taken or neglected by a disciple), disciples need to be reflective on the quality of their actions. Accountability for a disciple committed to Christlikeness needs to be about right intention and quality of action as much as it is about engaging in right action. Critical reflection seeks to discern the extent to which growth in Christlike character occurs. Reflection on how God’s character is manifest or demonstrated in an action is as important as the action itself. In terms of TLT, a discrepant event that inspires deeper discipleship might not be a specific action, but an extraordinary demonstration of compassion and grace as a part of a common everyday action that causes a person to reflect upon it with their small group members to discern its implication. In some respects, Stan’s searching is not prompted simply by the tragic loss of his nephew, but by the notable witness of his nephew’s grieving friends.

Yet, for Christian disciples, the work of critical reflection requires more than cognitively filtering the events of daily life to discern their importance. Disciples must also grow in awareness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Bill and his group, because they cannot discern Bill’s condition of their own accord, enter into a time of deliberate prayer and reflection. Disciples who are intentional about growing in sanctification do it not as an independent exercise, but with others ‘watching over one another in love’ for divine guidance and direction. Karen intuitively knows her circumstances are more than she can handle on her own and reaches out for Christian
support and nurture. Barry understands the nature of Stan’s crisis and suggests the two meet regularly and talk.

Wesleyan small groups provide opportunities in which disciples can engage the whole of their lives and see consistence and integrity. Critical reflection in response to a discrepant event aids disciples in responding appropriately to their context. Disciples need to be reflective and circumspect about the manner in which they engage the classical disciplines. Is a particular activity exercised with appropriate grace and humility, or is it approached as a perfunctory duty that blocks whole person engagement? How God’s character is manifest or demonstrated in an action is as important as the action itself. Though critical reflection assists a disciple in the task of internal deliberation, it is not the sole tool of transformative learning. Reflective dialogue also serves the discernment process as a disciple seeks sanctification in the company of other disciples.

The Role of Rational Discourse

Critical reflection is not a discrete activity, but relates to rational dialogue. TLT understands rational dialogue as the medium that gives expression to critical reflection and notes that rational dialogue is not confined to conversation among peers, but also includes journaling or letter writing.5 At the crux of rational dialogue is the process of articulating meaning both for one’s self and for others. In the case of journaling, a perennial popular spiritual discipline, Christian disciples, often privately express their inner emotions, impressions and thoughts as a means to sort through internal dynamics and unconscious aspects of their being. Trust, accompanied by a willingness to be vulnerable, provides an atmosphere in which disciples can be supported and comfortable in articulating their inner dynamics with others. Rational dialogue is particularly suited for spiritual direction, discerning where God is moving and how persons of God might be obedient and directed in their discipleship.

5 Dirkx and Smith, ‘Facilitating Transformative Learning Online,’ 61.
Vignette 1: Initially, Stan is unsettled with Barry’s use of what appears to be probing questions. He does not mind questions about the Scripture reading, or discussing his activities during the week and how he is getting on with evaluating his life’s goals. However, the question Barry inevitably asks at some point during their breakfast meetings, ‘How is it with your soul?’ confounds even as it fascinates Stan. At first, Stan realises Barry is comfortable to ask and answer this question rhetorically, but by their third meeting, Stan wants to answer for himself. He is grateful for Barry’s pauses which allow him to consider for himself his own response as they discuss their common scripture reading and the lives they live during the week between breakfast sessions which now includes Stan attending youth ministry as an adult volunteer.

Vignette 2: Karen discovers sitting down with two of her college chums was like slipping into a warm embrace. They congratulate her and express their love and concern for her and her baby. They allow Karen to unburden her heart and ask occasional questions for clarity. They acknowledge the passage of time in all their lives and assert they do not believe Karen’s questions reveal a lack of faith. One friend comments it is apparent Karen is busy loving God with all her strength and might feel distraught because her soul is not allowed the time to be replenished by God! Both friends believe Karen’s heart, mind and strength are all in a good place, to help her children have faith and trust in Christ, but the complete picture of loving God with heart, mind, strength and soul is skewed. Both friends want to know when Karen is taking time to listen to the Lord if she is so busy trying to help others hear and see Jesus? The second friend offers that it is not just happening in Karen’s life, but hers as well. They all agree they could use some time getting their whole lives right before the Lord again and decide to meet regularly, not just out of concern and love for Karen and her unborn baby, but in support of their common discipleship.

Vignette 3: During their dedicated time of seeking discernment through prayer and fasting, Kyle, another member of the group, shares he also is experiencing spiritual doldrums. For example, he is happy to chair the BBQ fundraiser for mission teams,
but it does not seem to be as fulfilling as it once was. Another member confesses he feels similarly. Discussion revolves around their trips to areas of the country devastated by storms and other natural disasters the past several years. Do they need to plan another? The consensus is that the trips are good, but it draws on their strengths. How can they learn to rely on God again? Someone asks when it was the last time anyone had been on an international mission trip. Through focused conversation with one another and in prayer with God, they decide it is time to partner with an international mission team, one in which they need to rely on the knowledge and experience of others. The trip cannot be about their skills and their abilities, but about how they can become dependant upon God so they may truly be servant leaders like Jesus.6

As the medium for critical reflection, rational dialogue is particularly suited to the discernment process that occurs in Wesleyan small groups. The corporate and collaborative nature of the small groups helps foster shared meaning and discover implications for further growth and development. Spiritual direction, or making plans about how to proactively engage a discrepant event (revealed by the critical reflection process) is largely achieved through the process of rational dialogue. Without discounting the agency of the Holy Spirit, Karen’s and Bill’s groups are able to share with one another the way God is prompting and moving them. Stan discovers with Barry that rational dialogue does not involve incessant talking or teaching, but entails responding appropriately to one another. Rational dialogue in the context of the Wesleyan small group is a way in which disciples can authentically engage in conversation to distinguish feelings, evaluate experiences, and discern meaning regarding their relationship with God through prayer or Bible study. Rational dialogue with others provides insight into more inclusive understanding of how the world works or how the kingdom of God is meant to operate.

