



Worship, Doctrine and Mission: The Contribution of Geoffrey Wainwright to a Developing Methodist Theology

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is threefold. First, it aims to honour the contribution made to Methodist scholarship, ecumenical dialogue and Christian theology by Geoffrey Wainwright. Second, it will set out some of the key elements in Wainwright's work and suggest how these very diverse enterprises might cohere. Finally, it will propose that eschatology and mission are twin themes that point to a lasting legacy for Wainwright's work.

Keywords: *Doctrine • Mission • Wainwright • Wesleyan • Worship*

Part 1: Biographical Introduction

Geoffrey Wainwright (1939—2020) was a British Methodist Minister and theologian. After an early period of missionary service as a theological educator in Cameroon, and a time teaching theology and biblical studies in Birmingham, England, he spent the rest of his active life in the United States, first (and briefly) at Union Seminary, New York, and then, for more than three decades, in Duke Divinity School, North Carolina. Though based in the US, he remained a minister of the British Conference and was, to the end, a proud Yorkshireman and cricket enthusiast. I should say that I owe Wainwright a personal debt of gratitude, as he was one of my early theology teachers and remained a friend and advisor for many years after.¹

Wainwright described himself as a systematic theologian, and so he was, in the sense that he was always concerned with the coherence and applicability of Christian truth-claims. It is important, though, to realise that – in spite of having (in his Union years) a chair formerly occupied by Tillich and MacQuarrie – he never saw himself re-writing Christian belief. Though well-read in philosophical theology, he had no interest in developing a philosophical foundation for Christian thought, nor in proposing revisionist accounts of traditional doctrines.² As he more than once remarked, he aimed to 'speak faith to faith', challenging Christians to be more theological, and challenging theologians to take faith more seriously. As I will argue, his understanding of theology was as an ecclesial discipline, deeply embedded in the church's twin tasks of worship and mission. As he says near the beginning of *Doxology*:

¹ A succinct biographical sketch can be found in: Cunningham, David, Ralph Del Colle, and Lucas Lamadrid, eds. *Ecumenical Theology in Worship, Doctrine, and Life: Essays Presented to Geoffrey Wainwright on His Sixtieth Birthday*. New York/ Oxford: OUP, 1999, pp 3–7.

² In this Wainwright was self-consciously distancing himself from his brother-in-law, the Anglican theologian Maurice Wiles, who proposed just such a revision. See Maurice Wiles, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine* (London: SCM, 1974).

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“In saying, then, that this book is written from faith to faith, I am in the first place saying that it is written within the community of belief and counts on the agreement of readers within the community that the Christian vision, of which it offers a more or less adequate version, does correspond to reality. But I am also saying that I should like the book to serve the eliciting of faith, at least in the indirect sense of making a theologian’s contribution to the clarification of the Church’s vision and to the more effective application of that vision and its further spread among the human community as a whole.”³

His work remains a gift to both the Wesleyan tradition and the wider Christian community.

Part 2: The many facets of Wainwright’s theology

Within this understanding of the theological task, Wainwright had a substantial and diverse output. He was difficult to pin down, moving between biblical studies, patristics, liturgical studies, the Wesleys and modern theology. For those not familiar with his varied output, here are some of the most obvious achievements of his career.

Wainwright brought liturgical scholarship into the service of theology

An enduring theme for Wainwright was the role of liturgy in developing theology, together with the role of theology in explicating liturgy. The tradition of ‘*lex orandi, lex credendi*’ (the rule of prayer is the rule of faith) was at the heart of his work, from the early monograph, *Eucharist and Eschatology*,⁴ through his *magnum opus*, *Doxology*,⁵ to his co-editing of *The Study of Liturgy*⁶ and *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*.⁷ Although not a liturgical scholar in the sense of researching the primary documents of liturgical history, he made the interaction between worship and theology the heart of his distinctive contribution to systematics. It is a contribution noted by such eminent – and contrasting – theologians as Wolfhart Pannenberg⁸ and Anthony Thiselton.⁹ From the Orthodox theologian, Nikos Nissiotis (one of his doctoral supervisors), Wainwright inherited the Orthodox understanding of theology as reflection on the liturgy. Realising that this puts him at odds with many of the theological trends of his day, he says, in the preface to *Eucharist and Eschatology*, “unless the thread of worship continues to be woven into the fabric of the church’s life and thought, then the defenders of the faith will soon find themselves with nothing left to defend.”¹⁰

