

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis

Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation

Concordia Seminary Scholarship

8-1-2016

Holiness Unto Whom? John Wesley's Doctrine of Entire Sanctification in Light of The Two Kinds of Righteousness

John Trinklein

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, hans.trinklein@lcmsintl.org

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/phd>



Part of the [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Trinklein, John, "Holiness Unto Whom? John Wesley's Doctrine of Entire Sanctification in Light of The Two Kinds of Righteousness" (2016). *Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation*. 25.

<https://scholar.csl.edu/phd/25>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

© 2015 by John Karl Trinklein. All rights reserved.

DEDICATION

Jesus, my Shepherd, Guardian, Friend,
My Prophet, Priest, and King,
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
Accept the praise I bring.

Weak is the effort of my heart
And cold my warmest thought;
But when I see Thee as Thou art,
I'll praise Thee as I ought.

Till then I would Thy love proclaim
With every fleeting breath;
And may the music of Thy name
Refresh my soul in death!

—John Newton, “How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds”, 1779

CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xiv
ABBREVIATIONS	xvii
1. INVITATION TO A DIALOGUE ON HOLINESS	1
A SYNOPSIS OF JOHN WESLEY’S HOLINESS DOCTRINES	2
MARTIN LUTHER’S TEACHING ON THE TWO KINDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS	7
THE THESIS	8
THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE QUESTION	9
A Brief History of a Much-Debated Doctrine	9
Entire Sanctification, <i>ca.</i> 1730–1900	9
Entire Sanctification, 1900 to the Present	11
The Theological Contours Today—Recent Dissertations and Articles.....	15
Sanctification Studies with Historical Emphases	15
Sanctification Studies with ‘Special Interest’ Emphases	17
Sanctification Studies Focused on Specific Practical Applications	18
Eastern Orthodox Sanctification Studies	20
Studies of Wesleyan Sanctification and Other Denominations.....	21
Wesley and Other Theological Systems	22
Sanctification Studies within Wesleyan/Holiness Doctrinal Parameters	22
The Theological Contours Today—Recent Major Works.....	26
The Great Divide	26
Historical Treatments	28

THE DISSERTATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT SCHOLARSHIP	29
Writings Directly Comparing Wesley and Luther	40
Conclusion	42
THE METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURE	44
2. SHAPING INFLUENCES	48
JOHN WESLEY’S UPBRINGING	48
The Social, Intellectual, and Theological Climate of the Wesleys’ Nation and Church	48
Conflicting Opinions—Who Shaped Whom?	48
Enlightenment Thought and Its Influence on the Church	52
Social Structure and Mores	60
The Influence of John Wesley’s Family	63
Factors influencing Wesley’s Ancestors	63
John Wesley’s Paternal Ancestry	65
John Wesley’s Father	66
John Wesley’s Maternal Heritage	69
John Wesley’s Mother	71
Life at Epworth	75
Summary	78
ENDEAVORS AND ENCOUNTERS	79
Charterhouse	79
Away to Oxford	80
The Bachelor’s Degree	80
Fellow of Lincoln College	82

Curate of Epworth	83
Influence of the Mystics	84
Jeremy Taylor	85
Thomas à Kempis	86
William Law	87
The Rise of the Holy Club	89
Georgia	92
The Hope	93
The Reality	94
Self-Examination	97
WESLEY’S THEOLOGY EMERGES	99
“The Great Day of Deliverance”	99
A Seeker-after-Faith	100
The Aldersgate Meeting	100
Preaching to a Disinterested Choir	102
SUMMARY: JOHN WESLEY—THE MAN, THE THEOLOGIAN	103
3. JOHN WESLEY’S THEOLOGY	104
INTRODUCTION	104
The Font of Wesleyan Theology	104
The Challenge	107
AN INTRODUCTION TO ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION, A.K.A. CHRISTIAN PERFECTION	108
In Wesley’s Own Words	110
Salvation/Freedom from Sin	111

The Indwelling of Perfect Love	112
WHAT, THEN, IS MAN?	113
The Political Image of God.....	114
The Natural Image of God.....	114
The Moral Image of God	115
Perfect Man’s Relationship with God.....	116
THE EFFECTS OF THE FALL INTO SIN	117
Effects of the Fall on the Moral Image.....	117
Effects of the Fall on the Political Image	117
Effects of the Fall on the Natural Image.....	118
The Effects of the Fall on Adam’s Offspring.....	119
Man’s Overall Condition Post-Fall.....	120
THE DEFINITION OF SIN	123
Sin, “Properly So-Called”	123
Original Sin.....	123
<i>The Doctrine of Original Sin, According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience....</i>	124
Wesley’s Theology of Original Sin	126
GRACE.....	126
Prevenient Grace.....	127
Is There No More than That?	130
RIGHTEOUSNESS	130
Can Such Righteousness be (Re)gained by Right Actions?	131
Exactly What ‘Righteousness of Christ’ is Imputed to the Believer?	132

JUSTIFICATION	133
Initial Justification	134
Final Justification.....	135
The Question of Merit	136
Justifying Faith	137
The Faith of a Servant	138
The Faith of a Child of God	139
Justification vs. Regeneration (a.k.a. the New Birth).....	140
SANCTIFICATION— A.K.A. SALVATION, HOLINESS, PERFECTION	142
WESLEY’S ORDO SALUTIS.....	144
4. MARTIN LUTHER’S THEOLOGY	147
INTRODUCTION	147
Martin Luther Himself	147
The Sources for Study of Lutheran Theology	148
Quoting Luther Against Himself	149
Luther’s Hermeneutical Principle.....	151
THE DOCTRINE OF MAN	153
One of a Kind.....	155
<i>Ratio</i>	156
On Original Sin.....	158
Effects of the Fall upon Reason viz. Spiritual Matters	159
Effects of the Fall upon Reason viz. Earthly Matters	160
THE DOCTRINE OF SIN.....	162

RIGHTEOUSNESS	165
<i>Coram Deo</i> Righteousness	166
The Shape of <i>Coram Deo</i> Righteousness	168
You Mean That’s <i>All</i> ?	169
<i>Coram Mundo</i> Righteousness	171
THE DOCTRINE OF GOD	176
Grace	177
Redemption	177
Justification	178
Sanctification	180
CAUGHT IN-BETWEEN THE NOW AND THE NOT YET	181
<i>in spe</i> vs. <i>in re</i>	181
Righteousness <i>redux</i>	182
The Sum of the Matter	182
5. WESLEY’S PERSPECTIVE ON MARTIN LUTHER	184
“GLORIOUS CHAMPION OF THE LORD OF HOSTS” OR “ROUGH, UNTRACTABLE SPIRIT”?	185
Luther the Man	187
Tarred with a Moravian Brush	188
Guilt by Association with Early Opinions	193
Striving over Words—Wesley’s Objection to Specific Quotes and Phrases	195
The Straw Man	195
Thou Shalt Not Covet	197
The “Thirty Years” War	198

Phrases in Common, Meanings May Vary	200
DOCTRINAL (DIS)AGREEMENTS	203
<i>Deus Absconditus</i>	204
Means of Grace.....	205
It's the Law	208
<i>Usus Legis à la Luther</i>	209
Wesley's Way.....	210
Doing What is In One	214
The Doctrine of Man	216
Pre-Fall	216
Post-Fall.....	218
The Reason for Reason.....	218
Justification.....	220
<i>Sola Fide</i>	220
The Witness of the Spirit	220
Concerning Sin	222
<i>Fomes Peccati</i> —Are There Ineradicable Remains of Sin in Believers?.....	222
Is Sin Destroyed by Death?	224
The Manner and Status of Sin in Believers	226
<i>Simul Iustus et Peccator</i>	228
THE PROVERBS 27:6 MAN.....	230
6. ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION	232
WHAT'S YOUR ONE THING?	233

A PLAIN ANALYSIS (AND EVALUATION) OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION	234
Reason and Scripture	234
Analysis	234
Evaluation	236
The Nature, Purpose, and Attainability of the Law	237
Analysis	237
Evaluation	238
The Nature of Sin.....	238
Analysis	238
Evaluation	240
Analysis: The Significance and Culpability of Original Sin	240
Analysis: Sin as Substance	241
Précis	243
In Place of Sin, Holiness.....	243
Analysis: The <i>Need</i> for Holiness	243
Analysis: “How Can I Know that I Have It?” The Doctrine of Assurance	245
Humankind in the Grasp of Grace	245
Analysis: Unwrapping the Gift of Grace	246
Analysis: The Human Progression With Grace— Children, Young Men, and Fathers	249
Evaluation: All My Children	250
Sirs, What Must I Do to be Saved?.....	252
Analysis: “Salvation Begun”—Initial Salvation, Initial Justification	252
Analysis: “Salvation Continued”—Faith Working by Love	253

Analysis: “Salvation Finished”—Final Salvation, Final <i>Justification</i>	254
Evaluation: Salvation Imperiled	257
Evaluation: Agonizing to Enter In at the Strait Gate.....	257
Consequences of the Doctrine of Entire Sanctification	260
Denigration of Faith	260
Exaltation of “Perfect Love”	263
Mutated Purpose of Good Works	264
What’s a Neighbor For?	265
Introducing Uncertainty.....	266
Misplaced Assurance: Dying to Sin	268
Misplaced Assurance: The Indwelling of Perfect Love	272
Misplaced Assurance: The Witness of the Spirit.....	273
Impoverished Justification.....	275
On the Advisability of “Paying it Extra”	278
DOES THE END JUSTIFY THE MEANS?.....	280
A STILL MORE EXCELLENT WAY	284
Working at Cross Purposes.....	284
What About “By Their Fruit You Will Recognize Them” (Matthew 7:16)?	287
The Pastoral Significance of the Two Kinds of Righteousness.....	291
7. CONCLUSION.....	295
THE SUM OF THE MATTER.....	296
Coming to Terms	297
The Voice of Reason	298

Parting of the Ways	300
Finding the Center	302
What’s Love Got to Do with It?	304
I HAVE MANY OTHER THINGS TO WRITE TO YOU.....	305
CONCLUSION.....	307
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	310
VITA.....	334

Note that unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture citations in this dissertation are from
The Holy Bible: New International Version. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The path to τελειότητα for a project such as this is a long and arduous one—and, but for the help and guidance of others, would be all but impossible. Through the years I have been blessed with the friendship and encouragement of many people; it is only fitting that a number of them be acknowledged at this point:

I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Gerry Bode, Dean of the Concordia Seminary Graduate School, and Dr. David Maxwell, Director of the Concordia Seminary Graduate School, for the fraternal support they granted both as administrators and as friends who had walked the road before me.

The Proposal Committee, Dr. Thomas Manteufel, Dr. Joel Biermann, Dr. William Schumacher, and Dr. Leo Sánchez, worked diligently and advised honestly to hone the focus of my project.

I deeply appreciate the flexibility and understanding of my Dissertation Committee—Dr. Thomas Manteufel, Dr. Joel Biermann, and Dr. William Schumacher—as they ran the race along with me, giving timely feedback and very insightful recommendations.

I also owe more than I can ever repay to my *Doktorvater*, Dr. Thomas Manteufel, whose encyclopedic knowledge of doctrinal and denominational systems combined with the gentle manner of a *Seelsorger* to direct and correct my progress without inducing discouragement.

Beyond the pale of Concordia Seminary faculty and staff, the number of people who hoped, and helped, and prayed for me is greater than I likely even know, and certainly more than can be acknowledged in this brief space. Still I would be inexcusably remiss if I did not mention the following—listed in roughly the chronological order of their involvement:

Thanks to Al and Jacque Collison, whose friendship and unparalleled support were there

even before my PhD studies began;

To the members of my congregation—Olive Branch Lutheran Church, in Okawville—who were patient and understanding as their pastor spent so many days locked away in his study, and so many of whom gave their part-time undershepherd special financial gifts that enabled me to keep focused on my studies without worrying about provision for my family;

To John Rhoads, who befriended an overwhelmed graduate student in my very first year, helping me navigate the bewildering labyrinth of academia and then fashion a Prospectus question worth asking *and* answering;

To Dr. Larry Lacher, Nazarene pastor and conversation partner, who helped me understand and appreciate John Wesley’s warmed heart and passion for holiness;

To Dr. John Hellwege, pastor and fellow graduate student who sustained my morale and advised me to “write like the wind”;

To Dr. Randy Maddox of Duke Divinity School, Durham, North Carolina, who provided insights concerning Wesleyan theology and recommendations for further research; and

To Eric Stancliff, research librarian *extraordinaire*, German instructor, and friend, whose generosity and persistent encouragement were a continual blessing.

But my greatest debt of earthly gratitude is due my family:

To my late father, Dr. Frederick E. Trinklein, who showed me what a Christian man ought to be, who taught me what an inspiration an excellent teacher could be, and whose merciless editing (born, no doubt, of his own experience with the editors of *his* books!) taught me to write;

To my beloved mother, Margaret Trinklein—herself an author, but whose chosen lifelong vocation was training up her children in the way they should go—for never, ever giving up on me, loving me unstintingly, and for continually interceding for me before the Throne of Grace;

To my children: Jael, Abigail, Michael, and John, for enduring fourteen years of “Daddy’s working on his dissertation right now” and still growing into loving and godly young women and men; and

To my wonderful, patient, long-suffering wife, Gretchen, who followed Ruth’s pattern (Ruth 1:16–17) even when the “whither-thou-goest” included doctoral studies that shifted so much onto her shoulders. I could never have done it without her.

Above all, my thanks and praise go to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whose patient endurance and willing sacrifice provided both atonement for my sin *and* the robe of righteousness that I will wear at the wedding feast of the Lamb. He took me as His own, wretched creature that I am, and brought me into a relationship sealed with His own precious blood—and in that relationship I can live and die, delight and grow and struggle and weep and laugh and sing, without ever fearing that He will change His mind about me depending on my performance.

I think it’s perfect.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AE</i>	American Edition of Luther's Works ¹
<i>BE</i>	Bicentennial Edition of Wesley's Works ²
<i>DB</i>	Luther's Deutsche Bibel—Weimar Ausgabe Abteilung 3
DBT	Holy Bible, Darby Bible Translation ³
ESV	Holy Bible, English Standard Version ⁴
<i>Jackson</i>	Jackson Edition of Wesley's Works ⁵
KJV	Holy Bible, King James Version ⁶
NAS	Holy Bible, New American Standard version ⁷
NET	Holy Bible, New English Translation ⁸
NIV	Holy Bible, New International Version ⁹
<i>WA</i>	Weimar Ausgabe of Luther's Works ¹⁰
WEB	Holy Bible, World English Bible Translation ¹¹

¹ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, 55 vols., American Edition, 55 vols. (St. Louis, MO and Philadelphia, PA: Concordia and Fortress, 1958).

² John Wesley, *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976).

³ John Nelson Darby, tran., *Holy Bible: Darby Translation* (London: G. Morrish, 1890).

⁴ *Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2001).

⁵ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 3d ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984).

⁶ *Holy Bible: King James Version* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub, 2006).

⁷ *Holy Bible: New American Standard* (La Habra, CA: Foundation Publications, for the Lockman Foundation, 1971).

⁸ *Holy Bible: New English Translation (NET)* (Biblical Studies, L.L.C., 2006).

⁹ *Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013).

¹⁰ Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimarer Ausgabe)* (Weimar, Germany: Hermann Böhlau/H. Böhlau Nachfolger, 2009).

¹¹ "Holy Bible: World English Bible," <http://worldenglishbible.org/>.

CHAPTER ONE

INVITATION TO A DIALOGUE ON HOLINESS

I once had a conversation with a student at a well-known, non-denominational university. He said, “I’m so glad to be attending this school! It has really helped me in my Christian walk—it’s getting to the point where I can go days on end without sinning, now.” This comment proved to be the springboard for some rather far-reaching discussions.

Nor could the student’s perspective on the Christian life be considered unusual—urgent calls to holy living, coupled with varied understandings of the impact (or even the existence) of sin in a believer’s life, can be found across the American religious landscape. And why not? Scripture certainly does urge us to be holy,¹² and to avoid sin.¹³ Taking these Scriptural injunctions to heart, a significant number of Christian communities have made personal holiness a central aspect of their teaching.

Is the idea of personal holiness truly a central, and biblically supportable, tenet of the Christian faith? Is it possible (as the student claimed) to “go days on end without sinning”? What is the proper understanding of the Christian’s life of sanctification? These are the primary issues to be addressed in this dissertation. The writings of John Wesley, the eighteenth-century theologian whose teachings continue to inform a broad range of church bodies even today,¹⁴ will

¹² *E.g.*, Lev. 19:2, 1 Pet. 1:15–16, and a host of others.

¹³ *E.g.* 1 Jn. 2:1; Jn. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:34; *et al.*

¹⁴ Noted historian William Lecky writes that “it is no exaggeration to say that he [Wesley] has had a wider constructive influence in the sphere of practical religion than any other man who has appeared since the sixteenth century”; see William Edward Hartpole Lecky, *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (London: D. Appleton, 1879), 2:687.

Indisputable substantiation of Lecky’s remarkable claim is difficult, but certainly the following may be

form the basis of consideration. Is Wesley correct in his understanding of God’s Word? If not, why not—and how might one speak the truth most winsomely to proselytes of the holy life, such as the student I encountered?

There is a framework by means of which Wesley’s theology may be addressed—one that is conducive to opening up dialogue and mutual understanding between students of Wesley and students of Luther. This framework is commonly called ‘the two kinds of righteousness’.

A Synopsis of John Wesley’s Holiness Doctrines

John Wesley taught that a specific type of personal holiness (which he termed ‘Christian perfection’ or ‘entire sanctification’¹⁵) was absolutely necessary for anyone to enter God’s

said: Wesley is acknowledged as the founder of the Methodist church, and his writings are foundational to most, if not all, present-day Holiness and Pentecostal bodies as well. Recent combined data for these groups, in the United States and Canada *alone*, shows:

Methodist bodies:	15,299,756 members in 86,327 congregations
Holiness bodies:	1,778,346 members in 13,573 congregations
Pentecostal bodies:	14,089,048 members in 54,611 congregations

Truly a sizeable portion of the North American theological landscape, and a segment well worth serious consideration. The above-cited data were concatenated from: Frank Spencer Mead, Samuel S. Hill, and Craig D. Atwood, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, 12th ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2005) and Eileen W Lindner, ed., *Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches, 2010* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2010).

Considering the population beyond the North American continent, the *World Churches Handbook* puts the 1995 world wide community in Methodist and Pentecostal bodies at 25,599,272 and 105,756,153 respectively; together these groups represent approximately 8% of the world’s Christian population. A separate 1995 census of the world-wide Holiness community showed 5,650,230 adherents, but it is likely that this figure is included in the number broadly classified as “Pentecostal” by the *World Churches Handbook*. See P. W. Brierley and Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *World Churches Handbook: Based on the Operation World Database by Patrick Johnstone, WEC International, 1993* (London: Christian Research, 1997), 13–14; also Stanley M Burgess and Ed M. Van Der Maas, eds., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 286.

Roughly, then, North America alone accounts for:

- 60% of all Methodist Christians,
- 32% of all Holiness Christians, and
- 13% of all Pentecostal Christians, worldwide.

The question of North American emphasis *vis-à-vis* other geographic regions will be discussed in the “Current Status of the Question” section, below.

¹⁵ Although ‘Christian perfection’ is the term commonly associated with this state of personal holiness, Wesley himself preferred the term ‘entire sanctification’. In his letter *An Answer to the Rev. Mr. Dodd*, (n.d., pub. 1782)

presence after death.¹⁶ When asked, “What is ‘Christian perfection’?” Wesley replied that it is “the loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies, that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by pure love.”¹⁷ At a later point he states that Christian perfection “is ‘perfect love.’ (1 John 4:18.) This is the essence of it; its properties, or inseparable fruits, are, rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks. (1 Thess. 5:16, &c.)”¹⁸

‘Entire sanctification’ also includes:

- Loving one’s neighbor as oneself;¹⁹ and
- Enjoying complete deliverance from all inward sin²⁰—though *n.b.* that such deliverance does *not* imply “freedom from ignorance, mistake, temptation, and a thousand infirmities necessarily connected with flesh and blood.”²¹

As Nicodemus asked Jesus, “How can this be?” (John 3:9). Key to Wesley’s claim for deliverance from all inward sin is his definition of sin, *properly so-called*.

Although Wesley believed that *all* “mistakes in practice” are transgressions of divine law

Wesley has this to say regarding the term ‘Christian perfection’: “I have no particular fondness for the term. It seldom occurs either in my preaching or writings. It is my opponents who thrust it upon me continually, and ask me what I mean by it. . . . but that it is a scriptural term is undeniable. Therefore, none ought to object to the use of the term, whatever they may do to this or that explication of it.” *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.* (New York: B. Waugh & T. Mason, 1835), 6:534.

Because Wesley (and his followers) preferred and often used the term ‘entire sanctification’, it will be the term of choice in this proposal, unless a quote or discussion point would necessitate otherwise.

¹⁶ John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1966), 68–69.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

and need the atoning blood,²² only “voluntary transgressions of a known law [of God]” are properly called ‘sins’.²³ As for *involuntary* transgressions of a law of God, known or unknown, Wesley considered such defects in practice to be “naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality,”²⁴ therefore not in the same category as (volitional) sin. He concludes: “Such transgressions you may call sins, if you please: I do not, for the reasons above-mentioned.”²⁵ With such an understanding of sin,²⁶ the hope and the goal of ‘entire sanctification’ become more realistic.

For Wesley taught that, not only was the holiness of ‘entire sanctification’ the *sine qua non* of final salvation, it was also possible for a Christian to experience ‘entire sanctification’ *in this lifetime*,²⁷ and that attainment of such holiness would surely be accompanied by both fervent inner conviction and specific observable hallmarks. To wit, at the Conference of 1759, Wesley was asked, “What is reasonable proof? How may we certainly know one that is saved from all sin?” Wesley answered:

We cannot infallibly know one that is thus saved, (no, nor even one that is justified,) unless it should please God to endow us with the miraculous discernment of spirits. But we apprehend those would be sufficient proofs to any reasonable man, and such as would leave little room to doubt either the truth or depth of the work: (1.) If we had clear evidence of his exemplary behaviour for some time before this supposed change. This would give us reason to believe, he would not ‘lie for God,’ but speak neither more nor less than he felt; (2.) If he gave a distinct account of the time and manner wherein the change was wrought, with sound speech which could

²² Ibid., 52.

²³ Ibid., 54.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Wesley’s hamartiology will be discussed further in the dissertation’s chapters three and six.

²⁷ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 120, notes, “As to the time [of attaining Entire Sanctification]. I believe this instant generally is the instant of death, the moment before the soul leaves the body. But I believe it may be ten, twenty, or forty years before. I believe it is usually many years after justification; but that it may be within five years or five months after it, I know no conclusive argument to the contrary.”

not be reproved; and, (3.) If it appeared that all his subsequent words and actions were holy and unblamable.

The short of the matter is this: (1.) I have abundant reason to believe, this person will not lie; (2.) He testifies before God, ‘I feel no sin, but all love; I pray, rejoice, and give thanks without ceasing; and I have as clear an inward witness, that I am fully renewed, as that I am justified.’ Now, if I have nothing to oppose to this plain testimony, I ought in reason to believe it.²⁸

Wesley furthermore taught that there was a certain method or pattern of living which the believer ought to observe, in order to attain and demonstrate this ‘entire sanctification’ most expediently. Thus, when he was asked at the same conference: “How are we to wait for this change?” he replied,

Not in careless indifference, or indolent inactivity; but in vigorous, universal obedience, in a zealous keeping of all the commandments, in watchfulness and painfulness, in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily; as well as in earnest prayer and fasting and a close attendance on all the ordinances of God. And if any man dream of attaining it any other way, (yea, or of keeping it when it is attained, when he has received it even in the largest measure,) he deceiveth his own soul. It is true, we receive it by simple faith: But God does not, will not, give that faith, unless we seek it with all diligence, in the way which he hath ordained.²⁹

Thus, the life of the Christian is both positive (growth in grace and love) and negative (killing the root of sin-properly-so-called, which hinders the positive aspect until that sin-root is truly dead). Both these aspects of the Christian’s life require the active involvement of the believer. Says Wesley,

[God] will not save us unless we ‘save ourselves from this untoward generation;’ unless we ourselves ‘fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life;’ unless we ‘agonize to enter in at the strait gate,’ ‘deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily,’ and labor, by every possible means, to ‘make our own calling and election sure.’³⁰

Against those who hope to get to heaven purely as a gift, he cries,

²⁸ Ibid., 57.

²⁹ Ibid., 62.

³⁰ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:208–9. Hereafter the Bicentennial Edition will be abbreviated *BE*.

Vain hope! that a child of Adam should ever expect to see the kingdom of Christ and of God without striving, without ‘agonizing’ first ‘to enter in at the strait gate!’ That one who was ‘conceived and born in sin,’ and whose ‘inward parts are very wickedness,’ would once entertain a thought of being ‘purified as his Lord is pure’ unless he ‘tread in his steps,’ and ‘take up his cross daily;’ unless he ‘cut off the right hand,’ and ‘pluck out the right eye and cast it from him;’ that he should ever dream of shaking off his old opinions, passions, tempers, of being ‘sanctified throughout in spirit, soul, and body,’ without a constant and continued course of general self-denial!³¹

John Wesley firmly believed that his teachings were founded on the testimony of Scripture alone. He felt that his doctrine of ‘entire sanctification’ was so obvious to the unbiased student of the Word that it could not be gainsaid. In the closing chapter of *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, he appeals to his readers, “Now let this perfection appear in its native form, and who can speak one word against it?”³²

Over the years, the answer turned out to be “many people, from across the Christian spectrum, could”—and they *did*. The significance and challenge of Wesley’s teaching was not lost on the Christian world, in his lifetime or the centuries to follow. His conception of ‘entire sanctification’ is widely acknowledged to be what Umphrey Lee called Wesley’s “most distinctive doctrine”³³ and, as W. E. Sangster observed, it “involved him in more controversy and odium than anything else he taught.”³⁴ Wesley called for adherence to his code of conduct, with the favor of God hanging in the balance, urging his followers, for example, to “[a]dmit no desire of pleasing food, or any other pleasure of sense; no desire of pleasing the eye or the imagination, by anything grand, or new, or beautiful; no desire of money, of praise, or esteem; of

³¹ Ibid., 1:412, emphasis original.

³² Wesley, *Plain Account*, 118.

³³ Umphrey Lee, *John Wesley and Modern Religion* (Nashville, TN: Cokesbury, 1936), 174.

³⁴ William Edwin Robert Sangster, *The Path to Perfection: An Examination and Restatement of John Wesley’s Doctrine of Christian Perfection* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1943), 25.

happiness in any creature.”³⁵ This is important, since “for us ‘by works faith is made perfect,’ so the completing or destroying the work of faith, and enjoying the favor, or suffering the displeasure, of God, greatly depends on every single act of obedience or disobedience.”³⁶

How does an assertion like this compare with the writing of the Saxon Reformer?

Martin Luther’s Teaching on the Two Kinds of Righteousness

Martin Luther taught that the favor of God is, from first to last, a gift *passively* received by Spirit-wrought faith. “Good works” of any kind were understood to be part of a person’s “horizontal” relationships with other creatures *only*, and even those “good works” flowed from a right “vertical” relationship with God which had already been established on Calvary and appropriated by faith.

Those “good works” that flow from faith might indeed be called “good” or even “righteous” from a human point of view—and Luther did teach that such works were an important part of the life God intended His people to live. But still he maintained that such good works had absolutely no merit or benefit *viz.* getting, keeping, or enhancing a right relationship with God. In his preface to his 1535 commentary on Galatians, Luther wrote, “This is our theology, by which we teach a precise distinction between these two kinds of righteousness, the active and the passive, so that morality and faith, works and grace, secular society and religion may not be confused. Both are necessary, but both must be kept within their limits.”³⁷

This dissertation will evaluate John Wesley’s theological tenets in light of Luther’s distinction between the ‘two kinds of righteousness’. Was Wesley’s concept of ‘entire sanctification’, and his meticulous pattern for holy living and tempers, a confusion of the ‘two

³⁵ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 102.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 101.

kinds of righteousness'? If so, what are the ramifications for Christians today?

The Thesis

It is the thesis of this dissertation that Wesley's "distinctive doctrine" of 'entire sanctification'—indeed, his entire *ordo salutis*—is predicated upon a different theological starting point than Luther. Furthermore, Wesley used this vantage point to address a different set of issues than those that faced the Reformer. But while the spiritual torpor and moral decay of eighteenth century England truly were deplorable conditions which needed to be addressed, Wesley's different starting point led both to some unintended theological consequences *and* to his misunderstanding Luther's theology regarding sanctification.

While it is true that Wesley's concerns were valid and important (then *and* now), it is my contention that Martin Luther's distinction between the 'two kinds of righteousness' provides a means of addressing those concerns in a manner that is more compatible with the full counsel of God's Word, than is Wesley's *ordo salutis* where entire sanctification before death is the *sine qua non* of eternal life in heaven.³⁸ The Lutheran two-dimensional understanding holds that Christians have a relationship and a 'righteousness' *coram Deo* that is differentiated (but not divorced) from their relationships and 'righteousness' *coram mundo*. This understanding provides a welcome alternate perspective on the issue of sanctification, for Christians seeking to live God-pleasing lives and gain assurance of their full and final salvation.

³⁷ Luther, *AE*, 26:7. Hereafter the American Edition of Luther's Works will be abbreviated *AE*.

³⁸ In a sermon written in the last year of his life, Wesley expounds on his doctrinal formulation, saying: "The righteousness of Christ is, doubtless, necessary for any soul that enters into glory. But so is personal holiness, too, for every child of man. . . . The former is necessary to *entitle* us to heaven; the latter, to *qualify* us for it. Without the righteousness of Christ we could have no *claim* to glory; without holiness we could have no *fitness* for it." Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 4:144; emphasis original.

The Current Status of the Question

The account which follows places primary, but not exclusive, emphasis on North American contemporary scholarship *viz.* ‘entire sanctification’. The reason for this is that, despite John and Charles Wesley’s original evangelical and missiological hopes, the doctrine of entire sanctification did not spread evenly or unadulterated throughout the world. Wesley’s theological offspring did indeed travel to countries and continents besides our own, as the brief numerical summary given in footnote 14, above, bears witness. As a result, many religious groups worldwide claim John Wesley as their spiritual forebear—yet as will be seen below, many of them (including mainstream Methodism) have modified or even outright rejected his “distinctive doctrine” as originally formulated. This section will briefly outline the history of entire sanctification from the time of Wesley to the present day, seeking to identify contemporary scholarship which addresses itself to entire sanctification *as believed and taught by John Wesley*. This, because

1. it is the soundness of *his* formulation which is under consideration, and
2. it is not feasible to evaluate the countless doctrinal variations which have sprung from John Wesley’s original teaching.

A Brief History of a Much-Debated Doctrine

Entire Sanctification, *ca.* 1730–1900.

John Wesley and his “most distinctive doctrine” of entire sanctification have been the subject of vigorous debate from the time he first began to preach it. From the 1700s³⁹ to the present day, both severe critics and ardent supporters have entered the fray with writings

³⁹ Note, for example, the mid-eighteenth-century publication of William Fleetwood, *The Perfectionists Examined Or, Inherent Perfection in This Life, No Scripture Doctrine. To Which Is Affixed, the Rev. Mr. Whitefield’s Thoughts on This Subject, in a Letter to Mr. Wesley*, (London: J. Roberts, 1741).

concerning the veracity and attainability of Christian perfection. Wesley addressed the challenges himself during his lifetime, and his powerful presence helped maintain some consistency of belief and application. After his death, however, the movement which he had shepherded split into a number of sub-groups,⁴⁰ and while many of the matters which divided these groups were ecclesial rather than theological, each group also tended to develop its own nuances on the doctrine of entire sanctification.⁴¹ Influenced by other Christian writers and groups, the “distinctive doctrine” changed. As P. D. Hocken attests,

[T]here was less Wesleyan-Methodist influence on the European than on the American Holiness Movements. Holiness teaching in Europe was mostly Calvinistic (among many Anglican evangelicals at Keswick and among Welsh Calvinistic Methodists) or Lutheran (as in much of the *Gemeinschaftsbewegung*, the Holiness movement within the Protestant state churches in Germany).⁴²

Academically speaking, the ir-rationality—read ‘subjectivity’—of a believer’s being entirely sanctified did not mesh well with the Rationalism so prevalent in England and the European continent.⁴³ Holiness teaching of this kind was not long given significant consideration in many continental theological venues; it was left to the itinerant preachers and lay theologians to discuss and proclaim. Once John Wesley, the one-time Oxford don, was no longer there to stir the pot among academic divines, the movement as he envisioned it ceased to receive substantial scholarly attention in the England *or* Europe of his day.

⁴⁰ John Kent, “The Wesleyan Methodists to 1849,” in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, ed. Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George, and E. Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth, 1978), 2:213.

⁴¹ Even John and Charles Wesley disputed between themselves over whether the experience of entire sanctification was instantaneous (as John declared) or a matter of gradual growth (as Charles averred). Following John’s death the divergences over entire sanctification—and other matters—accelerated. See Sarah H. Lancaster, “Current Debates Over Wesley’s Legacy Among His Progeny,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed. Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 309.

⁴² Peter. D. Hocken, “Europe, Western (Survey),” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M Burgess and Ed M. Van Der Maas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 96.

⁴³ See Richard A Miller, “Scriptural Authority and Christian Perfection: John Wesley and the Anglican

The fragmentation of Wesley's offspring was mirrored in America, where many of the schisms also tended to be of an organizational nature. But there were divisions over the question of Christian perfection as well;⁴⁴ these rifts were so significant that they led to establishment of separate church bodies such as the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Free Methodist Church, and (much later) the Church of the Nazarene—plus a host of others that followed the teachings of other leaders such as Phoebe Palmer and Charles Finney.⁴⁵

The debate continued and intensified as the nineteenth century drew to a close, with significant questions being raised about the *timing* of a believer's entire sanctification.⁴⁶ Then, fueled by the perception that many Christians were being seduced by worldliness and moral laxity, the start of the twentieth century witnessed a resurgence of holiness preaching and teaching.

Entire Sanctification, 1900 to the Present.

In keeping with the generally optimistic worldview of that time, preachers of entire sanctification at the close of the nineteenth century confidently spoke of the change wrought in the believer's heart in extravagant and awe-inspiring terms. They were convinced that the cleansing of the believer's heart—the eradication of sin and the indwelling of perfect love—would transform both individuals *and* the world in which they lived.⁴⁷

Tradition" (PhD diss., Drew University, 1991).

⁴⁴ See John Leland Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (New York: Abingdon, 1956), 94–109. The explosive growth of American frontier regions as well as the diverse training levels of itinerant preachers caused a wide variety of emphases to be proclaimed from the pulpit, where personal holiness was concerned.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 109–32.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁴⁷ Many Holiness preachers—notable among them is A. M. Hills—were postmillennialists. Hills' works were galvanizing calls to true holiness, and remain popular today. See, *e.g.*, Aaron Merritt Hills, *Holiness and Power* (Cincinnati, OH: Martin Wells Knapp, 1897); also his influential opus *Fundamental Christian Theology: A*

World War I and its aftermath did much to dampen the spirits of preachers and adherents alike. A sobering look at the realities of depression-era America caused many to question the veracity of entire sanctification,⁴⁸ with the result that, while some continued to staunchly defend it,⁴⁹ other proponents began to reformulate the doctrine. Their reasoning was as follows:

Entire sanctification, as mentioned above, is defined as perfect love for God *and* man filling one's heart...but this did not mean the sanctified believer was flawless or incapable of error. While "sin, properly so-called" was indeed removed from an entirely sanctified person's heart, "infirmities" remained. Wesley taught that such infirmities or human limitations are part of the inescapable human condition on earth, due to the Fall. Furthermore, these infirmities could and did cause even entirely sanctified persons to commit "errors." From its very start in the 1700s, the Wesleyan teaching had been that, due to this pervasive infirmity, one could make "mistakes" and still be perfect, if the intent of the heart was pure.⁵⁰ Why were these things significant to the contemporary reformulation?

Seizing upon the undeniable existence of "infirmities," some Holiness teachers began to *constrict* the range and definition of the "sin, properly so-called" which entire sanctification eradicated. At the same time, the range of actions and thoughts which fell under the category of "infirmities" was greatly expanded.⁵¹ In this way, by the middle of the twentieth century,

Systematic Theology, 2 vols. (Pasadena, CA: C.J. Kinne, 1931).

⁴⁸ Reinhold Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of Man. 1, Human Nature* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941) was a direct assault on the idea of man's perfectibility.

⁴⁹ H. Orton Wiley published his *Christian Theology*, 3 vols. (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1940) the same time Niebuhr's work debuted. A *tour de force* of traditional Holiness understanding and defense of entire sanctification, *Christian Theology* was the standard Holiness doctrinal textbook for the Church of the Nazarene for more than forty years.

⁵⁰ These concepts will be examined in detail in chapters three and six.

⁵¹ See, among others, D. Shelby Corlett, *The Meaning of Holiness: Messages on the Wesleyan Doctrine of Entire Sanctification* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1944); Richard Shelley Taylor, *A Right Conception of Sin: Its Importance to Right Thinking and Right Living* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene, 1939). This second work was revised

Holiness theologians could still insist that eradication of sin was possible in this life, even in the midst of a world untransformed by Holiness preaching, and despite having churches fraught with problems that at times certainly *looked* like sins. The reformulators thought they could “save” the doctrine of entire sanctification in this way.

Yet as Mark Quanstrom gently put it, “Not all were completely comfortable with this continuing expansion of the definition of infirmities,”⁵² for it seemed that the substance of the doctrine was being diluted into irrelevance. The discomfort spread, and it led to a mid-century renaissance in Wesley studies marked by a careful reexamination of John Wesley’s own writings and a comparison with twentieth century Holiness teachings. Many works⁵³ from this mid-century period remain some of the finest expositions of Wesleyan doctrine extant.

The result of this scholarship was a re-emphasis upon the doctrine as Wesley himself taught it, and a renewed attempt to apply it to modern-day Christianity. But *could* it be? Was it still relevant? Timothy Smith concluded his summary of early Nazarene history by observing:

The reader, therefore, must evaluate for himself the significance of the men and events which compose the history of the Nazarenes. We shall be content if in telling the story we have provided new and important information upon which thoughtful persons may ponder the meaning of American Christianity, the part played by the small denominational families into which it has recently been divided, and *the*

and slightly expanded in 1945

⁵² Mark R. Quanstrom, *A Century of Holiness Theology: The Doctrine of Entire Sanctification in the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2004), 128.

⁵³ Such as William R. Cannon’s *The Theology of John Wesley, with Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1946); George Croft Cell’s *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (New York: Henry Holt, 1935); Umphrey Lee’s *John Wesley and Modern Religion*; Harald Lindström’s *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation*. (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri, 1946); and William Sangster’s *The Path to Perfection*. Note that, although they came about twenty years later, both Leo George Cox’s *John Wesley’s Concept of Perfection* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1964); and George Allen Turner’s *George Allen Turner, The Vision Which Transforms: Is Christian Perfection Scriptural?* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1964) are considered standards in this field as well. Turner’s earlier work, *The More Excellent Way: The Scriptural Basis of the Wesleyan Message* (Winona Lake, IN: Light & Life, 1952) was a notable defense of classic Wesleyan theology.