6 It is acknowledged that some short-term mission work may actually take on the form of ‘Christian tourism’ and can be more about the team traveling than those in the field. At the same time, short-term trips have an appropriate purpose to support the work of established expatriate missionaries in the field or to partner long-term with local indigenous churches. Leopoldo A. Sánchez, ‘Pedagogy for Working among the Poor: Something to Talk about before Going on Your Next Short-Term Mission Trip’ in Missio Apostolica 16, no. 1 (May 2008): 81.
Rational dialogue on the part of a disciple within the Wesleyan small group benefits from the collaboration of other disciples who are also concurrently developing their rational dialogue skills. Barry, Stan’s mentor, demonstrates how rational dialogue works by rhetorically answering his own questions until Stan is comfortable responding for himself. Disciples hold fast to the accountability covenant ‘to watch over one another in love’ as they allow others to assess the validity of their thoughts, assumptions and feelings and even offer feedback. A covenantal, collaborative relationship fosters trust within a group providing for a safe place in order to engage rational dialogue. Drawing on this former trust, Karen and her friends allow themselves to be vulnerable with one another. It was the presence of this covenantal trusting relationship that allowed Bill to first voice his concerns. Rational dialogue nurtures and deepens trust for disciples who embrace the process and allows them to explore together the implications of their spiritual conversations. Disciples in mutual oversight with one another have an opportunity to act as both shepherd and flock to one another. With varying opportunities to experience a commitment to growth in sanctification, there will be times when some disciples can offer insight into the lives of others. Furthermore, Christian disciples who share a vision of God’s kingdom as the purpose for their discipleship can engage in rational dialogue with one another about what is truly relevant and viable for persons who live in this world but are not of this world.

The Coordinated Response

Though critical reflection and rational dialogue each contribute uniquely to the transformation process, they are in a dynamic, interpenetrating relationship in response to a discrepant event. Together, these core components of TLT help facilitate transformation in disciples as it leads to providing greater insights and awareness about how the process of sanctification or Christian transformation is facilitated in the life of an earnest disciple (see Figure 13). Critical reflection and rational dialogue help distinguish the current context or the discrepant event. Accountability and spiritual direction are sharpened through critical reflection and rational dialogue so that disciples can discern the way in which the cultivation of
Virtue, engagement in disciplines and the integrity of their community are progressing towards the telos so that each person might continue to grow in grace towards Christlikeness.

Vignette 1: Within several weeks, Stan begins to realise he yearns for God as much as he yearns to have the character and convictions of the kids in the youth group. He senses the need to re-evaluate the priorities of his life. He works with Barry as well as his grieving sister through questions he has about a loving God who would take the promising life of his nephew. He and Barry discuss the feelings that compelled him to originally propose a scholarship. He understands the implicit presence of the Holy Spirit through prevenient grace in his life and desires to make it explicit. He realises that developing Jesus' life and character within him is not just a worthy goal, but one that aligns other aspects of his life. Through the loss of his nephew, he knows a Christian life is not devoid of sorrow, but he wants to live a life worth living now and for eternity and grow in Christlike character and action.

Vignette 2: Karen and her college friends continue to meet regularly though her baby's birth and infancy. Karen does some re-evaluation of her church activities and scales back on the programming commitments she has made. In time, she approaches the pastor about beginning a new type of small group with other women from her church—one that is patterned after the class meeting she experienced in college. Her desire is to keep her life, and those of her family's, in balance that they all might love God with full heart, mind, soul and strength.
Vignette 3: Bill and his small group return from Guatemala. They believe the mission trip was a success not because of the work they did, but because of the new vision they have for God’s Kingdom. Having to rely on interpreters and listening to people pray enthusiastically in their native language, they are reminded of the presence and the power of the Spirit within all believers regardless of nationality or tongue. Returning home, they find their attention drawn to a local barrio and become invested in a new ministry among the undocumented workers living there. Their zeal for the Lord is re-ignited as they learn how to share and experience it appropriately with others in their particular context.

Within the discipline of adult education, TLT can be subject to criticism because critical reflection and rational dialogue emphasise cognitive understanding and rational expression. Transformative learning theorists like Tisdell and Dirkx maintain transformative learning is not simply rational and emphasise the extra-rational ways persons express their interpretations of the world though art, music or poetry. Regardless of preferred medium, TLT asserts that a learner’s insight and new knowledge about the world needs to be expressed for shared meaning with others. It is precisely this process of discernment and discovery that makes critical reflection and rational dialogue particularly suited to the endeavour and practice of Wesleyan discipleship.

Christian theology asserts that the goal of transformation is Christ as revealed and recorded in scripture and known as Jesus of Nazareth. Discerning Christlikeness for the generations of disciples within the varied cultures and contexts throughout the millennia depends upon an ongoing relationship with God through the agency and power of the Holy Spirit. Wesleyan disciples understand that it is through the promptings and power of the Holy Spirit that a relationship with God is brokered. Within the context of Wesleyan small groups, the commitment to challenge and encourage one another is a response to grace, which utilises the tools of critical reflection and rational dialogue for growth in and towards Christlikeness. Critical reflection and rational dialogue assist a disciple to draw on all faculties to make discernments and decisions about his or her actions and behaviours in order to
become more transformative and Christlike. Activities including, but not limited to, singing songs of faith, prayer, corporate worship and the creative arts require disciples to be holistic and integrative as they discern meaning and articulate its significance for shared meaning and interpretation. Within a theological context, the tools of critical reflection and rational dialogue are honed to help disciples interpret the present day messages of a transcendent God whose guiding words are bound in Scriptures written more than two millennia ago. Through critical reflection and rational dialogue, TLT contributes to the endeavour and practice of Wesleyan discipleship by offering disciples tools to help progress in sanctification.

While there are many suggestions as to the best practices that produce transformation, there is no one prescriptive or proscriptive way of instituting transformation. Transformation is not directive, authoritative or demanding, but participatory, involving vision casting, coaching, regular evaluation and continual striving as well. Wesleyan discipleship provides the presence of other disciples for companionship in which persons give explicit attention to the condition of their lives. Critical reflection and rational dialogue offer opportunities for disciples to explicitly explore the ramifications and implications of a discrepant event, and provide ways in which disciples engage their commitments to God, to their own maturity in Christ, to one another and to their local context. A common covenant that challenges and nurtures one another as a means to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit while engaging in spiritual disciplines offers an explicit opportunity to do critical reflection and engage in rational dialogue so that continued transformation and growth in Christlikeness occurs.

**Contributions of Wesleyan Discipleship to TLT**

The objective of this thesis is to identify ways in which TLT contributes to Wesleyan discipleship. The examination of each discipline on its own terms identified elements of TLT that are conversant with the endeavour and practice of Wesleyan discipleship, as well as insights for how Wesleyan discipleship contributes to the field of transformative learning. Specifically, two aspects of Wesleyan discipleship offer insight to help make TLT more robust and rigorous. First, the non-
formal and informal nature of lifelong Wesleyan discipling relationships contributes
to research possibilities that cannot be accessed in transformative learning. Second,
the presence of a coherent telos in Wesleyan discipleship helps TLT gain further
insight into how learners are continually and profoundly transformed as they
holistically pursue a particular goal as the result of their learning experience.