Wainwright was a significant architect of international ecumenical agreements

Alongside the emphasis on worship and liturgy, Wainwright was a key figure in the ecumenical movement of the second half of the twentieth century, especially through his membership of the Faith and Order committee of the World Council of Churches. The highlight of this part of his career was the ground-breaking 1982 consensus document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.¹¹ Wainwright played a key role in drafting the text of this agreement; he worked tirelessly to promote and explain it, and he shared in the work of collating and commenting on the responses made to BEM by churches throughout the world.¹² It was important for Wainwright that the Faith and Order conference in Lima not only produced the document known as BEM, but also put together a working liturgy that reflected the convergence it had achieved. BEM remains one of the outstanding achievements of the ecumenical movement and most member churches of the WCC considered and made response to it. In the years since its publication, it has become usual to refer to it whenever working on these three areas.¹³

³ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (New York: Oxford, 1980). p. 4.

⁴ *Eucharist and Eschatology* (London: Epworth Press, 1971).

⁵ *Doxology*; *ibid.*

⁶ Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold, eds., *The Study of Liturgy* (London: SPCK, 1978).

⁷ Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen Westerfield-Tucker, eds., *The Oxford History of Christian Worship* (New York: OUP, 2006).

⁸ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols., vol. 3 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998). p. 208, note 342.

⁹ Anthony Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Eerdmans, 2007) p. 480.

¹⁰ Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* p. ix.

¹¹ WCC Faith and Order, “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry,” in *Faith and Order Papers* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982).

¹² Max Thurian and Geoffrey Wainwright, eds., *Baptism and Eucharist: Ecumenical Convergence in Celebration* (Geneva: WCC, 1983).

¹³ See, for example, the references in: Faith and Order Committee, “His Presence Makes the Feast” (Peterborough: Methodist Conference, 2003).

Wainwright brought the Christian classics of scripture and tradition into dialogue with the challenges of modernity and cultural pluralism

Few things made Wainwright so angry as the cliché, ‘doctrines divide, but actions unite’.¹⁴ He was convinced that Christian action was inseparable from the truth claims that made up Christian doctrine. Such action was an acting out of the Christian hope. There are no actions that do not imply an underlying theology (or some secular ideology) and no theology that does not have practical implications. Wainwright was an advocate of what has come to be called ‘generous orthodoxy’ but, nevertheless, orthodoxy was important. To be a theologian is to engage in the handing on of a living tradition, as faithfully as one can. This meant that Wainwright was essentially a conservative theologian, not in the sense that he wanted to pass on an unchanging set of propositions, but in the sense that all Christians are united by a common faith in Christ and a common (if diverse) set of practices. This meant the Wainwright was wary of a number of trends in late-twentieth-century theology. What we might call ‘identity theologies’, be they feminist, womanist, black, gay or some other, risked, he thought, dividing the church and putting something other than Christ at the centre of theology. Similarly, he took a cautious approach to the contextual emphasis in recent theology.¹⁵ He was also critical of the secular trend in the sixties and seventies that saw the world setting the agenda for theology.¹⁶ This does not mean that Wainwright was unconcerned with the contemporary world and with recent developments in theology; he had extensive discussions on culture and context. But he did prioritise unity over diversity, or rather he saw unity imposing some limits on diversity. I will come back to this issue later in the paper, as I believe it reflects both a strength and a weakness of Wainwright’s approach.

