

“RE-EVANGELIZING THE CHURCH TO ITS PROPHETIC MINISTRY”

BY PETER STOREY

MFSA Banquet at the United Methodist Church Annual Conference, Ames, Iowa
June 11, 2005

I am always inspired to be amongst people like Methodists for Social Action who have discovered that Jesus came with a whole Gospel and who work to rescue our church from the heresy of the half-Gospel.

I want to talk this evening about “Re-evangelizing the Church to its Prophetic Ministry.” Evangelism is a respectable word, which all United Methodists should be proud of, but Wesleyan evangelism is an evangelism of the *whole* Gospel of Jesus Christ for the *whole* world. When my spouse and I came to live in the United States in 1979, after my retirement, one of the elements of American life that really touched us with wonderment was that, in any kind of emergency, no matter what the circumstances, all you had to do was to dial three magic numbers – 911 - and help would be there within minutes. What a remarkable society! We sensed that we’d entered a world that, while of course it had its tragedies, was nevertheless surrounded by a cushion of care and response. Americans really do look after each other in many remarkable ways, and we were deeply impressed with that.

Then came the day that the towers fell, and in those hours of horror, your “911” world became a 9/11 world, and since those mass murders in New York, Washington, D.C. and a Pennsylvania field, much has changed, not only for Americans, but for people living in the farthest reaches of our planet. I suppose I could have titled this talk, “Remarks from the Fringes of the Empire,” because I live in the developing world in the southern tip of Africa, a continent that has felt very, very painfully some of the actions of the super states of this planet. I remind you that America and Soviet Russia fought the Third World War on the soil of Africa, and we’re still recovering from those proxy wars, fought between dictators and puppets chosen by each side of that so-called “Cold War”. It was a very *hot* war in many parts of Africa.

Elizabeth and I were in South Africa the day that the towers fell: somebody alerted me and because of the miracle of communication today, we watched in real time as the second plane hit that second tower and I was glued to the television set for days following. Later, I began to monitor the preaching forums on the web to see what my fellow preachers in the United States were saying from their pulpits. I read some magnificent sermons that were deeply pastoral and therapeutic. Understandably and rightly preachers rushed to comfort a wounded people and so, incidentally, did most of us around the rest of the world.

A moment missed:

However, there was a note that seemed to me to be largely missing. I searched in vain for the kind of words that might be expected from the prophets of God. By this I do not mean shallow declamations, political commentary on this tragedy, or any simplistic

rushing to judgment, but I was looking for some note of introspection, some note of self-examination in this the most powerful nation in the world. I was expecting at least to hear somebody ask, not only, “how could anybody be so hateful as to perpetrate such an evil deed?” but also perhaps, “might there be something about us that could generate such anger and such hate?” The prophets of Israel were never slow to comfort their people, but they loved God and truth too much to overlook the uncomfortable questions. Sadly those questions were largely absent from the pulpits of this nation.

And the consequence has been far reaching and terrifying, because, while the church held the nation’s hand over those months, others - the White House and the Media - made up the nation’s *mind*. They were the ones who framed, not only the political discourse, which I suppose is their right, but the *theological* one, too, which is not their right. And they did so in simplistic terms of “them and us,” of “good and evil.” After that, whatever role the church was invited to play, was carefully choreographed by the politicians. When New York’s most prominent preacher, Dr. James Forbes of Riverside Church, began asking some prophetic questions about the memorial service being planned by the city, he was unceremoniously dumped from the organizing committee. The Dean of the National Cathedral was told what would happen there, too.