**Non-formal and Informal Nature of Wesleyan Discipleship**

Since the early 2000s, second wave transformative learning theorists like
Dirkx, Tisdell and Cranton have successfully advocated for and advanced a more
holistic way of viewing transformative learning than initially proposed by Mezirow.
Yet, Taylor and Snyder point out research in the field continues to neglect the less
formal settings and to reinforce research in the formal settings of higher education.7
Wesleyan discipling relationships provide interested transformative learning
researchers with opportunities to explore dynamics present in both non-formal and
informal learning environments. The commitment disciples make to Bible studies,
small groups and other short-term learning opportunities regularly offered by many
congregations and para-church organisations are indicative of the nature of non-
formal learning settings that learners typically commit to on a voluntary basis.

Learners who voluntarily commit to and engage in forms that foster the
endeavour and practice of Wesleyan discipleship offer researchers fertile ground for
study. As Taylor and Snyder point out, most research on transformative learning in
the non-formal learning environments is limited to certificate programmes for nurses
and teachers who decide to further their educational credentials, ESL students and
educating patients diagnosed with diabetes.8 The opportunity to engage adult learners
who voluntarily commit to short-term and long-term Wesleyan covenant discipling
groups opens possibilities for researchers to examine motivations that exist within a
learning population. Wesleyan covenant groups such as Bill’s Emmaus reunion
group and Karen’s college class meeting that capture the nature and purpose of the
early class and band meetings are ideally suited for researchers interested in
transformative learning dynamics within the non-formal educational setting. The

---

7 Taylor and Snyder, ‘Critical Review of Research,’ 40.
8 Taylor and Snyder, ‘Critical Review of Research,’ 40.
Wesleyan concept of continually growing in perfecting love offers researchers a unique opportunity and vantage point to consider what sustains or dissuades the lifelong learners from continual engagement.

Though the Wesleyan small group constitutes a non-formal learning setting, the small groups actually provide insight into the more elusive informal educational settings that are constituted in a disciple’s daily life. The boundaries that define the learning environment of a Wesleyan small group are fluid. Participants who covenant to challenge and nurture one another in their love of God and neighbour draw from the informal learning environment, their everyday lives, for their ‘classroom’ discussion. Whether or not disciples encounter each other in daily life beyond the weekly meeting, the curriculum for the endeavour and practice of Wesleyan discipleship is the sharing of personal experience in light of the common covenant that encourages growth in Christlikeness. Bill’s relationship with the other participants in his group is not simply sustained by the group process, but includes the informality of experiencing life together in times of celebration, distress and grief. The shared leadership and mutual submission of all participants within Bill’s and Karen’s groups are also of interest to transformative learning researchers. Taylor and Snyder indicate that education which is more learner-centred than teacher-directed would benefit from further study.9

In addition, spiritual mentoring also provides insight for researchers interested in the informal learning setting. Spiritual mentoring is understood as a relationship between two persons often at differing stages of faith, at least initially, who share a commitment to have their lives ordered by God. Spiritual mentoring relationships may be entered into consciously by both parties or can seemingly be serendipitous—the result of events and circumstances that goes unnoticed by one or more parties for a period of time. The informal nature of Stan and Barry’s relationship constitutes a casual yet intentional relationship that is of value to the transformative learning researcher. Any number of methodological research techniques, from narrative inquiry to auto ethnography and case study, would not only be valid to study such relationships, but as Taylor and Snyder point out, are

---

9 Taylor and Snyder, ‘Critical Review of Research,’ 49.
necessary to help transformative learning to progress as a field.\textsuperscript{10} Additionally, Karen’s story would offer researchers insight into how a transformative learning experience stays with a learner for years and motivates a disciple to become a disciple to others. The long-term, sustained nature of Wesleyan discipling relationships, whether in non-formal or informal learning settings, positions them to be fertile resources for transformative learning researchers studying the nature of transformation in lifelong learners.\textsuperscript{11}

Finally, in her work within the theological academy, Marmon has observed that cross-cultural engagement among seminary students as part of their prescribed curriculum can result in transforming a learner’s perspective.\textsuperscript{12} She notes in her study of seminary students that some of the most significant examples of learning occur as the result of conversation in the learner’s informal life (e.g. chats with other classmates during their shared commutes, or during phone calls with friends and families who do not share the same experience but still provide a sounding board for the student to do some informal processing).\textsuperscript{13} Because Wesleyan small groups may engage in cross-cultural ministry as a part of their commitment to grow in Christlikeness, the non-formal learning setting of an adult mission trip like Bill’s and the continuing informal relationships that result are also of interest to the transformative learning researchers willing to expand their field’s horizons. Transformative learning researchers find rich and abundant resources of study and examination in persons intentional about the endeavour and practice of Wesleyan discipleship. The possibilities for developing the field are only limited by the researcher who does not seek out the possibility.

\textit{The Presence of a Coherent telos}

Transformative learning theory, like the endeavour and practice of Wesleyan discipleship, concerns itself with the transformation of the learner and of society. However, it was indicated previously that, unlike Christian discipleship, TLT lacks a specific, cohesive telos at which transformation is aimed. Brookfield and Holst note

\textsuperscript{10} Taylor and Snyder, ‘Critical Review of Research,’ 39.
\textsuperscript{11} Taylor, ‘Analysing Research,’ 292.
\textsuperscript{12} Marmon, ‘Cross-Cultural Field Education,’ 70-84.
\textsuperscript{13} Marmon, ‘Cross-Cultural Field Education,’ 81.
many contemporary progressive educators shy away from advocating a particular worldview and ‘profess to be purely nondirective facilitators’ with regards to the purposeful aims and outcomes of transformation.\textsuperscript{14} Therefore, for purposes of this thesis, precisely because of this uncertainty within adult education about the intent and expectations of transformative learning, only instructional strategies regarding the nature of experience, critical reflection and rational dialogue were considered for the contributions they make to the endeavour and practice of Wesleyan discipleship. Yet, Cranton and Taylor acknowledge fostering transformative learning is more than methodologies and relies upon ‘its own assumptions about the purpose of education, the role of the educator, and the nature of knowledge.’\textsuperscript{15} Goals for a hoped-for transformation are grounded in the premises of transformative learning: constructivism, humanism and critical social theory. Progressive educators seek to help their students become self-actualised citizens who are tolerant of differing viewpoints or an emancipated society free from prejudice, coercion and inequality.

