WESLEYAN THEOLOGY AND METHODIST EDUCATION IN A POSTSECULAR SOCIETY

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Abstract:

This paper addresses the role of Wesleyan and Methodist education in contemporary multicultural and postsecular societies and asks whether communities inspired by an 18th century religious tradition can still be engaged in a positive dialogue with a new generation of students in the 21st century. This discussion is developed in four steps. First, I identify a growing gap between theological reflection and higher education as a challenge that needs to be addressed, so that the Wesleyan project to unit knowledge and vital piety can be pursued today. Second, I briefly recall the continuous role of education in the European Enlightenment and interpret its contemporary impact in light of recent discussions on secularism and the "postsecular society." Third, I turn to John Wesley to show how he was influenced by the Enlightenment and was able to develop a theological perspective that connected religious spirituality and the rationality of modern methodologies. Fourth, I conclude that schools, colleges, universities, and theological seminaries inspired by the Wesleyan and Methodist traditions may play a new role equipping communities to establish a fruitful dialogue with persons and groups with different comprehensions of religious life, culture, and science. This means that theological reflections on religion, faith, and spirituality should not be limited to questions of church membership but also engage in a dialogue with higher education, especially with students who now look for new ways to consider issues of religion and spirituality in public life. This would be similar to Wesley's project to unite knowledge and vital piety.

Keywords:

John Wesley, Enlightenment, Education, Multiculturalism, Globalization, Postsecular Society

Introduction

This paper addresses the role of Wesleyan and Methodist education in contemporary multicultural, global, and postsecular societies. It considers whether communities of faith inspired by an 18th century theological tradition can be engaged in a positive dialogue with a new generation of students in the 21st century who may not have traditional religious affiliation and are much influenced by rapidly changing cultures. My point of departure is a tension between religious and academic discourses, which often leads to a gap between theological reflection and higher education. As a result, theological reflection sees recent advances in the social and natural sciences as suspicious while higher education has difficulties in accepting authentic religious expressions as a matter of public life. There may have been good reasons to affirm this gap in the past, especially, but recent developments show that such strict separation is untenable.

Relying on recent philosophical discussions on the role of religion in public life, I take up this issue in four steps. First, I identify the strict separation between theological reflections and higher education as a problem that needs to be addressed because this dualistic view neither allows for these two areas to learn from each other nor contributes to a possible dialogue with new generations from different cultural backgrounds. Second, I briefly recall the continuous role of education in the European Enlightenment and interpret its contemporary impact in light of recent discussions on secularism and the "postsecular society." Third, I turn to John Wesley to show how he was influenced by the rationalization process of the Enlightenment and provided an example on how to question this strict separation. He established a dialogue with the cultural context and philosophical ideas of his time, was able to develop a theological perspective that connected religious spirituality and the rationality of modern methodologies, and had a large public, social, and historical impact. Finally, I briefly refer to recent discussions on the global nature of Methodism and the challenges of contemporary multicultural and global trends to suggest that schools, colleges, universities, and theological seminaries inspired by the Wesleyan and Methodist traditions may play a new role equipping communities of faith to establish a fruitful dialogue with persons and groups with different generations or comprehensions of religious life, culture, and science.

My conclusion is that theological reflections on religion, faith, and spirituality should not be limited to questions of church membership but resort to the Wesleyan tradition in order to engage with students who now look for non-traditional ways of being religious in a rapidly changing society. This theme is now recognized as part of public life and can be the subject of educational processes, so Methodist-related schools, colleges, universities, and seminaries around the world can serve as good partners in this endeavor. This conclusion is nothing but the affirmation that the Wesleyan theological and educational project of uniting knowledge and vital piety is still relevant and necessary today.

1. The tension between knowledge and spirituality

Theology and education were clearly held together by John Wesley in the context of the British Enlightenment. As it is well known, he insisted on the possibility of "uniting knowledge and vital piety." As Gary Best states, this connection is key to Wesley's views on perfectionism, especially because education has the function to improve humanity and lead to a proper knowledge of God. Thus, education has as its role "'to restore our rational nature to its proper state,' 'to discover every false judgment of our minds,' 'to subdue every wrong passion in our hearts,' 'to turn the bias from self-will, pride, anger, revenge and the love of the world, to resignation, lowliness, meekness, and the love of God'.[1]

However, this perspective has been questioned in several ways, so that less attention is now being given to education among scholars working in the Wesleyan and Methodist Studies. It almost appears that, contrary to Wesley's hopes, knowledge and spirituality are to be seen as irreconcilable. This important theme is being "forgotten" in contemporary discussions and this neglect needs to be questioned because it is the source of many challenges and problems that affect the current understanding and future impact of a community of faith based on the Wesleyan and Methodist traditions. Education is also important because it helps us navigate the various challenges related to the role of Wesleyan and Methodist theology in a multicultural and global society.[2]

One historical reason for this neglect may be related to the traditional charge of *rationalism*, i.e. the assumption that the Enlightenment project corresponds to a univocal process that imposes a particular understanding of science while rejecting any expression of emotions, including religious enthusiasm or aesthetic sensibilities.[3] According to this view, scientific considerations are intrinsically at odds with religious beliefs, as exemplified by the positions advocated by many radical philosophers such as David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant. Today, this is expressed by means of an anti-intellectualism in religious matters and an emphasis on utterly emotional experiences.

Another reason for the growing tension between knowledge and piety may be related to *Eurocentrism*, i.e. the charge that the Enlightenment project is connected to the 18th century British context and its corollaries such as imperialism, slavery, colonialism and an exploitative capitalism[4]. This

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1 Wesley, J. *Thought on Educating Children* [1783] in Jackson, T. *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 13, pp. 476-477 quoted by Best, G. "Education from a Methodist Perspective"

2 Love, J. "United Methodism in a Global Context: Navigating the Local and the Global," p. 6; Robbins, B. *A World Parish? Hope and Challenges of The United Methodist Church in a Global Setting* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004); Carter, K. Pieterese, H. *et alli*, "The Poor in a Global Church: What is at Stake for United Methodists?" (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2008); Gibson, W., Forsaith, P., and Wellings, M. (Eds.) *The Ashgate Research Companion to World Methodism* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013).

3 To understand the context see Kroll, A. *et al.*, *Philosophy, Science and Religion in England (1640-1700)*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

4 On this see Robert, D. *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* (Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), ch. 4;

imperialistic view was conceived in terms of a center-periphery structure and then imposed upon the variety of ethnic and cultural traditions around the world without recognizing their particularities or their values.[5] As a result any initiative coming from this context is biased and perceived as a disguised tool for the domination of other cultures. This is often observed today in discussions about church polity and the call for a more postcolonial approach to theology.[6]

Yet another reason for this neglect seems to be the assumption that religious or theological views are incompatible with a culture of *liberalism*. Liberalism informed economic practices and not only influenced political systems, educational processes, and intellectual endeavors but also led to s strict separation of church and state as well as the rise of secularism.[7] As a result, liberal education is often seen as suspicious because it may help to trigger these processes. Today, liberalism is seen as elitist, disconnected from the real world, irrelevant to social issues, and indifferent to religious convictions.