*relevance of Wesleyan perfection to a generation awed by its rediscovery of the deep sinfulness of man.*⁵⁴

Christian scholars within and without the pale of the Wesleyan trajectory continued to wrestle with the question. Those who were still committed to the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification *per se* had to contend with what Mildred Bangs Wynkoop called “The Credibility Gap”⁵⁵—the disconnect between the proclaimed eradication of sin, and the observable facts of human existence. Richard S. Taylor penned *The Theological Formulation*—the third volume in the present standard work *Exploring Christian Holiness*⁵⁶—in which he continues to defend a classic Wesleyan understanding *sans* the vitiation of terms. But Wynkoop believed that historic presentations were inadequate in modern times. She notes,

Of all the credibility gaps in contemporary life, none is more real and serious than that which exists between the Christian, particularly the Wesleyan, doctrine and everyday life. The absolute of holiness theology may satisfy the mind, but the imperfection of the human self seems to deny all that the perfection of Christian doctrine affirms. . . . This has created a vast and disturbing dualism between idea and life, between profession and practice. Such a dualism fosters either bewildered dishonesty (in the interest of loyalty) or abject discouragement. The ultimate result is rejection of the Christian message as itself unrealistic and unbelievable if not actually false.⁵⁷

For scholars such as Wynkoop (and H. Ray Dunning, fifteen years later⁵⁸), the answer was to radically restate the doctrine itself. Most significantly, the underlying definition of ‘sin’ had to be changed from a *substantial* to a *relational* understanding. They claimed that ‘sin’ was not a

⁵⁴ Timothy L Smith, *Called Unto Holiness: The Story of the Nazarenes* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene, 1962), 351; emphasis added.

⁵⁵ Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1972), 39.

⁵⁶ W. T. Purkiser et al., *Exploring Christian Holiness*, 3 vols. (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1983).

⁵⁷ Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love*, 39–40.

⁵⁸ Dunning’s systematic text, *Grace, Faith & Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1988) reflects themes similar to those of Wynkoop. *Grace, Faith & Holiness* was required reading at Nazarene institutions throughout the 1990s.

“thing” to be eradicated; rather, sin was a wrong relationship with God—and thus holiness or entire sanctification was simply being in right relationship with God *without* the eradication of any sinful nature.⁵⁹

Reaction to such radical proposals was understandably lively. In 1999, Richard S. Taylor published an article titled “Why the Holiness Movement Died.” While he admitted in the article itself that his title was more hyperbole than fact,⁶⁰ Taylor did assert that (thanks to revisionists of every stripe) the doctrine of entire sanctification as traditionally formulated was in danger of being itself eradicated. Although there were many reasons for this problem, he said: “I believe that a major contributing cause of the staggering of the holiness ranks has been *The Theology of Love* by Mildred Wynkoop.”⁶¹ And the controversy continues today, unabated.

The Theological Contours Today—Recent Dissertations and Articles

Sanctification Studies with Historical Emphases.

Contemporary academic consideration of Wesley’s entire sanctification formulation takes many forms. Some of the work is undertaken with an eye toward historical matters. Besides Richard Miller’s aforementioned evaluation of Wesley and the eighteenth-century Anglican Church regarding authority and perfection (see footnote 43), Jin Kim Doo compared Wesley’s view of holiness with John Calvin’s⁶²—although this work intentionally kept to historical presentation rather than analysis or critique. Reflecting one of the few recent continental contributions to the dialogue, Sung-Duk Lee traced the influence of the Halle school of German

⁵⁹ See Quanstrom’s summary of Wynkoop in *A Century of Holiness Theology*, 141–50.

⁶⁰ Richard Taylor, “Why the Holiness Movement Died,” *God’s Revivalist* (March 1999): 3–19.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶² Jin Kim Doo, “Holiness in Calvin and Wesley” (PhD diss., University of Bristol, 1995).

pietism upon Wesley's thought.⁶³ Charles Goodwin tracked a shift in Wesley's thinking concerning the attainability of entire sanctification when a small group of Methodists in London claimed to have attained such a level of purity that their hearts and minds had absolutely no room for wandering thoughts.⁶⁴ (Wesley considered such an assertion absurd, and preached his well-known sermon *Wandering Thoughts*⁶⁵ to clarify the issue.)

One interesting historical consideration of Wesley's entire sanctification was done by Sarah Sloan Kreutziger at Tulane University. Where others looked for the *sources* of the doctrine, Kreutziger charted its *outworking*, in the lives of women reformers of the next century.⁶⁶ Lastly, an ecumenical channel was opened between contemporary Roman and Wesleyan scholars when Edgardo Colón-Emeric detailed the similarities between John Wesley and Thomas Aquinas in their views of perfection, and urged the two traditions to challenge and stimulate each other to a clearer understanding of the truth.⁶⁷ His invitation to dialogue was accepted in 2010 when Kenneth Loyer also explored the interrelation of the Holy Spirit, holiness, and love in the writings of these two influential theologians, likewise expressing the conviction that each tradition could benefit from greater appreciation of the other's tenets.⁶⁸

⁶³ Sung-Duk Lee, "Der Deutsche Pietismus Und John Wesley" (PhD diss., University of Münster, 2003). This work was published in the *Kirchengeschichtliche* monograph series (Bd. 8) under the same title.

⁶⁴ Charles H. Goodwin, "Setting Perfection Too High: John Wesley's Changing Attitudes toward the London Blessing," *Methodist History* 36, (1998): 86–95.

⁶⁵ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:126–37.

⁶⁶ Sarah Sloan Kreutziger, "Going on to Perfection: The Contributions of the Wesleyan Theological Doctrine of Entire Sanctification to the Value Base of American Professional Social Work Through the Lives and Activities of Nineteenth-Century Evangelical Women Reformers" (DSW thesis, Tulane University, 1991).

⁶⁷ Edgardo Antonio Colón-Emeric, "Perfection in Dialogue: An Ecumenical Encounter between Wesley and Aquinas." (PhD diss., Duke University, 2007). This work was published for broader consumption under the title Edgardo Antonio Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection: An Ecumenical Dialogue* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009).

⁶⁸ Kenneth M. Loyer, "Spirit of Love: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life in Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley" (PhD diss., Southern Methodist University, 2010).

Sanctification Studies with ‘Special Interest’ Emphases.

Another subset of entire sanctification research is the work undertaken by those who look to Wesley’s teaching as a springboard for further studies in their own areas of special interest. Examples of this type of scholarship would be the ongoing dialogue concerning Wesley and his message *viz.* the tenets of liberation theology,⁶⁹ and scientific evaluation of Wesley’s teaching from within the disciplines of psychology⁷⁰ and neuroscience.⁷¹ It must be noted that these approaches posit Wesley’s doctrine at the outset and work from there—attempting either to re-interpret the doctrine for today (the sciences), or to apply it in a fashion quite divergent from Wesley’s own (liberation). Whether or not these approaches “take Wesley seriously *as written*”

⁶⁹ As Horton Davies discusses—see his “Justification, Sanctification, and the Liberation of the Person,” in *Sanctification and Liberation: Liberal Theologies in the Light of the Wesleyan Tradition*, ed. Theodore Runyon (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 64–82. Other book or article treatments of Wesley in light of Liberation Theology include Reuben L. Speaks, “Christian Perfection and Human Liberation: The Wesleyan Synthesis,” in *People Called Methodist*, ed. Gordon Rupp (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1984), 13–30; Timothy L. Wood, “‘That They May Be Free Indeed’: Liberty in the Early Methodist Thought in John Wesley and Francis Asbury,” *Methodist History* 38, (2000): 231–41; John Bailie, “John Wesley: A Theology of Liberation” (MTh thesis, University of South Africa, 2005); Gary Ball-Kilbourne, “The Christian as Steward in John Wesley’s Theological Ethics,” *Quarterly Review* 4, (1984): 43–54.

Dissertations addressing the issue include José Carlos de Souza, “Laicidade E Ecumenicidade de Igreja: O Pensamento Ecclesiológico de John Wesley” (Doctor of Religious Studies diss., Methodist University of São Paulo, 2008); [This work was later published in shortened format as *Leiga, Ministerial E Ecumênica: A Igreja No Pensamento de John Wesley* (São Bernardo do Campio: Editeo, 2009)]; Hugo Magallanes, “The Preferential Option for the Poor: A Wesleyan Liberation Ethic” (PhD diss., Drew, 2002). The number of discussions re: this topic multiply dramatically at the D.Min. and Master’s thesis level.

⁷⁰ Methodist theologian Randy Maddox, in his “Psychology and Wesleyan Theology: Precedents and Prospects for a Renewed Engagement,” *Journal of Psychiatry and Christianity* 23, (2004): 101–9 preceded both scientific evaluation and theological commentary alike. See Irv Brendlinger and Eric E. Mueller, “Psychological Implications of the Doctrine of Christian Perfection with Special Reference to John Wesley’s View,” *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 60, (2006): 275–86 for an example of the former; Nathan Crawford, “Science and Theology in Conversation: Emergence Theories of Consciousness and Entire Sanctification,” *Asbury Journal* 64, (2009): 40–53 demonstrates the latter.

⁷¹ Mark Mann did his doctoral work in this area, arguing that the difficulties arising amongst Holiness proponents regarding Entire Sanctification are due to deficient anthropological understandings, and calls for an alternate theological anthropology—one developed “in light of the sciences”. See Mark H. Mann, “Perfecting Grace: Holiness, Human Being, and the Sciences” (PhD diss., Boston University, 2004). This work was later released in book form, under the same title (London: T&T Clark, 2007). Interestingly, four years later and on the other side of the American continent, Rebecca Irelan undertook a study that also posited Peirce’s semiotic theory as a superior model for personhood and spiritual experience and, like Kreutziger (*q.v.*), evaluates her theory by applying the model to an historical (eighteenth-century) group of Methodist women. See Rebecca Jane Irelan, “A Little Experiment in Pragmatic Divinity: Charles Sanders Peirce and the Women of Early Methodism Socialize the

would be an interesting conversation to initiate, but is beyond the scope of this overview.

Sanctification Studies Focused on Specific Practical Applications.

For indeed there are those who are concerned about the viability *and the applicability* of entire sanctification as Wesley himself promulgated it. Not surprisingly, much of the work in this vein has been at the Doctor of Ministry level,⁷² but several recent PhD dissertations address Wesley's teaching on sanctification as well.

Using the doctrine of Christian perfection as his key, Australian David McEwan examined John Wesley's theological methodology and found it an effective pastoral approach in postmodern times.⁷³ Yet McEwan's was only the most recent in a series of works that applied Wesley's doctrines of sanctification to regions Wesley himself never visited. From China to Korea to Kenya, Wesley's teaching has been compared, contrasted and correlated with indigenous theologies. Wesleyan ministry in China was studied by Chin Yu, whose concern was the effect of religious education on developing a consciousness of "awakening to the Holy Spirit",⁷⁴ and the Chinese viewpoint has been employed in considering the exegetical and theological propriety of the concept of perfection itself.⁷⁵

Subject of John Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification" (PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, 2008).

⁷² E.g., Penelope Anderson Gladwell, "That We May Perfectly Love Thee': Christian Perfection Shaping the Mission of a Local United Methodist Congregation" (DMin thesis, Wesley Theological Seminary, 1990); James W White, "The Doctrine of Christian Perfection Its Historic and Contemporary Relevance for Methodism" (DMin thesis, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1997); Byung Young Kong, "A Model for Spiritual Formation: Toward the Wesley's Ideal of 'Christian Perfection' " (DMin thesis, Claremont School of Theology, 2003).

⁷³ David Bernard McEwan, "An Examination of How John Wesley's Theological Methodology Functions in Pastoral Practice, Illustrated by His Doctrine of Christian Perfection" (PhD diss., University of Queensland, 2006). Publication is pending by Paternoster, under the title *Wesley as a Pastoral Theologian: Theological Methodology in John Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Perfection*.

⁷⁴ Chin Cheak Yu, "Uncovering Seeds for Awakening and Living in the Spirit: A Cross Cultural Study of John Sung and John Wesley" (PhD diss., Claremont School of Theology, 2001).

⁷⁵ Cindy Su-Chin Lu, "The Exegetical and Theological Foundation of the Concept of Perfection in Heb. 10:19-25 from a Chinese Perspective" (ThM thesis, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1997).

Contemporary Korean consideration of entire sanctification ranges from dialogue with neo-Confucianism⁷⁶ to Minjung’s situational theology.⁷⁷ For example, Hung Kim evaluated the recent “theology of love” trend in Wesley studies in light of sixteenth-century Chinese scholar Yi Yulgok’s emphasis on sincerity,⁷⁸ suggesting that the two streams of thought could benefit from one another. There have been works seeking to apply Wesley’s theology to Korean pastoral practice,⁷⁹ and also a recent historical evaluation of holiness teaching in Korea, although the author of that study places greater emphasis on the “full/fourfold Gospel” teaching of A. B. Simpson and his followers, than on Christian perfection as preached by John Wesley and primitive Methodism.⁸⁰

Recent multicultural application of the doctrine of entire sanctification also extends to sub-Saharan Africa—in 2005, Miriti M’Mworia examined the foundations and impact of entire sanctification teaching on society *and* church polity in Kenya.⁸¹ These (and many Master’s-level

⁷⁶ Chul Baik, “Christian Religious Education for the Formation of Full Humanity: A Comparative Cross-Cultural Study of Yi T’oegye and John Wesley” (PhD diss., Claremont School of Theology, 2001). There are interesting parallels between this work and Chin Cheak Yu’s, although the Holy-Spirit-awakening emphasis does not predominate in Baik’s analysis.

⁷⁷ Hong Ki Kim, “The Theology of Social Sanctification Examined in the Thought of John Wesley and in Minjung Theology: A Comparative Study” (PhD diss., Drew University, 1991). Minjung theology (roughly translated ‘theology of the mass of the people’) is South Korea’s form of liberation theology, teaching that Jesus Christ is the liberator for those suffering from social injustice, economic exploitation, political oppression, and racial discrimination.

⁷⁸ Hyung Gyum Kim, “A Theological Comparison of Yi Yulgok’s Concept of Ch’eng and John Wesley’s Concept of Love” (PhD diss., Boston University, 2001). Yi Yulgok (1536–1584) and Yi T’oegye (1501–1570, see footnote 76above) were Korea’s most eminent Neo-Confucian thinkers.

⁷⁹ Sang-Gil Oh, “A Study About an Alternative Ministry Visiting of the Korean Church in the Light of Wesleyan Spirituality of Sanctification” (DMin thesis, Claremont School of Theology, 2003).

⁸⁰ Meesaeng Lee Choi, “In Search of Full Salvation: The Fourfold Gospel and the Korea Holiness Church in Relation to the American Holiness Movement” (PhD diss., Drew University, 2002). Choi shows how the full gospel was formed in search of “full salvation” (seen as another term for Wesley’s “Christian perfection”), and then traces the further development of the “full salvation” concept under the founders of the International Apostolic Holiness Union as well as the “full gospel” preached by the founders of the Oriental Missionary Society (now OMS International).

⁸¹ Miriti Silas M’Mworia, “An Examination of the Wesleyan Doctrine of Christian Perfection with Particular Reference to Its Socio-Cultural Implications and Its Significance in Shaping the Polity and Practice of Methodist

writings) show that the practical application of Wesley's doctrine continues to be a concern wherever it is taught.

Eastern Orthodox Sanctification Studies.

Regarding the source and content of entire sanctification doctrine, Eastern Orthodoxy remains an active participant in the academic conversation. John Merritt argued that Wesley's Perfection sprang from a blend of Eastern Orthodox spirituality and a Moravian logical system of cause-and-effect.⁸² This was followed by a pair of *Asbury Theological Journal* articles in which Howard Snyder⁸³ and Randy Maddox⁸⁴ debated the significance of Eastern Orthodox fathers in Wesley's theological development—and Wesley's consequent "place" in the lineage of Christian theological traditions. Michael Christensen contended that Wesley's entire sanctification was a modified version of Eastern Orthodoxy's *θέωσις*,⁸⁵ and John English noted that Wesley admired Macarius' Homilies so much that he reprinted portions of them in his *Christian Library*.⁸⁶ English goes on to detail the manner in which Macarius' work helped clarify Wesley's

Church in Kenya" (PhD diss., Drew University, 2005).

⁸² John G. Merritt, "Dialogue Within a Tradition: John Wesley and Gregory of Nyssa Discuss Christian Perfection," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, (1987): 92–116.

⁸³ Howard Snyder, "John Wesley and Macarius the Egyptian," *Asbury Theological Journal* 45, (1990): 55–60.

⁸⁴ Randy L. Maddox, "John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy: Influences, Convergences, and Differences," *Asbury Theological Journal* 45, (1990): 29–53.

⁸⁵ Michael J Christensen, "Theosis and Sanctification: John Wesley's Reformulation of a Patristic Doctrine," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31, (1996): 71–94; see also his chapter entitled "John Wesley: Christian Perfection as Faith Filled with the Energy of Love," in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 219–29.

⁸⁶ Macarius (pseudo-) of Egypt, "Primitive Morality; Or, The Spiritual Homilies of St. Macarius the Egyptian," in *A Christian Library: Extracts from and Abridgments of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity Which Have Been Published in the English Tongue*, ed. John Wesley, trans. Thomas Haywood, 1st ed., 50 vols. (Bristol: William Pine, 1750), 1:81–155.

understanding of perfection in the year 1736.⁸⁷ In 1999 a doctoral study by Neil Anderson at Drew University sought evidence of direct influence by Clement of Alexandria upon Wesley's doctrinal formulation *via* Wesley's mentor, John Potter,⁸⁸ while more recent articles reinforced the link between Wesley and the Eastern fathers Macarius and Gregory of Nyssa.⁸⁹

Studies of Wesleyan Sanctification and Other Denominations.

But Eastern Orthodoxy is not the only group with which Wesley has been associated. Laurence Wood, Systematics professor at Asbury Theological Seminary, has written articles noting similarities with other theological streams. In 1980 he commented on the parallels between the Roman Catholic doctrine of Confirmation, and Wesley's entire sanctification.⁹⁰ Observing that both groups cite the same scripture passages in defense of their doctrines, Wood contends that Wesleyan sanctification theology would benefit from the study of Roman Catholicism's theology of the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, sixteen years later, the same scholar discerned a link between Wesley's entire sanctification and the *Anglican* rite of Confirmation as

⁸⁷ John C. English, "The Path to Perfection in Pseudo-Macarius and John Wesley," *Pacifica* 11, (1998): 54–62.

⁸⁸ Neil Douglas Anderson, "The Influence of Clement of Alexandria upon the Thought of John Wesley" (PhD diss., Drew University, 1999).

⁸⁹ See J. Warren Smith, "John Wesley's Growth in Grace and Gregory of Nyssa's Epectasy: A Conversation in Dynamic Perfection," *Bulletin John Rylands Library* 85, (2003): 347–57; as well as Stephen Plant and Marcus Plested, "Macarius, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and the Wesleys," *Epworth Review* 33, (2006): 22–30. Note that the suggestion of a direct link from Gregory to John Wesley is not new; Albert Outler presented the idea to the modern Methodist world in the early 1980s. See Albert Cook Outler, "John Wesley's Interest in the Early Fathers of the Church," in *The Bulletin: Number 29, 1980–1982*, ed. Albert Cook Outler and Thomas A. Langford (Toronto: Committee on Archives and History of the Church of Canada, 1983), 5–17. This article was later revised and republished as a chapter in a larger work; see "John Wesley's Interest in the Early Fathers of the Church," in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 97–110.

⁹⁰ Laurence W. Wood, "Thoughts Upon the Wesleyan Doctrine of Entire Sanctification with Special Reference to Some Similarities with the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Confirmation," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 15, (1980): 88–99.

well.⁹¹ Although he does not claim that Wesley the Anglican priest intentionally reworked the essentials of the Anglican rite to suit Methodist ends, Wood does note the remarkable parallels between the two teachings—especially the shared emphasis on a post-justification Holy Spirit experience which conveys additional sanctifying grace.

Wesley and Other Theological Systems.

Nor have other theological systems ignored Wesley's doctrine. David Fourqurean took Wesley to task from a Barthian point of view,⁹² arguing that (if Wesley had been truly serious about his "theology of Love") then the eighteenth-century theologian ought to have preached strict pacifism as the only logical way of life for his followers. Coming from an altogether different standpoint, James Howard examined Wesley's biblical hermeneutics and discerned that the Anglican divine was actually a very early proponent of reader-response criticism!⁹³

Sanctification Studies within Wesleyan/Holiness Doctrinal Parameters.

In 2001, Wesley scholar Randy Maddox diplomatically described the current theological status of the doctrine of entire sanctification. "When one surveys Wesley's present ecclesiastical and theological descendants", he wrote, "it does not take long to sense that his conception of heart religion has been widely dethroned and replaced by models with varying degrees of revision. Few retain his confidence in the possibility of Christian Perfection."⁹⁴ Others in the

⁹¹ Laurence W. Wood, "The Attainment of Christian Perfection as a Wesleyan/Holiness Re-Interpretation of the Anglican Rite of Confirmation," *Asbury Theological Journal* 50 (1996): 173–96.

⁹² David N. Fourqurean, "The Politics of Christian Perfection as Peace: Karl Barth and John Wesley in Dialogue" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1996).

⁹³ James H Williams, "'Why Should I Strive to Set the Crooked Straight?': Wesley, His Luminaries, Modern Critics, and the 'Sinless Contradiction' in 1 John 1: 8, 10 and 3: 6, 9." (PhD diss., University of Sheffield, 2002).

⁹⁴ Randy L. Maddox, "A Change of Affections: The Development, Dynamics, and Dethronement of John Wesley's 'Heart Religion,'" in *Heart Religion in the Methodist Tradition and Related Movements*, ed. Richard B. Steele (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2001), 22.

contemporary Methodist community have been more severe, declaring that Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection is "at best a dead letter and at worst a source of political delusion".⁹⁵

But obviously, not all Methodist scholars today share that view. Much less do proponents of Holiness theology or Pentecostal writers dismiss this central tenet of Wesley's theology. His influence over the revivals and holiness groups in North America has been much discussed, in works ranging from dissertations⁹⁶ to journal articles⁹⁷ of varying depth. In 1999 Laurence Wood and Randy Maddox engaged in a thoughtful debate over the question of whether Wesley ever equated "baptism in the Spirit" with "attainment of Christian perfection",⁹⁸ while Ivan Howard, in considering the question of the "witness of the Word" vs. the "witness of the Spirit", judged Wesley's teaching on entire sanctification to be inferior to Phoebe Palmer's.⁹⁹

The propriety of using 'love' as the central interpretive element for entire sanctification has also been debated and elaborated ever since Wynkoop's seminal 1972 publication discussed above,¹⁰⁰ with contemporary socio-theological emphases providing ever-changing grist for the

⁹⁵ William J. Abraham, "Chapter 34: Christian Perfection," in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 587.

⁹⁶ E.g. Bruce Eugene Moyer, "The Doctrine of Christian Perfection: A Comparative Study of John Wesley and the Modern American Holiness Movement" (PhD diss., Marquette University, 1992).

⁹⁷ As seen in As seen in Vinson Synan, "The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement," *Paraclete* 23, (1989): 1–8; more recently: Winfield Bevins, "Wesley and the Pentecostals," *Pneuma Review* 8, (2005): 10–17.

⁹⁸ See See Laurence W. Wood, "Pentecostal Sanctification in John Wesley and Early Methodism," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 34, (1999): 24–63; Maddox answers in the very next issue, asking: "Wesley's Understanding of Christian Perfection: In What Sense Pentecostal?," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 34,(1999): 78–110.

⁹⁹ Ivan Howard, "Wesley versus Phoebe Palmer: An Extended Controversy," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 6, (1971): 31–40. Howard was the academic dean of Whitworth College at the time of the article's publication. The import of Howard's analysis—albeit from a different vantage point—was recognized decades later when Albert Truesdale of Nazarene Theological Seminary utilized it in his critique of Palmer's "altar theology"—see Albert L. Truesdale, "Reification of the Experience of Entire Sanctification in the American Holiness Movement," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31, (1996): 95–119.

¹⁰⁰ Pages 14–15

scholar's mill.¹⁰¹ To wit, one recent article blended an appraisal of Wesleyan perfection with a call for a social ethic of inclusion, diversity, and multiculturalism.¹⁰²

Loci of Wesley's theology which influence the doctrine of entire sanctification have also come under scrutiny. A pair of articles discussed the problem of endemically systematic evil *viz.* Christian perfection,¹⁰³ and in the area of pneumatology, Asbury Seminary's William Arnett explored Wesley's understanding of the Holy Spirit's preparatory, preliminary, purifying and witnessing rôle in the believer's entire sanctification.¹⁰⁴ The nature of original sin, so significant to understanding the effects of entire sanctification, was re-examined by Wesley Studies professor Leon Hynson, who traced the development of the "privation" concept from Arminius to the present day, and concluded that original sin was *not* constitutive of fallen Man's¹⁰⁵ nature—thus the need for the second ("crisis") experience of the Holy Spirit known as entire sanctification.¹⁰⁶

One of the most active debates in contemporary Wesleyan scholarship concerns the

¹⁰¹ As with the Holiness Movement dialogue, this discussion *also* ranges from journal articles to doctoral dissertations—examples include W. Stanley Johnson, "Christian Perfection as Love for God," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 18, (1983): 50–60; also Charles David Clarke, "A Still More Excellent Way: An Historical, Theological and Biblical Evaluation of John Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Perfection" (PhD diss., Potschefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1998). One theologian considered Love so essential to Wesley's theological framework that he proposed a Wesleyan *Quinquelateral* (with Love being the fifth "leg"), to replace the classic *Quadrilateral*. See David L. Cubie, "Wesley's Theology of Love," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 20, (1985): 122–54.

¹⁰² Michael T. Burns, "John Wesley's Doctrine of Perfect Love as a Theological Mandate for Unity and Diversity" (PhD diss., University of Manchester, Nazarene Theological College, 2009).

¹⁰³ Albert L. Truesdale, "Christian Holiness and the Problem of Systematic Evil," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 19, (1984): 39–59; William Hasker was quick to react, writing "Holiness and Systematic Evil: A Response to Albert Truesdale," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 19, (1984): 60–62.

¹⁰⁴ William M. Arnett, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Entire Sanctification in the Writings of John Wesley," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 14, (1979): 15–30.

¹⁰⁵ In our century, much ink has been spilled over the appropriate, non-discriminatory way to refer to humankind. This debate is beyond the scope of this paper, but in keeping with Wesley's own usage, the term 'Man' as referring to mankind as a whole or type, is retained. In order to differentiate between the two potential referents, the term *Man* (without quotes or italics, but capitalized) will be used when discussing mankind a species.

¹⁰⁶ Leon O. Hynson, "Original Sin as Privation: An Inquiry into a Theology of Sin and Sanctification," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, (1987): 65–83.

experimental framework of entire sanctification—*when* and *how* does one experience entire sanctification? Is it an instantaneous experience, or is it a gradual process?

While this very question was addressed to (and answered by) Wesley himself more than 200 years ago, the dispute continues undiminished. It received fresh impetus with the publication of Wynkoop's *A Theology of Love*, and deliberations have ranged from the predictable (further pneumatological studies¹⁰⁷) to the innovative (suggesting Old Testament [Sinaitic] experience as a hermeneutic for Holiness¹⁰⁸). Theodore Runyon has weighed in on the 'process' side of the debate,¹⁰⁹ while Kenneth Collins and Randy Maddox more recently engaged in a well-mannered exchange on the topic in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*.¹¹⁰

Throughout the process/instantaneous debate runs a refreshing thread: these authors take Wesley and his theology of entire sanctification *seriously*—as written—in contradistinction to those who contemporize them or dismiss them as irrelevant to 21st-century reality. And advocates of Wesleyan holiness are calling for thinkers from other traditions to take them seriously, as well. Twenty-six years ago Frank Bateman Stanger addressed a number of common misconceptions about Wesley's doctrine of scriptural holiness, and challenged the audience to

¹⁰⁷ John Oswalt, for example, wrote "John Wesley and the Old Testament Concept of the Holy Spirit," *Religion in Life* 48, (1979): 283–92. There he contended that "Spirit baptism" is *not* equivalent to entire sanctification (reminiscent of Arnett's article published the same year) and that Man must work *with* the Holy Spirit to attain His fullness.

¹⁰⁸ Fran Carver, "Biblical Foundations for the 'Secondness' of Entire Sanctification," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, (1987): 7–23.

¹⁰⁹ Theodore Runyon, "The New Creation: A Wesleyan Distinctive," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31, (1996): 5–19.

¹¹⁰ Kenneth Collins contributed "Recent Trends in Wesleyan/Holiness Scholarship," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35, (2000): 67–86 contending that it is incorrect to read Wesley as advocating gradualism. His article was followed in the same issue by Randy L. Maddox, "Prelude to a Dialogue: A Response to Kenneth Collins," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35, (2000): 87–98 arguing that disagreement over Wesley's soteriology arises from using a Western perspective, when in fact many of Wesley's soteriological lodestones were mined among the Eastern fathers. As a result, he contends, reading Wesley's theology from an "Eastern perspective" will provide a more satisfactory (and holistic) understanding of his view of justification and sanctification alike.

recognize the significance of Methodist holiness for the modern world.¹¹¹ Thirteen years later and an ocean away, W. B. Fletcher's doctoral dissertation addressed itself to the European Methodist community, in an attempt to reverse continental skepticism regarding the attainability of Christian perfection.¹¹²

The Theological Contours Today—Recent Major Works

The Great Divide.

As discussed previously,¹¹³ Wesley scholars are divided over the nature of entire sanctification. Interestingly, the split can be defined two different ways—by asking:

- 1) What is the *nature* of entire sanctification? Is it the “elimination” of something (sin), or the “restoration” of something (right relationship with God)? On the other hand, one may also ask:
- 2) *When* does entire sanctification take place? Is it gradual (a process) or is it instantaneous (an eradication)?

Note that (though not true in all cases) those who believe that entire sanctification is the “elimination” of the sin nature *tend* to believe it is an instantaneous change, and those who believe entire sanctification is the “restoration” of right relationship with God tend to believe that entire sanctification itself is a process.

Taylor was mentioned previously¹¹⁴ as the author of one of the recent volumes defending

¹¹¹ He made his appeal in print *and* in person—see Frank Bateman Stanger, “The Wesleyan Doctrine of Scriptural Holiness,” *Asbury Seminarian* 39, (1984): 8–29 as well as the conference paper of the same title, presented at the Bicentennial Symposium at Haddonfield UMC, September, 1984.

¹¹² W. Brian Fletcher, “Christian Perfection in Wesley and Fletcher with Implications for Today” (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1997).

¹¹³ Pages 11–15, above.

¹¹⁴ See page 14.

the instantaneous view. He is joined in this by J. Kenneth Grider, whose systematics text¹¹⁵ and an earlier work devoted exclusively to entire sanctification¹¹⁶ are clear and readable expositions from a Nazarene/Holiness perspective. In 1998 Holiness theologian William Greathouse produced a book that examines the Old and New Testament roots of entire sanctification, as well as charting its various formulations throughout church history.¹¹⁷ *Wholeness in Christ* serves both to defend Holiness teaching and to invite further discussion.

Proponents of the Relational/Process view naturally include Mildred Bangs Wynkoop and H. Ray Dunning, whose work and position were discussed earlier.¹¹⁸ It is interesting to note that, while Dunning does espouse a relational rather than ontological understanding of perfection, he follows Wesley in teaching that entire sanctification is both instantaneous *and* continuous.

More recently, Dr. Randy Maddox, now at Duke University, penned what has become a significant text in the debate. *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*¹¹⁹ engages both Wesley *and* the ever-growing corpus of secondary Wesley literature; Maddox brings them all together into a systematic presentation suitable for student and scholar alike. He presents Wesley as a theologian worthy of the name, and then (presaging his later work *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism*,¹²⁰) he puts Wesley to the test by 'asking' him how his theology applies to contemporary issues. His relational understanding of entire

¹¹⁵ J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1994).

¹¹⁶ J. Kenneth Grider, *Entire Sanctification: The Distinctive Doctrine of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1984).

¹¹⁷ William M Greathouse, *Wholeness in Christ: Toward a Biblical Theology of Holiness* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1998).

¹¹⁸ Page 15, above.

¹¹⁹ Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994).

¹²⁰ Randy L. Maddox, *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1998).

sanctification, coupled with the Eastern influences upon Wesley himself, leads him to the stimulating suggestion that perhaps Wesley's theological schematic is more properly understood as a fluid *via salutis*, rather than the more traditional (rigid?) concept of an *ordo salutis*.

Perhaps the greatest challenge re: the Relational/Process approach is that such a stance can lead to—or possibly even invite—open theism. Thomas Oord, whose bold work¹²¹ has engaged diverse and nontraditional audiences, recently co-authored a text¹²² which applies tenets of open theism to the issue of holiness. While the winds of controversy swirl around this interpretation (and resolution is beyond the scope of this paper), this much at least may be said with certainty: open theism is *not* what the historical John Wesley believed, taught, and confessed.

Historical Treatments.

Does sufficient primary source material exist to be able to determine what Wesley *did* teach? Thankfully, the answer is unequivocally **yes**. While John Wesley was an occasional rather than a systematic author, he was (thankfully) a prolific one. With so much source material at hand, it is not surprising that book-length works which address or incorporate the doctrine of entire sanctification also include many which are predominantly historical presentations.

Notable among these is Kenneth Collins' *The Scripture Way of Salvation*,¹²³ which is a thorough examination of John Wesley's broad literary corpus, with the goal of clarifying what Wesley truly taught regarding mankind's salvation. Wesley's Biblical foundations, as well as his

¹²¹ Including Thomas Jay Oord, *Divine Grace and Emerging Creation: Wesleyan Forays in Science and Theology of Creation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009); Thomas Jay Oord, ed., *Creation Made Free: Open Theology Engaging Science* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009); consider also Bryan P Stone and Thomas Jay Oord, *Thy Nature and Thy Name Is Love: Wesleyan and Process Theologies in Dialogue* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2001).

¹²² Thomas Jay Oord and Michael E. Lodahl, *Relational Holiness: Responding to the Call of Love* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2005).

¹²³ Kenneth J. Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley's Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1997).

own growth in understanding over the course of time, are well documented.

Two other excellent historical compendia include works by Thomas Oden¹²⁴ and Henry Rack.¹²⁵ Each is strong in its own way:

Oden deals in Wesley's own words, categorizing and arranging them in classic systematic form. In this manner Oden shows that (although he never intentionally set out to systematically cover all *loci* of the Christian faith) John Wesley nonetheless addressed every major topic of theological conversation during the course of his long and prolific career. It is an indispensable source-book.

Henry Rack provides Christendom with a searching combination of comprehensive biography and analysis. Unafraid to challenge earlier generations of biographers, Rack gives good consideration to historical contexts, and particular attention to the doctrine of perfection, which he claims was instrumental in creating a paradigm shift in Protestantism by moving justification from center stage to the periphery. It remains important, to be sure—but owing to this paradigm shift it is no longer the crown jewel the Reformation had considered it to be.

The Dissertation in the Context of Current Scholarship

Thus far we have considered the outlines of contemporary Wesleyan scholarship regarding the doctrine of entire sanctification. In contrast, how did Martin Luther understand the Divine/Human relationship, especially where the sanctified life was concerned? The Reformer's vehement denunciation of good works as a means of salvation is well known—indeed, it is *so* well known, that Luther (and the church that bears his name) are sometimes suspected of being

¹²⁴ Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994).

¹²⁵ Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity International, 1989).

against ‘good works’ or ‘sanctification’ of any kind.¹²⁶

But does this truly represent Luther’s entire attitude toward sanctification and good works? Not at all. In fact, one particular aspect of Martin Luther’s teaching, which pertains to this issue, has received renewed attention in recent years.

Luther distinguished between a person’s relationship with God, and his/her relationship with other humans; these relationships may be termed one’s “vertical” and “horizontal” relationships, respectively. Luther maintained that “right relationships” *are* possible, both vertically and horizontally, and he often described a person who was in that state of relational “right-ness” as someone who “had righteousness” with respect to God or humankind.

How does one achieve these states of righteousness with God and with others? Where some theologians might blend the two, Luther clearly delineated them. He taught that our righteousness *coram Deo* is a “passive” righteousness, but our righteousness *coram mundo*¹²⁷ is an “active” one. In the introduction to his 1535 commentary on Galatians, he says,

We set forth two worlds, as it were, one of them heavenly and the other earthly. Into these we place these two kinds of righteousness, which are distinct and separated from each other. The righteousness of the Law is earthly and deals with earthly things; by it we perform good works . . . [it is an] earthly and active righteousness. But this [Christian] righteousness is heavenly and passive. We do not have it of ourselves; we receive it from heaven. We do not perform it; we accept it by faith, through which we ascend beyond all laws and works.¹²⁸

Furthermore, Luther had introduced the section by saying, “This is our theology, by which we teach a precise distinction between these two kinds of righteousness, the active and the passive, so that morality and faith, works and grace, secular society and religion may not be confused.

¹²⁶ Witness, *e.g.*, the defense made by Carter Lindberg, “Do Lutherans Shout Justification but Whisper Sanctification?,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 13, (1999): 1–20.

¹²⁷ Alternately, *coram humanibus*.

¹²⁸ Luther, *AE*, 26:8.

Both are necessary, but both must be kept within their limits.”¹²⁹

Renewed consideration of Luther’s “Two Kinds of Righteousness” has proven very stimulating, and provided challenging new ways of integrating scriptural truths. One of the first book-length explorations in this renewal was a work by Timothy Wengert.¹³⁰ Admittedly an historical study of Melancthon, not Luther, Wengert’s evaluation nevertheless clearly demonstrates at whose feet Melancthon studied. Philip distinguished between passive, or Christian, righteousness (*coram Deo*) on the one hand, and the active righteousness (*coram mundo*) which is produced by the resultant human freedom on the other; this differentiation is clearly consonant with his mentor’s theology.

The recent scholarship on Luther’s own writing and theology has largely flowed from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, where Lutheran Reformation scholars Robert Kolb and Charles Arand have pursued this topic with great energy. Over the last three decades, there have been numerous articles, dissertations, and books which have consciously introduced this teaching as a lens through which to view systematic issues.

The most in-depth treatment of the two kinds of righteousness (and one of the most recent) is Kolb and Arand’s book *The Genius of Luther’s Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church*. The entire first half of this book is devoted to an explanation and exploration of this aspect of Luther’s teaching,¹³¹ clearly laying out the two-dimensional anthropology within which Luther operated. With a readability very unusual for a scholarly work of this kind, the book not only presents the salient aspects of Luther’s anthropology, but explains

¹²⁹ Ibid., 26:7. See also page 7, above.

¹³⁰ Timothy J Wengert, *Human Freedom, Christian Righteousness: Philip Melancthon’s Exegetical Dispute with Erasmus of Rotterdam*, Oxford studies in historical theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹³¹ Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther’s Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 21–128.

how keeping a clear distinction between these two kinds of righteousness allows us to fully affirm and enjoy *both* dimensions of our humanity, without confusing them.