In an increasingly globalised world of blending cultural landscapes, innovative technologies and partisan politics, many progressive adult educators understand their role ‘to be value-neutral and only student-centred’ in preparing students for citizenship and participation in a world of constantly emerging ideas.\textsuperscript{16} An online article entitled ‘Ten Things Not Enough Kids Know Before Going to College’ describes the need for adult students to be prepared to be regularly transformed in college and throughout their lifetimes. Christopher Blatant, a professor at Columbia University, urges students to understand that transformation of their worldview needs to be a constant, ever-evolving process of self discovery:

\begin{quote}
At the end of each year of college, you should look back at your thoughts and opinions 12 months before and find them quaint. If not, you probably didn't read or explore or work hard enough. I know I've succeeded when I read a blog post or paper I wrote a year ago and I see three points I should have made, and one I shouldn't have. I know I've succeeded when I change my opinions because the facts I know changed. Better yet, I really know I've succeeded when I can see how a handful of new ideas have reshaped the way I understand the world. Come to think of it, this is not a bad rule for life after college, too. It
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} Brookfield and Holst, \textit{Radicalizing Learning}, 62. \\
\textsuperscript{15} Cranton and Talyor, ‘Seeking a Unified Theory,’ 15. \\
\textsuperscript{16} Brookfield and Holst, \textit{Radicalising Learning}, 63.
gets harder to surprise yourself and change your worldview, but there are an awful lot of new facts to learn.\textsuperscript{17}

Blatant’s observation that adaption and expanding one’s worldview is a necessary life skill for the twenty-first century has merit. However, the assumed corollary, that the acquisition of a few new facts requires a transformation of perspective about the world on an annual or even periodic basis is troubling and raises questions about the purpose of transformation. Does transformation need to occur for the sake of transformation or for the sake of the learner and society? How is character formed and developed and personal integrity maintained if a learner is constantly subject to revision in a world of competing moral claims or rival political ideologies? Certainly, Brookfield and Holst acknowledge that adult educators operate with implicit normative parameters in mind that hopefully dissuade learners from detrimental influences designed to cause human suffering or anarchy.\textsuperscript{18} But the transient, seemingly ephemeral nature of transformation in a world of constantly emerging ideas raises questions about the persistent nature of transformation. How is transmission of any body of knowledge belonging to a particular tradition insured from one generation to the next if within the course of a single lifetime a learner must constantly alter the worldview from which she operates?

It is into this lacuna that the defined \textit{telos} of Wesleyan discipleship contributes. Though the ultimate aims and purposes of monotheistic claims of orthodox Christianity might conflict with the secular academy, Wesleyan discipleship’s concept of a \textit{telos} provides helpful insight on how to keep sight of moral goods that serve the common values of humanity in a postmodern landscape. Transformation in the endeavour and practice of Wesleyan discipleship is an integrated enterprise engaging one’s cognition, emotion and spirit at a profound level and embodies a person as he inhabits the world. Every aspect of personhood, heart, mind, soul and strength, is trained towards loving God and loving neighbour as one’s self. Tisdell recognises the difference between learning that transforms the way

\textsuperscript{17} Christopher Blatant, ‘Ten Things Not Enough Kids Know Before Going to College,’ \textit{Vox} 1.4, 1 January 2015, \url{http://www.vox.com/2015/1/7/7500705/college-advice} accessed (3 February 2015).
\textsuperscript{18} Brookfield and Holst, \textit{Radicalising Learning}, 63.
learners think and the kind of holistic, internal dynamics associated with learners that effects genuine change. She writes,

there are likely many times in one’s life when one has transformational experiences that are integrative to transform one’s thinking. But there are likely few instances of an epochal shift that transforms one’s being and identity. In these instances the ‘form’ that transforms involves multiple domains on a significant level—emotional, rational, physical and perhaps spiritual as well.19

This integrative dynamic is the kind of holistic, embodied engagement of all aspects of personhood that defines the endeavour and practice of Wesleyan discipleship.

Furthermore, the kind of transformation Wesleyan disciples undergo to become a Christian disciple in the first place, and in the continual pursuit of that transformation through the endeavour and practice of discipleship, is an embodied learning that is typified in the life and example of Christ. In the earliest stages of nascent discipleship, Stan exemplifies the learner undergoing a significant and momentous shift in identity. His understanding about his personhood undergoes profound transformation as he not only comes to a new perspective, but a new and deliberate way of living within the world and for God’s kingdom. Wesleyan discipleship is not simply about altering one’s allegiances to a particular idea, but embodied in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. For Christian disciples, transformation requires streamlining all energies and capacities towards emulating Christ. Though Karen and Bill are seasoned and mature disciples who have grown in the imago Dei, their very lives, supported by communities of other committed, like-minded disciples, are trained towards embodying Christlikeness. They do not merely learn ‘new facts’ as much as they confront new circumstances. Neither Karen nor Bill change their commitment for living out the Great Commandment through the crises either face, but the possibilities through which they embody Christ are expanded, transforming them further into the imago Dei and transforming the circumstances of their community’s context. Theorists and educators committed to a more unified theory of transformative learning would do well to examine how the motivations of a Christian disciple towards a transcendent, yet realisable goal, helps

to integrate the rational and extra-rational aspects of personhood in an all-encompassing embodied endeavour. In seeking a particular identifiable goal, all of life is made available to that goal. Wesleyan discipleship provides TLT with an opportunity to investigate the dynamics involved in a deep shift or alteration of personhood towards a new goal as well as what ongoing, lasting transformation looks like as learners continually pursue their goals.

**Conclusion**

This thesis has attempted to discern ways in which a practical theological conversation between TLT and Wesleyan discipleship might benefit the transformation of Christian disciples. Three core elements of TLT (the presence of a discrepant event, critical reflection and rational dialogue) act in concert with one another and offer insight into how transformation of disciples in the Wesleyan tradition might be facilitated. The nature of the cross-disciplinary dialogue demonstrates it is possible and appropriate to identify ways in which Wesleyan discipleship can contribute to and help TLT develop more robustly as a research field. Specifically, Christian disciples offer TLT researchers opportunities to investigate transformation within non-formal and informal learning environments of congregational and everyday life as it occurs over elapsed periods of time. TLT would also benefit from investigating how Wesleyan discipleship groups foster trust, honesty and respect among group members that leads to deeper sharing as persons challenge and nurture one another in the transformation process.
Chapter Eight
Christian Education as a Transformative Ministry

Introduction

Osmer’s pragmatic task requires devising ‘strategies of action’ that can lead to a desired outcome.¹ A desired outcome of this thesis is discerning how Christian educational ministries might facilitate whole life transformative discipleship in the lives of disciples. The previous chapter fulfilled an original intent of this thesis: discern ways in which a practical theological conversation with TLT illuminates the endeavour and practice of Wesleyan discipleship. It also proposed ways in which Wesleyan discipleship might benefit the research of TLT. This chapter completes the pragmatic task and concludes the thesis, examining how the Discipleship Matrix, the framework devised and used throughout the thesis, and relevant aspects of TLT offer an appropriate strategy of action for the situation examined. The result is a coherent, integrated theory of transformation that fosters holistic, holy love for God and neighbour, or sanctification, in the lives of disciples. Such a theory can help Christian educators and congregational leaders consider its implications for educational ministries in their local context. Rather than being prescriptive about a way forward, this chapter develops a series of questions for each element of the Discipleship Matrix and the various junctures that join it into a collective whole to assist congregational leadership in thinking through their approach to discipleship and educational ministries so persons might experience transformation.