How do these assumptions affect the Wesleyan and Methodist tradition? Undoubtedly, the Wesleyan movement and the birth of Methodism are surely linked to these processes and often confused with them, so it is not surprising to see the attempt to separate things and disconnect contemporary expressions of this theological tradition from strict scientific methodologies, controversial European roots, and suspicious cultural or intellectual values that supposedly lead to the secularization of society.[8] One of the results of these tensions is a growing gap between theological reflections within church settings and the more academic discussions in educational and scientific institutions, especially in those linked to higher education. To put it bluntly, there is an attempt to strictly separate theological reflections from higher education as a way of freeing theology from what is perceived as a pernicious influence.

These assumptions of incompatibility between theological reflection and higher education are not warranted. Neither an analysis of the educational processes generated by the Enlightenment nor John Wesley's views theology and education support these claims. Neither does the history of the Wesleyan movement nor the evolving of Methodism around the world, and nor even the contemporary predicament of Methodism in relation to global society support this conception of a strict dualistic separation between faith and reason, between religion and education, between church and school or between theological

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5 Nausner, M. "Kulturelle Grenzerfahrung und die methodistische Konnexio," in *Kirchliches Leben in methodistischer Tradition: Perspektiven aus drei Kontinenten*, ed. Michael Nausner (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2010), pp. 273-295; Pieterse, H. "A Worldwide United Methodist Church?" in *Methodist Review: A Journal of Wesleyan and Methodist Studies*, Vol. 15 (2013), pp. 8-14.

6 Rieger, J. *Christ and Empire: From Paul to Postcolonial Times* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007); Robinson, E., "Restructuring The United Methodist Church In an Age of Empire," *GBHEM Monographs* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2007); see also Pieterse, H. "A Worldwide United Methodist Church?," p. 16. Nausner, M. "Kulturelle Grenzerfahrung und die methodistische Konnexio," pp. 50-53, especially his reading of Timothy Hall on Methodist itinerancy in relation to the British colonial project.

7 Haywood, R. "Was John Wesley a Political Ecnomist?" in *Church History* , Vol. 33, No. 3, pp. 314-321.

8 Love, J. "United Methodism in a Global Context: Navigating the Local and the Global," *Occasional Papers* [General Board of Higher Education and Ministry] (Nashville: GBHEM, 2006), pp. 5-6, 12-13.

education and higher education. However, this point remains under-researched because this matter has been eclipsed by recent discussions on church growth and structural changes, even though the educational system based on the Wesleyan and Methodist traditions corresponds to nearly 13% of all church-related institutions (and almost 5% of institutions of higher education) in the United States alone and has a similar impact worldwide.[9]

In what follows, I want to argue that the Wesleyan and Methodist tradition of theological reflection is intrinsically related to educational processes that now form a global network of schools, colleges, universities, and seminaries connected to local churches, conferences, and national institutions related to Methodism. In my view, this unique combination – originally thought in terms of a structure to unite knowledge and vital piety – is one of the strengths of global Methodism and a way of engaging in a dialogue with new generations that are less connected to traditional religious communities and learn most of what they know about faith, religion, and spirituality while enrolled in higher education. Precisely due to this new constellation of facts, it would be good for sound theological reflections to inform the practices in higher education in the same way as educational theories and practices should provide references for theological reflections.

2. The role of Education: From the Enlightenment to a Global Postsecular Society

In order to go the roots of the problem, I want to start with a brief consideration of the Enlightenment. This shall be the starting point for a consideration of the tension between theological education and higher education because I want to offer an interpretation of the Enlightenment as a multicultural process that has many expressions related to "multiple modernities." My goal is to affirm that it is always necessary to identify or specify what one takes from a variety of understandings of the Enlightenment, instead of simply generalizing certain clichés.

First, when talking about the European Enlightenment, there is a wider context behind the term, which is not always acknowledged. The Italian Renaissance is also a period of *Iluminismo* that sees innovation in the arts, sciences, humanities, and other endeavors. During the emergence of Spain as a super-power in the 16th century, one can observe the Spanish golden Age [*siglo de oro de España*] and the use of the term *Iluminismo* as well. Later, in the 17th century, as the Netherlands had their own revolution in 1747 and began to question the Spanish hegemony to assume a position of leadership in trade and international relations, the Dutch had their version of the Enlightenment as well, *Verlichting*. This period coincides with the work of Grotius, the paintings of Rembrandt and Vermeer, the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza, and many

[9] Jacobsen, D. & Jacobsen, R. "The Ideals and Diversity of Church-related Higher Education" in Jacobsen, D. & Jacobsen, R. (Eds.) *The American University in a Postsecular Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 71-75).

other achievements in science and technology.[10] The English *Enlightenment* becomes more important as Britain emerges as a leading nation after the Glorious Revolution in 1688. Building partially on the works of John Locke, many British institutions were then established, enshrining principles such as the separation of Church and State, the toleration of different religious beliefs, and the affirmation of an ambiguous and overarching concept of "private property" that proved so crucial in the development of all forms of liberalism.[11] However, it is in the *Scottish Enlightenment* that we find new cultural, scientific, and aesthetic perspectives represented by the works of Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, and Adam Smith. Beyond that, two other specific national concepts emerge as part of the European Enlightenment: the German *Aufklärung* championed by Christian Wolff and Immanuel Kant[12] as well as the French *Lumière*, exemplified in the works of Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, and Jean Jacques-Diderot.[13] With these various examples, I passed very briefly over several contexts that deserve more attention and depth of analysis. Nevertheless, I believe they suffice to make my main point clear: there is a variety of conceptions of the *Enlightenment* in Europe. To put it in even more provoking terms, the European Enlightenment is a "multicultural process."

Second, it is not enough to observe this multiculturalism without considering questions concerning capitalism, Eurocentrism and postcolonialism, so I want to add examples of "multiple modernities" that indicate similar processes occurring in colonial contexts at the same time. Liberation theology and liberation ethics affirm the importance of the periphery and can be related to Methodist theology, thus helping us in this task.[14] For instance, Enrique Dussel's liberation ethics [*Ética de la Liberación*] provides us with two perspectives in this regard.[15] On the one hand, he shows how Eurocentrism allowed several European empires to succeed in leading world affairs for nearly 500 years: From 1492 to 1630, the center was formed by Spain and Portugal, while Holland became the center from 1630 until 1688, between 1688 and 1813, France and England shared a kind of hegemony, but after the British army won the Battle of

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[10] Israel, J. *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity – 1750-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), especially part II, pp. 157-436 and

[11] Porter, R. *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York: Norton, 2000).