Two images of that time still stick with me: the first is of President George W. Bush in the pulpit of the National Cathedral, a place where political leaders should properly go to listen, not to speak. The second image is that of Oprah Winfrey acting as the chief liturgist at the official memorial service in Yankee Stadium, with clergy meekly coming to the podium at her invitation. Those images seem to announce the ascendancy in this culture, even in matters of theology and worship, of politicians and media celebrities. It was these, rather than the prophets of God who were going to tell God what America was feeling about things, and even more important, were going to tell America what God was feeling. This is deeply troubling. Later, of course, in addition to this, some false prophets were found from the ranks of the right wing to reinforce the official meta-narrative and they continue to do so, while the church is still seeking to regain its voice. Now, how all this happened is a complex story, and there’s no time for that tonight. Suffice it to say just this: A “9/11” world doesn’t provide fertile soil for the growing of prophets, *but a 9/11 world needs them very urgently*.

Since that terrible event, the outpouring of sympathy from all around the world has dried up, replaced by a deep frustration and, in many places, resentment of the careless way in which this nation has exercised its power in supposed retaliation. It seems to me that something deeper and more profound than the warning: “Don’t step on me!” is needed to respond to some of the dreadful tensions in our world today

That’s why I want to speak about this need for the church to be re-evangelized to its prophetic voice. Those of us who were engaged in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa found much of our inspiration from you - from the Church in the United States of America. When I first visited here in 1966, the Church was alive to the issues which were running both within this nation and between this nation and the rest of the world and it was Methodist people who were so often right there in the forefront of being able to

spell out what the narrative was, able to identify for people what it meant, in the 1960's, to be faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I'm actually not interested in being a political liberal. I get what I need from the teaching of Jesus whose teaching is far more radical than liberal politics. That teaching drives me into the public arena to struggle for justice. I don't need any other excuse; I don't need any other guide. And my question tonight is: what has happened? What has happened that the Church I know has withdrawn from the public square? The public square been captured instead, not by the followers of the poor Carpenter of Nazareth, who said ...

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me;
He has sent me to announce good news to the poor,
To proclaim release for prisoners
And recovery of sight for the blind;
to let the broken victims go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

... but by those who offer a religious face to power, to economic greed, to its accompanying violence, and to the worst manifestations of Capitalism's dog-eat-dog economics.

John Wesley's "Prophetic Evangelism":

I remind you that John Wesley did not set out to be a social prophet. John Wesley was an evangelist. But his passion and his zeal for the Gospel drove him into places which turned him into a social prophet. John Wesley's transformation into an evangelist who evangelized not just individuals, but the institutions of society was all about *location*. The sisters and brothers that God gave to John Wesley were the poor. That's where his zeal took him, and in the process of regularly sharing their humble homes, their meagre crust, their heavy burdens and their terrible degradations, he was changed. When John Wesley was with the poor, he found that he had unknowingly arrived at the home address of Jesus. And the more he worked amongst the poor, the more convinced he became that being with the poor was as much a channel of God's grace, as receiving the bread and wine of Holy Communion. This relocation of Wesley's soul, this journey downward also explains how one can see in his life a progressive movement from *piety* (very important in the search for inward peace with God), through *charity* (very important for obedience to the Biblical injunction about the poor), to *justice* (a holy indignation at the systemic and entrenched nature of poverty and oppression). It helps us to see why holiness for the Wesleys, became an amalgam of all these three, piety, charity and justice together joined by God, and never to be separated.

It also explains Wesley's blazing indignation at the way the comfortable looked upon the poor, "So wickedly false," he says, "so devilishly false is the common objection, 'they are poor because they are idle.'" Sadly, as Theodore Jennings points out in his book on John Wesley's "evangelical economics,"^[1] the very qualities that Methodism instilled in the working classes actually led to increased affluence, and with growing wealth there

came a slow unraveling of the seamless theology woven together by John Wesley, until it became three different suits of clothes. Mr. Wesley's preachers in the 21st Century, like to decide which suit they will wear, the *evangelical* suit, the *pastoral* suit or the *prophetic* suit, as if there was a choice!