Diagnosing the Situation

It has been argued that within The United Methodist Church, despite a mission statement to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, there is general agreement that the church has failed to make transformed disciples. Barna research indicates United Methodists are indicative of the majority of American Christians who do not lead transformed lives as a result of their faith commitments. Although the field of Christian education is populated with a plethora of well-intentioned strategies and programmes designed to teach people about

¹ Osmer, Practical Theology, 176.
various aspects of the Christian life, they do not have the substantive effect in transforming persons into disciples of Jesus Christ. The contention of this thesis is that the field of Christian education often isolates various approaches to discipleship from one another, resulting in persons who are partially educated and formed in the Christian life through non-formal opportunities in the local congregation. As a result, they are missing out on opportunities to experience transformation and robust growth in Christlikeness in connection to their informal, daily lives.

The thesis determined that isolation present within the field of Christian education and evident in the ways in which contemporary Methodist and Wesleyan educators approach education. Educators agree that transformation, in some form or another, is the intended outcome of education, but there are differing opinions on what needs to be transformed or what constitutes the goal of transformation. Some Christian religious educators, such as Foster and Cain, advocate for the formation of disciples in order to be transformative agents within the world without addressing the need for disciples themselves to be transformed. The vision of transformation often held up by mainline educators is one of social justice for all of humanity which can also include the created order. For educators like Moore, transformation is understood as a constantly evolving process. A particular vision is not offered due to the fluid nature of transformation. At the same time, Wesleyan educators Matthaei, Maddix and Blevins either imply or briefly mention, that in order to be an authentic agent of change within the world for the sake of God’s kingdom, transformation begins with changed lives of individuals. In addition, these authors subscribe to a vision of personal transformation that is consistent with the life of Christ. While none of the conceptions about transformation within the field of Christian education is entirely wrong, each really only approximates a partial vision of Wesleyan transformation and is indicative of the isolation that exists within the field at large. Both schools of thought champion transformation as the desired goal of Christian educational ministries, but neither explain how transformation can be facilitated by the means on which they focus. This thesis concurs that transformation of both persons and social contexts in accordance with Christlikeness and kingdom purposes is the goal of Christian discipleship. However, this thesis seeks to develop an
enhanced understanding of Christian living to foster transformation in terms of a holistic endeavour and practice of Christian discipleship or the process of sanctification. Furthermore, the practice of Christian discipleship is developed in dialogue with TLT in order to help Christian educators facilitate desired Christian transformation.

Not only are there different stances on the goal of the Christian life and the nature of transformation, various approaches to Christian educational ministry address different aspects of the Christian life. Typically, an educator promotes one or two facets of the Christian life, focusing on and treating particular elements as discrete components that have often little or no integration with one another. Approaches consistent with Crain and Matthaei advance the role of the individual, stressing the need to cultivate Christian identity, while others like Foster and Maddix advocate the need for the Christian community to help form faith within the lives of its participants. Still other educators like Blevins promote an approach to discipleship through engagement in classical disciplines that have nurtured persons in faith throughout the centuries. Again, none of these approaches are fundamentally wrong and do not lapse into outright error or heresy. Indeed, many programmes and workshops developed for the local congregation nurture aspects of Christian formation in the lives of participants, but each misses the robustness of what entails the heart and life of Christian living and what is necessary to inspire and challenge persons to become full-fledged and lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ.

This thesis established that the problem confronting discipleship is less about the diversity of approaches present within the field, but the lack of an integrative approach that yields transformation of persons into disciples of Jesus Christ. Wesleyans understand the whole of the Christian life to be subject to transformation. Discipleship is an all-encompassing endeavour, a way of life in which persons are sanctified, becoming more like Christ. Appropriating Alastair MacIntyre’s definition of practice, this project derived and developed the Discipleship Matrix as a theoretical framework to understand the current situation underlying discipleship efforts in The United Methodist Church as one of isolation and compartmentalisation. The diversity of approaches that esteem particular aspects
without intentional integration in the rest of the Christian life does not yield holistic transformation. The wide array of programmes in congregations have little or no coherence between them. Isolation rather than integration makes it all too easy for any one approach to lapse into a misguided rut that ignores the rest of the Christian life. For example, communities of faith can become advocates of social justice without cultivating members to become disciples of Christ in the process. In another context, the focus on individuals can lapse into a privatised spirituality that ignores the call for Christians to act as beacons of hope and God’s love on behalf of the Kingdom in the world. It is possible that an emphasis on engaging classical disciplines can engender works-righteousness. The list goes on. For each approach to discipleship that does not intentionally integrate all aspects of the Christian life, there is a resultant emphasis that may educate and form persons in a particular understanding of faith that can easily distort full participation in the whole of the Christian life. The thesis has discerned that isolating various emphasis of Christian faith results in a patchwork approach to the Christian life which does not yield whole life, authentic transformation. What is needed to address the situation is a robust, holistic approach to the Christian life that integrates all aspects of faith in a comprehensive practice and endeavour of discipleship, nurturing and inspiring the transformation of persons into authentic disciples of Jesus Christ.

**Confronting the Situation**

It has been argued that discipleship needs to be approached as a single, complex practice, not simply encompassing but weaving together the various components of the Christian life. Such a holistic, integrated approach to discipleship was appropriated from the work of MacIntrye. His definition of practice is a resource from which a theoretical framework can be built to understand Christian discipleship as a single, complex practice integrating four essential elements that transforms its participants. The *Discipleship Matrix* is constructed and coheres as a theoretical framework because a necessary connection exists between the character of a disciple (virtue), the things disciples do (disciplines), the structures within communities that support, nurture and challenge disciples (*ethos*) and the overall goal that each is
purposed towards (telos) in their increasing Christlikeness. The logic present in MacIntyre’s definition of practice works to cohere the Discipleship Matrix. There is a mutually reinforcing relationship between all components. The desire to be like Christ inspires virtue which motivates participation in disciplines. Disciplines are required for the exercise and opportunities to grow in virtue. In order for a community to produce a desired product, the structures that form and define the community must be consistent to their goal. Communities of faith provide a place of instruction, nurture and accountability for the exercise of disciplines and display of virtue and all are consistent to the overall goal of becoming more Christlike. The structural integrity of the Discipleship Matrix demands integration of its four elements into a single complex practice. When the structural integrity is violated, fragmentation occurs. However, when structural integrity is maintained, the result is an integrated life of faith, one that seeks the example of Christ in all aspects of life. An integrated life of faith is a life of faithful discipleship consistent to the Wesleyan spirit.