[12] Kant, I. "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" in *Werke* [*Akademieausgabe*] (Berlin: Königliche Akademie der Wissenscahften, 1902f.), Bd. 8, pp. 35-42; See also Gerhardt, V., Hosrtmann, R.-P., and Schumacher, R. (Hrsg.) *Kant und die Berliner Aufklärung: Akten des IX. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses* [5 Bände] (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001.

[13] Gay, P. *The Enlightenment* (New York: A. Knopf, 1969), Vol. 2, especially on "the politics of education," pp. 497-535.

[14] Bonino, J.-M. *Doing theology in a revolutionary situation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1975) and "Methodism and Latin American Liberation Movements" in Rieger, J. and Vincent, J. (Eds.) *Methodist and Radical: Rejuvenating a Tradition* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2003); Rieger, J. "Methodism and Liberation Theology" in Gibson, W., Forsaith, P., and Wellings, M. (Eds.) *The Ashgate Research Companion to World Methodism* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), ch. 11.

[15] Dussel, E. (1992) *1492: El encobrimiento del Otro* (La Paz: Lugar Editorial, 1992); *Politics of Liberation: A Critical Global History* (Edinburgh: SCM Press, 2011), *Ethics of Liberaton* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

Waterloo in 1813, England became the most important Empire until 1945, when its supremacy was superseded by the bipolar rule of the United States and the Soviet Union.[16] After 1989 the United States became the unipolar Empire.[17] On the other hand, Dussel follows Gustavo Gutiérrez in insisting that the American, African, and Asian peripheries represented an "underside of modernity" – or, as Walter Mignolo puts it, the "darker side of the Renaissance" – in which independent values emerged but were negated by the center.[18] Thus, if we adopt this critical perspective, we can observe even more different versions of Enlightenment which can be related to the movements for independence and liberation. Roughly speaking, this occurs in the Americas between 1776 and 1835, appears in the struggle for independence of Asian countries from the British Empire between 1880 and 1949 – especially with the independence of India and the Cultural Revolution in China – and, more recently, is exemplified by the African experiences of liberation after the 1960s and the end of *apartheid* in 1994.[19] All these are forms of being 'postcolonial'. For sure, my examples are cursory, but I hope to have at least indicated that the Enlightenment is not limited to Europe and can be seen as a continuous process of liberation with different contextual outcomes.

Third, in these historical examples of Enlightenment there is a constant emphasis on education as an element of liberation, often related to religious expressions. For instance, this can be seen in the case of British Enlightenment. In his analysis of Protestant and Evangelic movements in Britain during the 18th century, especially the economics of Methodism,[20] Max Weber mentions how these movements were influenced by the Enlightenment and yielded a type of "intellectualism of the masses" [*Massenintellektualismus*]. Weber indicates that this feature was based on a particular way of understanding education that had a profound impact in the United States.[21] As a matter of fact, in an article on "Connectionalism and College" Russel Richey states that Methodism in the United States has always nurtured a connection between church and education.[22] In other publications Richey has returned to this topic to consider recent discussions on the future of Methodism. He mentions the role of education,

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16 Dussel, E. *Ethics of Liberation*, pp. 1-51; *Politics of Liberation*, chs. 6, 8, and 9.

17 Dussel, E. *Politics of Liberation*, pp. 501-528.

18 Gutiérrez, G. *Teología desde el reverso de la historia* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1979); Dussel, E. *The Underside of Modernity* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1996); Mignolo, W. *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995). Seel also Dussel, E. *Politics of Liberation*, ch. 7, especially pp. 237-240.

19 See Mignolo, W. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Keller, C., Nausner, M. and Rivera, M. (Eds.) *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (Atlanta: Chalice Press, 2004).

20 See Wesley, J. Sermon 87, "The Danger of Riches" in *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989, Vol. 3) and "The Use of Money" (in *Works*, Vol. 2).

21 Gay, P. *The Enlightenment. An Interpretation* (New York: Vintage, 1967) Vol. 1; Weber, M. *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1920), and *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1985).

22 Richey, R. "Connectionalism and College" in *The Quarterly Review*, Vol. 8/4 (Winter 1998-1999), p. 332.

and proposes that we look back to 1884, when "Methodism, the MEC [Methodist Episcopal Church] at least, was consolidating the educational apparatus – colleges, universities, seminaries – that would eventually orient towards social gospel and liberal directions."[23] Similarly, the role of liberation theology in Latin America cannot be disconnected from the proposal for liberation education or, more precisely, the "liberation pedagogy" proposed by Paulo Freire.[24] Thus, in the 1960s a similar educational movement with a focus on the poor and excluded could be observed in the Methodist movement in Latin America, as registered – for example – in the document *Guidelines for Education in the Methodist Church* [*Diretrizes para a Educação na Igreja Metodista*] which was elaborated in the late 1970s.[25]

Finally, this important but subtle point seems to have been neglected for a long time in main discussions about Wesleyan and Methodist theological studies, even though it has become a very important issue in secular studies about education, economics, politics, and society. As a matter of fact, there are now discussions about a "postsecular turn" in which some of the strict separations we mentioned above are being questioned. There is a growing recent secular interest in religion which is not to be interpreted as necessarily confessional, apologetic or psychological. Rather, this is a response to the "fact of pluralism" and the "reality of globalization." A series of events in the last decades constitute a growing wave that imposed itself upon us. For instance, the election of Jimmy Carter to the presidency of the United States in 1976 and the emergence of an evangelical Moral Majority that supported conservative politics in the 1980s is just a first example of the social and political impact of religion in modernity, which was contrasted and complemented at the time by the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979, which triggered a series of attempts at establishing other Islamic states based on *Shari'a* law in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and North Africa.[26] A similar process could be seen in the discrete role of religious movements in the democratization process of East Germany and the Soviet Union around 1989 as well as the emergence of new democratic governments in Latin America in the 1990s which were inspired by liberation theology. Obviously, these events occur in the same postcolonial contexts where we previously observed different forms of Enlightenment and the contrast between center and periphery.

As these contexts and their cultures were recognized, multicultural societies began to emerge which made room for the recognition of a variety of religious views linked to minority groups that claimed the right to express their identity and beliefs in the public sphere. It is, therefore, in light of this

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[23] Richey, R. "The United Methodist Church at 40: Where Have We Come From?" in *Methodist Review*, Vol. 1 (2009), p. 30.

[24] Freire, P. *Pedagogia do Oprimido* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1970) and *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1994).

[25] Igreja Metodista, *Diretrizes para a Educação na Igreja Metodista* (São Paulo: Imprensa Metodista, 1982).

[26] Marty, M. and Appleby, R.S. (Eds.) *Fundamentalism Observed* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991); Casanova, J. *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994)

wider context that we can talk about a certain continuity between the Enlightenment of the 18th century and the postsecular society in the 21st century.