The prophetic and the pastoral tension:

Through all the years of my ministry, certainly during South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle, arguments raged about the degree to which every preacher of the Gospel, every Christian was called to prophetic ministry. Many of my colleagues stayed out of the fray, arguing that their call was to be pastors, or evangelists, but not prophets. The number of preachers who truly embraced the prophetic task in the struggle was relatively small. There were those of course, who either for fear of their congregations or the authorities or both, chose silence. The less said about them the better, but, what I want to address tonight is not so much the *denial* of the need for prophetic ministry, but the assertion that *somebody else ought to be doing it* - that there's a tension between the pastor or evangelist on the one hand, and the prophet on the other, with each person's ministry necessarily stressing one or the other of these functions. I want to suggest that this assertion reveals a problem, not in any external theological reality, but in ourselves. If we see pastoring and prophesying as two different and contending ends of a spectrum in ministry, then whatever tension there is, locates in us, not in the Gospel.

I don't see any tension in Jesus, between those moments when he was reaching out in healing compassion and when he was denouncing some injustice. Jesus kneels in the sand, and with infinite tenderness helps a humiliated woman put back together the broken pieces of her life, with his gift of forgiveness. That's a supremely pastoral moment. And then with blazing scorn, he hurls an angry prophetic judgement at the circle of powerful males with stones in their hands, and he sends them scuttling away. Which is the real Jesus? Jesus stands gazing at Jerusalem, and he weeps pastor's tears as he cries, "Jerusalem, who stones the prophets, how I've longed to gather you as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not." Jesus weeps, but then he marches on Jerusalem and its temple and in anger he turns over its tables and scatters the exploiting priests. Would the real Jesus please stand up?

If Jesus is pastor, evangelist and prophet, co-existing and co-acting, then so should we follow his example.

If there is a real tension out there, then it is the tension between the *Gospel of the Kingdom* and the *kingdoms of this world*. It's the tension between God and Caesar. This is where the real tension is located and part of our calling - the calling of all Methodists - is to expose that tension. Many in doing so have found that it is a costly endeavor. And we don't, we cannot afford the luxury of determining and deciding whether we are going to be pastors or prophets, or evangelists. We are called to be all three.

Location, location, location:

Why do we have so much difficulty, however, with one of those roles, the prophetic role? Has it got something to do with our location? You see, if we locate ourselves where Jesus did, we, too, can faithfully offer both pastoring and prophecy. In fact the more faithful we are as pastors, the more readily our pastoral love will be triggered into prophetic action when we come upon the kind of injustices that hurt and abuse and destroy people.

However, if our ministries are located, not where Jesus located, but with the rich and the powerful, then there will be a tension, not between our pastoral duties and the need to prophesy, but between the Gospel we are called to proclaim and the degree to which our congregations have become shaped by other gods, the gods of this world. The tension remains one between church and world. But in this case, the church has, to some degree, become the world, and we're battling the enemy within our midst. So, if there's any one-sentence reply I would give to anybody who asks why is it that the United Methodist Church seems to have lost its prophetic voice, I would say, "Because it's rich." There's no need to say any more than that. It has become a church of the comfortable. It has become the church of the middle class and the affluent. It has become the church of the large campus, and Country Club-like "Christian Life" centers. It's structures are more like General Motors than the Church of Jesus Christ. It has bought into the careerism of capitalism and more often than not, when clergy gather they are more likely to be discussing salaries and appointments than wrestling with what it will mean to convey this terrifying, challenging, healing, empowering, frightening Gospel of Jesus. They're discussing salaries.

An interesting insight that I came across recently is about Baal-worship. Some scholars maintain that the Baal cult was not about worshiping other gods so much as seeking to *re-fashion Yahweh*. Because the people were no longer wandering in the wilderness, but had become prosperous and powerful, they no longer desired a God of the poor and oppressed, so it became necessary to convert Yahweh into a god of the affluent and powerful. They thought that God could be one of their possessions, to be re-manufactured in their own image. This is the original extreme makeover! In opposing them Elijah and Elisha deliberately located themselves among the poorest of the poor, the starving widows, declaring that that is where Yahweh would always be found, as friend of the poor, as a slave-liberating God.