Concordia Seminary has also seen a number of doctoral dissertations explore the ramifications of two-kinds-of-righteousness theology *viz.* contemporary Christian issues. In 2002, Joel Biermann (under *Doktorvater* Charles Arand) related virtue ethics and character formation to Luther's "active righteousness".¹³² 2005 saw the vertical aspect (or "passive righteousness") of our creatureliness explored by Guntis Kalme, under Robert Kolb's direction. Kalme's assertion was that Martin Luther held man's vertical relationship with God to be central to man's existence and meaning.¹³³

In 2008, doctoral student Makito Masaki traced the outlines of two-kinds-of-righteousness theology through the breadth of Luther's 1522 Wartburg Postil.¹³⁴ Also a student of Robert Kolb's, Masaki showed that a clear delineation between the two kinds of righteousness allowed the Reformer to fervently exhort his hearers to live godly lives in conformity with God's Law, *without* causing them to live in fear for their salvation if they should stumble.

Missionary Michael Paul authored a more recent dissertation in this field. Paul examines the theology of Taiwan evangelist Stephen Tong, whose teachings influence a large segment of Taiwan's Christian community. Paul has seen this influence first-hand, having served in Taiwan for more than twenty years and, under Kolb's direction, Paul uses the distinction between the two kinds of righteousness to evaluate Stephen Tong's theology, and offer a helpful alternative

¹³² Joel D. Biermann, "Virtue Ethics and the Place of Character Formation within Lutheran Theology" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2002).

¹³³ Guntis Kalme, "'Words Written in Golden Letters'—a Lutheran Anthropological Reading of the Ecumenical Creeds: 'for Us' as the Constitutive Factor of What It Means to Be Human" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2005).

¹³⁴ Makito Masaki, "Luther's Two Kinds of Righteousness and His Wartburg Postil (1522): How Luther Exhorted People to Live Christian Lives" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2008).

conception of Christian life and salvation, for Taiwan Christians.¹³⁵

In addition to finished works, one dissertation is currently under development which takes advantage of the two kinds of righteousness as an interpretive lens for theological issues. Concordia University, Chicago, professor John Rhoads is studying the issue of ecumenical consensus on, and receptivity towards, Communion Ecclesiology.¹³⁶ Under Charles Arand's guidance, Rhoads is applying the two kinds of righteousness—understood as a “paradigm of the cross”—to provide a post-foundational approach to practical discourse on this issue. His goal: a means to transition from erudite theological agreements to meaningful implementation in the life of the church.

It should be noted that the above-mentioned books and dissertations are not the first explorations of Luther's doctrine of the two kinds of righteousness, nor are they the only attempts to apply this doctrine to contemporary theological issues. In an independent study, Dennis Biefeldt outlined the relationship between Freedom, Love, and Righteousness as evidenced in Luther's *Sermon on the Two Kinds of Righteousness*.¹³⁷ Uuras Saarnivaara included a consideration of the two kinds of righteousness in his classic work *Luther Discovers the Gospel*,¹³⁸ while Ernst Bizer studied the similarities and differences between Luther's sermons

¹³⁵ Michael Paul, “Martin Luther's Two-Dimensional Anthropology in Light of the Theology of Stephen Tong” (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2010).

¹³⁶ John Rhoads, “The Crux of Communio: Toward a Common Ecclesiology beyond the Crisis of Reception” (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, forthcoming). Pending.

¹³⁷ Dennis Biefeldt, “Freedom, Love and Righteousness in Luther's *Sermo De Duplici Iustitia*,” in *Freiheit Als Liebe Bei Martin Luther/Freedom as Love in Martin Luther—8th International Congress for Luther Research*, ed. Klaus Schwarzhaller and Dennis Biefeldt (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995), 19–34.

¹³⁸ Uuras Saarnivaara, *Luther Discovers the Gospel: New Light upon Luther's Way from Medieval Catholicism to Evangelical Faith* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1951), 92–98. Cranx and Green likewise discerned the two-kinds-of-righteousness theme in their works tracing Luther's theological development. See Ferdinand Edward Cranx, *An Essay on the Development of Luther's Thought on Justice, Law and Society*, Harvard Theological Studies 19 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), xiii–xvii and 41–71; Lowell C. Green, *How Melancthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel: The Doctrine of Justification in the Reformation* (Fallbrook, CA: Verdict, 1980), 92–95.

on ‘the *two* kinds of righteousness’ and ‘the *three* kinds of righteousness’.¹³⁹

The dissertations discussed above also reflect and reinforce the investigations of other scholars. For example, Masaki’s examination of Luther’s Wartburg Postil calls to mind Glen Zweck’s commentary on Luther’s sermon on the three kinds of righteousness,¹⁴⁰ as well as Robert Kolb’s analyses of Luther’s two-kinds-of-righteousness language in his writings on monasticism¹⁴¹ and his 1523 sermons on Genesis.¹⁴² Guntis Kalme’s linking mankind’s identity to his vertical relationship with God also confirms his *Doktorvater’s* assertions in book¹⁴³ and essay¹⁴⁴ alike. The significance of our *coram mundo* righteousness, applied to ethics and

¹³⁹ Ernst Bizer, “Die Beiden Predigten Über Die Gerechtigkeit,” in *Fides Ex Auditu: Eine Untersuchung Über Die Entdeckung Der Gerechtigkeit Gottes Durch Martin Luther* (Neukirchen Kreis Moers: Verlag der Buichhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1961), 106–12.

A natural question regarding Luther’s understanding of Righteousness arises here: are there *two* kinds of righteousness, or *three*? Or did the Reformer modify his understanding mid-stream? Actually, Luther’s understanding did not change, but his emphasis did. The “third kind of righteousness” in his *Sermon on the Three Kinds of Righteousness* is a “righteousness according to the civil law. With its motives of fear of punishment and love of pleasure, it is no Christian righteousness, but a righteousness of Jews and Gentiles.” (Saarnivaara, *Luther Discovers the Gospel*, 92.)

Since this “third kind of righteousness” is one which believers and unbelievers alike could attain, Luther apparently did not consider it worth enumerating each time he discussed Righteousness. Quickly the focus became the *two* kinds of righteousness that were pertinent to the Christian estate. Since this dual (instead of triple) emphasis predominated in Luther’s writings, it is also the emphasis discussed in this dissertation.

¹⁴⁰ Glen E. Zweck, “Luther’s Sermon on the Three Kinds of Righteousness: Commentary with a New English Translation,” in *Let Christ Be Christ: Theology, Ethics & World Religions in the Two Kingdoms: Essays in Honor of the Sixty-Fifth Birthday of Charles L. Manske*, ed. Daniel N Harmelink (Huntington Beach, CA: Tentatio, 1999), 349–58.

¹⁴¹ Robert Kolb, “Die Zweidimensionalität Des Mensch-Seins: Die Zweierlei Gerechtigkeit in Luthers ‘De Votes Monasticis Iudicium,’ ” in *Luther Und Das Monastische Erbe*, ed. Christoph Bultmann, Volker Leppin, and Andreas Lindner, Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation 39 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 207–20.

¹⁴² Robert Kolb, “God and His Human Creatures in Luther’s Sermons on Genesis: The Reformer’s Early Use of His Distinction of Two Kinds of Righteousness,” *Concordia Journal* 33 (2007): 166–84.

¹⁴³ Such as Robert Kolb, *The Christian Faith: A Lutheran Exposition* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1993), 55–56; Robert Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today: A Theology for Evangelism* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1995), 28–38, 46–47, *et al.*

¹⁴⁴ See, *e.g.*, Robert Kolb, “Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness; Reflections on His Two-Dimensional Definition of Humanity at the Heart of His Theology,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 13, (1999): 449–66; this was also published as a component of Timothy J. Wengert, ed., *Harvesting Martin Luther’s Reflections on Theology, Ethics, and the Church*, Lutheran quarterly books (Grand Rapids, MI:Eerdmans, 2004), 38–55. This excellent article, along with David Lumppp’s “Luther’s ‘Two Kinds of Righteousness’: A Brief Historical Introduction,” *Concordia Journal* 23, (1997): 27–38,. are perhaps the most succinct and effective introductions to this doctrinal distinction available in English.

character formation in Biermann’s doctoral dissertation, was later applied to the question of public life in twenty-first-century America by Arand and Biermann in collaboration,¹⁴⁵ contributing new thoughts on a topic broached by Kolb in 1993.¹⁴⁶ John Rhoads’ ecumenical application of the two kinds of righteousness to churchly matters is in keeping with historical precedent as well—Robert Kolb notes in a 2001 article¹⁴⁷ that the first-generation Lutherans attempted to use this same doctrine as a means of opening up dialogue between Wittenberg and Rome in the years before the Council of Trent.¹⁴⁸ Finally, the idea of using the two kinds of righteousness as a lens through which to view other theological stances—the commendable effort in Michael Paul’s dissertation—follows in the footsteps of a 1996 article in which Robert Kolb evaluated H. Richard Niebuhr’s influential *Christ and Culture*.¹⁴⁹ Clearly, the doctoral studies emerging from the Concordia St. Louis seminary are adding welcome depth and range to the extant scholarship regarding the doctrine of the two kinds of righteousness.

Several significant essays examine further historical uses of the two kinds of righteousness. One of the earliest contemporary¹⁵⁰ articles on the subject was written by Kolb in 1982 and

¹⁴⁵ Charles P. Arand and Joel D. Biermann, “Why the Two Kinds of Righteousness?,” *Concordia Journal* 33, (2007): 116–35.

¹⁴⁶ Robert Kolb, “Christian Civic Responsibility in an Age of Judgment,” *Concordia Journal* 19, (1993): 10–34.

¹⁴⁷ Robert Kolb, “The Chief Controversy between the Papalists and Us: Grace, Faith, and Human Righteousness in Sixteenth-Century Ecumenical Exchange,” in *A Justification Odyssey: Papers Presented at the Congress on the Lutheran Confessions, Bloomington, Illinois, April 19–21, 2001*, ed. John A Maxfield, Luther Academy lecture series 8 (St. Louis, MO and Minneapolis, MN: Luther Academy and Association of Confessional Lutherans, 2001), 61–82.

¹⁴⁸ Nor is Luther’s theological insight lost on Roman Catholic theologians today—Augustinian scholar and author Daniel Olivier also believes Luther’s concepts are still relevant. See Olivier’s *Luther’s Faith: The Cause of the Gospel in the Church* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1982).

¹⁴⁹ Robert Kolb, “Niebuhr’s ‘Christ and Culture in Paradox’ Revisited,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 10, (1996): 259–79.

¹⁵⁰ It is true that Otto Ritschl specifically discussed the two kinds of righteousness *viz.* the Augsburg Confession in a 1910 article—“Der Doppelte Rechfertigungsbegriff in Der Apologie Der Augsburgischen Konfession,” in *Zeitschrift Für Theologie Und Kirche*, ed. D. M. Rade and D. W. Herrmann (Tübingen: Mohr

identified the significance of the concept of vocation in the Augsburg Confession and its Apology.¹⁵¹ Highlighting the reality and importance of the Christian's life among others (*coram mundo* righteousness), Kolb gives introductory coverage of the two kinds of righteousness—a coverage that would expand in richness and scope in the decades to come.

Charles Arand explored the impact of two-kinds-of-righteousness thinking on the Apology in greater depth in a subsequent article.¹⁵² In this study, Arand makes the bold (and well-supported) assertion that the two kinds of righteousness provides a *better* conceptual framework for understanding the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* than does the traditional distinction between Law and Gospel.¹⁵³

More recently, Oswald Bayer presented the two kinds of righteousness as a helpful way out of the trap of using our own thoughts and actions as our justification. In contradistinction to Spenner's (and pietism's) influence, Bayer de-emphasized the idea of a Christian's "linear" development, noting instead the "peculiar overlapping and intertwining of the times [of last judgment, consummation of the world, and creation] such as we find in Romans 8:19–23".¹⁵⁴ Instead, Bayer delights in, and espouses, the idea of "ethical progress *without* [the] metaphysical pressure"¹⁵⁵ of one's salvation hinging upon ethical performance.¹⁵⁶

Seibeck, 1910), 292–338. For the purposes of this analysis, however, the scope of "recent" scholarship is considered to be the last fifty years.

¹⁵¹ Robert Kolb, "God Calling, 'Take Care of My People': Luther's Concept of Vocation in the Augsburg Confession and Its Apology," *Concordia Journal* 8, (1982): 4–11.

¹⁵² Charles P. Arand, "Two Kinds of Righteousness as a Framework for Law and Gospel in the Apology," *Lutheran Quarterly* 15, (1999): 417–39.

¹⁵³ In a similar vein, Lumppp argued in his aforementioned article that the two kinds of righteousness should be considered a unifying theme of *all* of Luther's theology.

¹⁵⁴ Oswald Bayer, *Living by Faith: Justification and Sanctification*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Lutheran quarterly books (Grand Rapids, MI:Eerdmans, 2003).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 66; emphasis added.

¹⁵⁶ This is the very same purpose Luther had when he began teaching the distinction between the two kinds of

Three years after Bayer's monograph, Robert Kolb turned to tracing this teaching through Luther's writings. In a *Concordia Journal* article, he showed how the two kinds of righteousness formed a unifying thread in Luther's theology from the Diet of Worms through the formulation of the Smalcald Articles,¹⁵⁷ and Klaus Schulz evaluated Augsburg Confession article XVIII, contrasting Melancthon's and Luther's understating of *coram mundo* righteousness.¹⁵⁸

As might be expected, two-kinds-of-righteousness thinking is discernable elsewhere in early Lutheran writings. In 1993, Kolb traced the influence of the doctrine of the two kinds of righteousness, as presented in Luther's seminal 1535 Galatians commentary, upon other 'Lutheran' Galatians commentaries written later in that century.¹⁵⁹ He also assessed the impact of two-kinds-of-righteousness thinking on later Lutheran writers.¹⁶⁰ In 2001, Kolb evaluated the connection between the two kinds of righteousness and Luther's theology of the cross.¹⁶¹ Lastly, in a 2004 paper, Kolb noted how a clear understanding of the difference between *coram Deo* righteousness and human performance helped buttress the critique of Rome found in *Formula of Concord* article III.¹⁶²

righteousness—though admittedly far less encumbered with psycho-social terminology.

¹⁵⁷ Robert Kolb, "Here We Stand: Confessing the Faith in Luther's Footsteps from Worms to Smalcald," *Concordia Journal* 62, (2006): 175–88.

¹⁵⁸ Klaus Detlev Schulz, "Two Kinds of Righteousness and Moral Philosophy: Confessio Augustana XVIII, Philip Melancthon, and Martin Luther," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 73, (2009): 17–40.

¹⁵⁹ Robert Kolb, "The Influence of Luther's Galatians Commentary of 1535 on Later Sixteenth-Century Lutheran Commentaries on Galatians," *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte* 84 (1993): 156–84.

¹⁶⁰ Robert Kolb, "'Not without the Satisfaction of God's Righteousness': The Atonement and the Generation Gap between Luther and His Students," in *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte: Sonderband: Die Reformation in Deutschland Und Europa, Interpretation Und Debatten*, ed. Hans R. Guggisberg and Gottfried G. Krodel (Gütersloh: Gütersloh Verlagshaus, 1993), 136–56.

¹⁶¹ Robert Kolb, "Deus Revelatus—Homo Revelatus: Luthers Theologia Crucis Für Das 21. Jahrhundert," in *Gottes Wort Vom Kreuz: Lutherische Theologie Als Kritische Theologie*, ed. Robert Kolb, Christian Neddens, and Werner Klän, *Oberurseler Hefte* 40 (Oberursel: VLB-Harms Druckerei, 2001), 13–34.

¹⁶² Robert Kolb, "Human Performance and the Righteousness of Faith: Martin Chemnitz's Anti-Roman Polemic in Formula of Concord III," in *By Faith Alone: Essays on Justification in Honor of Gerhard O. Forde*, ed. Joseph A. Burgess and Marc Kolden (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 125–39.

But the two kinds of righteousness has not been used merely to examine the theological past—several recent essays and other works have brought its distinctions to bear upon current spiritual issues. Author Donald Bloesch brought the two kinds of righteousness to bear when contemplating modern Christian ethics.¹⁶³ Like Rhoads' dissertation discussed above, which applies the two kinds of righteousness to ecumenical discussions, Concordia Seminary professor William Schumacher used the two kinds of righteousness as a framework within which to consider how clergy ought (or ought not) involve themselves in civic events.¹⁶⁴

Charles Arand explored the ramifications of the two kinds of righteousness for churches and their pastors in a pair of 2007 articles. In the first,¹⁶⁵ he used the two-dimensional concept to address the question of a church's nature, mission, and unity, while in the second¹⁶⁶ he helped pastors themselves address the problems that arise when *God's* idea of a pastor's duties & calling differs from the *congregation's* ideas. From a similarly pragmatic and sympathetic view, Concordia Seminary professor Tim Saleska wrote an article showing the preacher how to put the two kinds of righteousness into sermonic action. It is indeed possible, Saleska showed, to comfort listeners with the passive righteousness that is theirs in Christ *and* encourage them to reach out in active love to their neighbors in need.¹⁶⁷

The two kinds of righteousness also provides grist for the doctrinal mill when addressing

¹⁶³ Donald G. Bloesch, *Freedom for Obedience: Evangelical Ethics in Contemporary Times* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 70–87.

¹⁶⁴ William W. Schumacher, "Civic Participation by Churches and Pastors: An Essay on Two Kinds of Righteousness," *Concordia Journal* 30, (2004): 165–77.

¹⁶⁵ Charles P. Arand, "A Two-Dimensional Understanding of the Church for the Twenty-First Century," *Concordia Journal* 33, (2007): 146–65.

¹⁶⁶ Charles P. Arand, "The Ministry of the Church in Light of the Two Kinds of Righteousness," *Concordia Journal* 33, (2007): 344–56.

¹⁶⁷ Timothy Saleska, "The Two Kinds of Righteousness!: What's a Preacher to Do?," *Concordia Journal* 33, (2007): 136–45.

theologians of different notably vantage points, as Leo Sánchez demonstrated in a recent *Logia* article.¹⁶⁸ Engaging liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, Sánchez shows how a proper understanding of the two kinds of righteousness enables us to coherently discuss the idea of “hope” as an essential dimension of human existence without turning to either “Science & Technology” or to a modified “Social Order” to be their savior. Instead, a firmly grounded hope *coram Deo* is founded in Jesus Christ alone—which then, itself, motivates action and fosters hope in the social sphere. *This*, he asserts, is where Hispanic/Latino efforts to promote social justice and socioeconomic liberation belong: in the realm of earthly relationships—not the realm of our relationship with God. To do otherwise is to obscure the utterly undeserved nature of our salvation and right standing before our Creator.¹⁶⁹

From all of the above, it is clear that the two kinds of righteousness has become an area of increasing interest, both as a doctrinal *locus* in its own right and as an interpretive theological lens. It has been used as an historical framework for considering Lutheran theology and as a polemical facilitator. It has been shown to be helpful in a wide range of current and historical issues, yet its use has thus far been largely limited to questions of either the first century of Lutheran theology or the present day.¹⁷⁰ To date, with the possible exception of Michael Paul’s dissertation on the theology of Stephen Tong, no major work has used the two kinds of righteousness as a means of addressing issues of disagreement with the founder of another

¹⁶⁸ Leopoldo A. Sánchez, “The Struggle to Express Our Hope,” *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 19, (Epiphany 2010): 25–31.

¹⁶⁹ It is interesting to contrast Sánchez’ engagement of liberation theology with that of Wesleyan Hispanic theologian Hugo Magallanes—cf. Magallanes’ contemporaneous “‘Who Do You Say That I Am?’ Jesús or Jesse: A Reflection on Christology and Christian Identity,” in *Jesus in the Hispanic Community: Images of Christ from Theology to Popular Religion*, ed. Harold Recinos and Hugo Magallanes (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 105–17. Cf. also his doctoral dissertation, discussed in footnote 69, above.

¹⁷⁰ Or both—Edward Yarnold contrasted the understanding of Righteousness in Luther’s Time and our own; see his “Duplex Iustitia: The Sixteenth Century and the Twentieth,” in *Christian Authority: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Gillian R Evans (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 204–23.

protestant denomination.

Writings Directly Comparing Wesley and Luther

Considering the influence of the two theologians under discussion, recent scholarship comparing and contrasting them has been surprisingly scant. Aside from general works for popular consumption such as *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification*,¹⁷¹ recent books contrasting the men have focused on matters *other* than entire sanctification—such as their hermeneutics or homiletics.¹⁷²

But serious work specifically addressing the issue of sanctification and the two theologians is extremely limited. Even reaching as far back as the turn of the twentieth century, there is only Peter Anstadt's 1902 *Luther, Zinzendorf, Wesley*¹⁷³—which in itself is more a commentary on the significance of Luther's *Preface to the Romans* in Wesley's life, than a theological analysis of entire sanctification. Several decades later, John McNeill penned an article on the same subject.¹⁷⁴

It is English Methodist Philip Watson who has devoted the most time and energy to the Wesley-and-Luther-on-Sanctification subject—beginning with his mid-century classic, *Let God*

¹⁷¹ Donald Alexander, ed., *Christian Spirituality—Five Views of Sanctification* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988).

¹⁷² Notable among these is Tore Meistad, *Martin Luther and John Wesley on the Sermon on the Mount*, Pietist and Wesleyan studies 10 (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1999). In addition, shortly before his death, Philip S. Watson had considered the pair's view of Biblical authority in *Die Autorität Der Bibel Bei Luther Und Wesley*, 14, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Evangelisch-methodistischen Kirche (Stuttgart: Christliches Verlagshaus, 1983).

¹⁷³ Rev. Peter Anstadt, *Luther, Zinzendorf, Wesley: An Account of John Wesley's Conversion Through Hearing Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans Read in a Moravian Prayer Meeting in London, England: To Which Is Added a New Translation of Luther's Preface* (York, PA: P. Anstadt & Sons, 1920). This volume remains popular; the most recent reprint was in 2005. Anstadt's own publishing house is still operating under fifth-generation family management.

¹⁷⁴ John T. McNeill, "Luther at Aldersgate," *London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 164 (1939): 200–217.

be God.¹⁷⁵ This was followed by an article in 1963 which presented, more than critiqued, the men's views.¹⁷⁶ At the same time that Watson's book was being (re)published by Muhlenberg Press, Franz Hildebrandt released *From Luther to Wesley*¹⁷⁷—and his later *Christianity According to the Wesleys* presented, rather than critiqued, Wesleyan theology (albeit with clear Lutheran overtones).¹⁷⁸ An evaluation from a somewhat more classic Methodist perspective came from Leo Cox in 1964,¹⁷⁹ followed in 1971 by an historical summary of Wesley's own views of Luther.¹⁸⁰

On the Lutheran side of the academic aisle, Luther-vs.-Wesley-*viz.*-Sanctification studies have been similarly sparse. Percy Scott evaluated Wesley's theology in 1939,¹⁸¹ albeit from a Lutheran point of view, rather than by considering Wesley's view of Luther or contrasting the men's own writings directly. In 1981, John Collier used both Martin Luther and Reinhold Niebuhr to evaluate Wesley's theology. Gordon Dicker wrote a dissertation evaluating Martin Luther, John Wesley and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, using Luther's doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator* as his criterion.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁵ Philip S. Watson, *Let God Be God! An Interpretation of the Theology of Martin Luther* (London: Epworth, 1947).

¹⁷⁶ Philip S. Watson, "Wesley and Luther on Christian Perfection," *Ecumenical Review* 15, (1963): 291–302.

¹⁷⁷ Franz Hildebrandt, *From Luther to Wesley* (London: Lutterworth, 1951).

¹⁷⁸ Franz Hildebrandt, *Christianity According to the Wesleys* (London: Epworth, 1956).

¹⁷⁹ Leo George Cox, "John Wesley's View of Martin Luther," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 7, (1964): 83–90.

¹⁸⁰ Jerry L. Walls, "John Wesley's Critique of Martin Luther," *Methodist History* 30, (1981): 29–41.

¹⁸¹ Percy Scott, *John Wesleys Lehre Von Der Heiligung: Verglichen Mit Einem Lutherisch-Pietistischen Beispiel*, Studien zur Geschichte des neueren Protestantismus 17 (Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1939).

¹⁸² Gordon S. Dicker, "The Concept Simul Iustus Et Peccator in Relation to the Thought of Luther, Wesley and Bonhoeffer, and Its Significance for a Doctrine of the Christian Life" (ThD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1971).

A brief recent article by Lyle Dabney in *Lutheran Forum*¹⁸³ emphasized that the Methodist and Lutheran traditions share similar concerns re: “God’s redemption of God’s creation,” but did not delve into areas of theological disagreement. More deeply engaged in the theological issues (though admittedly *not* from a Lutheran standpoint), Marquette professor Ralph Del Colle explored the effect that Wesley’s concept of grace had upon his doctrines of justification and sanctification alike, contrasting his views with Luther, Calvin and the Council of Trent.¹⁸⁴ From a very different perspective, John Drury reinterpreted Luther for contemporary Wesleyans, following the theories of Tuomo Mannermaa.¹⁸⁵

Conclusion

John Wesley and his teaching on entire sanctification have been critiqued and evaluated from many different denominational points of view, with diverse affirmations and/or correctives offered. But as of this writing, no in-depth assessment of John Wesley and his “most distinctive doctrine” has been undertaken from an orthodox Lutheran perspective, using the two kinds of righteousness as its interpretive lens. This dissertation is presented as means toward that end. Using the two kinds of righteousness as a way of affirming the God-pleasing nature of what Luther termed “active” (or “proper”) righteousness, a careful and intentional delineation between “active” and “passive” (or “alien”) righteousness will help clarify how Lutheran and Wesleyan believers alike can address the issue of Christian holiness of heart and life without falling prey to

¹⁸³ D. Lyle Dabney, “What Has Aldersgate to Do with Wittenberg?,” *Lutheran Forum* 43, (2008): 47–50.

¹⁸⁴ Ralph Del Colle, “John Wesley’s Doctrine of Grace in Light of the Christian Tradition,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 4, (2002): 172–89. This treatment was considerably kinder to Wesley than was Belgian Catholic writer Maximin Piette’s in 1925, who in his *La Réaction de John Wesley dans l’évolution du protestantisme* assured his readers that Wesley’s teaching on Justification was actually closer to Trent’s doctrines than the “crazy solafidianism” of Luther. See *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*, trans. Joseph Bernard Howard (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1938).

¹⁸⁵ John Drury, “Luther and Wesley on Union and Impartation in Light of Recent Finnish Luther Research,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 40, (2005): 58–68.

either antinomianism or works-righteousness.

For those are, essentially, the charges each side could make. To the proponent of Wesleyan holiness, the Lutheran teaching that man remains *simul iustus et peccator* all his life is dangerous, for it could lead the hearer to moral laxity, being ‘soft on sin’ since “I’ll always be a sinner anyhow”. *Does* (or *must*) teaching “saint and sinner” always lead to antinomianism (or “cheap grace”, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer termed it¹⁸⁶)? This misunderstanding and misapplication of the *simul iustus et peccator* doctrine will therefore be addressed.

In like manner, advocates of methodical and uncompromising Wesleyan holiness can be (and have been from the start) branded “Method-ists”, “Bible Moths”, and worse—disparaged as hopelessly over-pious members of a “Holy Club” who are obsessed with good works. Were and are Wesleyan Christians advocating a form of works-righteousness? Full and fair consideration of their founder’s teaching must be taken, including Wesley’s own responses to the detractors of his day.

It is my conviction that the distinction between the two kinds of righteousness is an enlightening theological concept which will elucidate and encourage believers in both denominational camps. It honors and encourages holiness of heart and life—a matter of pivotal importance to Wesley and his adherents—while simultaneously underscoring the biblical reality that right standing before God was, is, and ever will be the result of Jesus Christ’s finished work on Calvary, effected by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament, alone.

Right apprehension of the two kinds of righteousness permits believers’ hope of glory to rest secure, apart from their performance, yet still offers a framework for properly understanding (and encouraging) a living, busy, active life of true love and right conduct among their fellow

¹⁸⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller and Irmgard Booth, 2d ed. (New York: MacMillan, 1961), 35–47.

human creatures. The best of both worlds!

The Methodological Procedure

Because the question at issue is *Wesley's* and *Luther's* teaching (rather than that of their disciples), research will focus on primary writings by both theologians. The initial goal is to gain a solid foundational understanding of the doctrines as the men themselves might present them to us. Following this introductory chapter, the dissertation proceeds thus:

Chapter two comprises an overview of John Wesley's historical context and his early life. While many influential figures are said to have "shaped their times",¹⁸⁷ it is equally true that their times shaped those men and women of renown. This is as true for Wesley as for anyone else—thus chapter two considers the nature and significance of England's eighteenth century, examining the impact of Enlightenment thought upon the established Church and her clerics. Eighteenth-century England's cultural *milieu* and Wesley's ancestral heritage are considered in turn, and Wesley's life up to and including the Aldersgate meeting is investigated for significant influences that shaped his theology. What presuppositions did Wesley carry? What might have led him to articulate his doctrines the way he did?

Chapter three explores Wesley's doctrinal formulations themselves. With entire sanctification as the starting point, the doctrines and definitions which support and fuel Wesley's "most distinctive doctrine" are presented in his own words. The chapter culminates in a presentation of Wesley's *ordo salutis*. I have made a conscious effort to refrain from commentary or evaluation at this point; the goal of this chapter is to let Wesley speak for himself.

¹⁸⁷ E.g., Patricia Ward Biederman, "A Queen Who Shaped Era and Image," *Los Angeles Times*, December 23, 2002, sec. Entertainment; "Advertisement for 'The Unforgettable Winston Churchill,'" *LIFE Magazine*, February 12, 1965, 99, *et al.*

Chapter four explores Martin Luther's doctrinal formulations in a similar manner. Since much of the issue lies in each theologian's definition of familiar religious terms, it is essential to clarify what each man meant by words such as "sin", "grace", "righteousness", "salvation", and, of course, "sanctification" and "perfection." The chapter closes with a presentation of Luther's *ordo salutis* and the doctrine of the two kinds of righteousness.

John Wesley was hardly unfamiliar with Martin Luther—it was while listening to a reading of Luther's *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans* that Wesley felt his heart "strangely warmed".¹⁸⁸ Chapter five will consider the things Wesley said about the Wittenberg Reformer *and* elements of Lutheran doctrine—positive and negative alike. His comments, especially pertaining to Luther's teaching on sanctification, will help clarify the difference between Wesleyan and Lutheran understanding in this and other areas.

Chapter six will be devoted to the analysis of Wesley's teaching, with Luther's writings as a point of comparison. There are places in his writings where John Wesley sounds very much like Luther himself: similar goals, similar struggles, similar desires. Although their temporal stations and theological affinities were markedly different, there are certainly points of agreement between them, such as the call to renounce sin and live in holiness, as well as the reality of a daily struggle with temptation. (Indeed, consideration of Wesley's uncompromising and relentless focus on personal holiness may well provide reminders and encouragement to *any* Christians prone to antinomianism.¹⁸⁹) As a work of theological rapprochement and dialogue,

¹⁸⁸ Journal entry for May 24, 1738, Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 18:250.

¹⁸⁹ Even as reading the mystics first pricked Wesley's conscience and woke him from his "dogmatic slumber" (cf. Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics (1783)*, trans. James Fieser [Charleston, SC: Forgotten Books, 1982] although such reading led Wesley down a path he later rued.) In contradistinction to that kind of error, I hope that, by keeping close to each theologian's primary writings *and* the Book from which they drew their inspiration, this dissertation will serve as effective illumination of both Lutheran and Wesleyan thought, and also give helpful understanding and guidance regarding the place and importance of sanctification for all readers, regardless of their denominational background.

this dissertation will affirm the truths that these points of commonality represent.

It is also true that there are significant points of *divergence* between Luther and Wesley—in areas such as the doctrine of man; the nature of sin; imparted vs. imputed righteousness; the nature of holiness; the question of sin in believers; the attainability of perfection before death; and most significantly, the purpose and the significance of works of righteousness in this life. In such areas the dissertation will search for an evangelical corrective which offers hope even to the discouraged and stumbling Christian.

Wesley's *ordo salutis* and his critiques of Luther will be evaluated, with specific emphasis placed on the concept of entire sanctification. The rôle and significance of 'assurance' and 'the witness of the spirit' will be examined, as well as Wesley's use and understanding of key biblical texts such as Hebrews 12:14. The chapter will also reflect at length upon theological repercussions of the doctrine of entire sanctification.

It is certainly true that 'sanctification' is an oft-misunderstood and misapplied concept. While holiness is a central issue for the Christian, the meaning and source of 'holiness' is open to debate, and the line between 'good works' and 'works-righteousness' is notoriously difficult to maintain. Chapter six will conclude with an evaluation of Wesley's doctrine and his stated goals in light of the two kinds of righteousness, to arrive at an expression of Christian holiness which gives both *coram Deo* and *coram mundo* living their proper emphasis and place. Chapter seven will provide a summary of findings and suggestions for further research.

As noted in the preceding section, scholarly work specifically comparing and contrasting Luther and Wesley is comparatively scarce. The present work is intended to reinvigorate doctrinal discussion between two major streams of Christian thought—specifically the ones who believe, teach, and confess in keeping with the writings of their theological forebears, John

Wesley and Martin Luther. The much-desired goal is a deeper understanding of both our place and rôle in God's kingdom *and* the righteousness that is ours in Christ Jesus, with increased understanding and respect among those who participate in such a dialogue.

“Come now, let us reason together!” (Isaiah 1:18)

CHAPTER TWO

SHAPING INFLUENCES

To understand John Wesley’s doctrine, it is crucial to understand his context—his life and times. What forces shaped the man? This chapter discusses several of the most significant influences on John Wesley’s spiritual development up to and including the time of his Aldersgate experience. Many of the foundations for his doctrine of entire sanctification *and* the methodical life were laid long before John ever heard Luther’s *Preface to Romans* read, and as will be seen, these various influences are clearly discernable in Wesley’s later writings.

John Wesley’s Upbringing

Wesley’s early years provide valuable insight into his character and predispositions. His later theology is more readily comprehended by understanding the world into which he was born, as well as the childhood mentors who shaped his understanding of that world.

The Social, Intellectual, and Theological Climate of the Wesleys’ Nation and Church

Conflicting Opinions—Who Shaped Whom?

Nineteenth-century writer William Lecky claimed that John Wesley “has had a wider constructive influence in the sphere of practical religion than any other man who has appeared since the sixteenth century”.¹⁹⁰ Leo Cox concurred, observing that eighteenth-century England

¹⁹⁰ Lecky, *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, 631.

was at a low ebb religiously and morally,¹⁹¹ while John Bready declared that it was the Evangelical Revival that began with Wesley (as opposed to the spirit of the French Revolution and its philosophy) which “purged the spirit and character values of the English-speaking world”.¹⁹²

For many years, comments such as these were the accepted understanding of eighteenth-century England, and also John Wesley’s place in its development. But significant challenges to this understanding have been made. Regarding the historical scholarship of preceding generations, J. C. D. Clark says:

Then [*i.e.*, in those preceding generations] it seemed natural that the fragile experiment of eighteenth-century Methodism should be confidently presented in the light of the self-image, or myth of origins, established by Methodism’s numerical explosion and denominational separation in the nineteenth. This historiography. . . . was often written normatively, to celebrate the presumed action of the Holy Spirit, rather than analytically, to determine the historically accessible role of human agency in Methodism’s rise and later decline. Since 1965, our understanding of eighteenth-century Britain has greatly developed.¹⁹³

As a result of the newly developed historiography, a recent Cambridge publication declared,

There is no consensus among professional historians about Wesley’s context. Indeed, at the present time they are probably more divided than they have ever been about how to conceptualize the period in which he lived.

A growing number of scholars have begun to challenge [the] long-reigning view of the eighteenth century as witnessing the birth of modernity and secularization, and as most like the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁹⁴

The new understanding sees eighteenth-century England as much more affiliated with the *preceding* centuries—with church and crown dominating—and the claim is advanced that the

¹⁹¹ Cox, *John Wesley’s Concept of Perfection*, 16.

¹⁹² John Wesley Bready, *England, Before and After Wesley: The Evangelical Revival and Social Reform* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938), 13.

¹⁹³ Jonathan Charles Douglas Clark, “The Eighteenth-Century Context,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, Oxford Handbooks (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3–4.

¹⁹⁴ Jeremy Gregory, “The Long Eighteenth Century,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed.

socioeconomic changes of the 1700s were not as significant as formerly believed. The new view avers that the changes in Wesley's century were more *evolutionary* than *revolutionary*.¹⁹⁵

Remarkably, there is not even a consensus as to when the eighteenth century began and ended! To be fair, it must be understood that historians frequently mark periods of human history based upon significant elements or events; mere numerical century marks are comparatively arbitrary and less helpful as delimiters. For this reason, historians are often wont to call this period “the long eighteenth century” and mark its beginning in 1688/9 (some say as early as 1660) and declare its end to be in the vicinity of 1832 or even later.¹⁹⁶

The impact of modern historical thinking has gone beyond challenging epochal termini—these new theories also cast the Anglican Church in a very different light than have traditional histories. Seeds of this revolution in historical understanding can be traced to Norman Sykes' 1934 evaluation of eighteenth-century England,¹⁹⁷ and research supporting these revisionist ideas has been pursued with such vigor that, as Jeremy Gregory observed, “there is at the moment, then, a debate between optimists and pessimists about the state of the Church [of England] in the eighteenth century”.¹⁹⁸ He continues, “the pessimistic history of the eighteenth-century Church of England has been written...from what has been called a ‘Methodist perspective’, with Wesley's criticism of the Anglican Church being cited as proof of the shortcomings of that

Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 13, 17.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 17.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 24. Interestingly enough, opinions as to when the eighteenth century began abound as well, including 1714, 1760, and even 1780—perhaps it should be called the *short* eighteenth century.

Cogent arguments for a “long” 18th century—though with different terminus dates—include Frank O’Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History, 1688–1832*, The Arnold history of Britain (London: Arnold, 1997); Wilfrid R. Prest, *Albion Ascendant: English History, 1660–1815*, The short Oxford history of the modern world (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹⁹⁷ Norman Sykes, *Church and State in England in the XVIIIth Century* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1934).

¹⁹⁸ Gregory, “The Long Eighteenth Century,” 27.

institution”.¹⁹⁹

Countering that perceived bias, Gregory says,

Methodist scholarship is usually premised on the given fact of a moribund and ineffective established Church, but it may be that John Wesley and his brother Charles are evidence of a *lively* Anglican culture, and that much of what has been considered Methodist innovations should be seen as emerging from within an Anglican Church which was itself experimenting with developments in pastoral care. . . . review of the scholarship²⁰⁰ on the Church of England suggests that we should view Wesley’s relationship to the Church . . . in more subtle ways than traditional accounts of the rise of Methodism would have it.²⁰¹

Yet revisionists are not the only ones voicing opinions. The premise of a “moribund Church” and decaying society, and the idea that Wesley’s Methodism saved England from suffering a French-style revolution (*à la Piette’s* comments, above) were classically presented by renowned French historian Elie Halévy in 1906,²⁰² and again in 1912.²⁰³ This so-called “Halévy Thesis” is still defended (albeit hotly disputed) to this day.²⁰⁴

Besides questioning the traditional understanding of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, revisionist historiography also challenges its attendant “secularization thesis”. Some proponents claim that the “secularization” of England did not occur until the nineteenth (or even the twentieth) century.²⁰⁵ This has emboldened some scholars to also challenge the heretofore

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 26.