Wainwright was an advocate for the Wesleyan theological tradition in ecumenical dialogue

Alongside his work with the WCC Faith and Order committee, Wainwright was a frequent participant in other ecumenical dialogues, both formal and informal. He was, for many years, co-chair of the International Roman Catholic-Methodist conversations, but also shared in dialogues with Lutheran, Reformed and Orthodox leaders. As well as working with ecumenical colleagues for fresh consensus, Wainwright also defended Methodism as part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, deeply rooted in the worship, practices and beliefs of the universal Christian community. Conversely, Wainwright drew on these experiences of dialogue in work that urged his fellow Methodists to take a deeper interest in their doctrinal and liturgical heritage.¹⁷ Wainwright chaired the ecumenism group for a number of OIMTS (Oxford Institute for Methodist Theological Study) meetings and he provided papers for these, and for some plenary sessions. So, for example, he spoke on “Methodism and the Apostolic Faith” at the 1987 OIMTS,¹⁸ and on “The Ecumenical Rediscovery of the Trinity”¹⁹ at the 1997 meeting.

Wainwright was an avid reader and interpreter of contemporary theology

From the mid-seventies, for twenty-five years, Wainwright was commissioned by the journal, *The Expository Times*, to write regular articles on recent theology from continental Europe. This enabled him to employ his considerable linguistic gifts (he had read modern languages at Cambridge) to present German, French and (occasionally) Italian theology to an English-speaking readership. So, for example, 1977 found him discussing, among others, the original language editions of Schillebeeckx’s *Christ*, Jüngel’s *God as the Mystery of the World* and Rahner’s *Foundations of Christian Faith*,²⁰ while in one of his final articles (2000) he reported on recent French postmodern discussion of religion.²¹ Anyone reading these articles would receive an excellent introduction to contemporary European theology, given with a generous, though not uncritical, commentary. This work demonstrates Wainwright’s ability to

¹⁴ Geoffrey Wainwright, “Does Doctrine Still Divide,” *Ecclesiology* 2, no. 1 (2005).

¹⁵ *Doxology*, *Doxology*, ch XI, “Culture”.

¹⁶ See, for example, the critical references to the secularised missiology of Hans Hoekendijk in *Lesslie Newbigin: A Theological Life* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 165.

¹⁷ Wainwright’s ecumenical work is mostly found in short pieces collected together, as in: *Methodists in Dialogue* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1995).

¹⁸ *Methodists in Dialogue*, pp. 189–206.

¹⁹ Geoffrey Wainwright, “The Ecumenical Rediscovery of the Trinity,” *One in Christ* 34 (1998).

²⁰ “Recent Foreign Theology: Historical and Systematic,” *The Expository Times* 89, no. 2 (1977).

²¹ “Recent Continental Theology, Historical and Systematic,” *The Expository Times* 112, no. 1 (2000).

understand and appreciate theologies very different from his own in confessional identity, philosophical outlook and theological methodology. That he chose to work in a different way from these did not mean he could not write with respect about others.

Part 3: Worship, doctrine and mission as a threefold foundation for Wesleyan theology

If classical Anglican theology (as outlined by Richard Hooker)²² is defined in terms of scripture, tradition and reason, the Methodist tradition has famously added the ambiguous term ‘experience’ to make what we have learned to call ‘the Wesleyan quadrilateral’. Wainwright offers us a distinctive, and – I would argue – much-needed, alternative.²³ His triad of worship, doctrine and mission is, I further suggest, held together by the thread of unity, a reconciled diversity in liturgy, theology and action. Moreover, this triad is given its teleological direction by Christian eschatology, the vision of unending worship, an intimate knowledge of God and a share in the fulfilment of God’s mission.

It is worth repeating that Wainwright was not a theorist, in the sense of devoting time and energy to establishing an ideological foundation on which to build theology, or in developing a distinctive methodology. As Stanley Hauerwas once remarked, Wainwright was impatient with those who spent their time working out what they might do if ever they got round to some proper theology.²⁴ He was, therefore, a theologian of ecclesial practice. His work might, at first sight, appear esoteric and divorced from the realities of the world, but this is not, in fact, the case. The great themes of his work (worship, doctrine, mission) are rooted in the lived experience of the Christian community; they are all to be understood as ecclesial practice.