It all depends on location!

When we look at the witness of the church in South Africa, it is sometimes undeservedly sentimentalized and lionized. The fact of the matter is that the Methodist Church in South Africa was able to make the stand that it did because 80% of our members were from the poor and the oppressed. It was their presence and their challenge that touched the lives of some of the white members of the Methodist church and led them to plunge into that struggle for justice as well. But I want to tell you this: most of those churches in South Africa whose membership was largely white made little or no stand. It was because we could not avoid the challenge of the people within our own denomination who were suffering the deepest possible indignities and violations of their lives under the

apartheid system that we had to be obedient to Jesus. When you have congregations consisting of people who are touched by the poor, everything changes. In my congregation, the Central Methodist Mission in Johannesburg, we lost 200 white members when we insisted on becoming an integrated community, but let me tell you *it was cheap at the price!* What happened to that community is that God's dream for our nation began to be lived out there. To look out on that congregation was to see a beautiful picture of the kind of South Africa God intended.

But togetherness also brought pain. Remember that at that time only whites had the vote, blacks were voteless. I remember on the eve of an election saying to my congregation, "Look at each other. Look into one another's eyes. Those of you who have vote, look into the eyes of a member here, a fellow member of this church, your sister, your brother, who has no vote, no power, and then I dare you to go into that voting booth and vote for apartheid."

It seems to me that the problem of silence in this great United Methodist Church which we love and serve, is that it doesn't often look into the eyes of the poor and oppressed, but it looks far more often into the eyes of middle class, comfortable, nuclear families with at least one SUV. If anything is going to change, there's going to have to be a change in location.

Living appropriately with Caesar:

If our distance from the poor is a problem, then so is our proximity to Caesar. The longer I live, the more convinced I am that a crucial challenge to our faith is what we do with *power*. At the heart of so much struggle and pain in our lives, so much violence and tragedy in the world, is a misunderstanding and a misuse and abuse of power. That's why the life and death and resurrection of Jesus is a confrontation between the love of power that drives the world, and the power of love that lies in the heart of God. Those two are not going to make peace with each other. When we take the Cross seriously, as John Howard Yoder tells us, all our ideas about wisdom and power have to change. And we have to put our trust in the foolishness and the weakness of the Cross. If we put our trust anywhere else, we worship false gods.

This conviction must put us at odds with Caesar's understanding of power. There is a duty of the church to hold Caesar accountable to the Gospel. In Jesus' famous statement about the Roman coin, the implication is absolutely clear. There are definite limits on the authority of Caesar. Coins with Caesar's image might belong to him, but *anything or anyone stamped with that other image, the image of God, is God's sole property*. That means we have a duty to call Caesar accountable when Caesar does anything to violate the image of God in any human being, so Caesar, beware what you do with human beings made in the image of God, even if they're on the other side of the world and you don't hear their cries in your White House here.

To emphasize the proper distance required, the church I belong to, the Methodist Church of Southern Africa forbids the national flag entry into any of our sanctuaries. Now I

don't want to be misunderstood. I love South Africa's new flag of freedom, but a decision was taken at the height of the apartheid era when the old orange, white and blue flag of South Africa was a symbol of injustice and oppression, stained with horrible deeds. When our beautiful new flag first flew in 1994, some people said, "Now we can bring the flag into the church, can't we?" And our answer was ... "No." And they asked, "Why? Surely this new flag is clean and unstained?" And we said, "Just you wait." South Africa's new flag has not taken long to collect some stains along the way. In any case, while there may be greater respect and regard for our new flag, it is still Caesar's banner; it is the symbol of the secular power, and that has no place in God's sanctuary. It's very confusing for somebody to listen to the Word of God being preached from a pulpit when Caesar's banner is about three yards away. Some suggest that the reason why the US flag stands in our churches is to remind us of the amazing gift of freedom of religion you've been given in this country. My answer is that gift is not in Caesar's hands to give. That is a gift that comes direct from God and no state or government has any right to think that it can either bestow it or take it away.