The thesis demonstrated that Wesley and the people called Methodist maintained a position at the centre of the Discipleship Matrix: a locus that calls for a coordinated and comprehensive embodied response on the part of any recipient who accepts the gift of divine grace to live a new life in Christ. For Wesley, faith’s response to divine grace is to effect a coordinated change in the life of a Christian disciple. Wesley wrote,

\[\text{Our coming to Christ…’must infer a great and mighty change’. It must infer, not only an outward change, from stealing, lying, and all corrupt communication; but a thorough change of heart, an inward renewal in the spirit of our mind. Accordingly, ‘the old man’ implies infinitely more than outward ‘evil conversation’, even ‘an evil heart of unbelief’ corrupted by pride and a thousand deceitful lusts. Of consequence, the ‘new man’ must imply infinitely more than outward ‘good conversation’, even ‘a good heart’, ‘which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,’ a heart full of that faith which, working by love, produces all holiness of conversation}.\]

Christian faith, then, demands transformation. The change that Wesley refers to is more than simply converting from sin and death to light and life. Christian disciples

\[2\text{ Wesley, ‘Journal 3,’ Works, 19:84.}\]
need to engage in an ongoing transformational process as they accept God’s grace and seek a life of Christlikeness by the power of the Holy Spirit. For him, Christians, or Methodists in the eighteenth century were people who profess to pursue (in whatsoever measure they have attained) holiness of heart and life, inward and outward conformity in all things to the revealed will of God; who place religion in an uniform resemblance of the great Object of it; in a steady imitation of him they worship in all his imitable perfections; more particularly in justice, mercy, and truth, or universal love filling the heart and governing the life.  

Early Methodists were called to be active agents in their religious lives because they took seriously the call to obey Christ’s commands to follow him. Wesley stressed the need for the process of sanctification, growing continually towards the goal of Christlikeness. Wesley’s concern was discerning the principles of faith that would take hold in the life of a believer. He desired Christians to have a life they could live with integrity, which he understood as sincerity; ‘by sincerity I mean a real, inward principle of religion from whence these outward actions flow.’

As a result, Wesley sought a way of organised and ordered life that enabled persons to support, encourage and exhort one another in their common pursuit of sanctification.

Wesley’s approach to daily Christian living eschews the tendency to isolate aspects of Christian faith that plagues contemporary discipleship efforts. However, simply importing Wesley’s methods into the twenty-first century not only disregards the historical and cultural context of both settings, it also ignores pertinent and relevant contributions of social science in educational theory. Drawing upon MacIntyre to construct the framework and using Wesley’s eighteenth century context to illustrate the results of fragmentation, the Discipleship Matrix fulfils its purpose to define and examine the practice of discipleship in the Wesleyan spirit so that it might engage in cross-disciplinary dialogue with transformative learning. Consequently, the Discipleship Matrix provides a framework that offers Wesleyans and others committed to Christian transformation a thoughtful rubric by which they can participate in a sanctified life.

The Discipleship Matrix conceives of four elements (virtues, disciplines, ethos and telos) contributing in an integrated complex practice of discipleship. In the contemporary quest to craft institutional mission statements that echo the Great Commission, the Discipleship Matrix reminds contemporary Christians that making disciples requires the ongoing transformation of persons as they pursue sanctification. As an organising scheme, it depicts the Christian life as an integrated whole that fosters the process of sanctification or holy transformation. It constitutes an educational theory that provides a holistic approach to transformation.

It is possible to develop the Discipleship Matrix and the three components appropriated from TLT to offer a robust theory of Christian transformation for Christian educators and congregational leadership intent on developing disciples. A theory of Christian transformation can be represented by the Discipleship Matrix existing within an atmosphere dedicated to cultivating discrepant events, critical reflection and rational dialogue (Figure 14). A theory of Christian transformation stems from considering the ways in which discrepant events inspire and challenge disciples to participate in the Christian life and grow in Christlikeness. Critical reflection and rational dialogue provide opportunities for disciples to discern (both corporately and individually) in prayer about charting an appropriate course for the community or individual disciples to participate fully in the Christian life. Disciples who are intentional about their discipleship may find that the nature of the Christian life constitutes a discrepant event and that when the Christian life is subject to critical reflection and rational dialogue, genuine Christian transformation results.
The vertices of the *Discipleship Matrix* provide a rubric for discipleship in the Wesleyan tradition around which a set of formational questions can be crafted. These questions can prompt the critical reflection and rational dialogue processes of TLT to assess a disciple’s journey towards transformation in Christlikeness as well as evaluate the validity of a community to which a disciple belongs. The questions are not meant to be absolute, but are developed using the points and junctures of the *Discipleship Matrix* to guide disciples and their communities in deliberation and discernment for continued growth and development in their pursuit of sharing God’s love with the world. The purpose of these questions is to establish the ways in which each component is present and evaluate the component’s caliber for continual growth and nurture in Christian transformation.

These questions determine the extent to which persons are participating in daily disciplines and resultant transformation. The questions may be asked by Christian educators and congregational leadership charged with the responsibility of nurturing a community of faith. Yet, the following questions are not solely relevant to congregational leadership but also have application to individual disciples who seek to grow in their Christian discipleship. Therefore, the questions can be regarded by all persons who are concerned about nurturing, encouraging and challenging Christian disciples in pursuit of sanctification. They may be asked formally by leadership as they evaluate and envision ministry needs or informally by participants in a small group as well as individuals concerned about their ongoing personal daily discipleship.

*Virtues:*
- Are participants evidencing the fruit of the Spirit? In what ways?
- Which fruits are manifest? Which fruits are neglected?
- To what degree are participants growing and maturing in the evidence of the fruits?
- For what kind of character are participants known? by their family? by their friends? by their colleagues? by their fellow companions and fellow disciples?
- How are participants encouraged and challenged to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit?
- Can the participant or persons who know the participant attest to a transformation of character?
Disciplines:
- Is Christ being modelled through engagement in Christlike actions?
- In what actions do disciples regularly participate?
- How are those actions consistent with Christlike actions? How do they distract from Christlike actions?
- How often do disciples engage classical disciplines of faith or the means of grace?
- How are these actions connected to spiritual growth? What kinds of changes are yielded?
- What opportunities are provided for persons to experience something new about the Christian life? How often are these opportunities available?

Ethos:
- Is God made known in and by the presence of this community or small group?
- How is ongoing formation attended to by The General Rules (or contemporary reformulation) as a rule of life?
- How does the rule of life foster transformation within the community? Within lives of individuals?
- How is the community of faith distinguished from the surrounding culture? How does it relate to the surrounding context?
- How and where is community expressed/cultivated?
- To what extent is the group growing in intimacy with one another and with God?