²⁰⁰ Perhaps the most influential work in this area is Jonathan Charles Douglas Clark, *English Society, 1688–1832: Ideology, Social Structure, and Political Practice During the Ancien Regime*, Cambridge studies in the history and theory of politics (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1985), q.v. for the rationale in rejecting the traditional perspective.

²⁰¹ Gregory, “The Long Eighteenth Century,” 34; emphasis added.

²⁰² Elie Halévy, “La Naissance Du Méthodisme En Angleterre,” *Revue de Paris* (1906); this book was not translated into English until 1971.

²⁰³ The original French work was first translated into English in 1934, three years before Halévy’s death. See Elie Halévy, *England in 1815*, trans. E. I. Watkin and D. A. Barker (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968).

²⁰⁴ See, *inter alia*, Gerald Wayne Olsen, ed., *Religion and revolution in early-industrial England : the Halevy thesis and its critics* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990).

²⁰⁵ Gregory, “The Long Eighteenth Century,” 17–18.

accepted notion that the British Enlightenment was anti-religious, claiming instead that in England, piety and reason worked together.²⁰⁶ As Gregory confidently states, “central religious figures fit well in an English Enlightenment framework”.²⁰⁷

The intensity of the ongoing debate leads us to wonder whether the revisionists are right in their assessments after all. The question is a significant one, for the different interpretations of the era would affect one’s evaluation of John Wesley and his work. Although complete discussion of the question is beyond the scope of this dissertation, this much may at least be said: it is undeniable that the Anglican Church still maintained a powerful legal presence in Wesley’s England, and it had an equally significant influence over the political and social spheres as well.

But John Wesley and his Methodism must still be considered “counter-cultural” in a number of significant ways. Whether as a result of national forces or personal influences, John Wesley fought against the this-worldly, irreligious (or *antireligious*) trajectories of his day. For the sake of the admittedly brief synopsis to follow, perhaps the both/and approach suggested by John Walsh²⁰⁸ would be most fruitful—seeing Wesley as a syncretist of social forces as surely as he was of theological streams. With this in mind, let us consider significant elements of the English Enlightenment.

Enlightenment Thought and Its Influence on the Church

J. Gregory, a Manchester lecturer and historian whose focus has been the long eighteenth century, observes:

²⁰⁶ See especially Roy Porter’s essay “The Enlightenment in England,” in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, ed. Roy Porter and Mikulás Teich (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1–18.

²⁰⁷ Gregory, “The Long Eighteenth Century,” 38.

²⁰⁸ John Walsh, *John Wesley, 1703–1791: A Bicentennial Tribute* (London: Dr. Williams’s Trust, 1993), 12.

The lynchpin of Wesley's theology was Arminianism and universal redemption. . . . This was not only the dominant theology of the Church of England. . . but its central emphases can be understood as chiming in with the Enlightenment emphasis on optimism, human potential, perfectibility, and the essential equality of humankind. . . . Wesley's emphasis on evidence and experience can also be seen as echoing Enlightenment traits.²⁰⁹

This much is certainly true. While it cannot be said for certain that Wesley was self-consciously a child *or* proponent of the Enlightenment proper, his foci and his views certainly echo themes in common with it. What kinds of forces had shaped the era into which Wesley was born?

Scientific progress was certainly key—England had more fruitful scientific advances to its credit than any other nation of the seventeenth century.²¹⁰ New scientific discoveries directly or indirectly affected the religious and societal thought of Wesley's forbears. There were newly discovered territories and races, a different understanding of the cosmos through the development of astronomical instruments and theories, and more. Most significantly, each of these discoveries had come as the result of Mankind's application of reason to the problems and challenges around him. Instead of a sense of inscrutability and magic to the universe and the unknown, a sense of order and comprehensibility began to emerge, if only one would look (and think) carefully. John Locke, with his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, shifted the source of certainty away from divine revelation, in favor of personal experience, apprehension, and reason. Carl Becker describes the new paradigm by saying: "For the love of God, they [the philosophers] substituted love of humanity; for the vicarious atonement, the perfectibility of man through his own efforts; and for the hope of immortality in another world, the hope of living in

²⁰⁹ Gregory, "The Long Eighteenth Century," 38.

²¹⁰ Piette, *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*, 107.

the memory of future generations”.²¹¹

Enlightenment optimism regarding the character of man also affected the church’s proclamation (if not its published doctrine)²¹² regarding sin and depravity. As James Spalding notes,

Actually you find the doctrines of the fall and original sin *ignored* more than philosophically or theologically attacked and rejected in the eighteenth century. . . . After the time of Locke it is hard to find either orthodox or deist thinkers of England concerning themselves with the doctrines of the fall or original sin. In most of the theological treatises of the time, the subject is scarcely mentioned.²¹³

Thus, Enlightenment philosophy exalted mankind’s ability and status, casting aside classic understandings of the relationship between Man and God. Yet Empiricism went further, even denying God the honor of being the only One who could comprehend the complexity of His creation. In His place, Empiricism crowned a *process of thought* which took an ordered, rational approach to the problems in life—including questions about God Himself. As V. H. H. Green notes, “Men had a newfound faith in the possibilities of human reason to understand, demonstrate, and even prove the sublimities of revealed truth which even the most exacting of mediaeval logicians had lacked”.²¹⁴

So philosophical enquiry flourished—so much so that Voltaire, after his sojourn in England (1726–1729) said: “It is especially in the field of philosophy that the English have attained

²¹¹ Carl Lotus Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers*, 2d ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 130.

²¹² Umphrey Lee observes, “Nor did the High Church Arminianism in which Wesley was trained teach the natural religious or moral ability of man. Arminianism was a doctrine of grace presuming original sin in man.” Lee, *John Wesley and Modern Religion*, 120–21.

²¹³ James Cowell Spalding, “Recent Restatements of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin; with Special Reference to Continental Theology” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1950), 44–45.

²¹⁴ Vivian Hubert Howard Green, *John Wesley* (London: Nelson, 1964), 4.

leadership over all other nations.”²¹⁵ Lockean thought, advanced by Bishop Berkeley and others, posited that God Himself was a reasonable, rational being—in fact, the *ultimate* Rational Being—therefore a reasonable, rational human would ultimately find Christianity to be the most reasonable, rational expression of truth. In other words, (as A. E. Wilder-Smith titled one of his scientific treatises) “He Who Thinks Has to Believe”.²¹⁶

But a subtle shift had taken place. It is true that philosophy and science (at that point) still respected the concept of divine revelation—albeit because of its reasonableness. Yet it is also true that *Reason itself* was being elevated to an ever-higher level of authority. Cambridge Platonist Benjamin Whichcote (dubbed the “first of the Latitude-Men”²¹⁷) declared that “to go against Reason is to go against God. . . . Reason is the *Divine* Governor of Man’s Life; it is the very Voice of God.”²¹⁸

So began the honoring of reason above revelation—though at this point it might not have been acknowledged as such. It may be true that John Locke had already asserted that “[e]ven original revelation cannot be admitted against the clear evidence of reason”,²¹⁹ but divines such as Samuel Clarke still viewed the use of reason as beneficial to the Church. “A constant and sincere observance of all the laws of reason”, said he, “will unavoidably lead a man to Christianity.”²²⁰

²¹⁵ Piette, *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*, 108.

²¹⁶ Arthur Ernest Wilder-Smith, *He Who Thinks Has to Believe* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1981).

²¹⁷ Rufus M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (London: MacMillan, 1914), 288.

²¹⁸ Benjamin Whichcote, “Aphorisms,” in *The Cambridge Platonists: Being Selections from the Writings of Benjamin Whichcote, John Smith and Nathanael Culverwel*, ed. Ernest Trafford Campagnac (Oxford: Clarendon, 1901), 67; emphasis original.

²¹⁹ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Roger Woolhouse (London: Penguin Classics, 1998), 610.

²²⁰ Samuel Clarke, “The Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion,” in *A Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God, the Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation*,

What was the nature of the ‘reason’ these divines valued so highly? For them, “reason” was the simple exercise of one’s God-given intellect in an orderly, logical thought process. Green describes it thus: “In Latitudinarian opinion it was Reason’s function to assess whether divine revelation was authentic historically; *it had no part to play in interpreting divine truth.*”²²¹ But right, consistent application of this human faculty was honestly expected to be able to controvert doubt and objection, leading to an absolutely well-ordered (and Christian) society. It appears that they considered Ignorance or Muddy Thinking to be mankind’s greatest problem—not Sin.

But the Latitudinarian theologians had not considered that their noble presuppositions concerning God and Reason might be misunderstood and misapplied by later thinkers. Latitudinarianism soon became “a kind of religious indifference which reduced to an infinitesimal minimum the sum of revealed truths required for membership in the Church”.²²² This paved the way for the Deism which, Green notes, was “in part a natural development of certain ideas implicit in the theology of the Latitudinarians, more particularly the importance they attached to the natural judgment of the human mind”.²²³

These Deists, having been nurtured on the concept of an utterly reasonable God, proceeded to challenge any mystical elements that stubbornly clung to Scripture-based religion. They defined religious faith as no more than a “very strict Reasoning from Experience, from the Possibility of the thing, to the Power, Justice, and Immutability of him that promis’d it. . . . a most firm Perswasion [sic] built upon substantial Reasons”.²²⁴

by Samuel Clarke and Joseph Butler (Glasgow: Richard Griffin, 1823), 141.

²²¹ Vivian Hubert Howard Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley: A Study of John Wesley and Oxford* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1961), 4; emphasis added.

²²² Piette, *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*, 109.

²²³ Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley*, 5.

²²⁴ John Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious: Or, A Treatise Shewing, That There Is Nothing in the Gospel*

Thus Christianity was reduced to a reasonable and humane ‘belief’ system devoid of both the mysterious and the miraculous—which necessarily excluded divine intervention in the form of any revelation that was not independently verifiable by Man’s experience and rational deliberation. Towards this end, the Deist writers “developed a form of attack against Revelation”,²²⁵ simultaneously crafting a substitute religion that suited their intellects while still retaining the name of Christ. What resulted was a natural religion which gave its followers “an adequate and sensible guide to living”.²²⁶ Green evaluates, “The attempt to bring this about, made for the most part by men of mediocre intellectual capacity, diluted the Christian faith to a ludicrous extent. It appeared no longer as a structure of dogma but a moral code, and its founder was simply a good man, neither savior nor redeemer.”²²⁷

Over time, this process produced a ‘God’ who “was an idol compounded of fragments of tradition and frozen metaphysics,”²²⁸ and a Jesus whose Gospel “did not consist of ‘Good News’, but only Good Advice. . . . [a Gospel which] was not a deliverance, but a philosophy”.²²⁹

This change certainly had its effect upon the Church at large. Along with the shift away from Faith-and-Revelation came “a...lowering of the temperature in the sphere of both orthodoxy and dissent. . . . There was little in the liturgical worship of either the Churchmen or

Contrary to Reason, nor above It (London: s.n., 1702), 132. Wesley loathed this religion from the very start. In the 1738 sermon *Salvation by Faith* which launched his evangelical career, he denounced any faith which is merely “a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head” as being no more than “the faith of a devil” Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:120.

²²⁵ Piette, *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*, 99.

²²⁶ Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley*, 6.

²²⁷ Green, *John Wesley*, 4.

²²⁸ Sir Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 3d ed., 2 (New York: P. Smith, 1949), 338.

²²⁹ William Henry Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century: A Study in Spiritual Forces* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1908), 143.

the Dissenters to stimulate emotions or to satisfy inner devotional needs.”²³⁰ As Fitchett put it, the religious literature of that period “showed how curiously pale and ineffective God had become for even those who professed to be His Ministers”.²³¹ He claimed that, in England, “the first great duty of religion was to be tepid”²³²—and the religion of that period certainly had no room for such emotive things as tears of repentance.²³³ Surviving sermons of the day show themselves little more than essays on moralism, no matter how lofty and learned their style. The Irish writer Oliver Goldsmith († 1774) described it thus in his essay *Of the English Clergy and Popular Preachers*:

Their discourses from the pulpit are generally dry, methodical, and unaffecting; delivered with the most insipid calmness; insomuch, that, should the peaceful preacher lift his head over the [pulpit Bible] cushion, which alone he seems to address, he might discover his audience, instead of being awakened to remorse, actually sleeping over his methodical and laboured composition.

This method of preaching is, however, by some called an address to reason, and not to the passions; this is styled the making of converts by conviction: but such are indifferently acquainted with human nature. . . . not sensible, that men seldom reason about their debaucheries till they are committed. . . . Those who attempt to reason us out of our follies, begin at the wrong end, since the attempt naturally presupposes us capable of reason; but to be made capable of this, is one great point of the cure.²³⁴

Humorist Sir Richard Steele, a contemporary of Goldsmith’s, gave counsel which Julia

²³⁰ Green, *John Wesley*, 6. This sterile, dispassionate rationalism was the very antithesis of the spirituality John Wesley would promulgate. In his Journal entry for August 14, 1771—regarding Johannes Stinstra’s *A Pastoral Letter Against Fanaticism*, Wesley fumes: “The very thing which Mr. Stinstra calls fanaticism, is no other than heart-religion; in other words, ‘righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.’ These must be felt, or they have no being. All, therefore, who condemn inward feelings in the gross, leave no place either for joy, peace, or love in religion; and consequently reduce it to a dry, dead carcass.” Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 22:287. True Christianity, to Wesley, was a disposition of the heart, not just intellectual assent to a passel of “perswasive” [sic] propositions. If Stinstra’s principles were correct, then “every man may, on those principles, prove the apostles to have been fanatics to a man” *Ibid.*, 20:464; for by that calculus it was “ ‘fanatics’ who wrote the Bible.” *Ibid.*, 22:287.

²³¹ Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century*, 142.

²³² *Ibid.*, 144.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 143.

²³⁴ *The Works of Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. Peter Cunningham, 3 (London: J. Murray, 1854), 208–9.

Wedgwood later claimed was the motto of the Church of the eighteenth century:²³⁵ “We should take care never to overshoot ourselves in the pursuits even of Virtue. Whether zeal or moderation be the point we aim at, let us keep fire out of the one and frost out of the other.”²³⁶

This lukewarm Deism did not advance unchallenged, however. Theologians who were still committed to orthodox beliefs (including the reality and necessity of revealed truth) had begun to mount written counterattacks already in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Unfortunately, these refutations “did more to reveal the inadequacy of natural religion put forward by the Deists, than to justify the necessity of a revealed religion. The way was thus open for skeptics and agnostics such as David Hume, who would both either a natural and a revealed religion equally unacceptable.”²³⁷

Thus skepticism became one of three notable reactions to the dilemma in which English Christianity found itself. And while the skeptics bickered with those who continued to espouse Christian rationalism, by the early 1700s yet another movement was discernable. Green writes:

The flight from Reason had in fact already begun, and it is within *the fideism of the non-rationalists* with their insistence on personal experience and the assurance of truth and salvation which this provided that the third response to the religious crisis of the period is to be found. . . . The phrase “non-rationalist” is more accurate than anti-rationalist, for most of those who felt the content of faith lay in personal experience rather than argument *did not deny the validity of the latter*; they simply believed that it was irrelevant to the assurance of salvation.²³⁸

The effects of this conflict manifested them in every realm. Even Oxford’s High-Church

²³⁵ Julia Wedgwood, *John Wesley and the Evangelical Reaction of the Eighteenth Century* (London: MacMillan, 1870), 134.

²³⁶ Sir Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, *The Tatler; Or, Lucubrations of Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq*, 1 (London: Harrison, 1785), 519.

²³⁷ Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century*, 7.

²³⁸ Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley*, 11; emphasis added.

realms were saturated by “Whig Latitudinarianism and Skeptical indifference”.²³⁹ Concerning the era, William Fitchett said: “It was an age of compromise; of compromises in politics, in philosophy, in theology; and compromises are fatal to enthusiasm. They must kill it, or be killed by it.”²⁴⁰

How, then, to summarize the state of the established Church at the time of Wesley’s birth? All manner of forces were at work within it—compromisers and staunch defenders alike. As to the course the Anglican Church charted through these troubled waters, perhaps Green put it best: “The church was, then, very far from moribund but it was, as it has tended to remain, supremely respectable. Much more needed to be done to create the conditions for a spiritual revival and this is precisely what John Wesley was to do.”²⁴¹

Social Structure and Mores

What effect did these changing views have upon the people of England? Few would question that the period’s royal court was awash in immoral behavior. Piette called George II “a combination of clown and roué,” while prime minister Robert Walpole “passed the greater part of his life—in the face of the whole of Europe—in a state of debauchery and adultery”.²⁴² So flagrant and unashamed were his excesses that his name became synonymous with unscrupulous, dissolute living. So infamous were his morals and his conduct that he was lampooned by a veritable *Who’s Who* of English-speaking writers of his day, including Alexander Pope,²⁴³

²³⁹ Green, *John Wesley*, 7.

²⁴⁰ Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century*, 147.

²⁴¹ Green, *John Wesley*, 7.

²⁴² Piette, *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*, 111.

²⁴³ In works such as “Of the Nature and State of Man with Respect to Society,” in *An Essay on Man* (London: A. Millar and J. & R. Tonson, 1763), 57–85; also the “Imitations of Horace,” in *The Poems of Alexander Pope: A Reduced Version of the Twickenham Text*, ed. John Butt (Chelsea, MI: BookCrafters, Inc. for Yale University Press,

Samuel Johnson,²⁴⁴ Henry Fielding,²⁴⁵ and Jonathan Swift.²⁴⁶ In a mark of dubious distinction, he even had his life caustically satirized in song, *via* John Gay's farcical (and immensely popular) *The Beggar's Opera*.²⁴⁷

Nor was the pattern broken in the years to follow. As Fitchett records, "The bad morals of George II...bore their fruit in the early years of George III, and the result was a court *and a society* as dissolute as England ever knew."²⁴⁸ Even though the Crown was the official head of the Anglican Church, Latitudinarianism and Skepticism so pervaded the king's court that little more than a shell remained to shepherd the royal soul. And where the Crown led, could the Courtiers be far behind?

The upper strata of eighteenth-century society regarded Christianity with smug condescension; it was thought to be a droll concatenation of fables that were nonetheless beneficial—to *other* segments of society.²⁴⁹ Therefore "in good society it was fashionable to affect an entire contempt for *all* religion",²⁵⁰ and in fact, skepticism "has ever remained one of the distinguishing marks of the upper classes of the period, as much as the snuff-box and the

1966), 613–87.

²⁴⁴ Samuel Johnson, *Marmor Norfolciense, Or, An Essay on an Ancient Prophetic Inscription, in Monkish Rhyme, Lately Discovered near Lynn in Norfolk (1739)* (London: Printed for J. Williams, 1775).

²⁴⁵ See his 1743 *Miscellanies, Volume Three: The History of the Life of the Late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great (1742?)*, ed. Hugh Amory (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Jonathan Wild was a notorious gangleader and highwayman; Fielding's work compares Wild's life and character with Walpole's.

²⁴⁶ Walpole was the inspiration (or target) of Swift's character Flimnap in the 1726 *Gulliver's Travels*, ed. Albert J. Rivero (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002).

²⁴⁷ It is interesting to note that when it debuted in 1738, *The Beggar's Opera* began the longest consecutive run in theater history up to that time, and it is the *only* example of the satirical ballad opera which remains popular today. Can it be that some targets of satire are (unfortunately) more timeless than others?

²⁴⁸ Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century*, 141; emphasis added.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 146.

²⁵⁰ Piette, *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*, 112; emphasis added.

powdered wig”.²⁵¹ Add to this the natural inclinations of the flesh and the almost fashionable light in which extramarital dalliances were viewed, and the English upper class society was anything but the staid and stolid stratum it pretended to be.

The lower classes fared no better. Gambling and drinking, vices corrosive enough among the gentry, spread with devastating effect among the working poor. Indeed, in the mid-1720s a passion for gin-drinking seized the whole country—a phenomenon that Piette says “is probably the most momentous” development of the eighteenth century, far more significant than any other social, political or military event of the age.²⁵²

Many of the rapidly-developing industrial and mining regions had no established Church presence to check the downward spiral of conscience and conduct,²⁵³ and even the streets of fêted London were fetid and debased by day, and savage and dangerous at night. Poverty and addiction, prostitution and violence multiplied. In an attempt to stem the rising tide of crime, “penal laws of an appalling severity were enacted. Hence assassins, thieves, and criminals of every kind filled the disease-infected prisons of that time”.²⁵⁴

What, then, is the sum of the matter? Whether or not the revisionists are correct in their analyses of the era’s formative influences or historical significance, the societal symptoms described above are more a matter of public record than scholarly speculation. Perhaps Fitchett was not far wrong when he said of this period:

[England’s] ideals were gross; its sports were brutal; its public life was corrupt; its vice was unashamed. . . . It was the age of the pillory and of the whipping-post; of gin hells, and of debtors’ prisons. . . . Drunkenness was the familiar and unrebuked habit even of Ministers of the State. Adultery was a sport, and the shame lay not on the

²⁵¹ Ibid., 112.

²⁵² Ibid., 115.

²⁵³ Green, *John Wesley*, 7.

²⁵⁴ Piette, *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*, 115.

false wife or on the smiling gallant, but on the betrayed husband. . . . The spiritual life of England at this moment was beyond all doubt swiftly draining away. Its public life corrupt; its clergy discredited; its Church frozen; its theology exhausted of Christian elements. This was the England of the eighteenth century!²⁵⁵

The Influence of John Wesley's Family

Some familiarity with the greater English context does help to understand John Wesley's attitudes and actions, but what about the nearer context of his family? The future Methodist leader was naturally shaped by eighteenth-century Anglicanism, but he also inherited a significant *Dissenting* legacy from both his mother and his father. An overview of his family history is appropriate at this juncture.

Factors Influencing Wesley's ancestors

In the last half of the sixteenth century, a determined resistance to the Acts of Uniformity arose.²⁵⁶ Some members of this resistance soon came to be called "Puritans", because they were trying to purify the Church of England—that is to say, purge it of Roman Catholic influences—though many within the ranks preferred the less pejorative term "Dissenter" or "Non-Conformist".²⁵⁷

When the Savoy Conference of 1661 ended without securing a place for Dissenting Christians, Parliament imposed a series of oppressive restrictions upon them—Protestants and Roman Catholics alike—such as:

²⁵⁵ Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century*, 140, 147–48.

²⁵⁶ Meaning the Acts of 1549, 1552, and (especially) 1559. Part of the Elizabethan Religious Settlement, this act forced people to attend Sunday service in an Anglican church, at which a new version of the Book of Common Prayer was to be used. Decidedly controversial at a time when political and theological tensions were already running high, the Act passed by only three votes. See Henry Gee and William John Hardy, eds., *Documents Illustrative of English Church History* (New York: MacMillan, 1896); Reprint: Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, 2009), 45–67.

²⁵⁷ Note that the terms "Dissenters" and "Non-Conformists" were applied to more than Puritans alone—Baptists, Quakers, and a host of other lesser-known groups were grouped together under these broader titles.

- The Corporation Act of 1661, which said that only Church of England members could be members of (town) Corporations—thus barring Dissenters and Roman Catholics from holding public office;²⁵⁸
- The 1662 Act of Uniformity (or Act of Conformity) which required all ministers to be episcopally ordained, and mandated the use of the *Book of Common Prayer*;²⁵⁹
- The Conventicle Act of 1664, which forbade groups of five or more persons from meeting for worship, in private houses or in open air, unless such worship was in a manner “allowed by the liturgy or practice of the Church of England”;²⁶⁰ and
- The Five Mile Act of 1665, which ordered Dissenting and Roman Catholic ministers not to come within five miles of an incorporated town *or* any “borough that sends burgesses to the Parliament”.²⁶¹

As a result of these measures—collectively known as the “Clarendon Code”—Roman Catholic and Non-Conformist clergy were systematically divested of power and repressed. As a result of the Act of Uniformity alone, almost two thousand ministers were removed from their places, in a purge that came to be called “The Great Ejection of 1662”.

Hard times remained the Dissenters’ lot until William of Orange and his wife, Mary Stewart, came to power in 1688. More moderate and sensible in their proclivities, they issued the Toleration Act of 1689²⁶² which rescinded the Clarendon Code and permitted Dissenters the

²⁵⁸ Gee and Hardy, *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, 594–600.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 600–619.

²⁶⁰ Eugene Morrow Violette and Henry Morse Stephens, eds., *Select Documents of English Constitutional History* (New York: MacMillan, 1901), 431.

²⁶¹ Gee and Hardy, *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, 621.

²⁶² Violette and Stephens, *Select Documents of English Constitutional History*, 459–62.

freedom to worship, provided that they continued to affirm the doctrine of the Trinity²⁶³ and that they did not bolt the door of their meeting-place during their religious meetings.²⁶⁴ The Dissenter groups flourished following the Act of Toleration, and by 1715, there were an estimated 250,000 Dissenters in a kingdom of about five million people.²⁶⁵

John Wesley's Paternal Ancestry

The religious upheavals outlined above held great significance for John Wesley. His paternal great-grandfather, Bartholomew Westley, a Puritan, was ejected from his parish at Allington in 1662 for failure to conform,²⁶⁶ and later from the greater Bridport area as a result of the Five Mile Act.²⁶⁷ Bartholomew's Puritan son, John Westley, was approved for the ministry by Cromwell's Board of Commissioners in 1658, but then imprisoned in 1661 by a post-Cromwell court, for refusing to use the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Of course, as a Cromwell-approved preacher, John Westley had not been episcopally ordained; this added to the 1661 controversy mentioned above. But the interesting aspect for our purposes is not the fact of his incarceration, but *the manner of his defense*. In an interview with Dr. Gilbert Ironside, Bishop of Bristol, (recorded by Westley in his diary)²⁶⁸ Westley submitted that:

²⁶³ Ibid., 462.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 461.

²⁶⁵ Kenneth J. Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003), 13.

²⁶⁶ Robert C Monk, *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1999), 8.

²⁶⁷ Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 21.

²⁶⁸ This exchange was first published in Edmund Calamy, *A Continuation of the Account of the Ministers, Lecturers, Masters and Fellows of Colleges and Schoolmasters, Who Were Ejected or Silenced after the Restoration in 1660. By, or Before, the Act for Uniformity*, 2008 reformat., 1 (London: R. Ford, R. Hett, and J. Chandler, 1727), 395–407. Electronic file of 2008 format by Quinta : http://web.mac.com/quintapress/PDF_Books/Calamy_1727_Volume_1_Text.pdf; accessed 11/1/2010.

1. He was, in fact, ordained in the fashion stipulated in Romans chapter ten;
2. He had a “mission from God and man”;
3. He did not receive ordination to pastoral ministry because he was “call’d to the *Work* of the Ministry, tho’ not to the *Office*”;
4. He was confirmed in this by having been examined concerning the Gifts and the Graces of ministry;
5. He preached in the country as “a son of the prophets”; and that
6. The validity of his ministry was vouchsafed by the genuineness of “the apparent conversion of several souls” as the result of his ministry.²⁶⁹

Like his father Bartholomew, John Westley was also ejected from *his* parish in 1662. Defiant to the last, he settled in Preston and served congregations in Preston and Poole (in intentional violation of the Five Mile Act) until he died at the age of 42.²⁷⁰

John Wesley’s Father

But a son was born to John Westley, in 1662—a son named Samuel. This boy (who changed his surname name to “Wesley” in 1683) was educated at Dissenting institutions, yet when given the academic assignment of refuting an Anglican argument against Dissenters, Samuel’s studies convinced him that the Anglicans were right in their major criticisms. After deep deliberation, Samuel “left Dissent in order to enter the very church that had persecuted not

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 1:440–42. John Wesley thought so highly of his forefather’s reasoning and defense that he included a transcription of this interview in his Journal entry of May 25, 1765. Echoes of the defenses given above are clearly discernable in John Wesley’s own later reasoning concerning open-air preaching and the use of lay ministers. A similar line of reasoning was also later employed by Francis Asbury to defend the episcopacy of the American Methodist Episcopal church—see Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 82–85.

²⁷⁰ Franklin Wilder, *Father of the Wesleys: A Biography* (New York: Exposition Press, 1971), 20–22.

only his grandfather, but his own father as well”.²⁷¹

This is not to say that he renounced everything the Dissenters stood for. Samuel Wesley remained a steadfast believer in personal *and* corporate piety. In fact, he admired the format and purpose of the new English religious societies so much, that in 1700 he set up a small religious association of his own, with membership drawn from the choir at his parish. The duties of the members of Samuel’s religious society were: “First to pray to God; secondly to read the Holy Scriptures and discourse upon religious matters for their mutual edification; and thirdly, to deliberate about the edification of our neighbor and the promoting of it.”²⁷²

Despite the leanings toward personal piety, Samuel Wesley was a steadfast “child of the Restoration” whose “emotional and intellectual inclinations were closely, even mystically, attached to a fervent royalism which constituted the deepest of all his attachments”.²⁷³ He was also a highly principled man, whose emotional attachments were not allowed to interfere with his idealistic convictions. He was possessed of a rather choleric temper and a “streak of personal vanity, a tendency to strike a pose and act a part”²⁷⁴—and this tendency led to conflict in the parsonage as well as the parish. “It is an unhappiness almost peculiar to our family”, Susanna wrote to John in 1725, “that your father and I seldom think alike.”²⁷⁵

One of the most celebrated of these parsonage incidents was when his wife (standing on principles of her own) refused to say “Amen” to his prayers for King William III of Orange. Upon discovering this, Samuel was so affronted that he cried: “If that be the case, you and I must

²⁷¹ Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 23.

²⁷² Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1995), 27–28.

²⁷³ Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley*, 43.

²⁷⁴ John A. Newton, *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism* (London: Epworth, 1968), 71.

²⁷⁵ Eliza Clarke, *Susanna Wesley*, Eminent Women Series (London: W. H. Allen, 1886), 143.

part; for if we have two kings, we must have two beds.”²⁷⁶ Thereupon he left for London, and did not return for almost a year, until the accession of a new monarch—Anne—who was mutually acceptable to the estranged couple.²⁷⁷ John Wesley was born less than a year later, “the offspring of that reconciliation”.²⁷⁸

What influence did Samuel have upon his famous son, John? At his father’s feet John had ingrained in him the fusion of personal devotion and sacramental theology, which is so markedly different from the ideas of other experiential theologians. John’s loyalty to the Church of England, despite its many perceived flaws, and his insistence upon the importance of infant baptism and the Lord’s Supper, seem traceable to what he saw lived out in his father’s life and ministry. He likewise saw the power and significance of religious associations, *i.e.*, Christians active and meeting with one another in groups, outside the structure of Divine Service. Even if (as Heitzenrater points out²⁷⁹) there is no evidence that John himself participated in his father’s religious society at Epworth,

the later direction of his life clearly suggests that [John] Wesley was not only familiar with the substance of these pietistic [!] circles, especially in terms of their design to foster holiness of heart and life, but [John was] also well acquainted with their methods, particularly in terms of the use of small, intentional, face-to-face meetings that fostered both accountability and honesty, the very staples of spiritual maturity.²⁸⁰

Samuel rigidly adhered to the prescribed practices of the established Church,²⁸¹ while still

²⁷⁶ Stephen Tomkins, *John Wesley: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 10.

²⁷⁷ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 27. Note that Susanna describes Samuel’s vows of separation and his departure for London in rather more lively terms—see the summary in Tomkins, *John Wesley*, 11., and the letter itself in Susanna Wesley, *Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings*, ed. Charles Jr. Wallace (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 35.

²⁷⁸ John Pudney, *John Wesley and His World* (Norwich, Eng.: Jarrod & Sons. for Thames & Hudson, 1978), 11.

²⁷⁹ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 30–31.

²⁸⁰ Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 25.

²⁸¹ Lee, *John Wesley and Modern Religion*, 174.

carrying home to his family the desire to follow God rightly and without compromise. This could not fail to make its impression on his children. Indeed, “In a father who feared God and honoured the King, [John] Wesley was early to see devotion to Church and State in its most attractive form.”²⁸²

Even his dying day was to provide guidance and inspiration for his sons. Several times on that last day (April 25, 1735) Samuel spoke to John as well as any others within earshot, saying: “*The inward witness!* The inward witness—*that* is the proof, the strongest proof, of Christianity.”²⁸³ And as John looked on, Samuel laid his hands on Charles’ head and said: “Be steady. The Christian faith will surely revive in this kingdom; you shall see it, though I shall not.”²⁸⁴

John Wesley’s Maternal Heritage

The heritage of Dissent was not from the Wesley side of the family alone. His mother’s grandfather, John White, was a Member of Parliament during Cromwell’s time, and thus was vigorously opposed to the idea of an Established Church. So zealous for the Puritan cause was he that he was appointed the chairman of the Committee for Religion.²⁸⁵ More famously, he was also appointed chairman of Cromwell’s “Committee for Scandalous Ministers”, which gave him powerful sway over the process that examined and ejected many Anglican ministers.²⁸⁶ His

²⁸² Maldwyn Edwards, *John Wesley and the Eighteenth Century: A Study of His Social and Political Influence* (London: Epworth, 1955), 15.

²⁸³ Wilder, *Father of the Wesleys: A Biography*, 218; emphasis original.

²⁸⁴ Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley*, 246, citing a letter written by Charles to his brother Samuel, dated April 30, 1735.

²⁸⁵ Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 13.

²⁸⁶ Monk, *John Wesley*, 10. White, a lawyer, chronicled the affairs of this committee in a 1643 book entitled *The First Century of Scandalous Malignant Priests* which gave details concerning the first one hundred clergymen deprived of their livings for immorality or neglect of duty. This book earned him the nickname “Century White”.

influence also extended across the Atlantic Ocean, for he was also involved in the organization of the Massachusetts Colony and may even have written its charter.²⁸⁷

Wesley's maternal grandfather, Samuel Annesley, was "one of the most eminent of the later Puritan Nonconformists".²⁸⁸ Both an ordained Anglican deacon *and* ordained Presbyterian, he was ejected from his parish in 1662 for failure to conform. Undeterred, Annesley established a meeting-place in Spitalfields, East London,²⁸⁹ and paid for the support and education of young Nonconformist ministers from his own private income. It was at his meetinghouse in Little St. Helens that Annesley participated in the first public Presbyterian ordination since the 1662 Act of Uniformity had prohibited them, and his house was always the center of lively and sincerely pious debate. He remained in London, heralded as "the St. Paul of the Nonconformists"²⁹⁰ and "the Patriarch of Dissent",²⁹¹ until his death in 1696. John Wesley admired Samuel Annesley so much that he included some of Annesley's sermons in his *Christian Library*²⁹²—and Annesley's emphasis on holiness, faith, love, and the rôle of the Holy Spirit are fervent precursors to Wesley's own.

The full text is available for consideration: see "The First Century of Scandalous, Malignant Priests Made and Admitted into Benefices by the Prelates, in Whose Hands the Ordination of Ministers and Government of the Church Hath Been, or a Narration of the Causes for Which the Parliament Hath Ordered the Sequestration of the Benefices of Severall Ministers Complained of before Them, for Vitiousness of Life, Errors in Doctrine, Contrary to the Articles of Our Religion, and for Practising and Pressing Superstitious Innovations against Law, and for Malignancy against the Parliament," last modified 1643, <http://yufind.library.yale.edu/yufind/Record/6879878>, accessed November 3, 2010.

²⁸⁷ Sir Sidney Lee, ed., *Dictionary of National Biography*, LXI: Whichcord-Williams (New York: Macmillan, 1900), 59.

²⁸⁸ Sir Leslie Stephen, ed., *Dictionary of National Biography*, II: Annesley-Baird (London: Smith Elder, 1885), 7.

²⁸⁹ Wesley, *Susanna Wesley—Writings*, 5.

²⁹⁰ Wilder, *Father of the Wesleys: A Biography*, 51.

²⁹¹ Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 14.

²⁹² See volume 24 of John Wesley, ed., *A Christian Library, Consisting of Extracts from and Abridgments of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity Which Have Been Publish'd in the English Tongue*, 30 vols. (London: T. Cordeux, 1819).

John Wesley's Mother

Susanna Annesley was born on January 20, 1669, the twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth child of Samuel Annesley—apparently even the good doctor was unable to remember which.²⁹³ Raised in a home where high educational standards were joined with heartfelt devotional and moral training, Susanna developed rigorous spiritual disciplines. She was a careful steward of her time, she kept a spiritual journal, and she practiced “a strict Puritan Sabbath, in which all unnecessary labors were put aside and the day was observed in all manner of seriousness and in due devotion to the Most High”.²⁹⁴

Despite these solid Puritan underpinnings and her distinguished Nonconformist heritage, at only twelve years of age Susanna deliberated carefully and decided to break with the Dissenters to join the Church of England.²⁹⁵ This is not to say that she abandoned her roots; although her allegiance was now to the Established Church, she retained many elements of Puritanism—including strict self-discipline and an independent spirit.

Susanna and Samuel were married November 12, 1688,²⁹⁶ and her self-discipline was carried into the raising of children. Susanna bore and reared somewhere between seventeen and nineteen children, only nine of which survived to adulthood.²⁹⁷ But for all the demands that such a sizeable household would place upon her, peace and order prevailed—due, in no small part, to Susanna's passion for order and method. She required personal daily reading and meditation on

²⁹³ When Dr. Manton asked Samuel at Susanna's baptism asked how many children the Annesleys had had, Dr. Annesley replied: “Two dozen, I believe, or a quarter of a hundred.” Pudney, *John Wesley and His World*, 7. Given the fact that only eight of the Annesleys' children's names have been preserved, it is likely that a great many of this prodigious brood died in their youth.

²⁹⁴ Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 15.

²⁹⁵ Newton, *Susanna Wesley*, 57.

²⁹⁶ Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 23.

²⁹⁷ Tomkins, *John Wesley*, 10. Apparently the Wesleys were as bad at keeping track of their offspring as the

Scripture for all of them, taught each one to read at five years old, allotted a single day for each one to learn the alphabet, and (remarkably) spent a portion of every evening in one-on-one time with each of her children, according to an inviolate schedule.²⁹⁸ Each day held six hours of schoolwork—serious and thorough—and loud talking and boisterous play were strictly forbidden.²⁹⁹

Susanna has been called “methodical to a fault”.³⁰⁰ With a rigor that some today might consider oppressive and manipulative, she taught her children the importance of self-examination and self-mastery—that is to say, obedience to law and the mortification of self-will. She later told John: “In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done is to conquer their will, and bring them to an obedient temper.”³⁰¹ Further, she notes concerning self-will:

[It] is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children ensures their afterwretchedness and irreligion; whatever checks and mortifies it promotes their future happiness and piety. . . . Heaven or hell depends on this alone. So that the parent who studies to subdue it in the child works together with God in the saving of a soul; the parent who indulges it does the Devil’s work, makes religion impracticable, salvation unattainable, and does all that in him lies to damn his child, soul and body, for ever.³⁰²

Susanna was quite confident that her understanding was correct, in matters both civil and spiritual. This confidence, along with her independent spirit, led to another significant shaping factor in young John Wesley’s life:

Annesleys had been.

²⁹⁸ Clarke, *Susanna Wesley*, 122.

²⁹⁹ Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 16–17.

³⁰⁰ Lee, *John Wesley and Modern Religion*, 45.

³⁰¹ Excerpt of a letter written by Susanna to John, reproduced in Wesley’s *Journal* of August 1, 1742; Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 19:287.