Worship as the centre of ecclesial life, the invitation to Christian commitment and the foundation for theology

One of Wainwright’s most profound theological reflections on Christian worship is found in his introductory essay for *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*.²⁵ I mention three aspects of this study as indicative of the way in which he developed the connections between worship, doctrine and mission. First, the assertion that worship is a supreme expression of the social constitution of humanity, created for community and redeemed into community. He says: “The social constitution of humankind finds redeemed embodiment in the Christian community at worship, even if its realization remains imperfect”.²⁶ Worship, in other words, expresses a Christian anthropology. Second, worship is an indicator of the nature of theology and the God who is its subject. In a (for Wainwright) rare reference to philosophy, he cites Wittgenstein’s discussion of language games and forms of life, and Austin’s speech-act theory, in order to describe worship as ‘the concentrated instantiation of an entire “form of life”’.²⁷ When Christians engage with God in worship, this is not simply the means of communion with God, it is an action that shapes the very idea of God’s reality and of divine action. The theology of liturgical words and actions takes us beyond a set of objective propositions and introduces us to subtle and changing uses of language. Third, in concluding a section on the nature of worship according to Romans, he says: “The interweaving between mission and praise, between evangelism and the worship of God is striking. It recurs in the doxology that concludes the letter to the Romans (16.25-27), the importance of which it is hard to overestimate for the understanding and practice of Christian liturgy.”²⁸ In other words, Wainwright sees the New Testament presenting us with a vision of worship that

²² Richard Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, 2 vols. (London: Dent, 1907). Hooker (1554 – 1600) is regarded as the most important apologist for the English Reformation during the reign of Elizabeth I.

²³ Wainwright addresses some of the issues connected with the ‘Wesleyan Quadrilateral’ in a discussion comparing Wesley with the Danish Lutheran, Grundtvig. Tradition, in Wainwright, *Methodists in Dialogue*, pp. 143–160. It is noteworthy that he relates experience to the hymns of the Wesleys’ and their place in worship.

²⁴ Based on a remark by Stanley Hauerwas in David Cunningham, Ralph Del Colle, and Lucas Lamadrid, eds., *Ecumenical Theology in Worship, Doctrine, and Life: Essays Presented to Geoffrey Wainwright on His Sixtieth Birthday* (New York/Oxford: OUP, 1999), xii.

²⁵ Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen Westerfield Tucker, eds., *The Oxford History of Christian Worship* (New York: OUP, 2006). Chapter 1, “Christian Worship: Scriptural Basis and Theological Frame”, pp 1-31.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

is essentially extroverted, looking out to the world and sending worshippers into it. This leads him, for example, to argue against the traditional Orthodox practice of restricting attendance at Divine Liturgy to those who are already baptised Christians. Worship, then, is at the centre of theological life. It is both the fount of our speech about God, and the activity shaped by our faith.

Doctrine as the shared witness of the believing community

I have already described Wainwright as a doctrinal theologian. Throughout his career he wrote on doctrinal topics, such as the Trinity²⁹ and the Holy Spirit.³⁰ He was, as we have seen, determined not only to represent Methodism as a branch of Christianity firmly rooted in classical doctrines and their sources in scripture and tradition, but also to urge his own confession to take that doctrinal heritage more seriously. Against those who might argue that Methodism is a faith made up of experience and action rather than creeds and confession, he strenuously defended Wesley's theological orthodoxy and Wesley's firm commitment to the doctrinal basis of faith. This common confession of faith is, like worship and mission, an ecclesial process; it is both constitutive and expressive of the nature of the Christian community.