Telos:
- Are participants growing in Christlikeness?
- How is the vision of Christlikeness shaped? Upon which authorities does the vision rest? Prayer? Scripture? Discernment with others?
- How is Christlike love expressed and incorporated into the process of sanctification?
- How is transformation towards Christlikeness envisioned? Evaluated?
Each component of the Discipleship Matrix is relevant to Christian educators and congregational leadership shepherding disciples at each stage of the Christian journey. However, the specific questions that are asked may change or take on different implications and significance depending on the nature of a Christian educational opportunity, whether it be a workshop, short term course, other offering or simply an aspect of a disciple’s daily life. Seekers in the nascent stages of the Christian journey might find questions about Christ or divine manifestation surprising. Yet, questions about the virtues and actions demonstrated in the seeker’s life are more concrete and help guide reflection on how the seeker’s life is different from yet similar to the life of Christ. Questions about the role of the community of faith demonstrates the support, encouragement and challenge other Christians provide to a new disciple in his journey towards transformation. At the same time, Christian educators need to provide for other, more mature disciples for whom questions about the quality of the presence of Christ are appropriate. But maturity in faith does not mean that significant junctures of life or other disorienting events that inspire further growth can make the more fundamental questions about engaging the disciplines, the presence of the fruit of the Spirit and participation in the community of faith any less relevant. Regardless of the stage of faith or maturity in Christ, such questions help ground disciples in the ongoing process of sanctification.

The mere presence of the components of the Discipleship Matrix does not necessitate a coordinated life of discipleship. Simply attending to the cultivation of virtue, the exercise of spiritual disciplines, participation in small groups, or seeking transformation in Christ only identifies and assembles the constituent elements needed to live a life of faithful Christian discipleship. Without coordination among the vertices, the problems that already confront the current situation are repeated. Navigation and progress in the journey toward sanctification occurs when disciples reside and operate along the axis and within the intersections of the Discipleship Matrix. Questions that lie along each axis begin to probe the mutually reinforcing relationship between related elements and how they function in the lives of individuals or how various programmes within a congregation coordinate with one another. Disciples, Christian educators and other congregational leaders do well to
regard the relatedness of engaging in spiritual disciplines to cultivate Christian virtue as well as how virtue motivates and disciplines disciples for continued and sustained exercise of the means of grace. Similarly, questions that connect *ethos* and *telos* along the horizontal axis probe the necessary relationship of how growth in Christlikeness is fostered by a community of like minded persons and how a Christian community can help manifest the Kingdom of God in their local context.

**Spiritual Disciplines and Virtues:**
- How does participation in spiritual disciplines manifest fruit of the Spirit?
- How do specific practices cultivate desired virtues?
- To what extent is engagement in spiritual disciplines motivated by fruit of the Spirit or by habit? Or by making sure the disciplines are done for purposes of accountability?
- To what kinds of events are disciples exposed that expand their cultivation of virtue and Christlike character?
- To what extent does the need for further growth in virtue or Christian character prompt expanding ministry opportunities?

**ethos and telos:**
- How is the purpose of the Christian life, growing in Christlikeness, expressed by the faith community? How is this purpose shared within the community’s local context?
- How does community/others define Christlikeness in this context? By what authorities (scripture, tradition) is the vision shaped?
- How is God’s leading discussed and acted upon?
- How do disciples and their communities impact and influence their surrounding context?
- How is human-divine interaction/relationship discerned?
- How is this relationship witnessed to within the community’s local and wider context?
Intentional disciples who diligently seek after Christlikeness understand (at some level) that attitude and mindset can both predicate and be conditioned by the activities in which they engage. While it might be preferred for a disciple to be motivated by Christian virtue before engaging in a spiritual discipline, the fact is, virtue alone does not always motivate disciples. There are times in a disciple’s life when it is necessary to be disciplined about engaging in the spiritual life. Seekers at the beginning of their faith journey can be eager and want to spend time pursuing spiritual disciplines. More mature disciples may have experienced that there are situations when internal motivations are contrary prior to engaging disciplines, but as a result of committing to and fulfilling a particular act of devotion or service, they find their disposition is altered for the better. All disciples, at each stage of the faith journey, can experience this lack of internal motivation to engage in the means of grace. Therefore, it is important for younger disciples to have mentors (and vice versa) so each may encourage one another in the faith. Similarly, it is important for disciples and congregational leaders to be vigilant about how ministry is an expression of the vision God has for the Kingdom. Wesleyan disciples are agents of God’s grace, seeking, empowered and equipped by the Holy Spirit to find Christlike expression of divine compassion and love for the world.

Just as each element of the Discipleship Matrix is mutually reinforced by a second component lying along its axis, each element also relates to the remaining components that are on the vertices adjacent to it. The questions formulated below are intended to connect adjacent components in order to probe the space created between the vertices.

_Virtue and telos:_
- How is love for God and neighbour demonstrated extra-rationally that involves a disciple’s affect?
- How do disciples grow and progress in love of God and neighbour with their full heart?
- What sort of vision is offered for disciples to become?
- How are vertices continually manifest in a person’s life?
- To what degree is virtue directed towards the purpose that is valued or prized?
- To what extent does the depth and breadth of virtue demonstrate progress towards perfection?

_Virtue and ethos:_
- How is love for God and neighbour expressed and exercised rationally?
- How do disciples grow and progress in love of God with their whole mind?
- What qualities and characteristics describe this discipleship group/relationship?
- How is the discipling group bearing the fruit of the Spirit?
- How is further cultivation attempted and achieved?

_Spiritual Disciplines and ethos:_
- In what aspects is love for God and neighbour demonstrated extra-rationally that involves a disciple’s will and effort?
- How do disciples cultivate and increase their love of God and neighbour using all their strength?
- How is God’s love being demonstrated within the group? Beyond the group? In the community?

_Spiritual Disciplines and telos:_
- How is love for God and neighbour expressed transcendently?
- How do disciples develop and progress in their love for God and neighbour with their entire soul?
- To what end or purpose is participation in means of grace aimed?
- How is the continual and sustained engagement in spiritual disciplines progressing a person’s faith?

The four quadrants of the Discipleship Matrix are related to one another as a coherent whole. Each of the quadrants describes unique ways love for God and neighbour can be expressed. The purpose is not to separate and compartmentalise the various quadrants from one another. Indeed, to overemphasise one quadrant or
neglect another hinders a disciple’s progress from being constant and true. It results in a journey that can be unsteady and erratic or a pathway that is skewed towards a different goal than loving God and neighbour. The four quadrants of the Discipleship Matrix, like the four constituent points, work together so that a disciple might continue in grow in holistic love for God and neighbour, continually experiencing transformation and increasing Christlikeness.

The Discipleship Matrix, guided by appropriate prompts from TLT, offers a theory of Christian transformation by which twenty-first century disciples might approach a particular way of living that is holistic and transformative. Transformation is faithful to the mission of God in this world and is infinitely creative as participants act in cooperation with the divine grace of God. A theory of Christian transformation offers a set of core concepts for persons and congregational ministries to help understand the four components of the Christian life—virtue, discipline, ethos and telos—as necessarily related to one another through the endeavour and practice of Christian discipleship, guided by critical reflection and rational dialogue as disciples examine their lived experiences in the endeavour to be faithful, transformed disciples of Jesus Christ.