³⁰² Further excerpts from Wesley’s *Journal* of August 1, 1742; *Ibid.*, 19:288. Significantly, William Cannon observes concerning this journal entry: “The Wesley children were put into a regular method of living at the very day of their birth; and, if justification be the result of moral consistency and earnestness alone, then John Wesley was set on the road to its attainment from the very day he learned his name.” Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley*,

In 1712, Rev. Wesley was called away for an extended period, to represent his diocese at the national Convocation in London.³⁰³ A curate by the name of Godfrey Inman preached in Samuel's absence—and apparently did such a poor job feeding the flock that Susanna began to hold Sunday evening meetings in her kitchen. Psalms and prayers were read, and a sermon from Samuel's shelves was recited, for any of the villagers who wished to attend.³⁰⁴

The format was not Dissenting, the intent was not seditious. But the fact that soon Susanna had as many as two hundred people flocking to these “kitchen meetings”—far more than attended the Rev. Mr. Inman's services—proved to be more than the curate could bear. In high dudgeon he wrote a letter of complaint to Samuel about the impropriety of Susanna's conduct. In due time Samuel, with his keen sense of propriety and good order, wrote and asked her to stop at once, as it was a most “irregular proceeding”³⁰⁵—and it was unsuitable for a *woman* to conduct such meetings in any case.³⁰⁶

Susanna answered with a thorough theological and pragmatic consideration of the circumstances. She noted that her meetings had had such salutary effects upon the watery fens of Epworth that “we now live in the greatest amity imaginable. . . . Some families who seldom went to church, now go constantly; and one person, who had not been there for seven years, is now prevailed upon to go with the rest”.³⁰⁷ She was so convinced that her kitchen meetings were right

50.

³⁰³ These Convocations, by royal decree, met at the same time that Parliament was in session. It was the 1661 national Convocation that had prepared the revised *Book of Common Prayer*, which paved the way for 1662's Act of Uniformity.

³⁰⁴ Rebecca Lamar Harmon, *Susanna, Mother of the Wesleys* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1968), 78.

³⁰⁵ Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. Samuel Wesley: M.A., Rector of Epworth and Father of the Revs. John and Charles Wesley, the Founders of the Methodists* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1866), 346.

³⁰⁶ Harmon, *Susanna, Mother of the Wesleys*, 79.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

and God-pleasing that she closed her defense with the words:

If you do, after all, think fit to dissolve this assembly do not tell me you *desire* me to do it, for that will not satisfy my conscience; but send your *positive command*, in such full and express terms as may absolve me from all guilt and punishment for neglecting this opportunity of doing good, when you and I shall appear before the great and awful tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Susanna Wesley³⁰⁸

The reasoning (and perhaps the thought of the Lord’s tribunal) convinced her husband, and he did not renew his request that she desist. The kitchen meetings continued until Samuel returned from London, at which time evening services at the church took their place. But it is also true that these kitchen “conventicles” (as Mr. Inman and his associates called them) had done something remarkable to St. Andrew’s parish: the wall of hostility, suspicion, and distance between the Wesleys and their congregation had been breached. For a time, a new spirit prevailed in Epworth.³⁰⁹

Examples of Susanna’s character and spirit could be multiplied almost *ad infinitum*; the magnitude of her influence on her sons is undeniable. John Wesley’s sermons and writings reflect Susanna’s views, including the idea that the goal of religious training (for young *and* old) was “to turn the bias [*i.e.*, of human nature] from Self-will, Pride, Anger, Revenge, and the Love of the World, to Resignation, Lowliness, Meekness, and the Love of God”. Sometimes, John said, this can be accomplished “by mildness, softness, and gentleness”, but he also maintained that, if need be, “we must correct with kind severity”.³¹⁰ Echoes of parsonage life in Epworth! Furthermore, in Susanna’s kitchen meetings, John saw

A living example of a functional definition of ministry, one that deemed it far better to minister to the needs of the common people—even if it gave offense to the

³⁰⁸ Clarke, *Susanna Wesley*, 109; emphasis original.

³⁰⁹ Harmon, *Susanna, Mother of the Wesleys*, 80.

³¹⁰ Newton, *Susanna Wesley*, 120.

prejudices of the day—than to watch the harvest rot on the ground for want of laborers. . . . [This] would help to shape his own understanding of gospel ministry in the days ahead.³¹¹

Susanna’s confidence and authority in spiritual matters impressed John deeply—so much so that he continued to seek her guidance well into his adult years. She has often been called “the mother of Methodism”,³¹² and her influence on John’s life and thought has been long recognized.³¹³ She taught him early and well to consider his ways; as William Cannon notes, “Theology was no stranger to the Wesley fireside, and from early childhood John seemed to feel himself answerable to his reason and his conscience for everything he did.”³¹⁴

Life at Epworth

In early 1697—six years before John was born—the Rev. Samuel Wesley and his family moved to “the swampy island of Axholme...a remote outpost of civilized England, hardly

³¹¹ Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 20–21.

³¹² Most famously attested by the historian, philosopher, and critic of Methodism, Isaac Taylor (1787–1865) who wrote, “The Wesleys’ mother was *the mother of Methodism* in a religious and moral sense; for her courage, her submissiveness to authority, the high tone of her mind, its independence, and its self-control, the warmth of her devotional feelings, and the practical direction given to them, came up and were visibly repeated in the character and conduct of her sons.” (Emphasis added.) On the strength of this well-known quote, nineteenth-century writer Annie Keeling titled her chapter on Susanna Wesley the very same way; see Annie E Keeling, *Eminent Methodist Women* (London: C. W. Kelly, 1889), 11.

³¹³ Note this early, glowing attestation by the Rev. John Kirk: “And now, with the details and illustrations of this chapter fresh in his memory, we think it cannot escape the notice and reflection of the reader, that Methodism, — in some of its grand principles of economy, its thoroughly evangelical doctrines, and the means by which the former were promulgated and the latter brought into action—‘had its specific, healthy, though slowly-vegetating seeds in the original members of the Wesley Family.’ But the pre-eminence in this honourable ancestry must undoubtedly be given to HER WHO AROSE A MOTHER IN ISRAEL. Well has it been said that, as we contemplate the religious power which ruled the entire household in the Epworth parsonage, and the godly training which Mrs Wesley gave to her children, we cannot ‘escape the conclusion, that to the seed then sown in John Wesley’s heart we should trace very much of the religious idea that originated the first Methodists in Oxford, and was subsequently elaborated in the United Societies.’ And when we note her love of order and practical devotion to system which enabled her to manage the complicated affairs of her household so easily and so well, do we not discover the very same qualities in the Founder of Methodism, which enabled him to accomplish so much work and govern a large Christian community down to the smallest details with such perfect ease? Who can tell how much Christianity and the world, through the instrumentality of Methodism, are indebted to this noble woman?” John Kirk, *The Mother of the Wesleys: A Biography* (London: Henry James Tresidder, 1864), 298.

approachable by road”.³¹⁵ Here he was to serve as rector of St. Andrew’s church in Epworth; in 1725 the neighboring rectorate of Wroot was added to his charge. It was a difficult assignment for a man of Samuel’s learning and leaning—and also for a woman of Susanna’s cultured and pious upbringing. Common folk all across England had deeply resented the Cromwellian Interregnum (1640–1660), if for no other reason than they resented the Puritan ethos and ethic being imposed upon them by law. And Samuel’s new Epworth parishioners were “as uncouth and independent-minded a set of peasants as could be found in England”.³¹⁶

To such a place came the scholarly Samuel, who soon styled himself “the poet of the Isle of Axholme”,³¹⁷ although his verse never supplemented their income to any helpful degree. He undertook scholarly work as well—his twenty-year *magnum opus* was the 600-page *Dissertations on the Book of Job*,³¹⁸ written entirely in Latin and so full of “varied and useless learning” that Bishop Warburton sighed: “Poor Job! It was his eternal fate to be persecuted by his friends.”³¹⁹

It was inevitable that such a cultured and cerebral character would forever be an ‘outsider’ among the earthy people of the Axholme fens. The new rector was also a *former* Dissenter (but now High-Church Tory) in a congregation that included as many as one hundred Baptists and

³¹⁴ Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 44.

³¹⁵ Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley*, 45.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

³¹⁷ Pudney, *John Wesley and His World*, 8. Samuel wrote verse long and short, from his first published collection of poems (remarkably entitled *Maggots*, but see the gentle and generous interpretation of this name in Newton’s *Susanna Wesley*, 71.) to a ten-volume “magniloquent and egregious life of Christ in verse...[which] in spite of its stilted sonority and some execrable versifying...proved moderately popular” (Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley*, 45). In fact, some say that it was this work, dedicated to Queen Mary, that quite possibly resulted in the Epworth living being conferred upon him. (Wilder, *Father of the Wesleys: A Biography*, 47.) What manner of reward this living actually was, is open to conjecture.

³¹⁸ Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. Samuel Wesley*, 371–73.

³¹⁹ John Nichols and Samuel Bentley, eds., *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, 5 (London: Nichols,

Quakers³²⁰—and his sermons and sentiments were therefore more likely to fuel resentment than win approval. Says Green, “He was conscientious enough to win their dislike, insufficiently gracious to earn their affection.”³²¹

Nor did it take long for such antipathy to erupt into open conflict. Through the years, congregational malcontents burned the parsonage crops, maimed the Wesleys’ animals, and even (it is rumored) twice set fire to the parsonage itself.³²² By 1705 the animosity among Samuel Wesley’s parishioners had grown to such intensity that, as he told Archbishop Sharp, “A Clergyman met me in the Castle-yard, and told me to withdraw, as the Isle men intended me a mischief; another told me that he had heard twenty of them say if they got me in the Castle-yard, they would squeeze my guts out.”³²³

Remarkably (and perhaps instructively for his young son) the headstrong and outspoken rector faced down and survived these rebellions, hardly slackening his rigorous imposition of penitential discipline upon the congregation in an attempt to stem the tide of their moral transgressions. Was this the foreshadowing of John’s own ill-fated efforts in Georgia?³²⁴

All in all, growing up in Epworth was an excellent training ground for young John:

- the unfailing pattern of daily routine;
- a life of economic hardship that taught him to live contentedly on the smallest of incomes;
- the fearless confrontation of opposition, anchored in an unshakable conviction of truth;
- the devout personal piety of his parents, combined with highest academic expectations;

Son, & Bentley, 1812), 215.

³²⁰ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 45.

³²¹ Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley*, 46.

³²² Pudney, *John Wesley and His World*, 10, 12.

³²³ Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley*, 48.

all of these came together in Susanna's "Jacky", so that he became "an orthodox High Anglican of Jacobite inclinations, a better poet than his father, a careful scholar, a sensible divine".³²⁵

The foundations were laid. Instilled with a sense of destiny after his dramatic rescue from the house-fire of 1709—a "brand plucked from the burning", as his mother called him³²⁶—"the time would come when that early environment, that curious mix of Puritan discipline and Anglican sensibilities, would bear remarkable fruit".³²⁷

Summary

Eighteenth-century England was rich with both the high view of Man *and* the unshakable belief in the power of Reason to dispel ignorance and superstition. Between the triumph of Reason and the advances of Science, Man was thought to be capable of comprehending and organizing almost anything—including unruly Nature, and many aspects of Religion as well. This is reflected in John's parents' way of thinking and rearing their children.

Also influential was the Church of England's "middle ground" understanding of Justification. John's parents held to both the judicial understanding (justification was a "not guilty" verdict pronounced over the accused) *and* the notion that Man co-operated in his justification (Man takes the initiative and acts, and that act is called "faith"). The high view of Man's capabilities fostered an "English Arminian" predisposition in both parents.³²⁸

Furthermore, although both Samuel and Susanna had rejected the Nonconformity of their youth, "the Puritan impress was not lost, for *the habits of piety, deeply ingrained, are not easily*

³²⁴ Ibid., 47.

³²⁵ Ibid., 51.

³²⁶ Pudney, *John Wesley and His World*, 11.

³²⁷ Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 28.

³²⁸ Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 43–48.

thrust aside”³²⁹—by parents *or* the children they raise. So the parents exhorted their children both morally and spiritually, and their famous offspring (John and Charles) exhorted their followers.

John also saw the great shortcoming of the Established Church firsthand, in his early years: he saw its inability to “affect” either the educated or the common folk—by which he meant its inability to instill a heartfelt sense of religion, morality, and order.³³⁰ He feared his God, and he trembled at the irreligion he saw both in himself *and* in his fellow-man.

Endeavors and Encounters

Charterhouse

Although John’s life at Epworth had profound influence on him, he did not live with his parents for very long. In January of 1714, at the age of ten, he entered Charterhouse, a boarding school in London. He was an early favorite of schoolmaster Thomas Wacker and was well liked by his friends, but he still suffered the indignities commonly visited upon newcomers by upperclassmen.³³¹ Little is known of his life during this period, except that even at this early stage, he “liked to exercise himself...in talk and argument”.³³²

But you can remove the boy from the parsonage and still not remove the parsonage from the boy. Collins observes:

Like Luther who preceded him, Wesley’s conscience was not easily put aside, and he was hardly satisfied with the conventional religion of his Charterhouse days. . . . and though the young Wesley was clearly not plagued by the overbearing scruples of the

³²⁹ Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley*, 42.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

³³¹ Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 25.

³³² Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley*, 55.

monastic Luther, [!] he began to evidence pangs of conscience that others hardly or rarely felt.³³³

In a revealing Journal entry, Wesley himself remembers his Charterhouse days thus:

The next six or seven years were spent at school, where, outward restraints being removed, I was much more negligent than before, even of outward duties, and almost continually guilty of outward sins, which I knew to be such, though they were not scandalous in the eye of the world. However, I still read the Scriptures, and said my prayers morning and evening. And what I now hoped to be saved by was (1) *not being so bad as other people*; (2) *having still a kindness for religion*; and (3) *reading the Bible, going to church, and saying my prayers*.³³⁴

Away to Oxford

The Bachelor's Degree

In July of 1720, John Wesley was admitted to Christ Church, Oxford—the largest, most distinguished, most diversified College in the university.³³⁵ At this point he was “obviously enjoying his youth...exploring an array of activities with a sense of wonder and ease”.³³⁶ Interests ranged from social to scholarly: he played backgammon, billiards, cards, chess and tennis with his friends, even attending the theatre when his notoriously scant finances permitted. In scholastic endeavors he was a “studious and successful, if not brilliant”³³⁷ student, receiving his Bachelor's degree in 1724—to all appearances a classic product of a classic system.

But all was not well during these years, for noble Oxford had drifted from her moorings.

Fitchett sums up rather bluntly:

³³³ Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 26.

³³⁴ *Works (BE)*, 1:243; emphasis original.

³³⁵ Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley*, 61.

³³⁶ Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 27.

³³⁷ Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century*, 46. It is also worth considering that historiographers since the time of Fitchett's classic 1908 analysis have evaluated the social and political circumstances surrounding eighteenth-century academia, and cast Oxford in a somewhat kinder light. See, e.g., Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 62–68.

All the formulæ of a great Christian seat of Christian learning existed; but the facts were in quarrel with the formulæ. . . . Oxford, when Wesley trod its streets, was, for the average student, an education in the bad art of subscribing to articles he ridiculed, swearing to keep laws he ignored, and pretending to attend lectures which had no existence.³³⁸

Wesley himself remembers the academic exercises of those days as “an idle, useless interruption of useful studies”, “horribly, shockingly superficial”, and “an execrable insult upon common sense”.³³⁹ In the same letter he reflects upon his companions and diversions of that time by saying:

[T]here is no such choice of company elsewhere as there is at Oxford or Cambridge. That is most true; for the moment a young man sets his foot either in one or the other, he is surrounded with company of all kinds, except that which would do him good; with loungers and triflers of every sort; (*nequid gravius dicam*³⁴⁰) with men who no more concern themselves with learning than with religion;

who waste away,
In gentle inactivity the day,

to say the best of them; for it is to be feared they are not always so innocently employed.³⁴¹

In all fairness, it must be noted that these comments and observations were made a full fifty years after the fact, and that little direct written evidence remains from the years 1720–1724 to show young John’s state of mind at that time.³⁴² Chronologically, the nearest summary is from his Journal entry for May 24, 1738—the date of his Aldersgate experience. At that time he reflects back concerning those Oxford days, saying:

³³⁸ Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century*, 46.

³³⁹ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XIII:298.

³⁴⁰ “Not to mention persons of a still viler description”

³⁴¹ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XIII:299.

³⁴² One of the few documents that is available is a time-table the young scholar drew up for himself, with a regimen for each day of the week—from course of study to order of correspondence—see John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.*, ed. Nehemiah Curnock (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2006), 1:46. This one-page effort was his first attempt at journaling. Wesley began to journal in earnest on April 5, 1725; see Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 18:82.

Being removed to the University for five years, I still said my prayers both in public and in private, and read, with the Scriptures, several other books of religion, especially comments on the New Testament. Yet I had not all this while so much as a notion of inward holiness; nay, went on habitually, and, for the most part, very contentedly, in some or other known sin: indeed, with some intermission and short struggles, especially before and after the holy communion, which I was obliged to receive thrice a year. I cannot well tell what I hoped to be saved by now, when I was continually sinning against that little light I had; unless by those transient fits of what many Divines taught me to call repentance.³⁴³

It appears that John Wesley was not immune to the lures of Enlightenment England. Yet after a brief time “the Puritan heritage, the concern for discipline, and good order so evident in [his] earlier familial setting, evoked in Wesley an ardent desire for exacting moral rectitude in his own life”.³⁴⁴

Fellow of Lincoln College

After receiving his Bachelor’s, Wesley remained in Oxford to pursue a Master’s Degree. It seemed that his was the road to scholarship and holy orders; to that end he was ordained a deacon in September of 1725, granted a fellowship at Lincoln College in March of 1726, and in November of the same year he was appointed a Greek lecturer and moderator of the College’s daily disputations.³⁴⁵ His work in these vocations was well received, and the studious young Wesley received his Master’s Degree in February, 1727. He was ordained into the Anglican priesthood in February 1728.³⁴⁶

Wesley’s love of order and his concern for proper use of time intensified during these years. His academic pursuits had not been altogether satisfactory; in a letter to his mother he had

³⁴³ Wesley, *Wesley’s Journal*—Kessinger Ed., 466.

³⁴⁴ Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 28.

³⁴⁵ Pudney, *John Wesley and His World*, 20.

³⁴⁶ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 72.

observed that “there are many truths it is not worth while to know”.³⁴⁷ This conviction led him to largely set aside “speculative studies” in favor of a more practical divinity, designing a rigorous course of study which he intended to keep, for the sake of “more serious and important”³⁴⁸ topics. The better to accommodate these studies and make the best use of his time, he determined to rise “an hour sooner in the morning” and delay “going into company an hour later in the evening; both of which may be done without any inconvenience”.³⁴⁹ Thus was begun the habit of early rising which would continue throughout Wesley’s life, and to which he attributed much of his productivity and health. He wrote his brother, Samuel, “Leisure and I have taken leave of one another”,³⁵⁰ and he began keeping both a Journal (for public perusal; parts were published as early as 1738) and a Diary (for private use, written in cipher and symbol), “the better...to discharge the duty of self-examination”³⁵¹ while keeping the nature and specifics of his internal *angst* safe from any prying eyes. The cracking of his cipher is a relatively recent achievement—dating to Richard Heitzenrater’s “Rosetta Stone” discovery in 1969³⁵²—and it is within the pages of both published Journals and decoded Diaries that many details of his spiritual struggle may be found.

Curate of Epworth

From 1727 to 1729 Wesley served as his father’s curate at Epworth and Wroote. The elderly Samuel had suffered a stroke which made his continued work on the monumental

³⁴⁷ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XII:9.

³⁴⁸ Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley*, 116.

³⁴⁹ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XII:11.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 12:20.

³⁵¹ Pudney, *John Wesley and His World*, 24.

³⁵² Sally Hicks, “Unlocking the Code: How Richard Heitzenrater’s Discovery Shaped the Course of Wesleyan

Dissertationes in Librum Jobi a greater challenge. Young John was glad for the opportunity to be away from Oxford where, he said, “I lie under the inconvenience of being almost necessarily exposed to much impertinence and vanity”.³⁵³ So he removed to Epworth and applied himself with great diligence to the work at hand, but—in his own words—“I preached much, but saw no fruit of my labour.”³⁵⁴ This, coupled with some conflict with his father over his sermons and the matter of sister Hetty’s fall from family favor,³⁵⁵ made John all the more willing to return to Oxford in October 1729 when duty as Moderator called.

But the time at Epworth was not without spiritual significance for John. A short time before his assignment to Axholme, he had been introduced to the writings of certain authors whose works were to affect him deeply—before, during, and after his Epworth sojourn. It is to these authors, these works, and their influence, that we now turn.

Influence of the Mystics

In Lent of 1725, as Wesley was preparing for his ordination as a deacon, his reading began to focus on writers in the holiness tradition. Three stand out as pivotal in the development of Wesley’s spiritual understanding: Jeremy Taylor, Thomas à Kempis, and William Law. The exact order in which he was introduced to these writers is a subject of academic debate—and even Wesley’s own written recollection of events does not square with available evidence³⁵⁶—but the important tenets they advanced remain easily identifiable.³⁵⁷

Studies,” *Divinity Magazine* 8, (2008).

³⁵³ Letter to his mother, dated March 19, 1727; *Letters of John Wesley*, ed. George Eayrs (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1915), 46.

³⁵⁴ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:468.

³⁵⁵ Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley*, 110–11.

³⁵⁶ See, e.g., Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 56.

³⁵⁷ Wesley’s own summary of the influence of the Mystics may be found in *Plain Account*, 9–11.

Jeremy Taylor

Despite a friend's assertion that Taylor almost "put her out of her senses" in fear,³⁵⁸ both Taylor's 1650 *Rules and Exercises of Holy Living* and his 1651 *Rules and Exercises of Holy Dying* affected Wesley deeply. In these books Wesley was admonished: "Regard not how *full* hands you bring to God, but how *pure*."³⁵⁹ Taylor cautioned that *everything* must be begun, continued, and completed in prayer, and that absolutely no admixture of personal regard or thought of gain ought to pollute the true Christian's service to God. "Have a care", he warns darkly, "that while the altar thus sends up a holy flame, thou dost not suffer the birds to come and carry away the sacrifice: that is, let not that which began well, and was intended for God's glory, decline, and end in thy own praise, or temporal satisfaction, or sin."³⁶⁰

However uncompromising Taylor's prescriptions may have been, Wesley was challenged to his very soul. Consequently understanding salvation to hinge upon purity of intent—and believing himself strong enough to make the proper sacrifice and conform to the standards Taylor had set—Wesley says that after reading *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*,

Instantly I resolved to dedicate all my life to God, all my thoughts, and words, and actions; being thoroughly convinced, there was no medium; but that every part of my life (not some only) must either be a sacrifice to God, or myself, that is, in effect, to the devil. Can any serious person doubt of this, or find a medium between serving God and serving the devil?³⁶¹

Richard Heitzenrater notes that Jeremy Taylor "provided one of the most crucial suggestions that

³⁵⁸ In a letter to his mother on June 18, 1725, John said that this friend's fear was due to the fact that Taylor "seemed to exclude all from being in a [way of] salvation who did not come up to his rules." Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 25:168.

³⁵⁹ Jeremy Taylor, *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living: In Which Are Described the Means and Instruments of Obtaining Every Virtue, and the Remedies against Every Vice, and Considerations Serving to the Resisting All Temptations: Together with Prayers, Containing the Whole Duty of a Christian and the Parts of Devotion Fitted to All Occasions, and Furnished for All Necessities*, ed. George Croly (Philadelphia, PA: Willis P. Hazard, 1857), 36; emphasis added.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 16–17.

Wesley adopted: the first rule of holy living is care of your time”.³⁶² One of the most significant outworkings of that new resolve was the start of Wesley’s journaling (discussed below).

Thomas à Kempis³⁶³

Thomas à Kempis’ well-known treatise *The Christian Pattern, or a Treatise of the Imitation of Jesus Christ* only served to reinforce the idea that, for a man to be declared justified, his heart and motives must be spotlessly clean. Wesley recounts his experience thus:

In the year 1726, I met with Kempis’s “Christian’s Pattern”.³⁶⁴ The nature and extent of inward religion, the religion of the heart, now appeared to me in a stronger light than ever it had done before. I saw, that giving even all my life to God (supposing it possible to do this, and go no farther) would profit me nothing, unless I gave my heart, yea, all my heart, to him.

I saw, that “simplicity of intention, and purity of affection,” one design in all we speak or do, and one desire ruling all our tempers, are indeed “the wings of the soul,” without which she can never ascend to the mount of God.³⁶⁵

In an effort to purify his affections and simplify his intentions, he undertook a new regimen:

I began to alter the whole form of my conversation, and to set in earnest upon a new life. I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. I communicated every week. I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed. I began to aim at, and pray for, inward holiness. So that now, “doing so much, and living so good a life”, I doubted not but I was a good Christian.³⁶⁶

³⁶¹ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 9–10.

³⁶² Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 35.

³⁶³ The identity of *Imitatio Christi*’s author is not certain, but in keeping with tradition and the general agreement of scholars, authorship by Thomas à Kempis (ca. 1380–1471) is assumed here.

³⁶⁴ This was not his first exposure to *The Christian Pattern*, however. In a letter dated May 28 1725 he told his mother that he had been “advised to read Thomas à Kempis over, which I had frequently seen, but never much looked into before”—Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 25:162. In this letter he presents several points of *The Christian Pattern* with which he was struggling. His mother was not overly impressed with à Kempis, saying: “I take Kempis to have been an honest, weak man, that had more zeal than knowledge.” (*Susanna Wesley—Writings*, 108.) The month following, John would engage in similar theological dialogue with his mother concerning Jeremy Taylor’s theology.

³⁶⁵ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 10.

³⁶⁶ Journal entry for May 24, 1738; Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 18:244.

Although initially Wesley was “very angry at Kempis for being *too strict*”,³⁶⁷ *The Christian Pattern* nonetheless “reaffirmed what Wesley had already been taught in his home. The true Christian must seek to imitate his Lord.”³⁶⁸ Then came William Law.

William Law

It is in William Law’s 1726 *Christian Perfection* and 1729 *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* that Wesley was confronted with the strongest formulation of the idea that religious perfection (and, consequently, salvation) was equal to

the right Performance of our necessary Duties, in the Exercise of such holy Tempers as are equally necessary and equally practicable in all States of Life...[I]t is also the lowest Degree of Holiness which the Gospel alloweth. So that though no Order of Men can pretend to go higher, *yet none of us can have any Security in resting in any State of Piety that is lower.*³⁶⁹

“Necessary Duties”, for William Law, included intense self-examination and specific repentance.

In *Serious Call*, he presents his reasoning, which is worth quoting at length:

The Scripture saith, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Which is as much as to say, that then only our sins are forgiven, and we cleansed from the guilt and unrighteousness of them, when they are thus confessed and repented of.

There seems therefore to be the greatest necessity, that all our daily actions be constantly observed and brought to account, lest by a negligence we load ourselves with the guilt of unrepented sins.

This examination therefore of ourselves every evening is not only to be considered as a *commendable rule*, and fit for a wise man to observe, but as something that is as necessary, as a daily confession and repentance of our sins; because this daily repentance is very little significancy, and loses all its chief benefit, unless it be a *particular confession* and repentance of the sins of that day. . . .

You would, I suppose, think yourself chargeable with great impiety, if you were to go to bed without confessing yourself to be a sinner and asking pardon of God; you would not think it sufficient that you did so yesterday. And yet if, without any regard

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 18:243; emphasis original.

³⁶⁸ Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 56.

³⁶⁹ From his *A Practical Treatise Upon Christian Perfection*, 3, *The Works of the Reverend William Law* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2006), 5–6; emphasis added.

to the present day, you only repeat the same form on words that you used yesterday, the sins of the present day may justly be looked upon to have had no repentance. For if the sins of the present day require a new confession, it must be such a new confession as is proper to itself. For it is the *state* and *condition* of every day, that is to determine the *state* and *manner* of your repentance in the evening; otherwise the same general form of words is rather an empty formality, that has the appearance of a duty, than such a true performance of it, as is necessary to make it truly useful to you.³⁷⁰

Serious Call and the *Treatise on Christian Perfection* were written during what has been called the “ethical period” of William Law’s career—a transitional time as Law moved from High Churchmanship to the mystical piety so notable in his later writings.³⁷¹ Concerning Christian perfection, R. Newton Flew, in his classic *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology*, identifies several important elements of Law’s understanding, two of which merit special notice:

- While it is based upon a Spirit-wrought “conversion”,³⁷² “the chief characteristic of the positive teaching of Law’s *Christian Perfection* is the emphasis on taking up the Cross...no less than six chapters out of fourteen are devoted to this one theme”.³⁷³
- Christian perfection is to be sought and found in the common life of Everyman, “in the daily duties, amid the throng and press of men. He...would have no cloister.”³⁷⁴

Cannon summarizes, “Law’s temper in these two works [*Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call*]

³⁷⁰ *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life Adapted to the State and Condition of All Orders of Christians*, 4, *The Works of the Reverend William Law* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2006), 252–54; emphasis original.

³⁷¹ John Brazier Green, *John Wesley and William Law*, Fernley-Hartley lecture, 1945 (London: Epworth, 1945), 46.

³⁷² Significant question remains as to what Dr. Law meant by “conversion”. J. B. Green maintains: “There is certainly a doctrine of conversion in Law’s ethical works, *if by conversion we mean a conscious acceptance of a higher religious discipline*, a more strenuous quest of a full religious life, in practice and in devotion, a definite resolve to imitate the example of Jesus Christ.” (Ibid., 47; emphasis added.)

³⁷³ Robert Newton Flew, *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology: An Historical Study of the Christian Ideal for the Present Life* (London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1934), 294–95.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 297.

is stern, austere, melancholy. The brighter side of Christianity is not emphasized, and the joy and glad tidings of the gospel are silenced by the uncompromising command of duty and of law.”³⁷⁵

But although Wesley expressed initial discomfort on account of Law’s severity, full realization of Law’s errors would only come later in Wesley’s life. For now, the key truth these mystic mentors imparted to the young divine was that “faith is either in dead earnest or just dead”.³⁷⁶ Inspired by Law’s clarion call, Wesley believed that if (following Law’s tenets) he kept the whole law of God inwardly and outwardly, he would be accepted by Him.³⁷⁷ He also believed he was up to the challenge.

The Rise of the Holy Club

Such was the spiritual state in which John Wesley returned from Epworth to Oxford in 1729, to resume his duties as teacher and preceptor. His focus was Greek, classics and logic—and acting as Moderator of logic disputations six times a week—served him well in the Methodist years to come. He notes, “I could not avoid acquiring hereby some degree of expertness in arguing; and especially in discerning and pointing out well-covered and plausible fallacies. I have since found abundant reason to praise God for giving me this honest art.”³⁷⁸

But scholarly pursuits were not his only focus. Wesley gives account of his other activities in *A Short History of Methodism*:

In November, 1729, four young gentlemen of Oxford, Mr. John Wesley, Fellow of Lincoln College; Mr. Charles Wesley, Student of Christ Church; Mr. Morgan,

³⁷⁵ Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 59.

³⁷⁶ *John Wesley: A Representative Collection of His Writings*, ed. Albert Cook Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), viii–ix.

³⁷⁷ In his Journal entry for May 24, 1738, Wesley writes that “by my continued endeavour to keep His whole law, inward and outward, to the utmost of my power, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of Him, and that I was even then in a state of salvation.” Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 18:244–45.

³⁷⁸ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, X:353.

Commoner of Christ Church; and Mr. Kirkham, of Merton College, began to spend some evenings in a week together, in reading, chiefly, the Greek Testament.³⁷⁹ The next year two or three of Mr. John Wesley's pupils desired the liberty of meeting with them; and afterwards one of Mr. Charles Wesley's pupils. It was in 1732, that Mr. Ingham, of Queen's College, and Mr. Broughton, of Exeter, were added to their number. To these, in April, was joined Mr. Clayton, of Brazen-nose, with two or three of his pupils. About the same time Mr. James Hervey was permitted to meet with them; and in 1735, Mr. Whitefield.³⁸⁰

But *did* the group start in November of 1729? Not strictly speaking. It was then that *John* Wesley joined, but the group had earlier beginnings, at the hand of John's younger brother.

Charles, after spending the first year at Oxford enthralled with its entertainments, came to his spiritual senses. He summarizes it in a letter to the Rev. Dr. Chandler, saying: "The first year at College, I lost in diversions. The next, I betook myself to study. Diligence led me into serious thinking. I went to the weekly Sacrament, and persuaded two or three young scholars to accompany me; and likewise to observe the method of study prescribed by the Statutes of the University."³⁸¹

But such behavior earned the unfavorable attention of their fellows. In a January, 1729 letter to John, Charles ruefully observes, "Christ Church is certainly the worst place in the world to begin a reformation in; a man stands a very fair chance of being laughed out of his religion at his first setting out, in a place where 'tis scandalous to have any at all. Was the damning of others the only means of saving themselves, they could scarce labour more heartily!"³⁸²

³⁷⁹ This statement of John's is somewhat misleading—Charles' description which follows indicates that initially the group studied the classics more than Scripture; their meetings focused on Christian conversation and works of piety. (See Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 84.) Albert Outler notes that they also "developed a keen interest in the ancient liturgies and the monastic piety of the fourth-century 'desert fathers' ". Wesley, *A Representative Collection*, 8.

³⁸⁰ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:348.

³⁸¹ Thomas Jackson, *The Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley: Comprising a Review of His Poetry, Sketches of the Rise and Progress of Methodism, with Notices of Contemporary Events and Characters*, 2 (London: John Mason, 1841), 389–90.

³⁸² Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 25:239.

The group's activities earned them "the harmless nickname of Methodist"—and others. 'Sacramentarians;' 'Enthusiasts;' 'Supererogation Men;' 'The Reforming Club;' 'Bible Moths;' 'The Godly Club;' all these were flung at the young men who gathered (and preferred "The Holy Club" if any tag had to be used at all). It actually was not until John Bingham of Christ Church observed in 1732 that "a new set of Methodists...has sprung up among us"³⁸³ that the famous name attached itself to the small company. Doubrée sums up the impact upon the campus:

Thus Oxford beheld with astonishment a tiny coterie taking Christian doctrine literally...incessantly praying, rigorously observing fasts, living meagerly so as to give all they could to the poor, and preaching, yes, actually in jails! . . . Life was all ardour and stringency; the group wept over their sins; it was said that they even opened veins to cool the intemperance of their blood.³⁸⁴

Irrespective of the date of origin, and despite the heckling and the rumors, the Holy Club persisted. Following a regimen designed by John after his induction, members met daily from 6:00 to 9:00 for prayers, psalms, and study of the Greek New Testament. They took Communion weekly (even though the University only required it three times a year, and Merton College authorities actually *forbade* their undergraduates from weekly Communion).³⁸⁵ Wednesdays and Fridays were fast days, and in 1730 they began visiting the prisons to bring to the inmates

³⁸³ Kenneth Cracknell and Susan J. White, *An Introduction to World Methodism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 10. Note that the source and meaning of the term "Methodist" is still open to debate; see Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 44. Alexander Drysdale notes: "The word Methodist has three historic phases; and it is needful to distinguish between what it meant originally in its rise at Oxford, and what it became after John Wesley's "conversion", and finally when it assumed in his hands an organized form. *The first*, or *University*, phase was rubrical and High Anglican; *the second*, or *popular*, phase was Evangelical and evangelistic; and *the third*, or "*Society*," phase was connexional steadily tending to the Presbyterian. " 'Methodist' was a cant word of the seventeenth century, a nickname for any display of religious earnestness or 'enthusiasm'. It lay ready to hand as a derisive term, and was soon applied to a 'set' of young Oxford students who proposed to themselves a more rigid method of holy life and practice." Alexander Hutton Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England: Their Rise, Decline and Revival* (London: Publication Committee of the Presbyterian Church of England, 1889), 586–87.

Note that the 1732 date for the "Methodist" label does not conflict with Charles' historical recollection, as his letter to Chandler was written in 1785, and the elderly Wesley's account does not give a specific date for the nickname's assignment.

³⁸⁴ Bonamy Dobrée, *John Wesley*, Reprint of 1933 edition. (Philadelphia, PA: Richard West, 1977), 21–22.

Christianity, education, bodily care, and even debt relief from their own pockets—all with the blessing of the Bishop of Oxford.³⁸⁶

Yet these “exercises of holy living” brought Wesley no peace. He intensified his own devotional and self-examination efforts—even developing what Rack calls a “kind of spiritual temperature chart,” which was “an extraordinary, almost neurotic ‘grid’ system on which he listed his activities hour by hour and rated his ‘temper of devotion’ on a scale of 1 to 9 as well as recording resolutions kept or broken”.³⁸⁷ Wesley reflected concerning the years 1729–1735:

And now I knew not how to go any farther. I diligently strove against all sin. I omitted no sort of self-denial which I thought lawful. I carefully used, both in public and in private, all the means of grace at all opportunities. I omitted no occasion of doing good. I for that reason suffered evil. And all this I knew to be nothing unless as it was directed toward inward holiness. Accordingly this, the image of God, was what I aimed at in all, by doing his will, not my own. Yet when, after continuing some years in this course, I apprehended myself to be near death [during the storm aboard the *Simmonds*, discussed below], I could not find that all this gave me any comfort, nor any assurance of acceptance with God.³⁸⁸

If ever a man could have attained the Kingdom by dint of sheer effort and nobility of sentiment, John Wesley surely would have been a contender in his later Oxford years.

Georgia

But the relatively settled life of a holiness-minded Oxford don was not to be his. On October 13, 1735, John Wesley, accompanied by his brother Charles, Holy Club member Benjamin Ingham, and Mr. Charles Delamotte, boarded the 220-ton *Simmonds* with about two hundred and fifty other passengers,³⁸⁹ and set sail for the New World. Charles, newly ordained,

³⁸⁵ Pudney, *John Wesley and His World*, 34.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 33–35.

³⁸⁷ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 95.

³⁸⁸ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 18:245.

³⁸⁹ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 112.

was to be secretary for General J. E. Oglethorpe, who had led the first expedition to establish the settlement at Savannah.³⁹⁰ John, on the other hand, went as “a volunteer missionary, without pay or specific appointment”.³⁹¹ What precipitated this extraordinary action?

The Hope

As shown above, Wesley’s pious exercises at Oxford had not given him the peace and assurance that he sought. Indeed, he *didn’t* know “how to go any farther”...at Oxford, that is. It seems the spiritually disquieted Wesley decided that his surroundings—both physical and interpersonal—were at fault. Materialism and worldliness surrounded him, and seeped into his heart no matter how diligently it was guarded. What he needed, he thought, was a setting bereft of worldly distractions, and a people unspoiled by the world’s depravity. A *tabula rasa*—the New World and its native inhabitants.

In a letter to Dr. Burton in October of 1735, he makes his purpose plain, saying, “My chief motive, to which all the rest are subordinate, is the hope of saving my own soul. I hope to learn the true sense of the gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen.”³⁹² Anticipating his friend’s objections, Wesley addresses them: “But you will perhaps ask: ‘Cannot you save your own soul in England as well as in Georgia?’ I answer, No; neither can I hope to attain the same degree of holiness here which I may there; neither, if I stay here, knowing this, can I reasonably hope to attain any degree of holiness at all.”³⁹³

³⁹⁰ Debate over the motives for founding the colony remains animated and demonstrates, as historian Kenneth Coleman put it, “a case study in the persistence of historical mythology”. (Ibid., 107.) Whether altruistic, pragmatic or mercenary, the Trustees certainly painted an enticing picture of the opportunities in Georgia—opportunities which John Wesley found attractive enough to risk the dangers of the unknown.

³⁹¹ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 58.

³⁹² Wesley, *Works*, (Emory Edition), 6:609.