In *A Secular Age* Charles Taylor has recently insisted that it is possible to affirm "secularity" as a result of Enlightenment processes but at the same time recognize an important role of religion and confessional allegiances to both individual and collective identities. He begins by viewing secularity in way that encompasses the various forms of secularism and secularization, defined as follows: "secularity 1" corresponds to the privatization of religion, "secularity 2" is the decline of religious practice in general, and "secularity 3" is the recognition that religious beliefs can be challenged and, therefore, need to be justified in relation to the "whole context of understanding in which our moral, spiritual, or religious experience and search takes place" (2007:2-3). One example is his research on the sources of the "Self" in modern Europe, in which a particular conception of individuality emerged (1989), and another example is how a particular Protestant conception of individuality influences society in such a way that "society itself comes to be reconceived as made up of individuals" (2007:146). Yet another point is how this is connected to universality in ethics (2007:532). Due to all these aspects, Taylor insists on the need to acknowledge "the immanent frame," which is the conditional "sensed context in which we develop our beliefs" (2007:13). For Taylor, the very idea of a secular age is the result of a religious development that we should not neglect.

Similarly, Jürgen Habermas has discussed the concept of a "postsecular society."[27] He defended that the tradition of the Enlightenment is "not incompatible with particular sensibilities of multiculturalism" but rather guarantees the free expression of religious faith according to a "public use of reason by religious citizens."[28] This practice, however, requires a learning process, thus being directly connected to education. This can be seen in Habermas' conversations with the Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in Munich, in which he stated that an impartial state cannot simply generalize a secularistic perspective, but rather needs to allow both secularized citizens and citizens holding religious views to bring their contributions to public debate in a democratic way. In this context, he speaks of a "potential truth" in religious convictions. According to him, there is a "change in the form of religious consciousness that can be understood as a response to the challenges of modernity, whereas the secular awareness of living in a post-secular society gains a sophisticated articulation in a post-metaphysical mindset".[29] Habermas uses the term postsecular for the "sociological description of a tending awareness change in secularized or 'de-churching' [*entkirchlichten*] societies which have realized the continuity of religious communities and

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[27] Habermas, J. *Postmetaphysisches Denken II* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012), p. 326-327.

[28] Habermas, J. *Nachmetaphysiches Denken II* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012), p. 317) See also Habermas, J. *Religion und Naturalismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005).

[29] Habermas, J. *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005), p. 12.

now count with the influence of religious voices both in the national public spheres as well as in the world political stage."[30]

Undoubtedly, the emergence of multicultural societies is an outcome of the Enlightenment, which has also brought about the need to recognize several religious views and consider the conditions under which religious individuals can bring their contributions to the public life. Thus, we now experience a new moment in which many assumptions regarding the incompatibility of religion and science, religion and secularism, and religion and a democratic way of life have been questioned anew. Conversely, religious persons of different faiths do not have to be ashamed of expressing their views with fear that they are simply a private matter. A person of faith can neither be deprived of important meanings and insights nor have to refrain from her religious convictions when participating in public life. This point is surely relevant for our discussion about a new way to make knowledge and vital piety compatible, especially as we talk about Wesleyan education. Based on this more dynamic understanding of a process that goes from the Enlightenment to a contemporary multicultural, postcolonial, educational, and postsecular global society we can shed new light to Wesleyan theology and Methodist education, thus making them relevant for the 21st century. This requires us to go back to John Wesley and the context of 18th century British Enlightenment.[31]

3. Wesley's Views on Education: Uniting Knowledge and Vital Piety

The Wesleyan Movement arose within the university context during the 18th century and was influenced by the Enlightenment in many ways: through the emphasis on education, the stress on rationality, scientific method, political engagement, a new economic behavior and engaged social practices. However, as registered in his *Works*, Wesley was able to establish rules for spirituality, consistent with rationality.[32] He aimed at connecting faith and reason. Holiness, in his view, was a practice that needed continuous exercises in order to become strong and coherent. This model inspired the creation of various educational projects, starting with Kingswood School in 1748.[33]

Many other aspects could be mentioned, but I would like to center my attention on the fact that, based on the contexts of the British Enlightenment, Wesley was actually questioning the dualistic

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30 Habermas, J. *Postmetaphysisches Denken II*, p. 121.

31 I have been pursuing this subject for quite some time. See Nascimento, A. "Educação como forma de inclusão: a dialética do Iluminismo e o sistema educacional metodista na Inglaterra" in *Impulso* Vol 11, Número 25, 1999, pp. 119-145, where I discuss these issues in relation to the "dialectics of the Enlightenment".

32 Wesley, J. *The Works of John Wesley* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1989f.) hereafter cited as *Works*.

33 Best, G. *Wesley and Kingswood [1738-1988, 250th Conversion Anniversary]* (Bridgwater: Bigwood & Staple Ltd, 1988).

assumptions we see today and proposing a way to connect knowledge and vital piety.[34] He will be seen here not necessarily from a biographical point of view or from an internalist confessional perspective, but from the postsecular viewpoint that looks at his theological and educational positions in relation to the philosophical, political, scientific, and social discussions of his time. Altogether, these considerations will help us to understand the intimate relationship between Wesley, the university and the intellectual environments of his time.

John Wesley had strong connections with education and the university *milieu*. He arrived to Oxford University in 1720,[35] and soon became a member of Christ College. His brother, Charles Wesley, began his studies at this same place six years later, and they immersed themselves in the study of classics, philosophy, literature and history, science and medicine, as well as the theology. John Wesley graduated in 1727, with both a *Baccalaureus Artium* and a *Magister Artium*. In September 1725, he was ordained deacon in the Cathedral at Oxford and in 1728 he was ordained to the priesthood, but remained *inter sylvas academicas* and very much influenced by the academic environment. He was "Fellow" of Lincoln College and remained connected to the academy until 1751.[36] From 1726 to 1730 and also between 1729 and 1734 he was "Lecturer in Greek", from 1726 to 1730 he acted also as "Lecturer in Logic", and between 1730 and 1735 he worked as "Lecturer in Philosophy" at Oxford. Starting in 1731 he became responsible for presiding the public debates in Lincoln College. All this shows already an intensive activity that certainly made him put his training in formal logics, rhetoric and argumentation into practice. This certainly became something of great value to him later in life, as he presented his sermons and entered into polemic debates. At the same time he exercised these functions, Wesley also kept several positions as preacher at different chapels in Oxford.[37]

This university context and the long time during which Wesley was connected to it reveal already some key elements of 18th century Enlightenment. In Wesley's case, however, there was a very peculiar form of Enlightenment, for he wanted to relate methodical discipline and spirituality, rationality and emotion, university and church.[38] But extremes such as these are not always made compatible or explained so easily, so most of the times they are not seen as compatible. For instance, from a political perspective Wesley was always a Tory, and therefore a conservative, who was also opposed to the

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[34] Here I presuppose a vast literature on this theme, Gay, P. *The Enlightenment. An Interpretation* [2 Vols] (New York, Vintage, 1967) and Weber, M. *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (Tübingen, JCB Mohr, 1920). See also Weber, M. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1985).