The theory of Christian transformation proposed in this thesis helps Christian educators and congregational leaders think through the purpose of the various ministries offered in their settings and the relationship that exists between them. Though many programmes and studies offered in congregations provide formational experiences for participants, Christian transformation, the process of sanctification, relies on the underlying rationale that integrates the various ministries of the church so that disciples participate in a cohesive way of life that yields increasing Christlikeness. As persons experience deeper transformation and actively cooperate with sanctifying grace offered to them so, also, do communities experience transformation.

**Conclusion**

Contemporary discipleship efforts in United Methodism are inadequate as it concerns the nature of Christian transformation. The desired transformation of
persons into disciples of Jesus Christ who impact the world is at risk, despite numerous strategies that populate the field of Christian education. At best, the programmes and approaches of discipling ministries only approximate partial visions of what it means to be transformed in the Wesleyan tradition, or to participate in the process of sanctification. This thesis proposes that what is needed is a holistic and integrated vision of Christian discipleship, one that is consistent with the Wesleyan tradition and informed by TLT. Theological reflection of contemporary adult educational theory allows for a more robust understanding of what Christian transformation entails from an educational point of view.

The thesis appropriates MacIntyre’s theory of practice in order to investigate and diagnose the present situation as well as develop an understanding of Wesleyan discipleship as a holistic endeavour that is at once complex yet coherent. The theoretical framework identifies four constituent components of Christian transformation, virtue, disciplines, ethos and telos, that are integrated with one another and inseparable from one another. This framework also provides for cross-disciplinary dialogue between Wesleyan discipleship and TLT as well as a means for theological reflection for TLT. The resultant framework that incorporates pertinent aspects of TLT, the role of personal experience (including the presence or creation of the discrepant event), critical reflection and rational dialogue, contributes to the field of Christian education by offering a robust theory of holistic Christian transformation that occurs in the process of whole life, lifelong discipleship.

The theory of Christian transformation that emerges contributes to Christian education in a number of ways. First, Wesleyan theology posits that transformation involves a logic that does not simply encompass, but integrates virtue, disciplines, ethos and telos in the process of sanctification that occur in cooperation with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Christian discipleship or education in the faith entails holistic, ongoing lifelong pursuit of sanctification in which persons experience continual transformation in Christlikeness as divine grace is made available. Holy transformation occurs as disciples participate in ways of living that are woven together and endowed with God’s grace.
Second, this thesis provides a way for Christian educators to consider transformation from the standpoint of practical theology. As a result of the insights and theological reflection on TLT, it is incumbent on discipleship ministries to take seriously the role of personal experience (and the discrepant event), critical reflection and rational dialogue in the ongoing transformation of disciples, their faith communities and their particular contexts.

Third, just as discipleship and TLT each require a comprehensive, coherent logic, a theory of Christian transformation requires a coordinated, cogent response. Though transformation is ultimately the work of God, humans can participate and endeavour in continual transformation through the agency of the Holy Spirit as they utilise the insights of TLT to expand their understanding of what it means to participate in God’s Kingdom in this world. No setting or context is off limits. Indeed, the informal context of everyday life is the prime ‘classroom’ for disciples to engage in the pursuit of sanctification. Opportunities to reflect and dialogue with one another in the non-formal structures of small groups, workshops and retreats provide space to evaluate and envision continual transformation.

Further research for such a theory of Christian transformation is apparent. Christian educators and congregational leadership concerned with making, nurturing and supporting disciples of Jesus Christ in their journey of Christian transformation would not be adopting a new programme for implementation in their setting. Rather, the Discipleship Matrix could be used to help identify strengths that already exist within a ministry setting and discern areas that need attention. Leadership could then develop a coordinated or strategic approach that integrated their assets with emerging needs into a coherent plan for helping disciples seek more than formation in Christian living, but transformation as faithful disciples of Christ. Similarly, the Discipleship Matrix can be useful for individuals who want to experience transformation much in the same way the characters in the fictional vignettes did.

Regardless of application and potential usefulness to congregations or persons becoming disciples or furthering their discipleship, it is crucial to remember that transformation into Christlikeness is always a work of God. Persons may dedicate themselves to an earnest life of of discipleship, but they are transformed as
they cooperate with divine grace endowed by the Holy Spirit. Incorporating relevant aspects of TLT into a framework of Wesleyan discipleship does not diminish the efficacy of God’s grace. Rather, the framework and TLT help Christian educators, congregational leaders and faithful disciples have greater awareness and insight into the process of educating persons for transformation in cooperation with sanctifying grace.
Bibliography


Blevins, Dean G. ‘Communities of Holiness, Communities of the Spirit: Developing an Ecclesial Conversation for Discipleship.’ The Asbury Journal 60, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 97-109.


‘Transformational Teaching Insights from Neuroscience.’ *CEJ* 10 no. 2 (Fall 2013): 407-423.


Cohen, Larry R. ‘I Ain’t So Smart and You Ain’t So Dumb: Personal Reassessment in Transformative Learning.’ *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 74, (Summer 1997): 61-68.


________. ‘Nurturing Soul Work in Adult Learning.’ *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 74, (Summer 1997): 79-88.


_____. ‘Reconceiving Practice in Theological Inquiry and Education.’ in Murphy, Kallenberg and Nation, 161-182.

English, Leona M. ‘Reclaiming Our Roots: Spirituality as an Integral Part of Adult Learning.’ Adult Learning 12, no. 3 (June 2001): 2-3.


Kallenberg, Brad J. ‘The Master Argument of MacIntyre’s *After Virtue.*’ In Murphy, Kallenberg, and Nation, 7-29.


Leclerc, Diane. ‘Being Whole: Holiness and Sanctification as a Wesleyan Paradigm for Spiritual Formation.’ In Leclerc and Maddix, 48-64.


Marmon, Ellen L. ‘Cross-Cultural Field Education: A Transformational Learning Experience.’ *CEJ* 7, no.1 (Fall 2010): 70-84.


Morell, Amish and Mary Ann O’Connor. ‘Introduction.’ In O’ Sullivan, Morrell and O’Connor, xv-xx.


Rankin, Stephen W. ‘DISCIPLE Bible Study and Changed Lives.’ In Gunter and Robinson, 221-238.


________. ‘Fostering Transformative Learning.’ In Mezirow, Taylor and Associates, 3-17.

________. ‘Transformative Learning Theory,’ New Directions For Adult and Continuing Education no. 119, (Fall 2008); 5-15.


Vella, Jane. ‘A Spirited Epistemology: Honoring the Adult Learner as Subject.’ New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education 85 (Spring 2000): 7-16.


Young, Curtis J. ‘Transformational Learning in Ministry.’ CEJ 10, no. 1 (Fall 2013): 322-338.

Zeph, Catherine P. ‘Spiritual Dimensions Lay Ministry Program.’ New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 85 (Spring 2000): 77-84.