³⁹³ Ibid., 6:610.

Why? Methodical as always, he lays out his reasoned hopes for a more sanctified life in the New World:

A right faith will, I trust, by the mercy of God, open the way for a right practice; especially when most of those temptations are removed which here so easily beset me. . . . [S]implicity of food will, I trust, be a blessed means, both of preventing my seeking that happiness in meats and drinks...and will assist me—especially where I see no woman but those which are almost of a different species from me—to attain such a purity of thought as suits a candidate for that state wherein they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

Neither is it a small thing to be delivered from so many occasions, as now surround me, of indulging the desire of the eye. They here compass me in on every side; but an Indian hut affords no food for curiosity, no gratification of the desire of grand or new or pretty things. . . . If by the pride of life we understand the pomp and show of the world, that has no place in the wilds of America. If it mean pride in general, this, alas ! has a place everywhere: yet there are very uncommon helps against it, not only by the deep humility of the poor heathens, fully sensible of their want of an instructor, but that happy contempt which cannot fail to attend all who sincerely endeavor to instruct them.³⁹⁴

Wesley presents further insight into his vision of the Indians he will meet—as optimistic a portrait of “the noble savage merely awaiting enlightenment” as ever there was:

They have no comments to construe away the text; no vain philosophy to corrupt it; no luxurious, sensual, covetous, ambitious expounders to soften its unpleasing truths, to reconcile earthly-mindedness and faith, the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world. They have no party, no interest to serve, and are therefore fit to receive the gospel in its simplicity. *They are as little children, humble, willing to learn, and eager to do the will of God;* and consequently they shall know of every doctrine I preach whether it be of God.³⁹⁵

With these extraordinary expectations, John Wesley stepped aboard a seagoing vessel for the first time in his life.

The Reality

The saga of Wesley’s disastrous sojourn in Georgia would fill a chapter of its own; the

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 6:609.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 6:609; emphasis added.

purpose of this summary is only to chart its effect on his spiritual development. His conflict with the colonists, his romantic entanglement, and his thorough disillusionment regarding the Noble Savages notwithstanding,³⁹⁶ perhaps the most significant spiritual event took place *before* he ever set foot on America's soil.

Wesley and his friends quickly established the disciplines of the Holy Club on board the *Simmonds*, praying together at four in the morning and conducting frequent services, readings, and exhortations for their shipmates. These exercises were not universally appreciated: "All the people angry at my expounding so often", he notes in his Diary. "All convinced and affected."³⁹⁷

But surly sailors and common folk were not the only people on board. A contingent of twenty-six German Moravian Brethren from Herrnhut was traveling to Georgia to join their fellows already in the New World settlement. From his earliest acquaintance with them, Wesley was impressed by their implacable serenity—so much so that he resolved to learn German, the better to converse with them.³⁹⁸

Wesley's faith was severely tested—and, in his estimation, found wanting—when a series of three powerful storms battered the ship. Facing the fearsome ocean depths, Wesley realized that he was mortally afraid, Christian or not. But the Moravians were *unaffected*—he recalls,

In the midst of the psalm wherewith their service began the sea broke over, split the mainsail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English. The Germans calmly sung on. I asked one of them afterwards, 'Was [sic] you not afraid?' He answered, 'I thank God, no.' I asked, 'But were not your women and children afraid?' He replied mildly, 'No; our women and children are not afraid

³⁹⁶ An excellent contemporary summary of events can be found in Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, chap. 3, "Serpents in Eden: Georgia (1735–1737)".

³⁹⁷ Journal entry for November 17, 1735; Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 18:322.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18:137. In the manuscript version of his October 20 diary he adds: "May God give us all not only to be of one tongue, but of one mind and one heart!" (18:313). His respect for them would only grow stronger as the voyage continued.

to die.’ From them I went to their crying, trembling neighbours, and pointed out to them the difference in the hour of trial between him that feareth God and him that feareth him not.³⁹⁹

Wesley was shaken to the core—and he was also determined to understand what the Moravians knew that he did not.

The ship arrived safely in America on February 6, 1735, and the very next day John sought out the Moravians’ pastor, Augustus Spangenberg, for spiritual counsel. The dialog, as recorded by Wesley, is revealing.

I...asked his [Spangenberg’s] advice with regard to my own conduct. He said, ‘My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?’ I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it, and asked, ‘Do you know Jesus Christ?’ I paused, and said, ‘I know he is the Saviour of the world.’ ‘True’, replied he, ‘but do you know he has saved you?’ I answered, ‘I hope he has died to save me.’ He only added, ‘Do you know yourself?’ I said, ‘I do.’ But I fear they were vain words.⁴⁰⁰

Despite his unsettled spiritual condition—or perhaps because of it—John threw great energy into the parish work in Savannah. His unhappy attempts to impose high church order, primitive church practices, and rigid church discipline quickly alienated him from a flock that Fitchett describes as a diverse collection of “social failures of every kind”.⁴⁰¹ He was disabused of the “Noble Savage” myth in short order as well, saying,

They are likewise all, except (perhaps) the Choctaws, gluttons, drunkards, thieves, dissemblers, liars. They are implacable, unmerciful; murderers of fathers, murderers of mothers, murderers of their own children. . . . [He then describes specific vices of individual tribes, concluding with these observations about the Creek Indians:] They know not what friendship or gratitude means. They show no inclination to learn

³⁹⁹ Journal entry for November 25, 1735—the date of the third and worst storm. *Ibid.*, 18:143.

⁴⁰⁰ Journal entry for February 7, 1736; *Ibid.*, 18:145–46.

⁴⁰¹ Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century*, 101.

anything, but least of all Christianity, being full as opiated [sic] of their own parts and wisdom as either modern Chinese or ancient Roman.⁴⁰²

Disenchantment with New World mission work blended with increased hostility among the Old World colonizers. Brought before a grand jury of forty-four persons on twelve different charges, Wesley was forced to flee the settlement. Trudging through forest and swamp to Port Royal, he caught a boat thence to Charleston. There he boarded the *Samuel* on December 22, 1737, bound for England, to put his case before the Georgia Trustees in person.⁴⁰³

Self-Examination

It would be more than a month before the *Samuel* docked at Deal, affording the miserable Wesley plenty of time aboard ship to ponder the Georgia disaster. He was largely unwilling to preach during the voyage, and found his fear of death had not abated when Atlantic storms assaulted *this* ship as well.⁴⁰⁴ He pours out his anguish in some revealing Journal entries:

[*January 28, 1738*] I went to America to convert the Indians; but Oh! who shall convert me? Who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well; nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near: but let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, 'To die is gain!'

I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore!

I think verily, if the gospel be true, I am safe. For I not only have given, and do give, all my goods to feed the poor; I not only give my body to be burned, drowned, or whatever God shall appoint for me, but I follow after charity (though not as I ought, yet as I can) if haply I may attain it. I now believe the gospel is true. 'I show my faith by my works,' by staking my all upon it. I would do so again and again a thousand times, if the choice were still to make. Whoever sees me sees I would be a Christian O who will deliver me from this fear of death!

⁴⁰² Journal entry for December 2, 1737, in which Wesley summarizes the observations he had been compiling over the preceding eighteen months. Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 18:202, 204. What a difference from the optimism which followed his first meeting with the Indians, in February of 1736!

⁴⁰³ Green, *John Wesley*, 50.

⁴⁰⁴ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 207–10.

[January 29, 1738] It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity. But what have I learned myself in the meantime? Why (what I the least of all suspected), that I who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God.⁴⁰⁵

Disgraced and humbled, in great spiritual uncertainty, John Wesley returned to his homeland. He had left England convinced that the ways and writings of primitive Christianity were universal, authoritative, and prescriptive—he came back with a hard-earned lesson in practical parish work. He left England with a zeal for holy living fueled by the Mystics—but returned wary of any who denigrated the means of grace. In fact, he told his brother Samuel that the writings of the Mystics, which he had once admired so greatly, were actually “the rock on which I had the nearest made a shipwreck of the faith”.⁴⁰⁶

But it was the theological *methods*, not the pious lives, of the Fathers and the Mystics that Wesley rejected—his hunger for personal holiness remained. The interaction with the Moravians had given him much to think about and pursue in the months ahead.

What, then, was the net result of these various forces upon the man John Wesley? Perhaps William Cannon provides the best summary:

There was a basic principle in Wesley’s thought at this period in his life—the principle that man must be saved through moral goodness, through universal obedience, and through the rigid fulfillment of all the commandments of God. . . .

John Wesley, on the eve of the year 1738, was the spiritual prisoner of his age. He was bound by the fetters of a theology the precepts of which he sought slavishly to obey.⁴⁰⁷

In his 1741 sermon *The Almost Christian*, Wesley admits to having been captive to this manner

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 18:214. Reflecting back on his spiritual journey in his later years, Wesley evidently considered this judgment too severe. He wrote: “I am not sure of this” in the margin of his published Journal; this comment was subsequently included in the *errata* to Vol. XXVI of his 1774 collected works. Wesley’s modifications of earlier statements are more properly understood as reflections of later spiritual development, than corrections of *errata*—see other examples in John Telford, *The Life of John Wesley* (New York: Eaton & Maine, 1898), 93.

⁴⁰⁶ Letter dated November 23, 1736; see Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 25:487.

⁴⁰⁷ Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 63, 65.

of thinking. After cataloging all his efforts to “lay hold of eternal life” by way of diligent observance, he concludes by saying: “Yet my own conscience beareth me witness in the Holy Ghost that all this time I was but ‘almost a Christian’.”⁴⁰⁸

Can this be the man whom later generations would call “the greatest captain of men of his century”,⁴⁰⁹ “the most influential mind of the [eighteenth] century”⁴¹⁰ with “a genius for government not inferior...to Richlieu”?⁴¹¹ What happened to change Wesley’s theological understanding, to transform a visibly defeated cleric into the leader of a new religious movement? Between the grim, gray world of William Law’s justification-through-obedience and Wesley’s seminal *The Almost Christian*, lay the Aldersgate meeting.

Wesley’s Theology Emerges

“The Great Day of Deliverance”⁴¹²

Much ink has been spilled concerning the date, and the nature, of Wesley’s “Conversion.” Some scholars (notably those of Roman Catholic persuasion) trace it to September 25, 1725—the date of his ordination. Others prefer to see Wesley’s entire life as a matter of growth, without a specific date of spiritual crisis. Most (including Wesley himself) recognize May 24, 1738 as a watershed in his spiritual life. But there is one further pre-Aldersgate influence to consider first—the London Moravians.

⁴⁰⁸ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:137.

⁴⁰⁹ Wesley, *Letters of John Wesley*, 4.

⁴¹⁰ Letter by Robert Southey to William Wilberforce, January 3, 1818; see *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce* (London: J. Murray, 1840), 2:389.

⁴¹¹ Abel Stevens, *The History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century, Called Methodism: Considered in Its Different Denominational Forms, and Its Relations to British and American Protestantism* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1858), 1:147.

⁴¹² Such is W. H. Fitchett’s description of the Aldersgate event; see Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century*, 122.

A Seeker-after-Faith

In the months following his return to London, John Wesley spent considerable time with Peter Böhler, one-time Lutheran pastor who had been subsequently ordained into the Moravian ministry.⁴¹³ Spiritual conversation with Böhler had a profound effect on the struggling Wesley; when Wesley tried to reason through his difficulties with the Moravian, Böhler replied “My brother, my brother, that philosophy of yours must be purged away.”⁴¹⁴ Böhler urged John instead to seek the New Birth—the direct experience of the saving love of God, the awakening of a strong, personal faith in Jesus Christ. This immediate-conversion experience would empower him to resist sin and reach the holiness and happiness John so longed to attain.

Böhler also differentiated between “living externally to the Saviour” and “living in the Saviour”.⁴¹⁵ So persuasive was Böhler that, by March 5th, 1738, John became “clearly convinced of [his own] unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved”.⁴¹⁶

This, of course, presented a dilemma for a clergyman: what right did he have to preach something he himself did not possess? Peter Böhler’s answer to John has become legendary in Wesleyan circles. He said, “Preach faith *till* you have it; and then, *because* you have it, you *will* preach faith.”⁴¹⁷ And that is what Wesley did...until May 24, 1738.

The Aldersgate Meeting

The story of Wesley’s May 24th Aldersgate experience is well known; it is also best told in

⁴¹³ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 77.

⁴¹⁴ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 18:226.

⁴¹⁵ Green, *John Wesley*, 55. Was this a foreshadowing of Wesley’s own later distinction between “the faith of a servant” and “the faith of a son”?

⁴¹⁶ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 18:228.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 18:228; emphasis original. Did the logic of this response, which Wesley took to heart, later enable him to preach entire sanctification as well?

Wesley's own words.

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my sins*, even *mine*, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, 'This cannot be faith; for where is thy joy?' Then was I taught that *peace and victory over sin are essential to faith in the Captain of our salvation; but that as to the transports of joy* that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, *God sometimes giveth, sometimes withholdeth them, according to the counsels of his own will.*

After my return home I was much buffeted with temptations; but cried out, and they fled away. They returned again and again. I as often lifted up my eyes, and he 'sent me help from his holy place'. And herein I found the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now, I was always conqueror.⁴¹⁸

The crisis-point had been reached, and Wesley found hope in a justification-by-faith which did not require Man's goodness paid in advance. Justification is entirely by grace. Man has nothing with which to atone for sins; therefore, if Man is to find favor with God, it *must* be on account of God's gracious action and gift.⁴¹⁹

Wesley considered the Aldersgate experience a turning point in his life. No longer "almost a Christian", his cognitive understanding of Scripture truths had been wed to the *pro me* of Christian faith. It is true that he does not make extensive or oft-repeated reference to it in his writings—but neither, for that matter, did Luther trumpet his "tower experience" *ad nauseam*. Like Luther before him, Wesley was not interesting in holding up *his* personal experience as a model to be followed. As will be discussed in chapters following, it was the *individual believer's*

⁴¹⁸ Journal entry for May 24, 1738. Ibid., 18:249–50; emphasis original.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 1:117–18.

personal experience of assurance ought to matter.

For Aldersgate mattered to *him*. So much so, that, as Cell explains,

[T]here is in Wesley's Journals, Letters and Sermons a *double system of chronology*. In addition to the common way of timing events *Anno Domini*, by the year, month, day, hour or even the minute, pursued in his writings, especially the Journal, there are scattered throughout the twenty-five volumes of his writings—references, not a *few cases*, but *numbered by the score*, to his conversion-experience, *anno meae conversionis*. . . . Now the great frequency and entire consistency of these references, over a period of fifty years, to his acceptance of "Salvation by Faith," as the turning point of his career ought in all reason to put the matter at rest. Wesley was at once clear in his own mind, as the documents abundantly demonstrate, that he had, in accepting Luther's religious understanding of the Gospel, crossed his Religious Rubicon; and he began soon after to interpret the new developments which flowed from his personal acceptance of Luther's doctrine of faith, as events of vastly more than personal importance, year, of Church-wide importance.⁴²⁰

He had Good News to bring to the people of his country!

Preaching to a Disinterested Choir

But Wesley discerned a sharp disconnect between this essential Gospel truth, and the lives of many English churchgoers. He was appalled at the moral depravity observable outside the church walls, and he was grieved that what was coming from the Established Church's Sunday-morning proclamation (apparently) had so little effect on life the *rest* of the week—surely Christianity should bear observable fruit in believers' lives. He longed to communicate his vision: a religion of the heart that affected the life as well.

Yet his message was met with indifference (at best) or vehement opposition (at worst) in the Established Church. Barred from one Anglican pulpit after another, through his association with George Whitefield, he was introduced to the idea of open-air preaching, and it was in this context that John Wesley and his theology would make their impact on the world.

⁴²⁰ Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley*, 185, 187, emphasis original.

Summary: John Wesley—the Man, the Theologian

John Wesley was a man with a deeply ingrained passion for order *and* for a faith that showed. He also held a high, Enlightenment-fostered view of Humanity and the ability to accomplish whatever one's heart truly desired—though as we shall see, he would insist on giving God full credit for any good attained. Wesley began to preach the Gospel, as he now understood it, with great fervor and phenomenally untiring zeal. But what was the nature of this new understanding? How did it differ from contemporaneous English Christianity—why *was* there such a disconnect between Wesley and the Established Church clergy? This will be our focus in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

JOHN WESLEY’S THEOLOGY

Introduction

The Font of Wesleyan Theology

John Wesley was never what one would consider a “systematic theologian”—that is, he himself never undertook to write an exacting summary of his teaching. In fact, for many years it was fashionable in theological academia to consider Wesley little more than a “folk theologian”.⁴²¹ Albert Outler observes,

[Wesley] has gone unnoticed by historical theologians, generally, partly because he was not a theologian’s theologian, partly because he belonged to no single school and founded none. . . . The historical theologian is bound to view mass evangelists and popularizers with suspicion, as being derivative or simplistic.⁴²²

Yet as we have seen, John Wesley was no spiritual simpleton. He was a well-respected scholar in his Oxford years, and he did not abandon his wide-ranging love of learning after the Aldersgate experience. It was not his theological acuity that differed from other Anglican divines, but his manner of delivery.

Despite his considerable academic capacity and the breadth of his learning, Wesley desired to be (and remained) an advocate of “plain truth for plain people”⁴²³—a plain truth delivered in

⁴²¹ Albert Cook Outler, “Towards a Re-Appraisal of John Wesley as a Theologian (1961),” in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 43.

⁴²² “The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition (1976),” in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, ed. Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 77–78.

⁴²³ John Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions. In Three Volumes. By John Wesley, M.A., Fellow of Lincoln*

his sermons. And deliver he did! In the course of his ministry, it is estimated that he preached no less than 40,000 sermons, traveling more than 250,000 miles in the process.⁴²⁴ These homiletical discourses were the provender upon which the Methodist revival fed.

But for all the thousands of sermons he preached, Wesley preserved only 151 of them in printed form. Why was this, given that he was willing to publish all manner of *other* things—from his own Journal, to an entire “Christian Library” of works penned by other authors he deemed worth reading? Did he not want later Christians to have access to his theological understanding? Of course he did—and the published form of his sermons was intended to be the distillation of his preaching and teaching for that very purpose.

In producing a corpus of didactic homilies he was following a familiar and time-honored English trail, which had been blazed by such divines as Thomas Cranmer, Matthew Parker, and the like. In fact, the collected Edwardian *Homilies* of 1547 were not only required weekly reading in Anglican parishes,⁴²⁵ they were also an essential part of Wesley’s own devotional reading and theological self-understanding. He repeatedly declared that his own teachings could be found in, or were supported by, the official homilies of the Church.⁴²⁶

But as useful as published sermon collections were for instructing the people, Wesley did not feel the need to publish *every* sermon he ever preached. As Outler explains,

[Wesley] saw an important difference between the principal aims of an oral and a written sermon: the former is chiefly for *proclamation* and invitation; the latter is chiefly for *nurture* and reflection. Many of Wesley’s favourite texts for oral

College, Oxford (London: W. Straham, 1746), Preface, 3.

⁴²⁴ J. Keith Cheetham, *On the Trail of John Wesley* (Edinburgh: Luath, 2003), 31. Most of his travel was on horseback, providing him with time for extensive reading; cf. his Journal entry of March 21, 1770 where he discusses the horsemanship required to permit this fortuitous use of time without personal endangerment.

⁴²⁵ Leo Frank Solt, *Church and State in Early Modern England, 1509–1640* (New York: Oxford University Press US, 1990), 46.

⁴²⁶ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:9–10.

preaching do not appear at all in the corpus of his written sermons⁴²⁷ and vice versa. This fact, plus the enormous range of his oral sermon texts, disposes of the suggestion that Wesley had a limited repertory of memorized discourses which he merely repeated to different auditories. As far as we can tell, the doctrinal substance of the two genres was identical; and when Wesley finally resorted to a written corpus as an extension of his wider ministry, it was designated for his own people as well as for any others who also might be interested.⁴²⁸

Wesley intended his published sermons to be his theological *opus*, though arranged on a sermon-by-sermon (rather than locus-by-locus) basis. He states as much in his Preface to *Sermons on Several Occasions* (first published in 1746 and continually revised and updated throughout his lifetime):

The following sermons contain the substance of what I have been preaching for between eight and nine years last past. During that time I have frequently spoken in public on every subject in the ensuing collection: and I am not conscious that there is any one point of doctrine on which I am accustomed to speak in public which is not here—incidentally, if not professedly—laid before every Christian reader. Every serious man who peruses these will therefore see in the clearest manner what those doctrines are which I embrace and teach as the essentials of true religion.⁴²⁹

I have accordingly set down in the following sermons what I find in the Bible concerning the way to heaven, with a view to distinguish this way of God from all those which are the inventions of men. I have endeavoured to describe the true, the scriptural, experimental religion, so as to omit nothing which is a real part thereof, and to add nothing thereto which is not.⁴³⁰

Sermons on Several Occasions, along with his *Notes upon the New Testament*,⁴³¹ became the doctrinal standards for Methodist preaching. In fact, in 1763 Wesley provided a “Model Deed” for any new Methodist preaching-house, which required “always, that the persons preach

⁴²⁷ The texts Wesley used for his oral preaching on each occasion are documented in his meticulous journal. Comparison of these journal entries with his printed sermon *corpus* supports Outler’s assertion.

⁴²⁸ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:14; emphasis original.

⁴²⁹ Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions, 1746 Ed.*, Preface, 1.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, Preface, 6.

⁴³¹ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (London: Epworth, 1948). This work was first published in January of 1754; his *Explanatory notes upon the Old Testament* appeared in April of 1765.

no other doctrine than is contained in Mr. Wesley's *Notes upon the New Testament*, and four volumes of *Sermons*".⁴³²

The Challenge

The inherent problem with accumulating doctrinal summaries in this fashion is that Wesley never intentionally reconciled the individual treatises with one another in some form of "critical edition"—nor were they ever revised in such a way as to assure a completely consistent use of terms and phrases throughout. Even his supporters admit as much, saying: "At first glance, we *seem* not to have from Wesley's hand, as from Calvin or Suarez or Melancthon, a definitive systematic theology in the sense of a comprehensive and sequential organization of the topics of theology. With Wesley we have what *seem* to be occasional instructional homilies."⁴³³

Nor did this affront to Enlightenment order and method go unchallenged. Even during his lifetime Wesley was accused of contradictions, inconsistencies, evasions, and hypocrisy,⁴³⁴ to the point where one contemporary insisted that Wesley was "to this very moment so absolutely unsettled with regard to every fundamental doctrine of the gospel, that no two disputants in the Schools can be more opposite to each other than he is to himself".⁴³⁵

This apparent inconsistency is understandable when it is remembered that Wesley *really* was an "occasional" preacher—modifying the manner of his doctrinal presentation extemporaneously, to suit the circumstances and *sitz im leben* of each particular audience in turn.

⁴³² Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:331. Note that the number of standard *Sermons On Several Occasions* (commonly abbreviated *SOSO*) increased over the years—from the original four-volume set of 53, to an eventual total of eight volumes containing 108. Six miscellaneous sermons not included in *SOSO*, eighteen sermons published in *Arminian Magazine*, and nineteen sermons in manuscript form, account for the published total of 151.

⁴³³ Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity*, 19; emphasis added.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴³⁵ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, X:377. Wesley is here quoting from Rolland Hill's critique of his work.

It is true that some of his more systematically-minded disciples have analyzed the *Standard Sermons* and demonstrated at some length that Wesley did address most every major question of Christian theology in his sermons⁴³⁶—some discerning within the corpus certain foci around which they say his entire theology orbited.⁴³⁷ But even with these able and useful guides ready at hand, Wesley’s freewheeling and varied use of terms, illustrations, and definitions can present difficulties for systematic theologians who are trying to grasp Wesley’s theological structure.

Still—inconsistencies notwithstanding—utilizing Wesley’s published sermons, journals, letters, and notes, a brief summary of his teachings in several key areas can be laid out. In the following pages, certain key terms and doctrines will be recounted in Wesleyan fashion, and then Wesley’s *ordo salutis* will be elaborated. We begin, appropriately enough, with the doctrine of ‘entire sanctification’ itself, as reiterated by the mature Wesley.

An Introduction to Entire Sanctification, *a.k.a.* Christian Perfection

From early in his ministry years, Wesley’s pulpit cry was “the circumcision of the heart!”⁴³⁸ In his own words, such a “circumcision of the heart” was

that habitual disposition of soul which in the Sacred Writings is termed ‘holiness’, and which directly implies the being cleansed from sin, ‘from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit’, and by consequence the being endued with those virtues which were

⁴³⁶ Note such commendable works as Robert W. Burtner and Robert E. Chiles, eds., *A Compend of Wesley’s Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1954); Kenneth J. Collins, *A Faithful Witness: John Wesley’s Homiletical Theology* (Wilmore, KY: Wesley Heritage, 1993); Oden, *John Wesley’s Scriptural Christianity*; Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1983).

⁴³⁷ Such terminology is common among contemporary Wesleyan scholars; see Langford, *Practical Divinity*, 263; H. Ray Dunning, “Perspective for a Wesleyan Systematic Theology,” in *Wesleyan Theology Today*, ed. Theodore Runyon (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1985), 52; Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2007), 6; Albert Cook Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville, TN: Tidings, 1975), 23; and others.

⁴³⁸ Wesley’s famous (and foundational) sermon entitled *The Circumcision of the Heart* was preached on January 1, 1733, before the University in St. Mary’s church—nearly five and a half years before his Aldersgate experience.

also in Christ Jesus, the being so ‘renewed in the image of our mind’ as to be ‘perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect’.⁴³⁹

Concerning the sermon just quoted, Wesley said that it was “composed the first of all my writings which have been published. This was the view of religion I then had, which even then I scrupled not to term *perfection*. This is the view I have of it now, without any material addition or diminution.”⁴⁴⁰

Despite this assertion, evaluation of Wesley’s works show that the concepts nascent in *The Circumcision of the Heart* were further clarified and developed in later sermons and writings, until the doctrine of entire sanctification was a clearly defined and well-established component of his teaching. Yes, and more than just a *component*—in a 1790 letter to Robert Carr Brackenbury, the aged Wesley said: “This doctrine is the *grand depositum* which God has lodged with the people called Methodists; and for the sake of propagating this chiefly he appeared [sic] to have raised us up.”⁴⁴¹

Yet the concept of entire sanctification did not spring up independently; neither can it be understood (much less evaluated) apart from the theological soil in which it grew. Taken by itself, entire sanctification is easily misunderstood or maligned. It is important to “step into” Wesley’s understanding of the *whole* of Christian doctrine, if one is to rightly apprehend the *depositum* he so diligently proclaimed—and only from there can a right and respectful evaluation be made.

⁴³⁹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:402–3.

⁴⁴⁰ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 13–14; emphasis original.

⁴⁴¹ Letter DCLXXVIII to Robert Carr Brackenbury, Esq., of Raithby, Lincolnshire. September 15, 1790. Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XIII:9.

In Wesley's Own Words

Wesley describes his full understanding of Christian perfection this way:

- (1.) There is such a thing as perfection; for it is again and again mentioned in Scripture.
- (2.) It is not so early as justification; for justified persons are to 'go on unto perfection.' (Heb. 6:1.)
- (3.) It is not so late as death; for St. Paul speaks of living men that were perfect. (Phil. 3:15.)
- (4.) It is not absolute. Absolute perfection belongs not to man, nor to angels, but to God alone.
- (5.) It does not make a man infallible: None is infallible, while he remains in the body.
- (6.) Is it sinless? It is not worth while to contend for a term. It is 'salvation from sin.'
- (7.) It is 'perfect love.' (1 John 4:18.) This is the essence of it; its properties, or inseparable fruits, are, rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks. (1 Thess. 5:16, &c.)
- (8.) [Christian perfection] is improvable. It is so far from lying in an indivisible point, from being incapable of increase, that one perfected in love may grow in grace far swifter than he did before.
- (9.) It is amissible, capable of being lost; of which we have numerous instances. But we were not thoroughly convinced of this, till five or six years ago.
- (10.) It is constantly both preceded and followed by a gradual work. ⁴⁴²

There are two aspects of particular note in the above definition:

- I. Perfect Christians are saved from sin—(6) above—and
- II. They are filled with perfect love—(7) above—a perfect love of God and neighbor⁴⁴³

These two aspects may be explored further as follows:

⁴⁴² Wesley, *Plain Account*, 114.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 37, 51, 55, 84., *et al.*

Salvation/Freedom from Sin.⁴⁴⁴

Regarding ‘entirely sanctified’ Christians Wesley allows,

They are not perfect in knowledge. They are not free from ignorance, no, nor from mistake. We are no more to expect any living man to be infallible, than to be omniscient. They are not free from infirmities, such as weakness or slowness of understanding. . . . Such in another kind are impropriety of language, ungracefulness of pronunciation; to which one might add a thousand nameless defects, either in conversation or behaviour.⁴⁴⁵

If this is so, then in what sense *are* such Christians “perfect”? Wesley responds that, first, “even babes in Christ are so far perfect as not to commit sin. This St. John affirms expressly. . . . In conformity, therefore, both to the doctrine of St. John, and the whole tenor of the New Testament, we fix this conclusion: A Christian is so far perfect, as not to commit sin.”⁴⁴⁶

Furthermore, he claims that believers also experience “the proper Christian salvation...consisting of those two grand branches, justification and sanctification. By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favour of God: by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God.”⁴⁴⁷

Thus far, the *negative* aspects of Wesley’s ‘entire sanctification’: the guilt, the power, and the root of sin are removed from the ‘perfect’ Christian. But what then *fills* such a soul that has been newly cleansed of sin?

⁴⁴⁴ Note that although Wesley simply calls it ‘Salvation from Sin’, I have chosen to designate it ‘Salvation/Freedom from Sin’. The reason for this is that the term ‘salvation’ may carry a different base meaning for different readers. The question of what the word ‘salvation’ means in different Christian traditions is beyond the scope of this paper; suffice it to say, for our purposes here, that Wesley is referring to the idea of a ‘perfect’ Christian being one whose heart *and* conduct are altogether *devoid* of—*i.e.*, ‘free’ from—any “sin, properly so-called” (discussed below).

⁴⁴⁵ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 23.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 23. 25.

⁴⁴⁷ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:204.

The Indwelling of Perfect Love.

Wesley says that “of grown Christians it can be affirmed, they are in such a sense perfect, as, [s]econdly, to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers”.⁴⁴⁸ In other words, ‘perfect’ Christians may not be free from *mistakes*, but their perfection consists in that they have “the pure love of God and man; the loving God with all our heart and soul, and our neighbour as ourselves. [Entire sanctification] is love governing the heart and life, running through all our tempers, words, and actions.”⁴⁴⁹

Thus, entire sanctification is a “renewal of believers in the spirit of their minds, after the likeness of Him that created them”,⁴⁵⁰ it is the very image of God stamped upon their hearts anew.⁴⁵¹ And since Love is the fulfillment of the law, Love is all that is needed.⁴⁵² In short, perfection can be attained in this life because Wesley’s Christian perfection is a perfection of *attitude*, not of *action*. Wesley confidently tells his assembly, “We are all agreed, we may be saved from all sin before death; that is, from all sinful tempers and desires. The substance, then, is settled.”⁴⁵³

But is it? Such a confident assertion may strike some as astonishing, until Wesley’s understanding of humankind, sin, and salvation is taken into account.

In his *Doctrine of Original Sin According to Scripture, Reason and Experience*, Wesley

⁴⁴⁸ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 26.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 28. Is Wesley’s understanding of salvation as restoration of the *imago Dei* an adaptation of Irenaeus’s doctrine of ἀνακεφαλαίωσις? His familiarity with Eastern Fathers is well documented.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵² As presented, for example, in this *Plain Account* excerpt: “Q. 4. Is love the fulfilling of this law? A. Unquestionably it is. The whole law under which we now are, is fulfilled by love. (Rom. 13:9, 10.) Faith working or animated by love is all that God now requires of man. He has substituted (not sincerity, but) love, in the room of angelic perfection.” *Ibid.*, 80.

⁴⁵³ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:328.

declared that “no man can possibly ‘love his neighbour as himself,’ till he loves God; and no man can possibly love God, till he truly believes in Christ; and no man truly believes in Christ, till he is deeply convinced of his own sinfulness, guiltiness, and helplessness. But this no man ever was, neither can be, *who does not know he has a corrupt nature.*”⁴⁵⁴ In fact, Wesley considered “original sin, justification by faith, and the holiness consequent thereon” to be “the three grand...doctrines” of Scripture.⁴⁵⁵ Leo Cox stated that it “would be impossible to understand Wesley’s concept of either justification or sanctification without first understanding his view of sin”⁴⁵⁶—yet to comprehend ‘sin’, ‘original sin’, or ‘the sinful nature’, we must first consider the nature of the creature to whom these terms apply.

What, Then, is Man?⁴⁵⁷

Physiological considerations aside, Wesley’s chief concern about the nature of Man dealt with the *imago Dei* in which Man was made. For Wesley, to be human meant to share in some way in the nature of God. But *which* aspect of God’s nature was (and is) involved in the ‘image of God’? Building on the work of Isaac Watts,⁴⁵⁸ Wesley’s answer was to discern in the triune *God* a triune *nature*, consisting of:

- 1) a political/governing nature,
- 2) a natural/rational nature, and
- 3) a moral/relational nature.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.,IX:313; emphasis added.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.,XII:264. Letter CCXXII “To the Rev. Mr. D—.”

⁴⁵⁶ Leo George Cox, *John Wesley’s Concept of Sin* (Salem, OH: Schmull, 2002), 8.

⁴⁵⁷ As discussed in chapter one, in keeping with Wesley’s own usage, the term ‘man’ in this discussion of anthropology will refer to the inclusive idea of ‘mankind’ and will be capitalized to emphasize the inclusive, categorical meaning.

⁴⁵⁸ See Watts’ *The Ruin and Recovery of Mankind: Or, An Attempt to Vindicate the Scriptural Account of*

How does this concept of a triune divine nature figure into Wesley's anthropology? He taught that God imparted elements of all three natures to Man—and that each one was affected differently by the fall into sin.

The Political Image of God

God's *political* image was imparted to Adam in that Adam was made “the governor of this lower world”,⁴⁵⁹ giving him dominion over all creation. Not merely a position of authority, the position as “God's viceregent”⁴⁶⁰ was intended to be a means of administering God's blessings, love, and care to the Garden under his care. Wesley understood that “all the blessings of God in paradise flowed through man to the inferior creatures; as man was the great channel of communication between the Creator and the whole brute creation”.⁴⁶¹

The Natural Image of God

God's *natural* image was imparted to Adam in that Adam, like God Himself, had rational faculties such as a capacity for understanding, the ability to tell truth from falsehood, a free and (pre-Fall) perfect will, and liberty.⁴⁶² These are “man's equipment as a human being. They are essential to his being a man.”⁴⁶³

Note that by ‘liberty’, Wesley means both “a ‘liberty of contradiction’ ...[and] a ‘liberty of

These Great Events upon the Plain Principles of Reason (London: Printed for J. Brackstone, 1742), 188–89.

⁴⁵⁹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:188.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*,2:440.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*,2:442. Wesley elsewhere makes clear that such care was to extend not only to “brute creation”, but other human beings as well. Even today, in this fallen world, “it is generally his pleasure...to help man by man.” *Ibid.*,3:349.

⁴⁶² Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 4:293–95.

⁴⁶³ Cox, *John Wesley's Concept of Perfection*, 27.

contrariety’.”⁴⁶⁴ He describes liberty as “an active, self-determining power, which does not choose things because they are pleasing, but is pleased with them because it chooses them;” he holds that “God is endued with such a power” *and* that “man partakes of this principle”.⁴⁶⁵

These concepts—human freedom and the liberty of the moral agent—are of tremendous importance in Wesley’s teaching. Perhaps in response to the despised Calvinistic doctrine of double predestination, Wesley said that there is no subject of greater importance than human freedom, and that this is the one principle which limits the power of the otherwise almighty God.⁴⁶⁶

The Moral Image of God

God’s *moral* image consisted in His knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.⁴⁶⁷ “In the image of God was man made;9 holy as he that created him is holy, merciful as the author of all is merciful, perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect.”⁴⁶⁸ These attributes also entailed perfect knowledge of God, perfect understanding of God’s will, and perfect comprehension of God’s law. *This element of God’s image was, to Wesley, the most important of the three*—no doubt because it spoke most directly to Man’s relationship with his Creator.

In summary, the natural imaged concerned Man’s functionalities and freedoms as a creature, the political image concerned Man’s standing *viz.* with the created order, and the moral

⁴⁶⁴ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 4:24. Thomas Oden describes the difference as follows: “Contrariety is the ability to choose, while Contradiction is the ability to act on that choice or to refrain from the exercise of choice.” Oden, *John Wesley’s Scriptural Christianity*, 140.

⁴⁶⁵ Letter to his father, January, 1731; Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XII:4–5.

⁴⁶⁶ See Wesley’s “Thoughts Upon Necessity”, *Ibid.*, X:447. Of course Wesley saw this limitation as one God imposed upon Himself; once having created man with any certain essential element—such as freedom or even the image of God—He would never remove it, because to do so would to be untrue to His own character as well as His creation. See Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:540–41.

⁴⁶⁷ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:475.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:184.

image concerned Man's propinquity to the Creator. Because they possessed these three elements of God's image, Adam and Eve were paragons of what it meant to be truly human: ethically, spiritually, intellectually perfect. Above all, they had God's moral character; as Wesley declares,

In the [moral] image of God was man made; holy as he that created him is holy, merciful as the author of all is merciful, perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect. As God is love, so man dwelling in love dwelt in God, and God in him. God made him to be 'an image of his own eternity', an incorruptible picture of the God of glory. He was accordingly pure, as God is pure, from every spot of sin.⁴⁶⁹

Perfect Man's Relationship with God

In the Garden of Eden, this Man was placed under a law which was commensurate with his abilities and state. Says Wesley,

To man thus upright and perfect God gave a perfect law, to which he required full and perfect obedience. He required full obedience in every point, and this to be performed without any intermission from the moment man became a living soul till the time of his trial should be ended. No allowance was made for any falling short. As, indeed, there was no need of any, man being altogether equal to the task assigned, and thoroughly furnished for every good word and work.⁴⁷⁰

The Adamic law (a.k.a. "the law of works"⁴⁷¹) was much wider and more demanding than the law imposed on Man *after* the Fall—in fact, Wesley equated the Adamic law with the angelic law.⁴⁷² He says, "Consequently, this law, proportioned to his original powers, required that he should always think, always speak, and always act precisely right, in every point whatever. He was well able so to do: And God could not but require the service he was able to pay."⁴⁷³

Then came the Fall.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, X:314.

⁴⁷² Wesley, *Plain Account*, 79.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

The Effects of the Fall into Sin

Effects of the Fall on the Moral Image

Adam and Eve's rebellion⁴⁷⁴ violated God's moral law and breached the Adamic covenant. Relationship with God was broken.⁴⁷⁵ Wesley describes the tragedy by saying: "[Eve] then 'gave to her husband, and he did eat.' And in that day, yea, that moment, he died! The life of God was extinguished in his soul. The glory departed from him. *He lost the whole moral image of God, righteousness and true holiness.*"⁴⁷⁶

The loss of the moral image of God meant the entire corruption of our nature.⁴⁷⁷ There is no way that Man can see or desire fellowship with God on his own, in this state.⁴⁷⁸ Wesley warns, "I testify unto you, there is no peace with God, no pardon, no heaven for you in this state. There is but a step betwixt you and eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord."⁴⁷⁹

Effects of the Fall on the Political Image

But the fall into sin affected more than just the moral image—all aspects of humanity were corrupted. Man's natural and political 'images of God' were grievously corrupted also,⁴⁸⁰ but (*nota bene*) they were not lost. Regarding the political *imago*, Man's dominion over creation was corrupted, with the result that, even if the animals *feared* Man, they no longer willingly *obeyed*

⁴⁷⁴ This was no mere "mistake"—Wesley says: "By this wilful act of disobedience to his Creator, this flat *rebellion* against his Sovereign, he openly declared that he would no longer have God to rule over him." Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:189; emphasis added.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:189.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:477.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:190.