Mission as theology lived out in action

Wainwright is not generally regarded as a missiologist, but mission was an important part of his life and theology from the beginning. As a young minister he went to Cameroon in West Africa, not simply to find an outlet for his academic gifts (he was teaching in a theological seminary in French), but as one committed to the missionary enterprise of 'offering Christ' to those who had not yet heard the gospel. In his first substantial work, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, there is a significant section entitled "An eschatological eucharist and an eschatological mission". In which he says: "The eucharist has an inescapable missionary significance insofar as it is the sign of the great feast which God will offer in the final kingdom to express forever the universal triumph of His saving will and purpose".³¹ He goes on to argue that the eucharist must be celebrated openly and in public, as a visible sign of the kingdom of God and as an invitation to enter into Christian commitment and action. This long-standing personal and theological commitment to mission comes to fruition in Wainwright's late volume, his theological biography of Bishop Lesslie Newbigin.³² It might seem surprising that a busy professional theologian such as Wainwright should have devoted so much precious research and writing time to someone who was from outside his own tradition and was not himself an academic, creating his most substantial monograph after *Doxology*. But, I want to argue, this book is in some ways the summation of Wainwright's theological work. The clue is in the book's subtitle, "a theological life". As he explains in the introduction, he intends this in two senses: he (Wainwright) is writing about the life of Newbigin from the perspective of a theologian who is interested in the theological issues which that life illustrates. Even more, he intends it to mean that it is an account of a life in which theology is expressed through action. Newbigin's life is itself a theological exploration and theological statement. There is, I think, an element of hero-worship in this book; Newbigin was, perhaps, the leader and man of action which Wainwright might like to have been had he not spent most of his career as a university professor.

Lesslie Newbigin is a well-known figure in the history of mission and ecumenism in the twentieth century. From a north-of-England presbyterian background, Newbigin went to South India as a missionary in the 1930s. He worked as an active evangelist, preaching, teaching, baptizing and nurturing new Christian communities. Though he never had the leisure for the kind of detailed scholarship that was Wainwright's way of life, he was, from the beginning, someone who reflected seriously on the theology of mission and his place in it. As the second world war came to an end, Newbigin was part of the leadership group that negotiated the basis for the emerging Church of South India, becoming, on its foundation in 1947, one of its first bishops. Alongside his episcopal work, which he saw as missional leadership,³³ Newbigin was increasingly involved in the life of the then recently-formed World Council of Churches, becoming, in 1961, its Director of World Mission and Evangelism. From that role, he returned to India for

²⁹ "Why Wesley was a Trinitarian" in , 261-276.

³⁰ "The Holy Spirit" in Colin Gunton, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), pp 273-296.

³¹ Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*. p.128.

³² *Lesslie Newbigin: A Theological Life*.

³³ Documented in his widely read account: Lesslie Newbigin, *A South India Diary* (London: SCM, 1951).

another lengthy period as bishop, before eventually returning to the United Kingdom. Having been engaged with mission across the globe, he became aware of the huge mission challenge represented by the secularized West. In Birmingham, England, he lectured to mission students (including myself) but also pastored a local church and wrote a series of works on the theme of Christian apologetics in a secular society. These included *The Open Secret*³⁴ and *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*.³⁵ Close to the end of his long life, Newbigin was the initiator of a movement called 'The Gospel and our Culture', which culminated in a major conference at Swanwick.

This is, in brief, the life and work that is given such an extensive examination by Wainwright. Even the short sketch above will have shown how Newbigin represents so many of the concerns that had occupied Wainwright in his own, more academic, career. The chapter headings give a good idea of the picture Wainwright wants to present. They include: "The Confident Believer", "The Direct Evangelist", "The Ecumenical Advocate", "The Pastoral Bishop", "The Missionary Strategist", "The Liturgical Preacher", "The Christian Apologist". It is a picture of a life in which worship, doctrine and mission converge and interact in a creative and fruitful way. As Newbigin came from the Reformed, rather than the Wesleyan tradition, this book (unlike most of Wainwright's output) does not have frequent references to John Wesley's sermons or Charles Wesley's hymns. Nevertheless, it sets out the approach to Wesleyan theology that Wainwright himself wanted to embody and commend.

This book demonstrates that Wainwright wanted his theological legacy to be practical and missiological, socially and economically engaged, culturally critical and relevant.