[35] Green, V.H. *Religion at Oxford and Cambridge* (London: SCM Press, 1964); Aston, T.H. (ed.) *The History of the University of Oxford* [The Eighteenth Century, Vol. 5] (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

[36] Wesley, J. *The Works of John Wesley* (Abingdon Press: Nashville, 1989), Vol. 1, p. 2.

[37] For details see Heitzenrater, R.P. *John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1972), p. 332-408.

[38] Simpson, David *Romanticism, Naturalism and the Revolt against Theory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), p. 36; Brantley, R. *Locke, Wesley and the Method of English Romanticism* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1983).

American Independence; while on social issues he was a progressive person. From a religious point of view he remained a "High churchman" within the Anglican Church, while on the other hand he led an alternative religious movement that was then called Methodist and later became a separate confessional body. Moreover, one can also find a clear trace of tension between different classes within Methodism, for Wesley was part of the Anglican elite, but at the same time he tried to bring religiosity to the masses, as he defined that Christianity was a social religion.[39] Beyond that, he was a perfectionist, a behavior that was not changed by his personal mystical-religious experience in 1738, but at the same time he always recognized the human limits, thus championing a *sui generis* doctrine of grace. Is there any clear mediation between these extremes? Instead of forcing an answer to this question at this point, I would like to highlight this complex context of several elements that represent different poles in tension and call the attention upon three aspects:

1. Wesley insisted on the rationality and the method of the natural sciences and attempted to adapt these premises to daily life by means of a methodical discipline;
2. he had a *sui generis* views on religion, with emphasis on issues such as grace, santification and other theological doctrines that represent the opposite pole to earthly matters;
3. his translation and application of this double dimension of rationality and religion into a social and educational project led him to create schools and develop new educational methods.

There is a constant tension between these poles in Wesley's thinking, which could be interpreted in terms of extremes that can lead to conflicting positions. The emphasis on methodical rationality, for instance, would yield easily to a form of positivism that puts all hopes of humanity on the natural sciences. On the other hand, spirituality and emotion alone may lead to an enthusiastic fanaticism – what Wesley always tried to avoid. What would be the middle term? The suggestion above is to explore a third possibility in the form how Wesley implemented social and educational projects that are deeply indebted to the Enlightenment. In what follows I shall explore with more details some of the tensions already mentioned.

The tension between the rationality of scientific method and the spirituality of religion

Regarding the rationality of the scientific method, Wesley was very well informed about the historical, social, and natural sciences in the 18th century. As evidenced by his library and the donations he made to Kingswood School, he read the *Works* of Joseph Addison, was surely interested in history and, due to his

[39] Mesquida, P. "Metodismo e Educação no Brasil: Formar elites e civilizar a nação", in *Revista do Cogeime*, 2, No. 2, 1993, p. 29-50.

professional work in the philosophical field, he also had access to the works of René Descartes, David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Voltaire.[40] Besides his sermons, in which he dealt with the above themes from a theological perspective, Wesley had an encyclopedic knowledge, which motivated him to launch projects similar to those of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot e D'Alembert and the writings of Voltaire.[41] He was also interested in science and published several manuals on physics, electricity, rhetoric, medicine and others.[42] Among the books one could find in his library we see treatises by Linnaeus, books by Voltaire, the *Dictionaire Historique et Critique* of Pierre Bayle, several works by Hobbes, Berkeley, Newton and Locke, as well as chemical treatises by Robert Boyle and works on electricity by Benjamin Franklin. However, instead of launching a large collection for academic reference he decided to write a series of simple manuals on a variety of themes, always publishing them in popular editions that became best-sellers.[43]

Many of the ideas he propagated by these means were based on an eclecticism that would sound absurd today. For example, according to a scientificist trend of that time, Wesley tried to make faith and natural science compatible by means of a physico-theology. For that matter – and especially after the earthquake in Lisbon –, he studied about earthquakes, volcanoes, electricity and astronomy, trying to find a common logic in these different natural events, thus aiming at finding the key to God's operations – even though he never affirmed this thesis in a radical way. On the other hand, he even tried to articulate a cosmology as an alternative to the mechanics of Newton. As he said: "It will be easily observed that I do not deny but only doubt of the present [Newtonian] system of astronomy".[44] The history of science proves how much Wesley was wrong in these areas.

But this does not necessarily affect the main point, which is his emphasis on method. Wesley always affirmed the primacy of science over common sense and cultural beliefs. Even in his sermons he tackled this theme and put forward several challenges to the philosophers of common sense, such as Shaftesbury, Joseph Butler, Francis Hutchenson and Adam Smith.[45] His dispute against David Hume is also a case in point, even though he criticized Hume for many other reasons, such as his skepticism, his

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[40] MacMillan, K. "John Wesley and the Enlightened Historians," *Methodist History*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2000), pp. 121-132; Maddox, R. "John Wesley's Reading: Evidence in the Kingswood School Archives," *Methodist History*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (2003), pp. 49-67.

[41] See *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Edinburgh: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1771 [First edition, printed by A. Bell and C. Macfarquhar]), vol. 2.

[42] Schofield, R. "John Wesley and Science in 18th century England," *Isis*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (1953), pp. 331-340; English, J. "John Wesley's Scientific Education," *Methodist History*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (October 1991), pp. 42-51.

[43] On Wesley's editorial work see Baker, F. "Wesley's Printers and Booksellers" in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Broxton (UK), XXII, (3): 61-65, 1939 e Baker, F. "Wesley's Printers and Booksellers" in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Broxton (UK), XXII, (5): 97-101, 1940. See also Herbert, Th. *John Wesley as Editor and Author* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940).

[44] Wesley, J. in *Survey of the Wisdom of God in Creation: Or, A Compendium of Natural Philosophy*, 5 vols., 1777. The expression cited can be found on Vol. 3, p. 328.

[45] See Kroll, A. *et al.*, *Philosophy, Science and Religion in England (1640-1700).*

ironic critique of religion and his controversial defense of African slavery.[46] But even here, the Scottish philosophy proved to have a much greater historical impact than Wesley's positions in determining modern thinking, as it can be seen in David Hume's philosophy of mind.

What could then count as the contribution of John Wesley in this field, if he was neither right – if compared to the science of Isaac Newton – nor so sophisticated and attractive – if compared to the philosophy of David Hume? Based on the above references, we can conclude that his main work was that of popularizing the new natural science, in order to make it accessible to the masses – many argue the same point regarding his theology – that he did not say much new, but provide a compilation of existing ideas for practical purposes. He was also able to promote a specific type of behavior that incorporated science, philosophy, religion, economy and arts into daily life. In short, his role was rather educational.