⁴⁷⁸ Cox, *John Wesley's Concept of Perfection*, 29.

⁴⁷⁹ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, IX:376.

⁴⁸⁰ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 4:296–99.

him.⁴⁸¹ Further, the corruption of Man’s political image interrupted the flow of blessings from God to the creatures under Man’s dominion, so that all creation “ ‘was subjected to vanity,’ to sorrow, to pain of every kind, to all manner of evils”.⁴⁸²

Effects of the Fall on the Natural Image

According to Wesley, Man’s natural image of God—the power of self-motion, understanding, will, and liberty⁴⁸³—was not (indeed, *could* not have been) totally lost, as a result of the Fall. Marred and corrupted, yes—but not totally lost.⁴⁸⁴ Wesley describes the psychosomatic state of the body as an “instrument being now quite untuned”.⁴⁸⁵ As had the soul, so also Man’s body “became corruptible and mortal, so that death then took hold on this also”.⁴⁸⁶ While Adam and Eve did not die *physically* on the day of their rebellion, their bodies “became obnoxious [*i.e.*, susceptible] to weakness, sickness, pain”⁴⁸⁷—they became “not only dust, but mortal, corruptible dust”.⁴⁸⁸ With discouraging precision (albeit utilizing medieval medical terminology) Wesley chronicles the manner in which the sinful flesh flowers then and fades (Psalm 90:5–6).⁴⁸⁹ Instead of being a vehicle of blessing to Man, the post-Fall body “very

⁴⁸¹ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, IX:329.

⁴⁸² Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:242.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 2:438–39, 474–75.

⁴⁸⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 2:410.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 4:298.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:185. As to the precise means by which sin transformed incorruptible flesh into corruptible, Wesley presents a fascinating description in his sermon *The Image of God* I.1, which (as Oden indicates) uncannily presages the discovery of low-density lipoproteins and arteriosclerosis—see Oden, *John Wesley’s Scriptural Christianity*, 136. It is also notable that Wesley’s beliefs regarding the physical state of pre-Fall Man mirror Martin Luther’s; see Luther, *AE*, 1:110.

⁴⁸⁷ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:477.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:405.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:407–8.

frequently hinders the soul in its operations; and, at best, serves it very imperfectly”.⁴⁹⁰

Fallen Man’s natural understanding was also clouded—perceiving “through a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12)—“that glass being now grown thick and dull, having lost great part of its transparency”.⁴⁹¹ The will was poisoned, “seized by legions of vile affections”,⁴⁹² and liberty itself was defiled: “Liberty went away with virtue. . . . The subject of virtue [*i.e.*, liberty] became the slave of vice. It was not *willingly* that the creature obeyed vanity; the rule was now perforce; the sceptre of gold was changed into a rod of iron.”⁴⁹³

Thus every element of the natural image was ruined to the core—ruined, but not removed. Had God *stripped* Adam and Eve of these elements, the race would have been eliminated! Thus the fact that mankind even exists today (and retains a modicum of self-motion, understanding, will, and liberty) is itself proof of God’s love and mercy, in Wesley’s opinion. Leo Cox concurs that “in this sense, apart from grace, man’s fall was complete and all was lost. In Wesley, then, there is no ‘relic’ of the image of God in man after the Fall, except through God’s grace.”⁴⁹⁴ But a *grace-resuscitated* natural image would have an important part to play, as we shall see.

The Effects of the Fall on Adam’s Offspring

Wesley believed that Adam—at least as far as ‘original sin’ was concerned—was a type of federal head, “the first general representative”⁴⁹⁵ of mankind as a whole. Since all human beings

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 2:405.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 4:298.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 4:298–99; emphasis added.

⁴⁹⁴ Cox, *John Wesley’s Concept of Perfection*, 28.

⁴⁹⁵ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, IX:333. He begins this section of *The Doctrine of Original Sin, According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience* by saying: “My reason for believing he [Adam] was so [a federal head], in some sense, is this: Christ was the representative of mankind, when God ‘laid on him the iniquities of us all, and he was wounded for our transgressions’. But Adam was a type or figure of Christ; therefore, he was also, in some sense, our

descend from Adam, all his offspring inherit the corruption that befell him. The newborn are not exempt; Wesley succinctly states: “God does not look upon infants as innocent, but as involved in the guilt of Adam’s sin; otherwise death, the punishment denounced against that sin, could not be inflicted upon them.”⁴⁹⁶

The punishment for Adam’s sin was twofold. First came all evils in the realm of nature; even the animals suffer punishment for Adam’s sin.⁴⁹⁷ The second (and more dreadful for Adam’s progeny) was the disruption and corruption outlined in the sections above. The death we inherit is both physical and spiritual.⁴⁹⁸ Wesley cites with approval Dr. Jennings’s evaluation: “So we do in fact suffer for Adam’s sin, and that too by the sentence inflicted on our first parents. We suffer death in consequence of their transgression. Therefore we are, in some sense, guilty of their sin.”⁴⁹⁹

Mankind’s Overall Condition Post-Fall

After the fall into sin, Man “by nature”⁵⁰⁰ was so bad that Wesley could say “we bear the

representative; in consequence of which, ‘all died’ in him, as ‘in Christ all shall be made alive.’” Ibid., IX:332. He concludes the section by stating emphatically, “Adam was the representative of mankind.” Ibid., IX:334.

⁴⁹⁶ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, IX:316.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., IX:359–60.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., IX:258. “In and through their first parent, all his posterity died in a spiritual sense; and they remain wholly ‘dead in trespasses and sins.’”

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., IX:243. A well-respected Dissenting minister and author, Dr. David Jennings published *A Vindication of the Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin* anonymously in 1740. Both this work and Wesley’s 1753 *Doctrine of Original Sin, According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience* were written to refute Deist theologian John Taylor’s opus *Doctrine of Original Sin*. Wesley’s treatise quoted extensively from Jennings, Samuel Hebdon, and others.

⁵⁰⁰ Proper understanding of this term is essential. Leo Cox says: “Wesley uses the term *by nature* to describe man as he is by birth apart from the grace of God.” But note the distinction offered in the next sentence: “By *original nature* Wesley means the nature that was given to Adam before the fall, and which was completely corrupted by the fall. It is difficult to describe fully man as what he is by nature because, as we now see man, he not only inherits Adam’s nature, but is also a recipient of God’s grace as we shall later see.” Cox, *John Wesley’s Concept of Sin*, 60. This distinction will be explored further, below.

image of the devil, and tread in his steps”,⁵⁰¹ and that

we are by nature ‘wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked’ ...in our best estate we are of ourselves all sin and vanity...confusion, and ignorance, and error, reign over our understanding...unreasonable, earthly, sensual, devilish passions usurp authority over our will: in a word...there is no whole part in our soul...all the foundations of our nature are out of course.⁵⁰²

Elsewhere he identified the root of all these sins: *self-will*. This radical inward focus, trumping all other considerations (including God) is “indeed, the original idolatry, which is not confined to one age or country, but is common to all the nations under heaven”.⁵⁰³ And it is from this heart of sin that individual acts of sin proceed.

Nor did this dim view of Man change as Wesley matured. In a 1790 sermon he delivered a potent rebuke of romantics and rationalists alike for their notions of human nature’s supposed perfections *and* its perfectibility by human means.⁵⁰⁴ Building his thoughts upon the judgment Scripture pronounces in Jeremiah 17:19, he proclaims that although outward manifestations may differ from person to person—or from nation to nation—still “in the inward root, the enmity against God, atheism, pride, self-will, and idolatry, it is true of *all* that ‘the heart of man’, of *every* natural man, ‘is desperately wicked’ ”.⁵⁰⁵

So pervasive was this wickedness and self-focus, taught Wesley, that the sinful heart is unable to either discern its faults or even desire *true* (divine) self-understanding. Convinced that we are wiser and better than we are, even in our “religious seeking” we are unwittingly deceived even further. The heart

⁵⁰¹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:179.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 1:403.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 3:353.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 4:152–59.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 4:155.

‘is deceitful above all things’, that is, in the highest degree, above all that we can conceive. So deceitful that the generality of men are continually deceiving both themselves and others. How strangely do they deceive themselves, not knowing either their own tempers or characters! Imagining themselves to be abundantly better and wiser than they are! The ancient poet supposes there is no exception to this rule; that no man is willing to know his own heart—

*Ut nemo in sese tentat descendere, nemo!*⁵⁰⁶

None but those who are taught of God!⁵⁰⁷

In an attempt to pierce the defenses of the wicked heart, Wesley exhorted the unbeliever:

Know thyself to be a sinner, and what manner of sinner thou art. Know that corruption of thy inmost nature, whereby thou art *very far gone* from original righteousness. . . . Know that thou art corrupted in every power, in every faculty of thy soul, that thou art totally corrupted in every one of these, all the foundations being out course.⁵⁰⁸

For Wesley, Man-by-nature “cannot ‘not-sin’ ”⁵⁰⁹—guilt and condemnation are his natural destiny. Moreover, the imbalance and corruption were not exclusively spiritual problems; ever since the Fall, [Adam’s corrupted *body*] is a clog to the soul and hinders its operations. Hence, at present, no child of man can at all times apprehend clearly or judge truly. And where either the judgment or apprehension is wrong it is impossible to reason justly.⁵¹⁰

Wesley believed that Man was composed of the four elements of antiquity: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. He further concluded that the Fall threw these four elements out of balance, and Earth (the body) predominated. The weak and now-mortal body began to burden the soul and hinder its

⁵⁰⁶ The full citation is *Ut nemo in sese tentat descendere! nemo! Sed praecedenti spectatur mantica tergo.*—“None, none descends into himself, to find The secret imperfections of his mind.” Persius, *Satire*, trans. John Dryden, n.d., chap. IV:24.

⁵⁰⁷ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 4:155.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:225; emphasis added. Precisely how such a wicked heart could be stirred at all, will be discussed below.

⁵⁰⁹ Augustine’s *non posse non peccare*—see *Ibid.*, 1:403.

⁵¹⁰ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 30.

functions. Mistakes, as well as ignorance, became *status quo* for the mind of Man.⁵¹¹ A dire prognosis of Man's disease,⁵¹² indeed! But two important elements of Wesley's theology serve as significant counterbalances to the hopelessness of this total corruption: his definition of sin, and his understanding of grace.

The Definition of Sin

Sin, "Properly So-Called"

At the Conference of 1759, Wesley engaged in a lengthy Q&A session with his ministers. He subsequently deemed this session important enough to include a considerable portion of it in the important publication *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. The Q&A exchange is significant for our consideration because it was here that Wesley clarified that there was a difference between sin "properly so-called" and sin "improperly so-called".⁵¹³ In his understanding, *only that which is a "voluntary transgression of a known law" is truly a 'sin'*; any "involuntary transgression of a divine law, known or unknown" is "naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality"—and therefore not a 'sin'. He concludes his analysis by saying: "Such transgressions *you* may call sins, if you please: I do not, for the reasons above-mentioned."⁵¹⁴

Original Sin

What, then, is the nature of the original sin that we post-Fall human creatures inherit—is it "sin, properly so-called"? Does the guilt of such original sin condemn us? Somewhat

⁵¹¹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:406.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 2:184. Wesley employed medical metaphors to describe Man's condition post-Fall more frequently than forensic ones.

⁵¹³ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 54.

surprisingly, John Wesley’s longest and most detailed systematic treatise dealt not with sanctification but with original sin.⁵¹⁵ Comprising two hundred and seventy-two pages in the Jackson edition of Wesley’s works, it is intended to cover every aspect of original sin’s historical, exegetical, and ethical ramifications. It serves both to provide a theodicy—defending God against the charge of being the Author of evil—and to lay the groundwork for redemption’s story. What prompted Wesley to undertake such a monumental work?

The Doctrine of Original Sin, According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience.

In 1740, a Deist minister named John Taylor of Norwich published a series of booklets collectively titled *The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination*.⁵¹⁶ The work caused a sensation, as it challenged the basic premise of original sin itself. Although immediately and vigorously challenged by a number of well-respected theologians, Taylor gained so many adherents that Wesley fumed, “I verily believe no single person since Mahomet has given such a wound to Christianity as Dr. Taylor. They are his books, chiefly that upon Original Sin, which have poisoned so many of the clergy, and indeed the fountains themselves—the Universities in England, Scotland, Holland, and Germany.”⁵¹⁷

For Wesley, the danger of Taylor’s work was extreme. Ultimately, (if there were no

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., 54; emphasis added.

⁵¹⁵ *The Doctrine of Original Sin, According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience* (1757), in Wesley, *Works* (Jackson), IX:191–464.

⁵¹⁶ John Taylor, *The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination: In Three Parts; The Third Edition, with Large Additions; To Which Is Added, A Supplement, &c. Containing Some Remarks upon Two Books, Viz. “The Vindication of the Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin” [by David Jennings], And, “The Ruin and Recovery of Mankind” [by Isaac Watts]*, 3 vols. (London: J. Waugh, 1750). All together, Taylor published four editions of this work; each new addition responding to various critics (including Wesley, in the 1767 fourth edition). It is likely that the edition read and critiqued by Wesley was the 1750 third edition referenced here—cf. the introduction to his analysis: Wesley, *Works* (Jackson), IX:191–95.

⁵¹⁷ John Wesley, “Letter to Augustus Montague Toplady,” December 9, 1758, accessed April 28, 2011, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-letters-of-john-wesley/wesleys-letters-1758/>.

original sin) what was the need for salvation? Wesley believed that “the three grand doctrines of the church” were original sin, justification by faith, and the “holiness consequent thereon”,⁵¹⁸ and said: “If, therefore, we take away this foundation, that man is by nature foolish and sinful, ‘fallen short of the glorious image of God,’ the Christian system falls at once.”⁵¹⁹

So essential was a right understanding of original sin that Wesley proclaimed:

[A]ll who deny this—call it ‘original sin’ or by any other title—are but heathens still in the fundamental point which differences heathenism from Christianity. They may indeed allow that men have many vices. . . . But here is the shibboleth: Is man by nature filled with all manner of evil? Is he void of all good? Is he wholly fallen? Is his soul totally corrupted? Or, to come back to the text, is ‘every imagination of the thoughts of his heart evil continually’? Allow this, and you are so far a Christian. Deny it, and you are but an heathen still.⁵²⁰

With so much at stake Wesley felt it was time to enter the fray, himself.

Wesley’s 1756 refutation begins with citations of biblical evidence for antediluvian wickedness, and then seeks to prove the veracity of that account through a survey of the modern (*i.e.*, eighteenth-century) world. His premise: the ubiquity of sin reinforces and validates the doctrines of both the fall of Man and the depravity described in Romans 1:17–32. Taking Taylor’s original work almost line by line (direct citations of Taylor’s work account for a large portion of Wesley’s *opus*) he engages in a sort of “virtual dialogue”, answering the Deist’s arguments point by point.

After thus (re)establishing the traditional doctrine of original sin, Wesley goes on to engage Taylor’s supplemental refutations of Jennings and Watts in like manner. The last hundred-plus pages are devoted to salient, if lengthy, passages from other authors whose conclusions support and illuminate Wesley’s own.

⁵¹⁸ Letter CCXII To the Rev. Mr. D—., April 6, 1761. Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XII:264.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, IX:194.

Wesley's Theology of Original Sin.

In keeping with the logic of his definition of sin “properly so-called”, Wesley taught that despite the otherwise horrific consequences of original sin, no child of Adam would suffer *eternal damnation* on account of Adam’s sin in the Garden, since only Adam (and Eve) voluntarily transgressed the known law of God and ate the forbidden fruit.⁵²¹ *Total corruption* and *the irresistible inclination to sin* have indeed been passed on to us,⁵²² but only our own voluntary (“proper”) sins can damn us.

Yet this assertion offered more armchair theological comfort than practical relief. Despite the assurance that man-by-nature⁵²³ would not be condemned for inherited original sin, Wesley nonetheless painted a bleak picture of man-by-nature’s standing with God—so bleak, in fact, that it would certainly cause his hearers to despair. Even if we are not damned on account of Adam’s transgression, if man-by-nature’s ability to do *anything* is so categorically eliminated due to post-Fall corruption, what hope can there be for us?

For Wesley, the answer was found in his manifold understandings of grace.

Grace

“We have all received grace upon grace” (John 1:16, ESV), St. John tells us, and John

⁵²⁰ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:183–84.

⁵²¹ Wesley had an ongoing, published dialogue with Unitarian minister John Taylor on the topic of Original Sin. In the following excerpt, Wesley first quotes Taylor’s assertion and then voices his agreement, regarding Original Sin:

“ ‘God assures us, children shall not die for the iniquity of their fathers.’

“No, not eternally. I believe none ever did, or ever will, die eternally, merely for the sin of our first father.” Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, IX:315.

⁵²² Wesley did not expend a great deal of effort trying to discern the exact manner of Original Sin’s transmission, though (following Henry Woolnor’s 1655 argument in his *The Extraction of Mans [sic] Soul*) Wesley considered traducianism a reasonable understanding sufficiently in harmony with Scripture, asserting that “the souls of his [Adam’s] posterity, as well as their bodies, were in our first parent”. Cf. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 68.

Wesley took this verse quite literally. Filled with an overwhelming awareness of God’s unmerited love for His fallen creation—and with a personality given to exactitude and detail—Wesley discerned a fair number of discrete *kinds* of grace which God bestowed upon Man. These include *prevenient* (or *preventing*) grace; *convicting* (or *convincing*) grace; *justifying* grace; *sanctifying* grace; *perfecting* grace; *glorifying* grace. Although each type of grace is significant in its own right, the crucial aspect of ‘prevenient grace’ must be examined in depth here.

Prevenient Grace

In spite of the dark portrait he painted of man-by-nature, Wesley nonetheless “saw that in every man there was something prior to any justification that made a man better than he is by nature”.⁵²⁴ William Cannon, in his classic analysis of Wesley’s theology, writes:

Wesley goes all the way with Calvin, with Luther, and with Augustine in his insistence that man is by nature totally destitute of righteousness⁵²⁵ and subject to the judgement and wrath of God. But to this he adds another principle: By the free grace of God given to all men alike at the very moment of birth, they are able to turn again unto their Heavenly Father and to regain the privilege of which by nature they have been deprived.⁵²⁶

He further clarifies: “If man is by nature sinful, conceived in iniquity, he is at the same time endowed with the quality of what Wesley calls *Preventing Grace*. There is something in him besides the attributes of his own nature. He is endowed with a spark of divinity.”⁵²⁷

Wesley himself describes it in this fashion:

For allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by *nature*, this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has

⁵²³ Remember Wesley’s definition of Man *by nature* (footnote 500, above).

⁵²⁴ Cox, *John Wesley’s Concept of Sin*, 65.

⁵²⁵ True to Wesley’s teaching, ‘righteousness’ here is understood to be the *moral* image of God.

⁵²⁶ Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 200.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the Grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called ‘natural conscience.’ But this is not natural; it is more properly termed ‘preventing grace.’⁵²⁸ Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man. . . . Everyone has some measure of that light, some faint glimmering ray, which sooner or later, more or less, enlightens every man that cometh into the world. . . . So that no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he hath.⁵²⁹

Essentially this means that the totally corrupt (‘natural’) post-Fall Man—“Man-by-nature”—is only an abstraction for Wesley,⁵³⁰ since “[t]he grace or love of God, whence cometh our salvation, is free in all, and free for all”.⁵³¹ This ‘prevenient grace’ is shed abroad without discrimination by a loving Creator who is not willing that any should perish. It began to shine already in Genesis 3, for “from the ‘very hour the original promise was made,’ the covenant of grace has been operative”.⁵³²

What *is* ‘prevenient grace’? Wesley says that it is “the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight, transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life, some degree of salvation, the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God.”⁵³³

This is not to say that preveniently-graced Man “has” these tendencies inherently, or acts upon them independently. Any good tempers or desires in Man flow *on account of* this gift of grace; Wesley’s Man-by-nature does not “have” any good tempers or desires that might merit

⁵²⁸ Though Wesley seems to prefer the term ‘preventing grace’, this concept is often called ‘prevenient grace’ in broader theological parlance. For this reason the term ‘prevenient grace’ will be used in this dissertation unless in giving a direct quotation where Wesley uses ‘preventing’.

⁵²⁹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:207.

⁵³⁰ Lee, *John Wesley and Modern Religion*, 124.

⁵³¹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:544. This sermon was Wesley’s withering public vituperation of Calvinist predestination.

⁵³² Cox, *John Wesley’s Concept of Perfection*, 31.

⁵³³ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:203–4.

grace of any kind.⁵³⁴ Unlike Calvin’s understanding, these faint glimmers of grace could be resisted, but they nonetheless dwelt in every child of Adam—“although the generality of men stifle them before they can strike deep root or produce any considerable fruit. *Everyone* has *some* measure of that light...unless he be one of the small number whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron”,⁵³⁵ and has snuffed out this “divine spark”.

The gift of prevenient grace is similar to the gracious gifts God bestowed in pre-Fall creation—albeit given for a different reason. The grace of God demonstrated in the “very good” of Eden arose freely of God’s nature; the grace of God shed preveniently in Man’s heart stems from the Atonement. It is through Christ’s finished work—and *only* through that work— that “whatever was lost through the first [Adam]”⁵³⁶ can be regained.

The significance of ‘prevenient grace’ for the Wesleyan *schema* cannot be overstated, for prevenient grace delivers us from the guilt of Adam’s original sin.⁵³⁷ Even infants are covered here: “Therefore no infant ever was, or ever will be, ‘sent to hell for the guilt of Adam’s sin;’ seeing it is cancelled by the righteousness of Christ, as soon as they are sent into the world.”⁵³⁸ Thus, even though “by nature all men are totally corrupt and helpless; by [prevenient] grace *all*

⁵³⁴ Wesley emphatically preached that such good things “flow from the free grace of God; they are the streams only, not the fountain. They are the fruits of free grace, and not the root. They are not the cause, but the effects of it. Whatsoever good is in man, or is done by man, God is the author and doer of it. Thus is his grace free in all; that is, no way depending on any power or merit in man, but on God alone, who freely gave us his own Son, and ‘with him freely giveth us all things.’ ” *Ibid.*, 3:545.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3:207; emphasis added.

⁵³⁶ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, IX:333. Wesley continues by saying that this ability to regain that which Adam lost “totally removes all reflections on the divine justice or mercy, in making the state of all mankind so dependent on the behaviour of their common parent; for not one child of man finally loses thereby, unless by his own choice”.

⁵³⁷ In a 1744 Q&A session, John explains: “That text, ‘As by one man’s disobedience all men were made sinners, so by the obedience of One, all were made righteous,’ we conceive means, By the merits of Christ, *all* men are cleared from the guilt of Adam’s actual sin. We conceive farther, that through the obedience and death of Christ, (1.) The bodies of *all* men become immortal after the resurrection. (2.) Their [*i.e.*, *all* men’s] souls receive a capacity of spiritual life. And, (3.) An actual spark or seed thereof.” *Ibid.*, VIII:277–78; emphasis added.

⁵³⁸ Letter DXXIV, to Charles Wesley, November 21, 1776, *Ibid.*, XII:453.

men are restored to a *salvable* condition”.⁵³⁹ Umphrey Lee observes, “This is Wesley’s way of escape from the theological and psychological dilemma which the doctrine of original sin poses for all who adopt it. . . . for Wesley, the “natural man” is only a logical fiction. In this world [every] man exists as a natural man *plus the prevenient grace* of God.”⁵⁴⁰

Is There No More than That?

But the grace of God continues. Providing that the sinner *does* “use the grace which he hath”, God rewards him with further outpourings of grace (enumerated above, and detailed in the presentation of Wesley’s *ordo salutis*, below). In this fashion, *everything* good we sinners accomplish is because some form of the grace of God was there first—*nos praeveniente*—enabling us to do good if we want to. In this way Wesley sought to keep all glory in God’s court, while maintaining his Arminian synergism.

Righteousness

What did Wesley understand by the term ‘righteousness’? As Leo Cox declares, Wesley’s concept of our original righteousness “is best summed up in the idea of love”.⁵⁴¹ In his *opus* concerning original righteousness, Wesley said that “righteousness is, properly and directly, a right temper or disposition of mind, or a complex of all right tempers”.⁵⁴² He goes on, in his question-and-answer format discussion, by saying that Adam

was created full of love. Now, whether you call this a habit or no, it is the sum of all righteousness.

⁵³⁹ Cox, *John Wesley’s Concept of Perfection*, 34; emphasis added.

⁵⁴⁰ Lee, *John Wesley and Modern Religion*, 124–25; emphasis added.

⁵⁴¹ Cox, *John Wesley’s Concept of Perfection*, 28.

⁵⁴² Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, IX:342.

[Q.] “But this love is either under the government of my will, or it is not.”

[A.] It is. The love of God which Adam enjoyed was under the government of his will.

[Q.] “But if so, it could be righteous only so far as applied to right action in heart and life.”

[A.] Stop here. The love of God is righteousness, the moment it exists in any soul; and it must exist before it can be applied to action. Accordingly, it was righteousness in Adam the moment he was created. And yet he had a power either to follow the dictates of that love, (in which case his righteousness would have endured for ever,) or to act contrary thereto; but love was righteousness still, though it was not irresistible.⁵⁴³

With such words Wesley virtually identifies ‘righteousness’ with the ‘moral image of God’ discussed earlier.

Can Such Righteousness Be (Re)gained by Right Actions?

At times Wesley and Luther wrote much alike, where the concept of righteousness was concerned. Thomas Oden points out that according to Wesley’s teaching, “The law was never designed to recover God’s favor once lost. The only way to recover the favor and image of God, once lost, is through trusting the gift of the revealed righteousness that comes by faith.”⁵⁴⁴ “The righteousness of faith”, notes Albert Outler in his introduction to Wesley’s sermon of the same name, “is God’s mercy freely given. It is God’s pardon, warranted by Christ’s atonement, and therefore both just and justifying.”⁵⁴⁵ Wesley himself summarizes thus: “By ‘the righteousness which is of faith’ is meant that condition of justification (and in consequence of present and final salvation, if we endure therein unto the end) which was given by God to *fallen man* through the merits and mediation of his only begotten Son.”⁵⁴⁶

Wesley, like Luther before him, had come to understand that pursuing right standing before

⁵⁴³ Ibid., IX:344.

⁵⁴⁴ Oden, *John Wesley’s Scriptural Christianity*, 204. Cf. also Wesley’s *The New Birth*, III.1.

⁵⁴⁵ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:201.

God by ‘the covenant of works’ was a hopeless task, since it required an uninterrupted, perfect fulfillment of all righteousness. There were only two alternatives: perfect obedience or death.⁵⁴⁷

Likewise Wesley understood that sinners’ only hope for righteousness was to cast aside the filthy rags of their own righteousness, have the righteous obedience of Jesus Christ imputed to them.⁵⁴⁸ Through “faith in the righteousness of Christ”,⁵⁴⁹ every believer is clothed in the righteousness of Christ.⁵⁵⁰ Such imputation through faith comes in the moment of belief.⁵⁵¹

But Wesley also claimed that each believer had an *inherent* righteousness—although it was the *fruit* of our acceptance with God, not the ground of it. He says that

[inherent righteousness is] not in the place of *imputed* righteousness, but as consequent upon it. That is, I believe God *implants* righteousness in every one to whom he has *imputed* it. I believe ‘Jesus Christ is made of God unto us sanctification’ as well as righteousness; or that God sanctifies, as well as justifies, all them that believe in him. They to whom the righteousness of Christ is imputed are made righteous by the spirit of Christ, are renewed in the image of God ‘after the likeness wherein they were created, in righteousness and true holiness’.⁵⁵²

Exactly What ‘Righteousness of Christ’ Is Imputed to the Believer?

Wesley’s thought in this area is exceedingly complex. John Deschner undertook a careful analysis of Wesley’s sermon *The Lord Our Righteousness* in his book *Wesley’s Christology*. He outlined the first section of the sermon as follows:⁵⁵³

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 1:206; emphasis original.

⁵⁴⁷ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, X:324.

⁵⁴⁸ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:454.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 1:458.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ In the same sermon Wesley asks rhetorically, “‘But when is it imputed?’ When they believe. In that very hour the righteousness of Christ is theirs. It is imputed to every one that believes, as soon as he believes: faith and the righteousness of Christ are inseparable.” Ibid., 1:454.

⁵⁵² Ibid., 1:458–59; emphasis original.

⁵⁵³ John Deschner, *Wesley’s Christology: An Interpretation*, First Edition. (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960), 157–58.

Christ's righteousness consists of two parts:

1. His divine righteousness: Wesley does not regard its imputation to be at issue in the debate with the antinomians.
2. His human righteousness: this is imputed as a whole to man. It consists of two parts:
 - a. Internal human righteousness: Christ's human image of God.
 - b. External human righteousness: Christ's obedience. This, in turn, consists of two parts:
 - i. Active obedience: what Christ did. Two aspects can also be distinguished here:
 1. Negative obedience: He did no sin.
 2. Positive active obedience: He did God's will perfectly.
 - ii. Passive obedience: what Christ suffered.

An important *caveat* must be observed here: although Deschner states in point (2) above that Christ's human righteousness was "imputed as a whole to man", he later insists that "Wesley's explicit position is that the *active* obedience which counts for the believer is his *own* obedience, not Christ's".⁵⁵⁴ Which is true? The answer must be sought in Wesley's teaching on justification, particularly his delineation between *initial* justification and *final* justification. It is to these teachings that we now direct our attention.

Justification

As noted in chapter two, the pre-Aldersgate Wesley believed that "man must be saved through moral goodness, through universal obedience, and through the rigid fulfillment of all the commandments of God".⁵⁵⁵ By the time Wesley wrote such important later sermons as *The Scripture Way of Salvation* (1765) and *The Wedding Garment* (1790), he had come to place great

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 164; emphasis added. In his sermon *The Lord Our Righteousness* he explains further: "I believe God implants righteousness in every one to whom he has imputed it. . . . They to whom the righteousness of Christ is imputed are made righteous by the spirit of Christ, are renewed in the image of God 'after the likeness wherein they were created, in righteousness and true holiness'." Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:458. In answer to those who claim that Man has no inherent ("implanted") righteousness—and *need* none since the active righteousness of Christ is imputed to them—Wesley writes, "without holiness," personal holiness, "no man shall see the Lord"; [Hebrews 12:14] none who is not himself conformed to the law of God here, "shall see the Lord" in glory. This is the grand, palpable objection to that whole scheme [of the active righteousness of Christ being imputed to the believer]. It directly "makes void the law". [Romans 3:31] It makes thousands content to live and die "transgressors of the law", [James 2:11] because Christ fulfilled it "for them". Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, X:330.

emphasis on the distinction between what he termed “initial” justification and “final” justification. These terms may be defined as follows:

Initial Justification

Initial justification is:

1. the present remission of sins, that blessed gift given to man on account of the suffering and death of Christ;
2. it is what saves man from the guilt and power of sin; and
3. it is received by faith.

These elements remain unchanged from 1738 to Wesley’s death. Yet by later emphasizing that Christ’s atoning work applies to ‘*initial* justification’, and by emphasizing that such ‘initial justification’ is only the barest beginning of the Christian’s journey, Wesley separates himself from his May, 1738 position. As he himself says, “The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon. . . . the remission of the sins that are *past*.”⁵⁵⁶

Note that Wesley’s initial justification is both a remission of past sins and acceptance in God’s sight—an initially-justified person has been restored to God’s favor.⁵⁵⁷ Cannon rightly observes, “In regard to this aspect of the justifying act, Wesley is at one with Luther and with Calvin.”⁵⁵⁸ But unlike Luther and Calvin, Wesley’s initial justification is not a goal in itself. As Leo Cox observes,

One can conclude that Wesley made justification a gate or door to salvation, holiness, or perfection.⁵⁵⁹ Justification by faith is a *first stage* in the beginning of perfection.

⁵⁵⁵ Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 63.

⁵⁵⁶ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:189; emphasis added.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3:204.

⁵⁵⁸ Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 88.

⁵⁵⁹ For Wesley, these terms are often used interchangeably. Cox earlier notes: “Wesley identified perfection

The preliminary acts of grace led to repentance and faith. Justification opens the gate and true salvation *begins*. Justification marks the first great stage in the order of salvation.⁵⁶⁰

Final Justification

In the early days following his Aldersgate experience, Wesley had found the idea of a second—or ‘final’—justification repugnant.⁵⁶¹ Yet by 1744 he wrote “entire sanctification goes before our justification at the last day. (Heb. xii. 14)”⁵⁶² and “both inward and outward holiness are the stated conditions of final justification”.⁵⁶³ Does this mean that the later Wesley believed we are justified by works, since we need *both* inward and outward holiness to be saved?

Not necessarily. Wesley explains that “faith alone” and “judgment according to works” are *not* contradictory, if one remembers that “faith alone” applies to *initial* justification, and the “judgment according to works” applies to *final* justification. In a sermon published the year of his death, he says,

The righteousness of Christ is, doubtless, necessary for any soul that enters into glory. But so is personal holiness, too, for every child of man. But it is highly needful to be observed that they are necessary in different respects. The former is necessary to *entitle* us to heaven; the latter, to *qualify* us for it. Without the righteousness of Christ

and holiness. To be perfect was to be holy. Religion was holiness and religion was salvation. Salvation was holiness of heart and life. Furthermore, to be sanctified is to be holy; so actually in Wesley’s mind perfection, holiness, salvation, religion, and sanctification were all about the same thing. Wesley gave more of a religious content to these terms than theological. There are times when Wesley gave a more precise meaning to these terms, but, generally speaking, no distinctions were drawn between them.” Cox, *John Wesley’s Concept of Perfection*, 70. The question of whether it is meet, right, or beneficial to parse Salvation will be addressed in chapter six.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., 79, emphasis added.

⁵⁶¹ He joined Bishop Thomas Barlow in criticizing Bishop George Bull’s 1670 *Harmonia Apostolica*, because he deemed this ‘double justification’ a thinly-veiled form of works righteousness. *Harmonia Apostolica* was an attempt to reconcile the views of Paul and James on the relationship of faith and works with regard to justification. Wesley repudiated these ideas in his 1738 *Justification by Faith*, notably III.2; see Outler’s analysis of Wesley’s position relative to the concept, in Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:191, f/n 55. Interestingly, Jeremy Taylor had been a vocal proponent of this idea, in the books Wesley himself once found so inspiring.

⁵⁶² Identical wording is found in *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*—Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:47; in *An Answer to the Rev. Mr. Church’s Remarks on the Rev. Mr. John Wesley’s Last Journal: In a Letter to That Gentleman* (Ibid., VIII:387.); also in *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Horne* (Ibid., IX:111.).

⁵⁶³ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:388.

we could have no *claim* to glory; without holiness we could have no *fitness* for it. By the former we become members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. By the latter we are ‘made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light’ [Colossians 1:12].⁵⁶⁴

The Question of Merit

What do the terms “works” and “merit” mean for Wesley? In 1770 he addressed his Conference’s concerns on the matter by saying: “As to merit itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid: We are rewarded according to our works, yea, because of our works. How does this differ from, ‘for the sake of our works?’ And how differs this from *secundum merita operum*⁵⁶⁵? Which is no more than, ‘as our works deserve’.”⁵⁶⁶

Shades of Rome! Scholars of various persuasions have struggled with this concept since Wesley first propounded it. In answering his critics, Wesley attempted to explain by delineating between merit in a “strict” sense and a “loose” sense. For these purposes, Wesley’s “strict” sense merit is the same as Rome’s ‘condign’ merit—merit which is accorded the doer because the deed “deserves” it. Wesley’s merit in a “loose” sense “means no more than that which is ‘rewardable’ ”.⁵⁶⁷ With this distinction in mind, he defends his theology (including the 1770 comment above) by saying,

I still maintain, (so I added in the “Remarks;” so I firmly believe,) there is no merit, taking the word *strictly*, but in the blood of Christ; that salvation is not by the merit of works; and that there is nothing we are, or have, or do, which can, *strictly* speaking, deserve the least thing at God’s hand. And all this is no more than to say, Take the word merit in a *strict* sense, and I utterly renounce it; take it in a *looser* sense, and

⁵⁶⁴ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 4:144.

⁵⁶⁵ Literally, “according to the merit of works”; this phrase was frequently utilized by church fathers, such as Augustine of Hippo, in theological deliberations of this kind.

⁵⁶⁶ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:337–38.

⁵⁶⁷ Letter LXXXII, to Charles Wesley, August 3, 1771, *Ibid.*, XII:137.

though I never use it, (I mean, I never ascribe it to any man,) yet I do not condemn it. Therefore, with regard to the word merit, I do not contradict myself at all.⁵⁶⁸

Ever since, Wesleyan theologians have tried to summarize Wesley's position. Harald Lindström's précis is: "The Christian who has already been saved through faith, still awaits the final salvation for which the maturing power of sanctification will qualify him",⁵⁶⁹ while Kenneth Collins recaps more fully by saying that the concept of 'reward'

does not mean that the redeemed have an independent claim on the grace of God. Instead, it simply points to the already-effective grace of the Almighty that results in works that will, again out of sheer grace, be favored and rewarded. . . . Sanctification, then, though not the basis of (initial) justification, *is* the basis of final justification, not because works form an independent basis for a claim on the goodness of God, but because such works are the evidences of a lively and gracious faith.⁵⁷⁰

Justifying Faith

When is a person right with God—when are they *true* Christians? Or, using Wesley's own terms, what is the difference between "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption"⁵⁷¹—between what he called "the faith of a servant" and "the faith of a son"? From his earliest days Wesley himself struggled with this question, and even in his final years his usage of these chosen terms is somewhat inconsistent. Collins notes that "because of this failure, he and his brother Charles caused great harm among those who were attentive to early Methodist preaching";⁵⁷² yet Wesley maintained that distinguishing between the two kinds of faith was both biblical and necessary. What follows is a brief summary of his mature thought.⁵⁷³

⁵⁶⁸ From *Some Remarks on Mr. Hill's 'Farrago Double-Distilled'* (1773), *Ibid.*, X:433.

⁵⁶⁹ Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 216.

⁵⁷⁰ Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 323, 324; emphasis added.

⁵⁷¹ Cf. his sermon of the same title in Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:248–66.

⁵⁷² Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 244–45.

⁵⁷³ It is worth noting that there is significant contemporary debate among Wesley scholars both as to the benefits of "the faith of a servant" and Wesley's actual opinion of such faith; e.g. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, chap. 6; Scott Kisker, "Progressively Justified: Justifying Grace and Justifying Faith Prior to Justification" (presented at

The Faith of a Servant.

From the very beginning Wesley was concerned with being a *real* Christian.⁵⁷⁴ What differentiated such a believer from “The Almost Christian”⁵⁷⁵? On his deathbed, Samuel Wesley had insisted that “the inward witness” was the real proof of Christianity.⁵⁷⁶ But there were many self-identified Christians (including the young Wesley) who had no such witness or assurance; did such people, who sincerely feared God and earnestly tried to keep His commands, have saving faith?

