

I have characterized our universal calling to be human as demanding that "we [each] accept both our own becoming and the becomings of all others as parts of [the] ultimate whole and then, by serving as best we can the transient goods of all the parts, to make the greatest possible contribution to the enduring good of the whole."

Another characterization that may help to answer the obvious question of just how we go about serving the transient goods of the parts, etc. is to say that we are each called to make the best possible use of the past in order to make the best possible contribution to the future—or, conversely, to make the best possible contribution to the future by making the best possible use of the past. Of course, "best possible" isn't all that much clearer than "greatest possible." But what I have in mind is doing all that one can to consummate or redeem the past by creatively appropriating as much of it as possible without eliminating any more of it than absolutely necessary in order to transmit as much harmonized contrast to the future as one can.

In this connection, I cannot but think of Mr. Wesley's characterization of "true religion" as "right tempers towards God and man," which is to say, "gratitude to our Creator and supreme Benefactor" and "benevolence to our fellow-creatures," or "the loving God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves." I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that this formulation probably reflects the fateful one-sidedness of classical theism, according to which (1) we can serve the God who acts but is not acted upon only by passively allowing God to serve us; and (2) we can serve our neighbor only in the way God serves us, not by allowing her or him, first of all, to contribute to our lives, but only by actively willing and doing good to her or his life, thereby being, like God, albeit in our own creaturely ways, "benefit machines."

Given the insight, on the other hand, that God and everything else concrete transcends itself by real internal relations to both the past and the future, we are free to think of all things as, in their different ways, consummatants and thereby beneficiaries no less than as creators and thereby benefactors. In other words, God is as really our beneficiary as we are God's, and we and our fellow creatures are as really benefactors—of God as well as