Nobody questions the attachment we have to whatever place we call home, or possibly the idea that binds us to others who share that home with us. We may take a measure of pride in some of the noble ideas that have played a role in forming us into what we call a nation, but this is as far as any followers of Jesus may go. John Wesley hinted at this in a letter he wrote to King George II in 1744, surely one of history's more subtle reminders to a monarch of his subservience to God. After assuring His Majesty of the loyalty of the Methodist Societies, Wesley wrote:

We cannot indeed do either more or less than we apprehend consistent with the written Word of God; but we are ready to obey your Majesty to the utmost in all things which we conceive to be agreeable thereto."[\[2\]](#)

Perhaps true patriotism can only emerge in those who give their first loyalty to another citizenship, the Kingdom of God. Such persons will love their country and their compatriots enough to want to hold them accountable to the highest of God's standards, and such persons will always acknowledge a wider citizenship on earth as well, one that stretches beyond the borders of any nation and embraces all the human family.

When I speak of prophetic ministry some interpret it as a return to days when the church had political clout in the corridors of power. Hear this: the Methodist Church of Southern Africa was set free by God the day we were thrown out of those corridors - that was when we found our true soul and our prophetic voice. When we weren't worrying any more about whether we were offending Caesar, when we weren't in the dilemma of having gone to a prayer breakfast with Caesar one day and having to prophesy against him the next, that was when we became free to speak truth to power. Beware of Caesar's attempts to co-opt. Beware of the blandishments of power. Keep a prophetic distance, and you will have a prophetic word.

Points of Prophetic Contact Engagement:

What should some of those prophetic words be? There will be no widely based action by the church on issues of peace and justice until we are willing to stop merely playing with ourselves and begin to ask where God wants us to engage with God's world. We have become adept at playing "church" with ourselves week after week, wrapped up in our churchy rituals and our churchy programs, arrogantly assuming that what we are doing really matters to God, often letting the tragedy and pain of the world leave us untouched. Perhaps it is time for our churches to stop some of the incessant round of club-like activities in order to ask God some serious questions.

I believe that there are four major issues right now around which the church needs to rally our people, to invite them into deep Bible Study, discussion, prayer, faithful listening and theological reflection.

- The first is the question of *wealth and poverty and good news to the poor*. What would happen if in every congregation we gathered our people and they wrestled and debated and prayed, and listened and struggled and read their scriptures, and theologized around this issue? Remember how good it was to see a universally-felt compassion sweep across the rich nations of the world who found scores of billions of dollars for the victims of one day's dreadful *tsunami*? But why in God's name, haven't we found a similar compassion for similar numbers of children (some 200,000) who die in our world *every week* because of poverty? There's something wrong with a world that routinely allows that to happen every week.

In responding to that question, Christians need to start with scripture. We need to let the Gospel make us into become people who are "creatively maladjusted" as Martin Luther King said, to the excuses that are made in Washington D.C., or in London, or Berlin, or Paris or Tokyo. The teaching and example of Jesus exposed these excuses as hollow. I take off my hat to Tony Blair for his struggle right now to try and convince the most powerful and rich nation in the world, which gives less *per capita* in aid than almost all other western nations, to turn cancel the debts that were incurred during those proxy wars in Africa. It's not that the debts should be forgiven. There's nothing to forgive. The powers who used the blandishments of those debts to manipulate corrupt puppets they selected and placed in power in Africa - those are the ones who need forgiveness.

What would happen if our people wrestled with the massive inequities that divide the world into haves and have-nots, and asked of Jesus where the beginnings of change might lie? A Church with a new commitment to relocate with the poor and oppressed of the world would earn the right to be heard in a new way.

