

As an African American who was a senior pastor in both white and black churches between 1966 and 1974, Edward Wimberly encountered shame as the feeling of being unloved and being unlovable primarily when his parishioners and counselees experienced a loss of a loved one. Grief was the dominant psychological category for talking about loss in those days, and the feeling of shame of being abandoned and resulting in feelings of being unloved were described as temporary. However, in the middle 1980s pastoral theologians began to recognize shame as a dominant psychological and spiritual long lasting experience that needed to be addressed. Thus, pastoral counselors and pastoral theologians began to explore psychological object relations theory, self-psychology, and the psychology of shame to understand the persistence of the experience of shame. Today shame as the feeling of being unloved and unlovable is a major experience of many modern people given the nature of the loss of relational connections and close-knit communities. Many psychologies are surfacing focusing on cultural narcissism or selfish love, the cult of self-admiration which is replacing self-actualization, and the equating of wealth and social status with being loved. Growing up in the Methodist tradition in an African American church, Wimberly was sensitized to John Wesleys small group experience hearing about the class meetings. Moreover, he had been exposed to the use of small groups in Zimbabwe, Africa in 1998 based on African Methodists attempts to recover the village which was disappearing on account of technology, industrialization, and the colonialisms destruction of the family. Thus, based on the authors family of origin communitys fascination with Wesleys small group and witnessing this same phenomenon in Africa, Wimberly decided to explore Wesleys cell group practical theology for its contribution to twenty-first century ministry to people who could be classified as relational refugees. Engaging and exegeting key sermons and treatises by John Wesley, Edward Wimberly translates Wesleys therapeutic message of saving grace, praxis of supportive small groups, and narrative modalities of proclamation--Good News for the guilt-oriented eighteenth century--into redemptive counsel for the twenty-first century, where brokenness, isolation, and feelings of being unloved yield shame, not guilt and find expression in status anxiety, the commodification of human life, and narcissistic or self-absorbed identity. -Russell E. Richey William R. Cannon Distinguished Professor of Church History Candler School of Theology, Emory University Edward Wimberly makes a provocative statement when he says that shame is the major issue confronting the twenty-first century. After reading this book, I am convinced that there is merit to this assertion. The transposition of John Wesleys construct of groups/classes and therapeutic rhetoric represents an important component in the lives of those seeking community and membership in the Kingdom of Gods reign. This book is a thumbs up for Wesleyan relevance and pastoral counseling conversations. -Carol N. Helton Instructor of United Methodist History and Polity Interdenominational Theological Center Edward P. Wimberly is Jarena Lee Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling, Interdenominational Theological Center. He has published fourteen trade books and over fifty articles in the area of pastoral theology.

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