The conception that Wesley had of science and the impact of the Enlightenment on his writing can be read in a series of texts, such as his *Compendium of Logic* (Bristol, 1750), *Electricity Made Plain and Useful* and his *Compendium of Physic*. However, at the same time he contradicted many adepts of the Enlightenment, as he went further and affirmed that science was compatible with religion.[47] In the last instance, he subsumed logical and scientific rationality into his theological concepts. This can be seen in his sermons "The Imperfection of Human Knowledge"[48] and "The Case of Reason Impartially Considered".[49] A series of other interests can be mentioned, in order to show how Wesley applied the same approach to several areas:

On medicine, he studied the works of Boyle and collected a series of medicinal prescriptions in a book, *Primitive Physick, or an Essay on Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases*, which had more than twenty editions during his life.[50] It is also important to note that by doing this he was also presenting alternatives to the common belief that liquor and alcoholic beverages had therapeutic functions. Wesley was also interested on social history, compiling a *Digest* with Locke's ideas, writing *A History of England* and a *Compendium of Social Philosophy*. To this we should add his abolitionist positions, expressed in *Thoughts upon Slavery* (1774). In fact, his concern with slavery was a constant theme – witnessed in his criticism of Hume and in a passage he wrote in his diary on February 23, 1791 after reading *The interesting narrative of the life of O. Equiano, or G. Vassa, the African ... written by himself* (1789).

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46 For this debate with David Hume see Stremminger, G. *David Hume* (Paderbron: Schöning, 1994).
47 Halévy, É. *Growth of Philosophic Radicalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960 [1955]).
48 Sermon 69 in *Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 568-586.
49 Sermon 70 in *Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 589-600.
50 See the newer edition of *Primitive Remedies* (Santa Barbara: Woodbridge Press, 1973). For details check Vaux, Kenneth *This Mortal Coil* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 39-46; Ott, Phillip "John Wesley on Health: A word for sensible regimen" in *Methodist History*, April 1980, p. 193-204; e Jeffrey, F. "John Wesley's 'Primitive Physic'" in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Broxton (UK), XXI, (3): 60-67, 1980. See also Heitzenrater, R. *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), p. 166-167.

Readings such as these would later provide the basic categories for his famous letter to William Wilberforce on African slavery.[51]

Wesley also had opinions in the field of economy. One example is the famous sermon *The Use of Money* (1763),[52] in which one can read his famous formula: "gain all you can, save all you can, and give all you can".[53] In other sermons, such as "The Danger of Riches", "Heavenly Treasure and Earthen Vessels", "Riches" and "The Danger of increasing Riches", he even criticized Adam Smith and argued against the idea of cumulating riches. Certainly these reflections had an impact on the Wesleyan movement, for Wesley was himself a very good administrator, who designed in detail a system of administration, financing, loans and investments to be applied by the different Methodist groups.[54]

Finally, we should include culture, rhetoric and music as evidence of the impact of the Enlightenment on his thinking and action. But also here, we shall not forget the theological and religious intentions. This is clear in the treatises collected by Wesley and his brother, Charles Wesley: *The Gamut, Scale of Music* [1761], *The Grounds of Vocal Music* [1765], *Thoughts on the Power of Music* [1779]) and hymn collections, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* [1739], *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* [1753].[55] In the same way, it is possible to understand why Wesley wrote a book on rhetoric. In his library he had a vast collection that witnesses his knowledge of classic writers: he had volumes of Horace, Caesar, Cicero and Augustine, as well as the masters of the English language: John Dryden, William Shakespeare, Alexander Pope, John Milton and Edward Young.[56] He collected many passages of these texts and elaborated a study on rhetoric, published with the title *Directions Concerning Pronunciation and Gesture* in 1749.[57] Certainly, the art of argumentation and speech are fundamental to a preacher! He also left a *System of Rhetoric* unfinished. To mention just one aspect of these books, we can show the emphasis on discipline in the advices he gives to preachers in 1747:

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51 Wesley, J. *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 89.

52 Wesley, J. "Sermon 50" in *Works*, Vol. 2, p. 266-280.

53 Weber, M. *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, introduction; for a different vision see Tawney, R.H. *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (New York: New American Library, 1926), p. 161; Warner, Wellmon *The Wesleyan Movement in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Longman's Green & Co.), 1930. Cf. also Thompson, E.P. *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon, 1964), pp. 38-44, 362-363.

54 Halévy, É. *The Birth of Methodism in England* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1971).

55 Wesley, J. *Works*, Vol. 7.

56 See Lawton and his study in three parts on this theme: Lawton, G. "Slang and Colloquialism in John Wesley's Tracts and Treatises" in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Broxton (UK), XXXV (6), 154-158, 1994; Lawton, G. "Slang and Colloquialism in John Wesley's Tracts and Treatises" in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Broxton (UK), XXXV (7): 165-167, 1994; and Lawton, G. "Slang and Colloquialism in John Wesley's Tracts and Treatises" in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Broxton (UK), XXXV (8): 185-188, 1994. See also Shepherd, T.B. *Methodism and the Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Epworth, 1940).

57 See the analysis of Wesley's texts on rhetoric by Howell, W.S. *18th Century British Logic and Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971) and also by De Bolla, P. *The Discourse of the Sublime* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1989).

(4) Choose the plainest texts you can.

(5) Take care not to ramble from your text, but to keep close to it, and make out what you undertake.

(6) always suit your object to your audience.

(7) Beware of allegorizing or spiritualizing too much.[58]

All the facts mentioned above show the importance of rationality and indicate key aspects of the Enlightenment. But we still need to know how the pole of science and rationality is related to the other pole, i.e. with his particular views on religiosity. This leads us to the second point mentioned at the outset and to the question of emotions and spirituality in the Wesleyan movement. There is indeed a series of elements to be considered, such as religious enthusiasm, the polemic relation between emotion and eroticism, and other characteristics of popular religious movements in the 18th century.[59] However, the most important aspect in Wesley which I would like to highlight here is the form in which he tried to establish rules for spirituality, thus somewhat contaminating the religious dimension with his views on scientific methodology. Nevertheless, this did not mean subsuming religion into science. What seems to be his intention was precisely a relation of complementarity between rationality, education, and the spiritual dimension.

In fact, even when stressing religion, Wesley always insisted on rationality. In the sermon "The Case of Reason Impartially Considered", based on I Corinthians 14:20, he started by pointing to the silliness of certain behaviors and their childish character, insisting that one should always pursue a mature understanding: "Brethren, be not children in understanding: in wickedness be ye children; but in understanding be ye men".[60] But he also repeats that one cannot base faith on reason. The same old question arises here again: how can we find a middle term between rationality and spirituality? Again, methodical discipline was the solution proposed by Wesley, including as means to search for spiritual perfection and sanctification. The rationality in this process is shown in the development of rules and exercises for spiritual development, a type of discipline and technique which led to the grounding of the "Holy Club", which existed between 1729 and 1735 at Oxford University. Holiness, according to Wesley,

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58 Wesley, J. *Minutes*, June 18, 1747 in *Works* , Vol. 1, p. 24.