- The second question around which I believe our people need to wrestle with Scripture, and struggle and pray and the rest, is the question of *violence and nonviolence, of war and peace*. The world longs to be liberated, reclaimed and rescued from what Walter Wink calls "the myth of redemptive violence."^[3] The suggestion that you can help people by bombing them, that you save people by

killing them - all the absurd illogicalities of war, is something that Martin Luther King saw so clearly when he closed the door forever on any legitimizing of violence as a way of dealing with conflict. Americans laud him year after year and there's even a public holiday for him. *But we resolutely refuse to take seriously the heart of his message.* The teachings and example of Jesus are clear. What would happen if the Church finally confessed one of its most long-standing disobediences to Jesus – our compromise with violence and war – and began to take Jesus at his word. A Church with a new commitment to nonviolence and peacemaking would offer the world a new experience: the world would at last witness the sons and daughter of God who Paul tells us the whole creation is waiting to see.

- The third question that we need to struggle with is something I've spent a little time with already, the issue of *flag and altar*. What would happen if in every congregation people prayed, struggled, read their Scriptures, debated and theologized around? I know that there are some people who are understandably concerned that the word "God" might be removed from the Pledge of Allegiance, but the more dangerous question, which few are asking, is whether the Pledge of Allegiance has displaced God in many of our hearts. The teaching and example of Jesus are clear. God takes precedence over Caesar.
- The fourth question is about *inclusion and exclusion*. What would happen if every congregation set aside other things in order to struggle and wrestle and read our Scriptures, and pray and debate and theologize around the dreadful addiction that every human being is born with: *the addiction to division*. You see, if we are permitted to, we will always find a way of keeping some people out, so that we can feel that we're in. If there is any litmus test that we can think of, whether it be linked to race or gender or culture or language or class, or education or sexual orientation, or nationality, or ... you name it, we will find it. We are very creative in finding these things, and we will use them. The teachings and example of Jesus are clear. Christ came amongst us to overcome our enmities, and on the Cross breaks down the dividing walls between us. Jesus nailed on the Cross nails you and me to our neighbors and we better be very careful in exercising any act of exclusion, that we are not sinning against the redeeming work of the Cross.

Now those are just four questions that I put to you this evening, What if every church in the land, Christians with very different viewpoints on these questions, sat down together, prayed together, (didn't just strategize for annual conferences or General Conferences, like amateur politicians), but rather struggled as one with what Scripture has to say about these issues, what Jesus has to say, what the great hearts and noble spirits down the centuries have to say about these four questions?.

If that happened, I believe that we could perhaps become *bearers of hope*. For me, prophetic witness is not just about raising the hard issues, it's about becoming bearers of hope. The glory of the Biblical messengers is that in the midst of judgment, they always offered a redeeming word, and so must we. The reason why we preach is not that we

might feel righteous but that our people might be fed, and they await from us a promise, something more than a mere diagnosis. They await a *word from God*, so they may “lay hold on hope.” I believe that the church is waiting for a new word to reinvigorate it, re-evangelize it to its true vocation of both pastoral and prophetic witness without fear or favor.

I celebrate you as people who, sometimes under difficult circumstances, in season and out, have kept alive the flame of the prophetic witness. And I pray that all of us may be found faithful to God.

Thank you.

QUESTIONS:

Q Is there ever a time that’s right for war?