Unity, the path and goal of Christian theology

While Wainwright's own ecumenical career was largely in the field of Faith and Order, addressing those questions of belief and organisation that have divided the churches down the centuries, his work on Newbigin makes it clear that for him unity and mission were inseparable. All three of his theological foundations, worship, doctrine and mission, were dependent on a unified and reconciled Christian community. Worship is essentially a corporate activity and anything that prevents Christians from worshipping together is a serious distortion of God's intention and call. This is not about everyone having the same liturgy – though Wainwright was influenced by the mid-twentieth-century liturgical movement that led so many churches in a common liturgical direction – but it is about what is needed for Christians to be in communion with each other. Similarly with doctrine. Wainwright recognises the existence of a variety of doctrinal traditions, but he asserts that these different traditions need to be able to identify themselves and each other with the common Tradition that stems from the Bible and the early church.³⁶ One example of this would be the work on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, already cited. Another would be Wainwright's lectures addressing the long-standing divide between the Wesleyan and Reformed traditions on Christ's work of salvation.³⁷ Yet another would be his many contributions to the reconciliation of the Wesleyan and Roman Catholic doctrinal traditions.³⁸

Wainwright was also instrumental in ensuring that the World Methodist Council expressed its support for the Lutheran/Roman Catholic *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*.³⁹ In other words, ecumenism is, for Wainwright, an essential theological enterprise, demanding the theologian's full attention. It is of the essence of theology, with its object of reflection the God who is both unity and Trinity, and with its location in the ecclesial community called into being by the reconciling power of that God. Unity is inseparable from mission, therefore, both for the pragmatic reason that disunity hampers the church's presentation of the Gospel to a divided world, and for

³⁴ *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology* (London: SPCK, 1978).

³⁵ *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (London: SPCK, 1986).

³⁶ The distinction between Tradition and traditions is usually associated with the work of the fourth WCC Faith and Order Conference: P. C. Rodger and L. Vischer, "The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order: The Report from Montreal 1963," (London: World Council of Churches Faith and Order, 1963).

³⁷ See, for example, Geoffrey Wainwright, "Perfect Salvation in the Teaching of Wesley and Calvin," in *Methodists in Dialogue* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1995).

³⁸ One example would be, "Mary and Methodism," in *The Ecumenical Moment: Crisis and Opportunity for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

³⁹ Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

the theological reason that mission aims to draw humanity more and more into that reconciled unity for which Christ suffered and died.

The Eschatological Gaze: Worshipping, believing and missioning in hope

So far, this essay has focussed on what I have called the threefold foundation of Wainwright's Wesleyan theology: worship, doctrine and mission. I have set out how Wainwright addresses these and brings them together in his many contributions to ecumenical theology. As a final descriptor of his theology I want to focus on eschatology. This is a doctrinal topic on which he wrote throughout his career. Faithfulness to the historical doctrines of the faith is important, not because of the need to hold onto the past, but because they point us towards God's promised future. This is already evident in *Eucharist and Eschatology*, where he takes the eschatological work of biblical scholars like Schweitzer, and contemporary systematic theologians such as Moltmann, to help rediscover the eucharist as a forward-looking event. It returns in the closing pages of *Doxology*,⁴⁰ with its meditation on the coming kingdom of God, drawing in doctrinal affirmation, liturgical insight and Wesleyan hymnody.

Those looking for a succinct discussion of recent writing on Christian eschatology need look no further than Wainwright's essay on eschatology in *Keeping the Faith*, the collection of essays edited (perhaps surprisingly) by Wainwright on the centenary of the publication of *Lux Mundi*, a set of papers that had tried to relate Anglican theology to developments in modern thought.⁴¹ This is a *tour de force*, beginning with a survey of the discussion of Christian eschatology within and since *Lux Mundi*, going on to discuss key theological dilemmas (such as providence and predestination, body and spirit, salvation and damnation, eschatology and apocalyptic) and ending with a dogmatic confession of faith, drawing on biblical and patristic foundations, and shaped by reflection on liturgy.