59 On religious enthusiasm, eroticism and Methodism (e.g. the Love Feasts, etc.) see Rack, Henry *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (Nashiville: Abingdon, 1992); and Swollett, Tobin *Humpry Chinker* [ed. by James L. Thorson] (New York: Norton, 1983). It is also important to see how this leads to Romaticism: Simpson, D. *Romanticism, Naturalism and the Revolt against Theory* and Brantley, R. *Locke, Wesley and the Method of English Romanticism*.

60 Wesley, J. *Works*, Vol. 2, p. 589.

was a type of practice, which needed continuous exercises in order to become strong and coherent, for it does not fall from heaven or occurs solely by inspiration.

The above reading of Wesley's thinking takes us to a central and final point: rationality and spirituality are in constant contrast, demanding a method, so that both aspects find a balance.[61] Having affirmed this point, we can now proceed to deal with the third aspect mentioned above.

Wesley's educational method

The double tension mentioned above leads to consider the role of social and educational projects in Wesley's project. He observed with interest the experiences of Moravian communities, especially at Herrnhut, and the pietistic tradition of the Universität Halle, trying to apply their model at Oxford. His reflections on how this theme applies to education are expressed in the sermon "On the Education of Children".[62] It was based on these reflections that he founded the Kingswood School in 1748 to continue a project initiated by George Whitefield in 1739 in a region of poor miners. Kingswood became a model for further initiatives.[63] Charles Wesley produced a collection of songs for this school, *Hymns for Children* (1763), in which he included "At the Opening of a School in Kingswood (June 24, 1748)":

> Come Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
> To whom we for our children cry!
> The good desired and wanted most
> Out of thy richest grace -
> The sacred discipline be given
> To train and bring them up for heaven.
>
> Answer on them the end of all
> Our cares , and pains, and studies here;
> On them, recovered from their fall,
> Stamped with the humble character,
> Raised by the nurture of the Lord,
> To all their paradise restored.
>
> Error and ignorance remove,
> Their blindness both of heart and mind;
> Give them the wisdom from above,
> Spotless, and peaceable, and kind;
> In knowledge pure their minds renew,

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61 Heitzenrater, R.P. *John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists*, pp. 231-286, 332-408; Harper, S. *A vida devocional na tradição Wesleyana* (São Bernardo do Campo: Edims, 1992); Heitzenrater, R. *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995).

62 Wesley, J. "Sermon 95" in *Works*, Vol. 3, pp. 347-360.

63 Mesquida, P. "Metodismo e Educação no Brasil: Formar elites e civilizar a nação", p. 32; Ives, A.G. *Kingswood School in Wesley's Day and Since* (London, Epworth Press, 1970).

And store with thoughts divinely true.

Learning's redundant part and vain
Be here cut off, and cast aside,
But let them, Lord, the substance gain,
In every solid truth abide,
Swiftly acquire, and ne'er forego
The knowledge fit for man to know.

Unite the pair so long disjoined,
Knowledge and vital piety:
Learning and holiness combined,
And truth and love, let all men see
In the whom up thee we give,
Thine, wholly thine, to die and live.

Father, accept them through thy Son,
And ever by thy Spirit guide!
Thy wisdom in their lives be shown,
Thy name confessed and glorified;
Thy power and love diffused abroad,
Till all the earth is filled with God.
(*A Collection of Hymns*, 461 in *Works*, Vol. 7)

The wording indirectly reveals the ideological premisses mentioned in the previous section, but the emphasis is above all on the virtues of a Christian education. Very clear is the stress on methodical discipline, which follows the previous examples of the Port-Royal schools and Locke's considerations in *Thoughts concerning Education* (1690). Based on these premises Wesley established the rules for his school, as they can be read both in *A Short Account of the School in Kingswood, near Bristol* (1749) as in *Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*. The interesting point to raise at this point is how he does not limit himself to the religious aspect, but includes pedagogical, administrative and strategic considerations – also related to economic rationality –, so that the project could succeed:

"1. Another thing which had given me frequent concern was the case of children. Some their parents could not afford to put to school. So they remained like 'a wild ass's colt'. Others were sent to school, and learned at least to read and write. But they learned all kind of vice at the same time, so that it had been better from them to have been without their knowledge than to have bought it at so dear price.

2. At length I determine to have them taught in my own house, that they might have an opportunity to read, write, and cast accounts (if no more) without being under almost a necessity of learning heathenism at the same time. And after several unsuccessful trials I found two such school-masters as I wanted - men of honesty, and sufficient knowledge, who had talents for, and their hearts in, the work.

3. They have now under their care near sixty children. The parents of some pay for their schooling, but the greater part, being very poor, do not; so that the expense is chiefly defrayed by voluntary contributions. We have of late clothed them, too, as many as wanted. The rules of the school are these that follow:

    First, no child is admitted under six years of age.
    Second, all the children are to be present at the morning sermon.
    Thirdly, they are at school from six to twelve, and from one to five.
    Fourthly, they have no play-days.
    Fifthly, no child is to speak in school, but to the masters.
    Sixthly, the child misses two days in one week, without leave, is excluded the school

4. We appointed two stewards for the school also. The business of these is:
    To receive the school subscriptions, and expend what is needful.
    To talk with each of the masters weekly.
    To pray with and exhort the children twice a week.
    To inquire diligently whether they grow in grace and learning, and whether the rules are punctually observed.
    Every Tuesday morning, in conjunction with the masters, to exclude those children that do not observe the said rules.
    Every Wednesday morning to meet with, and exhort their parents to train them up at home in the ways of God.

5. An happy change was soon observed in the children, both with regard to their tempers and behavior. They learned reading, writing, and arithmetic swiftly; at the same time they were diligently instructed in the sound principles of religion, and earnestly exhorted to fear God and work out their own salvation

6. For an account of the Grammar School in Kingswood I refer to you to the tract lately published."[64]

The above considerations indicate that religion was indeed an important part, which came however, as a complement to other educational, technical and professional elements that helped to prepare the children to exert several professions. The teaching of Christian religion was the culmination of this process, and aimed at the cultivation of moral virtues. The sixty boys at the school were tutored by six masters (Dr. John Jones, Walter Sellon, Thomas Richards, Richard Moss, William Pencer e Abraham Grou), with the support of five servants (under the supervision of Mrs. Mary Davey). Moreover, Kingswood opened its doors to children after their sixth year of age, and no one were accepted after completing their 12th year. For Wesley, they would be corrupted by earthly matters by this age. Every details was, thus, thoroughly thought. In order to educate these children according to his method he added further rules: they should wake up early in the morning, at four o' clock. They should wait until the morning sermon at five, using this time for meditation, reading, singing and praying.[65]