A. For me, there is never a time “that’s right for war,” but that’s because I am a Christian pacifist. I started my working life in the military and have come to that place through my walk with Jesus. When you ask that question, I just try to picture Jesus with a machine gun in his hands, I try to picture him riding on top of a Bradley armored vehicle and I cannot. There’s simply no way to connect him with those things. I’ve got a lot of other reasons, but that one alone would be enough for me. However, I want to say that there are many people who have struggled with this issue who take a “just war” (or “justifiable war” –a better phrase to use) position, whom I must respect. It’s the majority position in the United Methodist Church so it has an important place in our thinking and our discussing about this. My question to “just war” proponents is, “When last was there a ‘just war?’” If we take seriously the criteria given us by the church fathers, who were at least trying to *reduce* something of the terrible brutality of war by producing their list of conditions, when last did we see one? And you’ll have to go a long time back now in order to find a war that met those criteria. Most people turn to the Second World War, and say, “That truly was a just war.” That is open to question because you have to take into account the unintended consequences, which attend every war. After all, Britain went to war, and France went to war to save Poland from enemy occupation and, whatever else happened in the Second World War, Poland was not saved. Poland was liberated decades later by the non-violent *Solidarite* movement of Lech Walenski. Britain and France, the Commonwealth countries, and much later, the United States went to war presumably around issues of human rights, human dignity and human liberty, but I think we know now that a deliberately deaf ear was turned by the Allies to the cries of the holocaust. So there are many questions. I can’t go further tonight, but I have to reply to your question with a, “No.” To the many who would answer, “Yes,” the challenge is, when last did any of our wars actually measure up in to the criteria given us for a just war?

Q. I would follow up on that question in this way. The same question has to be asked, it seems to me, of the pacifist position. When did it ever produce a just peace? And specifically, in the case of South Africa, would there have been the mobilization of support of people around the world to the cause of the anti-

apartheid movement, were it not for the defensive actions of the African National Congress first to awaken us and call us to do our part?

A. We have many examples of people who acted non-violently. I remember a woman in a yellow dress, with the support of the Church and thousands of Christians in the Philippines, who overthrew a vicious dictator, Ferdinand Marcos, using total non-violence. I remember how a movement which began at the World Council of Churches Central Committee in Dresden, in East Germany some years before, mobilized the Christian people and the non-violent people of East Germany to come out from their churches, into the streets with their candles, and finally to march on that wall, and to push it over. I remember in my own country, South Africa, there was, a putative “armed liberation struggle,” and I know how just how ineffective that armed struggle was, compared with the momentum for change in produced by ordinary unarmed people, who refused to continue to cooperate in their own oppression, and turned out into the streets of every township and city and made South Africa ungovernable under the apartheid regime, and by the actions of the international community, who were prepared to pressure our country economically and in other ways. I don’t believe that the non-violent position has been tried and found wanting. I believe it’s not been tried enough. That’s what I believe.

Q. How do you participate in a system which you might have very strong questions about as a Christian?

A. I’m not sure that this globalization thing that we’re now living with is going to go away. I do believe that if people insist on having a global economy, then the globalized community of Christians and other world faith communities should insist on a *global ethic* to ensure accountability for the way that economy is managed, and to govern the behavior of those who are engaged in that economy. In the past, nation states have had laws against exploitation, about how corporations and businesses should operate, the minimums they could pay, and about the rights unions would have. They varied in different countries. What is heppening in the global economy, is that nation states no longer seem to have that authority. South Africa has very advanced, very progressive labor laws. As a result corporations and investors don’t go to South Africa to estalishfind factories to make their products? They go to places where governments permit workers to be ruthlessly exploited. This is where we need to rise up and demand a global ethic for a global economy. Just as the churches and the evangelical movements of the 19th early 20th centuries, as part of their Christian witness, campaigned for the rights of workers in nation states, so we now need to do so throughout the world.

Let me also suggest that you do everything in your power to make yourself, and particularly your generation of young Americans aware of what is happening outside of the American “bubble.” Young Americans do not in their hearts want to be part of a ruthless empire. They want to be part of a different kind of greatness. When Duke students kneel in our chapel and we commission them to go off to Haiti or to South Africa, or to some other country where people are living in desperate poverty, to live with and minister with those people, they represent another America, which I believe in because I’ve seen it at work. I’ve experienced the benefits of that kind of solidarity in my own country, and I long to see new church-based equivalents of the peace corps, groups of young people who say, “I’m glad I’m an American, but I’m even more grateful to be a

citizen of this planet, and I want to go out and meet my sisters and brothers who were born in other parts of this planet; I want to listen to them, I want to discover what impacts their lives. I want to put myself alongside them, if it is in any way helpful to them, but I'm ready to discover that they may be more helpful to me by helping me come out of my "bubble" and rejoin the human race."