Eucharist and Eschatology perhaps remains Wainwright's most original contribution to his discipline. He was influenced by authors such as Jürgen Moltmann, whose *Theology of Hope*⁴² made such an impact on theology in the sixties and seventies, and, though he never uses Moltmann's famous phrase, "the ontology of the not-yet", this has clearly had an impact on his insistence that the reality met and celebrated in the Eucharist is a reality that meets us from God's future kingdom and draws us towards it. His closing chapter⁴³ looks at eschatology in terms of divine gift and human appropriation, of material and spiritual elements, of its universal scope, and its openness to historical progress as well as drastic upheaval. All these aspects of eschatology are expressed and developed in the church's celebration of the Eucharist, its confession of faith and its sharing in God's mission.

Evaluation and Conclusion

This paper closes with some remarks about Wainwright's legacy to those situated within the Wesleyan theological tradition, particularly those for whom Christian mission continues to be a preoccupation. These are followed by some points of critique that suggest how Wainwright's work might be developed and – dare one say? – improved.

I hope I have shown that Wainwright was a significant and original systematic theologian, rooted in the Wesleyan tradition, but adept at relating to a wide range of Christian traditions. Furthermore, I believe that I have demonstrated that his work, though often consisting of occasional articles and essays, does in fact demonstrate a consistent and compelling understanding of the basis, method and goal of theology. I have identified this pattern as a weaving together of Worship, Doctrine and Mission, understood as ecclesial actions and constituting a living theology. This is a vision of theology with unity as a vocation and eschatology as a central theme. Eschatology, it must be emphasised, is itself a missiological doctrine. However, while Wainwright remains an important influence and a valuable source for missiologists, systematians and ecumenists, I would want to suggest a number of ways in which his theological trajectory could be extended. Here are a few:

⁴⁰ Wainwright, *Doxology*; *ibid.*, 456–462.

⁴¹ Wainwright (ed), Geoffrey Wainwright, ed. *Keeping the Faith: Essays to Mark the Centenary of "Lux Mundi"*. (London: SPCK, 1989), 341–370.

⁴² Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (London: SCM, 1966). Note that Wainwright cites the original German publication.

⁴³ Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, pp.147–151.

- A broader understanding of Christian orthodoxy, allowing for more local and cultural variation. Wainwright's concern for unity and his resistance to what I have called identity theology has been noted and has some validity. Nevertheless, his is very much a Western cultural and religious perspective. He does assert, in the preface to *Eucharist and Eschatology*, that his work in Africa has informed and confirmed many of his theological judgements. However, there is a need for greater variety than he allows. Other voices besides those from Europe and North America need to be prominent so that orthodoxy can become even more generous.
- Similarly, we could argue that theology and mission require a more positive engagement with contemporary secular culture than Wainwright seems to allow. In his work on Newbigin, he suggests that the bishop flirted with the nineteen-sixties secularising agenda of Hoekendijk and others, then praises him for turning decisively away from them. Contemporary theologians, wanting to be faithful to traditional Christianity, might nevertheless engage with the social and cultural trends in a more nuanced way. Catholic philosopher Charles Taylor, for instance, argues in *A Secular Age*⁴⁴ that we cannot simply deprecate developments like the Enlightenment or the current 'age of authenticity', but must accept them as part of the reality with which we have to grapple.
- A final critical point might look at the rather idealistic way in which Wainwright refers to the church, whether it is the Wesleyan tradition to which he belongs, or the ecumenical church that is the focus of his aspiration. In each case, there is a tendency for Wainwright to write from a point of abstraction, not necessarily engaging with the realities of the church that exists. His idealistic ecclesiology needs to be supplemented and corrected by engagement with the varied and often problematic realities of the churches as they actually are.

Having pointed to some limitations in Wainwright's theological outlook and, therefore, a need for contemporary Methodists to move beyond his boundaries, I would still conclude this paper by commending the method, content and achievements of this great Wesleyan theologian.

⁴⁴ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007).

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