If we were to consider all these observations, rules and disciplinary remarks from the point of view of contemporary pedagogical theories, there would be many points of tension. I will not pursue this

[64] Wesley, J. *Plain Account of the People Called Methodists* in *Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 277-279.
[65] Heitzenrater, R. *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, pp. 168f..

venue, however. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that Wesley's educational method is a consistent application of his general outlook, for here he applies it to science, arts, medicine, music and religion we have seen before. In a rationalist way, he thought above all on the pragmatic – perhaps even utilitarian – application of these disciplines. Such view can be corroborated by the very form how the announcement of Kingswood and the call for matriculation was made. The emphasis was of the practicality and usefulness of the studies, somewhat anticipating the later trend of technical education:

> "Whereas it has been long complained of, that Children generally spend seven, eight and ten Years in learning only two or three Languages; and that together with these they learn such Vices as probably they never unlearn before:
>
> This is to give Notice,
>
> That in the Forest of Kings-Wood, near BRISTOL, in a good clear air a BOARDING-SCHOOL is now opened, wherein are taught, at 14*l.* per Annum - *English, French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, History, Geography, Chronology, Rhetoric, Logic, Ethics, Geometry, Physics*; together with Writing in all the useful Hands; *Arithmetic*, Vulgar, Decimal, and Instrumental; *Merchants' Accompts* by Single and Double Entry; *Trigonometry*, Plain and Spherical; *Surveying* and *Mapping of Land*; *Gauging* in all its Parts; *Mensuration* of all Superficies, Solids &c. at much less Expence of Time than usual: Where particular Care is also taken of the Morals of the Children, that they may be train'd up at once to LEARNING and VIRTUE,
>
> By JAMES ROUQUET
> (Late of St. *John's* College, OXFORD)
> N.B. No Child is received above the Age of twelve Year"[66]

The insistency on the practicality of education fits well into the framework of the Enlightenment and it is certainly an outcome of the Industrial Revolution. On the other hand, the place reserved to religion in the curriculum and in the practices is very important, even though Wesley distanced himself from certain trends in religious education. As he admitted later, "what is commonly called a religious education frequently does more harm than good". He wanted to contaminate religious education with technical matters and vice-versa, designing a new model, as he proposed in *Instruction for Children*. Taking several already existing manuals, he compiled this *Instruction* for use at the school. All things considered we see also here the tension between elements that are many times seen as opposite and irreconcilable, and Wesley's efforts to bring them together. For Wesley, there was a possibility of finding a balance between these poles.

We can conclude that the attempts at articulating scientific rationality and religious emotionality pass also through the educational project established by Wesley. The result is a different product, a new social and educational method that applies concretely the premises of the Enlightenment, which we have seen above. These considerations allow us to draw some conclusions.

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[66] Cited by G.M. Best, *Wesley and Kingswood [1738-1988, 250th Conversion Anniversary]* (Bridgwater, Bigwood & Staple Ltd, 1988).

4. Wesleyan and Methodist Education in a Postsecular Society

Recent discussions on the global nature of the church have prompted churches in the Wesleyan and Methodist traditions to face the challenges of multiculturalism, find ways to accommodate differences, and search for ways to justify the articulation of such differences in terms that are compatible with Wesleyan theology and tradition.[67] In this context, however, the emphasis is often on statistics and managerial issues. As a result, there is a deficit in discussions about the role that educational institutions can play in fostering discourses and practices that connect faith and learning in public life as well as link rationality and religion in new contemporary ways that are relevant to new generations who live in a multicultural, global, and postsecular society.[68] This new generation can also be identified with students who attend Methodist-related schools, colleges, universities, and seminaries worldwide.

As I tried to address current and future issues regarding the relationship between religion and education, I offered a panoramic view of a few elements that show a growing tension between theological reflection and higher education. In this task, a look into the past proved to be helpful. We have seen that John Wesley's ideas were indebted to the intellectual environment of 18th century and the Enlightenment, that he developed a new conception of education focusing on uniting spirituality and knowledge, that he was not shy of becoming involved in various public debates on important issues of his time. His contribution in these areas goes beyond the confessional framework of the Wesleyan movement, of Methodism and other religious bodies that were later established based on his thinking. It is a contribution to public life, which endures to this day, as seen in the impact of his ideas on the social, political, editorial and scientific areas, including in public health. Very often, his views on these themes were simply wrong. In other occasions, his positions were only intuitive, lacking the theoretical or empirical backing that philosophers and scientists at his time could provided. In certain cases, he was right, but his positions were confirmed by later achievements. At any rate, he was engaged in public life and expressing his views on various issues of his day. From today's perspective, this can be identified in postsecular terms.

Among Wesley's various initiatives I have centered my attention on education. I believe it is precisely in this area that the postsecular impact of Wesley's thinking is most profoundly contemporary.

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[67] Hempton, D. *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University, 2005), Robert D.L. & Scott, D. "World Growth of the United Methodist Church in Comparative Perspective: A Brief Statistical Analysis" in *Methodist Review*, Vol. 3 (2011), pp. 37–54. Nausner, M. "Geist gewirktes Mit-Sein: Methodistische Ekklesiologie als Ausdruck globaler Verbundenheit," in Neumann, B. (Hrsg.) *Ekklesiologie aus freikirchlicher und römisch-katholischer Perspektive* (Paderborn: Patmos Verlag, 2009).

[68] Wuthnow, R. *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Jacobsen, D. & Jacobsen, R. (Eds.) *The American University in a Postsecular Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Tisdell, E. & Tolliver, E. "Claiming a sacred face: The role of spirituality and cultural identity in transformative adult higher education" in *Journal of Transformative Education*, 1/4 (2003), pp. 368-392.

In this area that we can see how the tension I mentioned at the beginning above was resolved in terms of an equilibrium between reason and faith, knowledge and vital piety, theological reflection and education at various levels. The *just milieu* provided by Wesley still serves as a good lesson for us today. I hope to have brought to attention to a fact that is not always remembered in Wesleyan studies, namely that he was a person influenced by the Enlightenment and the impact of his thinking goes beyond the mere confessional importance for Wesleyan and Methodist movements. As a public speaker, writer, editor, practical economist and performer of many other duties, he had a profound social importance. His specific contribution to education certainly deserves more studies and an articulation with sound theological reflection.

Recent discussions on a "postsecular society" affirm the need of a "complementary learning process" as a form of dialogue between religion and social forces, including political structures. Thus, it is possible to say that a renewal of Wesleyan theology and Methodist education can take place in an existing global network of educational institutions. New and flexible educational settings that nurture the connectionalism between church and education can provide a basis upon which persons with or without religious or confessional convictions can establish a fruitful and respectful dialogue with those who express different views. In a postsecular age, religion is finding new expressions beyond the traditional structures for church membership and secular persons and institutions need to learn and respect the connection between culture and various forms of religion, faith, and spirituality. Taking these aspects into consideration may help to close the gap between theological reflection and higher education.