Q. The United States Government was so bound and determined to go to war with Iraq, and looking back on it from your perspective, was there anything that the peace movement, or the church or anybody could have done to have stopped the government from proceeding with this war?

A. Certainly in my experience in South Africa (and I think the experience people in Northern Ireland, and in the Middle East will bear this out), there are *kairos* moments in history that you can grasp – or they go by and do not return for a time. With your leaders so set upon this war, perhaps before even the false intelligence they used was in their hands, I'm not sure, there was something that would have stopped them. But, I know there were some people who did what maybe all we Christians should have done: *they went there*. They were Christian peacemakers, and they went to Iraq took lodgings with the Iraqi people in Baghdad. Somebody here has done that? More than one of you? Thank you so much! (applause) I wonder what would happen, if those who call themselves by the name of Jesus made that very kind of journey whenever somebody threatened war on their neighbors.

Q. (Inaudible: something about the global church?)

A. There are two battles for the soul of Methodism.

As I travel the world I experience that there are two Methodist Churches: there is the rich and old, and there is the poor and new. The rich and old is to be found in Europe and in the United States. This is a Church that lives in a very different culture from the majority of Methodists around the world. Many, many more millions of Methodists around the world live in poverty. They live on the edge of the breadline, and not surprisingly, that is where the church, in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, is growing, and that is where the church is most vigorous. The question is whether, as that church grows, it should seek to emulate its affluent and comfortable, institutionalized counterpart in the "developed" world? Or whether it is the so-called "developed" Methodist Church that needs to change and make a journey downwards into solidarity with its economically poorer, but spiritually richer counterpart? There is a battle, I believe, for the soul of the Methodist Church. We've got to decide which of those two churches is going to be the Methodist Church in the world of the future.

The other battle for the soul of the Methodist Church is being waged in places like the USA, where there are those who would want to rob Methodism of its unique blend of evangelical fervor and commitment to social justice, and who suggest to us that being truly evangelical is to cease to take positions in the public square in the struggle for justice and for peace in the world. There are those for whom Jesus is some kind of personal mascot, who we can be owned, to assure us of our own personal road to salvation. I pray that we do not fall into the same trap as those other evangelical movements that rose up at the same time as Wesley and became simply pietistic, with a personal salvation narrative and nothing more to say to the world. I think we do need to

remind ourselves (and I'll be saying this to the Ordinands tomorrow) that it was the *world* that God "so loved" in Jesus and the *world* to which he came. The church wasn't mentioned in that verse. In the Seminary where I teach, much attention is given to the church "being the church, so that the world can be the world", which is fine provided we are clear what "being the church" means. If the church is the Body of Christ, one of the most important things we know about the body of Jesus the Christ is that it became flesh in the world. A church that is not becoming flesh in the world is not the church. We need to hold onto this, because I think it's the unique difference between Wesley's brand of evangelism and much that happened around him. That's who Wesleyans are – Christians engaged with the world. Let nobody take our identity away from us.

For those who hold that there is no such thing as a "personal" Gospel, I have to tell you that there is no such thing as a "social" Gospel either. There is only the Gospel of Jesus, expressed both personally and socially, and that's what we should aim to live out.

[1] *Good News to the Poor – John Wesley's Evangelical Economics*, Theodore W. Jennings Jr., Abingdon, 1990

[2] *Journal* (Standard) Vol. III, March 5th, 1744

[3] Walter Wink, *The Powers that Be – Theology for a New Millennium*, Doubleday, 1998.