The mature Wesley said of them, “This is the lowest character of those that ‘are of God’, who are not properly sons, but servants...because they have the fear of God in their heart, and a sincere desire to please him.”⁵⁷⁷ They are accepted by God “in a degree”⁵⁷⁸—but they *are not (yet) justified*. Collins notes that Wesley

did not confuse the issue of “acceptance” (for the light and grace that they have) with justification, for those under “the spirit of fear” are still waiting for the One who justifies. This means, of course, that these believers are in the way of salvation; consequently, if they continue in this grace—and unfortunately some will not—then the One “who is nigh” will justify. Moreover, in a similar fashion, Wesley distinguishes properly saving faith from that which, though it constitutes an degree of acceptance, nevertheless remains, to use Wesley’s own words, “only” the faith of a servant.⁵⁷⁹

What is the difference between one who has the ‘faith of a servant’ and one who has the ‘faith of a child of God’? In a word: Assurance.

the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, Duke University Divinity School, 2007).

⁵⁷⁴ He states that this was the purpose for his “Holy Club”—Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:452–53.

⁵⁷⁵ His sermonic deliberation on this issue is directed as much at himself as his hearers. *Ibid.*, 1:131–37.

⁵⁷⁶ Wilder, *Father of the Wesleys: A Biography*, 218.

⁵⁷⁷ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:130.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 4:35.

⁵⁷⁹ Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 245.

The Faith of a Child of God.

Wesley describes “children of God” as “[a]ll that have ‘the Spirit of adoption, crying in their hearts, Abba, Father’. All that have ‘the Spirit’ of God ‘witnessing with their spirits, that they are the sons of God’.”⁵⁸⁰ This assurance is the essential mark of justifying faith.

Thus the faith of a child is properly and directly a divine conviction whereby every child of God is enabled to testify, ‘The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.’ And whosoever hath this, ‘the Spirit of God witnesseth with his spirit that he is a child of God’. . . . This then it is that (if St. Paul was taught of God, and wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost) properly constitutes the difference between a servant of God and a child of God. ‘He that believeth’, as a child of God, ‘hath the witness in himself.’ This the servant hath not.⁵⁸¹

A “child of God” who has this assurance is motivated in an entirely different manner than someone who has only the faith of a servant. A “child of God” acts and obeys out of love, rather than servile fear or a sense of impending doom.

Yet the mature Wesley does not leave those with “the faith of a servant” without hope—indeed, as early as 1745 there is evidence that Wesley understood “the faith of a servant” to be the precursor to justifying faith. So, as Collins summarizes, “Simply put, the faith of a servant of God is valued not only for the measure of faith that it is, but also for what it will soon become: the qualitatively different faith of a child of God, where faith will be filled not with the energy of fear, but with the energy of love.”⁵⁸² Wesley exhorts his hearers, “[L]et no man discourage him [who has the faith of a servant]; rather, lovingly exhort him to expect it [*i.e.*, assurance] every moment!”⁵⁸³ He promises the faithful that “indeed, unless the servants of God halt by the way, they will receive the adoption of sons. They will receive the faith of the children of God by his

⁵⁸⁰ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 4:49.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 3:497–98.

⁵⁸² Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*, 247.

revealing his only-begotten Son in their hearts.”⁵⁸⁴

This manner of faith justifies; this assurance makes it certain; the consequent ability to obey out of love is the privilege of all the children of God.⁵⁸⁵ So essential is the internal witness of the Spirit that Wesley cautions,

[L]et none rest in any supposed fruit of the Spirit without the witness. There may be foretastes of joy, of peace, of love—and those not delusive, but really from God—long before we have the witness in ourselves, before the Spirit of God witnesses with our spirits that we have ‘redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins’. Yea, there may be a degree of long-suffering, of gentleness, of fidelity, meekness, temperance (not a shadow thereof, but a real degree, by the preventing grace of God) before we are ‘accepted in the Beloved’, and consequently before we have a testimony of our acceptance. But it is by no means advisable to rest here; it is at the peril of our souls if we do. If we are wise we shall be continually crying to God, until his Spirit cry in our heart, ‘Abba, Father!’ This is the privilege of all the children of God, and *without this we can never be assured that we are his children*. Without this we cannot retain a steady peace, nor avoid perplexing doubts and fears. But when we have once received this ‘Spirit of adoption’, that ‘peace which passes all understanding’, and which expels all painful doubt and fear, will ‘keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus’. And when this has brought forth its genuine fruit, all inward and outward holiness, it is undoubtedly the will of him that calleth us to give us always what he has once given.⁵⁸⁶

Exactly what happens to the believer who has received the assurance of the Spirit? What does justifying faith bring?

Justification vs. Regeneration (*a.k.a.* the New Birth)

According to Wesley, God is truly active in declaring a man ‘just’. But in order that God not be “*deceived* in those whom he justifies”,⁵⁸⁷ the newly-forgiven sinner must truly be righteous before God pronounces him righteous. To accomplish this, Wesley separates

⁵⁸³ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:498.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:497.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 4:35.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:298; emphasis added.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:188.

justification from regeneration in theory. Although *temporally*, justification and regeneration occur simultaneously, Wesley claims that *intellectually*, justification must precede regeneration—and that they have vastly different purposes (so that divine justice is not violated or thwarted):

Justification implies only a relative, the new birth a real, change. God in justifying us does something *for* us: in begetting us again he does the work *in* us. The former changes our outward relation to God, so that of enemies we become children; by the latter our inmost souls are changed, so that of sinners we become saints. The one restores us to the favor, the other to the image of God. The one is the taking away the guilt, the other the power, of sin.⁵⁸⁸

So it is that, since a man has been forgiven by God (on account of Christ) and has been restored to right relationship with God—that is, he has been justified—it is therefore appropriate for God to:

- 1) infuse an actual, regeneration righteousness into the man, and
- 2) since he is now, in truth, righteous, God can *declare* him to be so—a descriptive, rather than forensic, speech act.

This “real change” is tremendously important in Wesley’s thought, for the “real change” idea sets his thought apart from that of the continental reformers. For Wesley, the “image of God stamped upon him”⁵⁸⁹ means that the man *is* righteous in himself, and thereby does not sin any longer.⁵⁹⁰ Justification was *not* equal to salvation, for the mature Wesley. There was something essentially different about *initial* justification vs. *final* justification; there is something required of Man in between the two: sanctification.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., 1:431–32; emphasis original.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., 1:117; *ibid.*, 2:194.

⁵⁹⁰ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 4.

**Sanctification—
a.k.a. Salvation, Holiness, Perfection...**

As noted in footnote 559 above above, Wesley used the terms “salvation”, “holiness”, and “perfection” somewhat interchangeably. For this reason this section will include all these terms (insofar as they may be differentiated in his works) under the general heading of ‘sanctification’.

As discussed previously, the definition of justification excluded being *made* just or righteous. According to Wesley, incipient just-ness and right-ness were conferred in the “real change” of new birth. To *complete* this—bringing all to completion or maturity—was the rôle and task of sanctification.⁵⁹¹

Wesley taught that concomitant with justification and regeneration, the new Christian was also the recipient of an initial sanctification,⁵⁹² which might be termed “holiness-so-far” or “holiness-to-date”. It is an up-till-now idea, which permits Wesley to say that at the moment of conversion, all of God’s work is ‘perfect’ and ‘complete’ even while insisting that the newborn believer has a long way to go.

How can this be, if we are “new birth” creatures? As discussed above, Wesley explains by identifying three distinct elements of ‘sin’ in the believer, all of which must be eradicated. He contends that at justification one is delivered from the *guilt* of sin, at regeneration one is delivered from the *power* of sin, and through the gradual process of sanctification (begun at the new birth) one is delivered from the *root* of sin.⁵⁹³ In other words, Christians have two “lives” battling within them: a life of holiness and a life of sin. At regeneration, the life of holiness is born and begins to grow; the life of sin begins to shrivel and die.

⁵⁹¹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:187.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, 3:204.

Thus, the life of the Christian is both positive (growth in grace and love) and negative (killing the root of sin, which hinders the positive aspect until that sin-root is truly dead). Both these aspects of the Christian's life require the active involvement of the believer, until at last all sin is eradicated, and perfect love for God and man—a.k.a. entire sanctification—is achieved.

To illustrate this, Wesley uses an extended analogy in his *New Birth* sermon.⁵⁹⁴ Here he explains that a human child born into the physical world still needs to grow, for he is not yet a man; before birth he has eyes but does not see, a brain but does not reason, etc. *After* birth, however, eyes begin to see and reason begins to function. Growth in every physical capacity is both natural and necessary, for a child—and regarding Man's spiritual life, Wesley exclaims: “How exactly does the parallel hold in all these instances!”⁵⁹⁵

Jesse Peck makes a helpful delineation:

There is a broad and necessary distinction between the existence of a thing and the state of the thing existing, between the fact of life and the mode of life, between a soul spiritually alive and the moral condition of [that] living spirit. . . . Regeneration appropriately designates the former, sanctification the latter. . . . Now here are two things totally distinct from each other, as much so as a fact and a quality of a fact, a thing and an accident of a thing can be. . . . regeneration, the production of spiritual life; sanctification, the treatment of the soul spiritually alive—neither of which can, without violence to the laws of language, perform the office of the other.⁵⁹⁶

Thus, even if a newborn infant is a ‘perfect’ baby, it still can grow and improve; for though it might get ‘perfect’ marks on a pediatrician's chart, it would not pass adult coordination or reasoning exams. So it is with Wesley's thought: the “new birth” Christian's life is in infancy. The infant believer is perfect *for where s/he is*, (a relative perfection) and thus God's simultaneous works of justification, regeneration, and initial sanctification can all be declared

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., 2:191–94.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., 2:192.

⁵⁹⁶ Jesse Truesdell Peck, *The Central Idea of Christianity* (Boston, MA: H.V. Degen, 1858), 14–16.

“perfect” and “complete” works, even though there is room for (and need for) further growth in that Christian’s life. You can’t remain a baby forever!

Wesley’s *ordo salutis*

When considering the totality of John Wesley’s doctrine, Albert Outler states: “The restoration of our corrupted and disabled ‘image’ to its pristine capacity is, indeed, the goal of Wesley’s *ordo salutis*.”⁵⁹⁷ What are the steps along the way?

Following the definitions and understandings outlined above, Wesley’s unique *ordo* may be discerned. Long study of both Scripture and human experience led him to discern the following stages in a believer’s life, each infused with a different element of God’s grace specific to the need:

- Prevenient grace (given to natural Man at birth)
- Repentance (the result of convicting or convincing grace)
- Initial justification (the gift of justifying grace)
- Regeneration (alternately ‘conversion’ or ‘the new birth’)
- Initial sanctification
- Gradual sanctification (enabled by God’s sanctifying grace)
- Entire sanctification (the result of perfecting grace)
- Final justification and glorification (alternately ‘final salvation’).

Although entire dissertations could be written on each of the steps outlined above, it may succinctly be noted that

⁵⁹⁷ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:118, f/n 5.

- 1) God enables depraved Man, *via* prevenient grace, to strive for the sake of his spiritual life.
- 2) Upon justification/regeneration/initial sanctification, the newborn Christian is “so far perfect as not to commit sin”.⁵⁹⁸
- 3) The Christian has a new life in which he/she is expected to grow.
- 4) This growth will culminate in perfection (entire sanctification) in this life—for most “in the article of death”, but Wesley saw no reason that it should not be granted earlier.⁵⁹⁹ This expectation became the thrust of Methodist preaching and practice.
- 5) Such perfection is amissible (as is salvation itself) although Wesley maintains that it can also be regained.⁶⁰⁰
- 6) Final justification leads to glorification (heaven)—but a person *must* be entirely sanctified, for “without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). For those who worry that they may not achieve perfection during their earthly years, Wesley assures that it will be granted “a little before death” if need be.⁶⁰¹

From a soteriological perspective, Wesley’s doctrine of Christian perfection hinges upon his definition of justification and sanctification. Harald Lindström, in his respected discussion of Wesley’s understanding of sanctification, says: “But as sanctification is considered necessary to final justification it acquires another basic meaning. Incorporated in a process of salvation aiming at the sanctity which is a necessary qualification for eternal life, it is clear that

⁵⁹⁸ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 23.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 114, 88.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

*sanctification must become the dominant component in salvation.”*⁶⁰²

How does this conception of the way of salvation compare with the orthodox Lutheran understanding of Scripture? The next chapter contains summary of Lutheran terms and doctrines which will directly affect our evaluation of John Wesley’s teaching.

⁶⁰² Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 125; emphasis added.

CHAPTER FOUR

MARTIN LUTHER'S THEOLOGY

Introduction

Martin Luther Himself

More than a hundred years ago, in the introduction to his biography of Martin Luther, Preserved Smith notes: “A glance at the catalogue of almost any great library—that of the British Museum, for example—will show that more has been written about Luther than about any man, save one, who ever lived.”⁶⁰³ He then asks rhetorically, “Why bring another coal to this Newcastle?”⁶⁰⁴ Why, indeed!

Since many excellent biographies and analyses of Luther’s life and times are available (and since the intended readers of this dissertation are likely quite familiar with Luther’s spiritual formation) this chapter will not dwell on the Reformer’s *life* in any great detail. Those who wish to examine his formative years or his development as a theologian may consult books such as those by Kittelson,⁶⁰⁵ Kolb,⁶⁰⁶ Lohse,⁶⁰⁷ *et al.* It is what Luther believed, taught, and confessed, that is our focus.

⁶⁰³ Martin Luther, *The Life and Letters of Martin Luther*, ed. Preserved Smith (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), viii. The one exception, of course, is our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, viii. Newcastle-on-Tyne in England has been a coal mining center since the Middle Ages. The expression “carrying coal to Newcastle” denotes a redundant/manifestly unnecessary effort.

⁶⁰⁵ James M. Kittelson, *Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and His Career* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003).

⁶⁰⁶ Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁶⁰⁷ Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1986).

The Sources for Study of Lutheran Theology

It was observed at the outset of the last chapter that John Wesley never compiled a systematic summary of his teaching. No more did Martin Luther. As Timothy Lull notes, Luther “was more a contextual theologian than a systematician—usually responding to specific opponents and immediate pastoral challenges”.⁶⁰⁸ In the unfolding battle that was the Reformation, Luther’s weapon of choice was the pulpit rather than the primer. He told his students,

[I]t is not at all in keeping with the New Testament to write books on Christian doctrine. Rather in all places there should be fine, goodly, learned, spiritual, diligent preachers without books, who extract the living word from the old Scripture and unceasingly inculcate it into the people, just as the apostles did. For before they wrote, they first of all preached to the people by word of mouth and converted them, and this was their real apostolic and New Testament work. That is the right star which points to Christ’s birth and the angelic message which tells of the swaddling clothes and the crib.⁶⁰⁹

Luther’s oft-stated goal was to direct others to *Scripture*, there to discern for themselves the truths it contained. He considered his written works no more than poor and temporary road signs pointing the way for those who would follow. To his printers in Erlangen he wrote:

I had hoped that people would henceforth pay more attention to the Holy Scriptures themselves and let my books go now that they have served their purpose and led men’s hearts into and up to the Scriptures, which was my reason for writing my books. What is the use of making many books and yet always staying away from the chief book? Drink rather from the fountain itself than from the rill that has led you to the fountain.⁶¹⁰

Yet despite his protestations, Luther’s writings—like Wesley’s—continue to be a source of

⁶⁰⁸ Timothy Lull, “Luther’s Writings,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 39.

⁶⁰⁹ Luther, *AE*, 52:206.

⁶¹⁰ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters*, ed. Preserved Smith and Charles M. Jacobs, trans. Preserved Smith and Charles M. Jacobs, 2 (Philadelphia, PA: Lutheran Publication Society, 1918), 189.

instruction, guidance and inspiration to those who follow.

Neither group can complain for lack of source material. Both Luther and Wesley were prolific writers; the recently-completed Weimarer Ausgabe⁶¹¹ (WA) weighs in at more than 130 bound volumes comprising approximately 80,000 pages—and *still* does not contain everything Luther wrote. This, added to his “contextual” approach to theologizing, makes the search for precisely “what Luther said” or “what Luther believed” on any given topic challenging indeed.

Quoting Luther Against Himself

It is also possible to find “Luther quotes” that flatly contradict one another—a fact his critics remark with some relish. Yet this does not mean that Luther was inconsistent or capricious in his thinking—it only means that he matured in his thinking as the years passed. No one (least of all Luther) would deny that, as a young man, he was thoroughly steeped in the Roman Catholic theology of his day. Therefore it is not surprising to find that his early writings reflect both Scholastic *and* incipient Reformation thought.⁶¹² Development, not the Damascus Road, characterize Luther’s spiritual journey.

This is true even when discussing specific “events” such as Luther’s so-called “Tower Experience”. Given his descriptions thereof, which can be found in writings as diverse as the *Vorrede* to the 1545 edition of his Latin works on one hand,⁶¹³ and a dinnertime discourse in his *Table Talk* on the other,⁶¹⁴ one might assume the Tower Experience was a sudden new insight at a specific point in time—after which his theology was always in keeping with that innovative

⁶¹¹ Luther, WA.

⁶¹² Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999), 46.

⁶¹³ Luther, *AE*, 34:336–38.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 54:193.

idea.

But neither Luther's collected writings, nor his various descriptions of the Tower Experience taken together, bear this out. In fact, scholars today hotly contest the date and even the precise content and nature of the breakthrough Luther describes. Rather, it would seem that Luther struggled with competing theologies—those which he had been taught, vs. those which Scripture revealed—when forging his own understanding.

Concerning the Tower Experience itself, Uuras Saarnivaara has well shown⁶¹⁵ that even if Luther *did* first start to understand the true meaning of Romans 3:21's "righteousness of God" as early as 1513, the implications did not fully manifest themselves in his thinking and writing until 1518. "Therefore", Saarnivaara concludes, "the experience in the tower of the Wittenberg monastery was not at all *initial* in his spiritual and theological development. On the contrary, it was a kind of culmination or conclusion."⁶¹⁶

No one was more aware of his maturation—and the errors contained in his early writings—than Luther himself. In the March 5, 1545 foreword to his collected Latin works, he writes:

But above all, I beseech the God-blessed reader, and on behalf of our Lord Jesus Christ, to read these things with good judgment, indeed, with much mercy. And bear in mind that I was once a monk, and an extremely foolish Papist when I began. . . . So you will find, in these my earlier writings, how many and great things I humbly conceded to the Pope, which I in later times held (and now hold and curse) as the highest blasphemy and abomination. May you therefore, beloved God-blessed reader, ascribe these errors *or (as they [i.e., Luther's critics] gripe) contradictions of speech*, to the time and my ignorance. I was alone at first, and certainly very clumsy and unlearned to be handling such great matters. . . .

I relate [all] this, dear reader, so that when you read my work, you would be mindful that I (as I have said above) was alone, and that I am (as Augustine wrote

⁶¹⁵ Saarnivaara, *Luther Discovers the Gospel*, notably chapter 8.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 105; emphasis added.

about himself) one who has grown through writing and teaching. [I am] not one of those who, from nothing, suddenly attained the highest [wisdom].⁶¹⁷

Luther's Hermeneutical Principle

With a lively awareness of his own fallibility—and perhaps in reaction to the woes associated with the overly-analytical reasoning of the Scholastics—Martin Luther was determined to let Scripture speak for itself as he sought the truth. He was willing to let apparently contradictory statements stand, rather than try to reconcile them. Attempts to “fix Scriptural problems” by making them bend to humanity’s limited intellect had produced doctrinal errors such as Pelagianism and Arianism, as well as innumerable theodicies. Luther was determined to take Scripture as a whole and, even if its words offended human reason, to accept them at their face—letting God dictate what Truth was.

A noteworthy example of this hermeneutic centers on length of time it took almighty God to create the heavens and the earth. Odd as it may sound to twenty-first-century ears, many in Luther’s day were arguing for a *shorter* time span—one day, rather than six. Luther’s response to this squabble is well worth taking to heart in our own time.

How long did the work of Creation take? When Moses writes that God created heaven and earth and whatever is in them in six days, then let this period continue to have been six days, and do not venture to devise any comment according to which six days were one day. But, if you cannot understand how this could have been done in six days, then *grant the Holy Spirit the honor of being more learned than you are*. For you are to deal with Scripture in such a way that you bear in mind that God Himself says what is written. But since God is speaking, it is not fitting for you wantonly to turn His Word in the direction you wish to go.⁶¹⁸

This hermeneutic is certainly instrumental in establishing Luther’s understanding of Man,

⁶¹⁷ Martin Luther, *Dr. Martin Luthers Sämmtliche Schriften*, ed. Johann Georg Walch, 4 (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1898), col. 439–40, 449; translation mine, emphasis added.

⁶¹⁸ Martin Luther, *What Luther Says: An Anthology* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1959), 1523; emphasis added.

⁶¹⁹ as well. This has far-reaching consequences, for Luther's understanding of Man is key to his entire theology—Man as he is *according to the entire counsel of God*, not as proscribed by the intersection of Scripture and the science or reason of the day. Luther searched the Scriptures alone, and arrived at an understanding of Man as a whole, not merely as a sum of parts or attributes. What is Man? What does it mean to be “human”? All of Luther's theology (including his doctrine of God) ties in to these questions.

Throughout *his* life, John Wesley's study of humankind included a keen interest in medicine and the natural sciences, even leading him to publish his own book of recommended diet, exercise, and home treatment.⁶²⁰ This is not as surprising as it might seem at first—Randy Maddox writes,

In considering Wesley's interest in health and healing, it is helpful to recall that study of basic medicine had become part of the training of Anglican clergy candidates in the seventeenth century. It was common—at least in smaller villages—for priests to offer medical care as part of their overall ministry. . . . My working list of medical works that Wesley cites or mentions over his life span stands at nearly 100 items.⁶²¹

Luther, in contrast, had relatively little interest in Man's physiology,⁶²² devoting himself chiefly to the question of our spiritual condition and how that condition affects our status as human creatures *viz.* our Creator. In fact, for Luther, anthropology was indissolubly bound to soteriology—who or what Man is, *apart from God's plan for him*, he deemed either unknowable

⁶¹⁹ Consistent with its usage in preceding chapters, the term ‘Man’ (capitalized) refers to the inclusive categorical idea of ‘mankind’.

⁶²⁰ John Wesley, *Primitive Physick Or an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases* (London: W. Straham, 1761), . This book went through an astounding twenty-three printings in Wesley's lifetime alone.

⁶²¹ Randy L. Maddox, “John Wesley on Holistic Health and Healing,” *Methodist History* 46, (2007): 5.

⁶²² Even Luther's 1536 *Disputation Concerning Man* focuses more on the significance of Man's ability to reason, than his physical being. For a recent and succinct evaluation of the place of Man's physical body in Luther's theology, see Charles Lloyd Cortright, “‘Poor Maggot-Sack That I Am’: The Human Body in the Theology of Martin Luther” (PhD diss., Marquette, 2011). While Cortright's dissertation focuses largely on questions human sexuality, it effectively demonstrates that Luther's overarching concern with Man remained the soul/spirit; the corporeal tent itself was rarely, if ever, a matter of independent consideration for the Reformer.

or unimportant.⁶²³ Lohse summarizes: “Luther’s statements about human creation must be seen first in connection with his view of the world’s creation, and second within the context of the history of salvation.”⁶²⁴

Given these insights into Luther’s theological development and hermeneutical approach, as we seek to determine “Luther’s theology” our focus will be on the mature Luther’s teachings. Our areas of interest are the same as they were with our exploration of John Wesley’s teachings in chapter three, and since his understanding of Man is central to his theological system, we begin with Luther’s anthropology.

The Doctrine of Man⁶²⁵

Mankind, like the rest of creation, exists only because God’s all-powerful Word created *and* sustains it.⁶²⁶ All creation derives not only its ontological existence but also its existential meaning from its relationship to the One who made it. This source-of-meaning is especially true for the crown of all creation (Genesis 1:26–31); in his *Disputation Concerning Man*, Luther asserts that human beings “are” human in that they are justified by faith⁶²⁷—that is to say, human beings only actualize their full, true humanity *when and inasmuch as* they are in right (justified) relationship with their Creator. Oswald Bayer summarizes:

Luther takes what for him is the central passage in the Bible, Romans 3:28—concerning which he formulated no less than five series of theses!—as the definition

⁶²³ “Nor is there any hope that man in this principal part can himself know what he is until he sees himself in his origin which is God. And what is deplorable is that he does not have full and unerring control over either his counsel or thought but is subject to error and deception therein. But as this life is, such is the definition and knowledge of man, that is, fragmentary, fleeting, and exceedingly material.” Luther, *AE*, 34:138.

⁶²⁴ Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 199.

⁶²⁵ Consistent with its usage in preceding chapters, the term ‘Man’ in this discussion of anthropology will refer to the inclusive idea of ‘mankind’ and will be capitalized to emphasize the inclusive, categorical meaning.

⁶²⁶ Luther, *AE*, 1:75.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, 34:139.

of the human being: The human being is human *insofar as* he is justified through faith—in *that* he is justified by faith. Justifying faith for Luther is not something *about* a human being, no qualitative element, which comes only secondarily, as that which is accidental to the substance. *Moninem iustificari fide* (a human being is justified by faith) is, instead, a *fundamental* anthropological thesis. To be human means to have undeserved existence, that which is purely indebted to another.⁶²⁸

Thus Man’s purpose, meaning, and identity are constituted in being in right relationship with God. Further, this right-relational existence finds its expression in doing what God says humans do:

- They live in full, right relationship with God (“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”—Matthew 22:37) *and*
- They serve creation the way God intended from the very start. This entails having dominion over the earth—Genesis 1:28—but as compassionate stewards for the good of all creation (Genesis 2:15), rather than in self-serving tyranny. It also includes caring for other human creatures (Matthew 22:39).

Exercising despotic dominion would have been inconceivable for the caretakers of Eden, since their will was in complete harmony with God’s. In truth, the only hope for fulfilling such a daunting and selfless duty lies in living with utter harmony with, and complete dependence upon, the Creator.⁶²⁹ Only in doing what God designed them to do—and in living in full, right relationship with Him—is anyone truly “human” *according to God’s design and description*.⁶³⁰

⁶²⁸ Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther’s Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 2008), 155–56; emphasis original.

⁶²⁹ Consider King Solomon’s God-pleasing plea: “Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?” (1 Kgs 3:9, ESV)

⁶³⁰ The temptation exists to use such a definition of humanity as a weapon, to demean and denigrate certain kinds of people by declaring them to be “so far out of harmony with God that you can’t even call them human”. In similar fashion have some sought to demean and oppress women through misuse of passages such as Col. 3:18 and Eph. 5:22, or justify nineteenth-century American slavery by appealing to a so-called “curse of Ham”. But (potential for) misuse of Scripture or its doctrines dare not trump the need for teaching the truth; these dangers only reinforce the importance of clear and careful proclamation.

One of a Kind

The human creature is different from any other created being in a number of ways. First, the mode of Man's creation differed from the rest of the cosmos. In Luther's words, "man was created by a unique counsel and wisdom and shaped by the finger of God"—which method, second, "points to the immortality of the soul". He further explains that God "does not leave it to the earth to produce him [Man], like the animals and the trees. But He Himself shapes him according to His image as if he were God's partner and one who would enjoy God's rest."⁶³¹ The birds, beasts, and fish received their life by divine fiat; Man became a living being by receiving the very *נְשַׁמַּת אֱלֹהִים* in his nostrils.

A third distinction which, as Luther himself put it, "is worthy of wonderment is God's plan in creating man, that although He had created him for physical life and bodily activity, He nevertheless added *intellectual power*, which is also in the angels, with the result that man is a living being compounded of the natures of the brute and of the angels".⁶³² Though Lady Psyche (in)famously opined that Man "at best is only a monkey shaved",⁶³³ Scripture sees him in a much nobler light: mankind traffics in spheres physical *and* spiritual. The "dual nature" of Man highlights the fourth and greatest distinction of all: Man was created to be in full, conscious relationship with God as well as with other creatures. The aforementioned "intellectual powers" were granted to facilitate movement in both spheres, although they serve significantly different purposes in each.

⁶³¹ Luther, *AE*, 1:84; emphasis added.

⁶³² *Ibid.*, 1:112.

⁶³³ Gilbert & Sullivan, *Princess Ida*, Act 2, quoted in Robert Andrews, ed., *The Columbia Dictionary of Quotations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 294.

Ratio

Key among the “intellectual powers” is Mankind’s “Reason.” Contrary to the critiques of some writers, Luther always held Reason in high regard—in its proper place. He wrote in his *Wartburg Postil* that “the natural light of reason...is the sole ground for calling [Man] human and for his having human worth”,⁶³⁴ and in another place⁶³⁵ equated Adam’s “enlightened reason” with the pre-Fall *imago Dei*.⁶³⁶ What is this wonder, this power, called Reason?

Broadly speaking, for Luther, Reason (hereafter denoted by the Latin *ratio*) comprised the capacity to understand and judge (“*vim intelligenti et iudicandi*”) things.⁶³⁷ He called it “a beautiful light”⁶³⁸ and plainly considered *ratio* one of the greatest gifts God bestowed on us.⁶³⁹ Yet he can also be found writing about it in far less favorable terms: he variously calls *ratio* “Frau Hulda”⁶⁴⁰ (a capricious, elfin creature of German mythology thought to sow disorder among men), “the devil’s bride”,⁶⁴¹ and “the foremost whore the devil has”.⁶⁴² How can one and

⁶³⁴ Luther, *AE*, 52:60. It is true he elsewhere said that “it is by *speech*, more than by his shape or by any other work, that man is most distinguished from other animals” (*ibid.*, 35:254; emphasis added), but surely this denotes reasoned speech, since many animals communicate vocally.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:63.

⁶³⁶ Apart from the Genesis lecture description of the *imago* as Adam’s “enlightened reason”, Luther did not further analyze the substance or components of the “image of God.” Consistent with his hermeneutic, Luther limited himself to simply saying: “Man was created in the image of God, in the image of righteousness, of course, of divine holiness and truth, but in such a way that he could lose it”; *Ibid.*, 34:177. Beyond this he felt it was fruitless (and even dangerous) to inquire or speculate, since our fallen faculties have never known the pre-Fall perfection which Adam enjoyed.

⁶³⁷ Luther, *WA*, 42:93. Bernhard Lohse describes it as “the capacity for knowledge, thus critical understanding, insight, mental activities in the broadest sense, the weighing or arguments, the capacity for drawing conclusions, as well as, finally, the philosophical effort at a comprehensive view of the world and humankind”; Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 201.

⁶³⁸ Luther, *WA*, 48:76.

⁶³⁹ Luther, *AE*, 42:145.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 40:174.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 51:374.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*

the same thing (*ratio*) be praised and excoriated by one and the same man? The key to comprehending Luther’s varying attitudes towards *ratio* is to recognize that he understood “intellectual power” to play very different rôles in the physical and spiritual realms.

In his 1536 *Disputation Concerning Man*, Luther says:

4. [I]t is certainly true that reason is the most important and the highest in rank among all things and, in comparison with other things of this life, the best and something divine.
5. It is the inventor and mentor of all the arts, medicines, laws, and of whatever wisdom, power, virtue, and glory men possess in this life.
6. By virtue of this fact it ought to be named the essential difference by which man is distinguished from the animals and other things.
7. Holy Scripture also makes it lord over the earth, birds, fish, and cattle, saying, “Have dominion” [Gen. 1:28].
8. That is, that it is a sun and a kind of god appointed to administer these things in this life.
9. Nor did God after the fall of Adam take away this majesty of reason, but rather confirmed it.⁶⁴³

Luther believed *ratio* a great blessing in the affairs of this life—that is, in matters under mankind’s divinely-granted dominion. When *ratio* is rightly employed (to help us understand God’s will and carry it out, or in service to our neighbor—sometimes called the “ministerial” use of reason⁶⁴⁴) the Reformer considered it worthy of highest praise.

Ratio enables us to mark and understand the passing of time (which Luther,⁶⁴⁵ like Aristotle,⁶⁴⁶ considers a definitive difference between mankind and the beasts of the field). It guides society and animates the arts. Althaus summarizes by saying that

within ‘earthly government’ in the broadest sense in which Luther can use that term, reason alone is the final authority; it contains within itself the basis for judging and deciding about the proper regulation and administration of earthly matters such as

⁶⁴³ Ibid., 34:137.

⁶⁴⁴ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1950), I:197.

⁶⁴⁵ Luther, *AE*, 1:44.

⁶⁴⁶ See his discussion in *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, trans. John K. Ryan, Image Books edition. (Garden City, NY: Image, 1960), bk. 11, chapters 11–31.

economics and politics. In these matters the Bible, Christian preaching, and theology have nothing to say.⁶⁴⁷

On the other hand, for Man's unregenerate and limited mental faculties to sit in judgment over God's Word, deciding whether to accept or reject God's revelation and will—sometimes referred to as the “magisterial” use of reason⁶⁴⁸—is in Luther's opinion the most damnable height of arrogance. Consider this exchange from his 1533 *Table Talk*:

[The question was asked,] Is the light of reason also useful [to theology]?
[Martin Luther answered:] “I make a distinction. Reason that is under the devil's control is harmful, and the more clever and successful it is, the more harm it does. We see this in the case of learned men who on the basis of their reason disagree with the Word. On the other hand, when illuminated by the Holy Spirit, reason helps to interpret the Holy Scriptures. . . . reason, when illuminated [by the Spirit], helps faith by reflecting on something, but reason without faith isn't and can't be helpful. . . . reason that's illuminated takes all its thoughts from the Word. The substance remains and the unreal disappears when reason is illuminated by the Spirit.”⁶⁴⁹

It is in these spiritual matters *ratio* finds its important limits—limits affected and imposed by original sin.

On Original Sin

Luther described the fall into sin by saying that initially, in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve enjoyed a “concreated hereditary righteousness in Paradise, or...God's image, according to which man was originally created in truth, holiness, and righteousness”.⁶⁵⁰ But then, “as soon as they ate from the forbidden tree and sinned, just as soon this hereditary righteousness failed and was ruined. Then evil desires began to be roused and grow in them, then they were inclined to

⁶⁴⁷ Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1966), 65.

⁶⁴⁸ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, I:197.

⁶⁴⁹ Luther, *AE*, 54:71.

⁶⁵⁰ F. Bente, ed., *Concordia Triglotta - The Symbolic Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1921), 863.

haughtiness, unchastity, lust of the flesh and all sins such as we find now.”⁶⁵¹

Luther understood the *imago Dei*, which was part of the Creator’s will for Mankind, to be *relational* in nature, rather than physical or objective. It was the state-of-*being-in* positive, trusting, assenting fellowship with Him; Yahweh’s will and ways were Adam and Eve’s delight. In the Garden of Eden there was no dissonance whatsoever between God and Man. The Reformer concluded that this relational *imago* was utterly lost when the trust-bond with God was broken at the Fall (Genesis 3). Sin is, at its core, a distrust of God, originally displayed when Adam and Eve distrusted His Word and chose their own way instead. *Original sin* is this relation-shattering distrust of God, bequeathed to Adam and Eve’s descendants. This hereditary sin is something that those subsequent generations do not *per se* commit, but “it is no less reckoned to us than as if we ourselves had done it”.⁶⁵² The doctrine of Sin will be further discussed under its own heading below.

Effects of the Fall upon Reason *viz.* Spiritual Matters

The consequences of the Fall were as devastating as they were comprehensive. Man’s spiritual capacities were completely corrupted (a condition often referred to as total depravity), with the result that neither Adam, nor Eve, nor their naturally-begotten descendants, could understand God’s will or seek Him aright. In fact, the rebellion and brokenness of the Fall twisted Man’s *ratio* to the point that the creatures who were intended to enjoy undimmed fellowship with God Himself were thereafter conceived and born spiritually blind, dead, and enemies of God—“children of wrath”, as St. Paul says in Ephesians 2:3. This dreadful state truly is the only possible outcome, when a spiritual nature *whose sole foundation and purpose is a*

⁶⁵¹ Luther, WA, 17(II):283; cited and translated in Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 252.

⁶⁵² “*wirt uns nit winger zu gerechnet, den als heten wir sie selbs gethan.*” Luther, WA, 17(II):282.

God-ward orientation turns away from God in rebellion.

Note well that the human creature's ontological standing as a spiritual being is not eliminated—as discussed above, it is part of Man's essential nature to be a physical and spiritual, dependent, created being. It is the God-ward focus or orientation that has been lost, with the concomitant damage that such a loss brings. Due to its inherently dependent creatureliness, a fallen human will still seek *some* kind of “spiritual” relationship to fill the void once occupied by the Creator. This search for spiritual completion is the root of idolatry, whether the chosen idol is self or some other created thing.

That quest for spiritual wholeness may (and in many cases *will*) continue with all the human creature's energy, but according to Scripture, fallen persons can neither identify⁶⁵³ nor regain⁶⁵⁴ the one, right, spiritual relationship on their own. They can only continue on a self-focused, self-destructive course.⁶⁵⁵

Effects of the Fall upon Reason *viz.* Earthly Matters

Luther's detractors repudiate his depressing diagnosis of Reason by pointing out that, even in this fallen world, countless people are demonstrably not self-destructive, etc. On the contrary, evidence of selflessness and generosity abound. But Luther's severe censure is directed towards fallen *ratio*'s capability re: spiritual matters—matters which Luther liked to call “things above” us.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵³ 2Cor. 4:4; 1Cor. 1:23

⁶⁵⁴ Rom. 8:7–8

⁶⁵⁵ The spiritual nature of man is roughly analogous to the fire kindled in a home's furnace: the fire is designed to be in a specific relationship (beneath the boiler) for a specific purpose (heat). If that relationship is broken (furnace ruptures), the once-beneficial fire, released from the confines of its right relationship, becomes a danger to all the home. Nor is the fire, “by its own reason or strength”, capable of restoring itself to its proper place.

⁶⁵⁶ Luther, *AE*, 25:375; see also Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 167. Note that Luther often describes fallen Man's reason in other terms. His descriptions of Man's “flesh”, “flesh and blood”, “nature”, “sense”, and even “free

Regarding things of *this* life, Luther extols *ratio*. He understands Genesis 1:27's pre-Fall state to include every (rational) capacity for law, science, economics, medicine, etc.—“all the strength and wisdom implanted in Paradise”. He continues by saying that “Holy Scripture does not censure, but approves the laws introduced and the arts which have been found [through the earthly use of reason].”⁶⁵⁷

This pragmatic *ratio* was not eliminated when Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden.⁶⁵⁸ The pragmatic aspect of *ratio* remains, post-Fall, although it is naturally subject to the same ruination-by-sin suffered by the rest of our faculties.⁶⁵⁹ The extent of its degradation can only be conjectured, since we have no concept of mankind's pre-Fall powers⁶⁶⁰ and also lack the *extra nos* perspective necessary to make such an evaluation.⁶⁶¹ Tragically, whatever powers and ingenuity remain to us are turned inward, and made to serve “the sinful self-awareness and self-glorification of fallen man”.⁶⁶²

So humanity retains the ability to think, govern, explore, discover, invent, and so on.

Furthermore, fallen *ratio*'s capacities and inquisitiveness can still guide the human creature in

will” can be found to be actually referring to *ratio*. Consider, *e.g.*, the way he equates these terms when he says that it is the Gospel, not “reason or free will” (*ratio aut liberum arbitrium*), that identifies Christ as Deliverer from sin, death, hell, and the wrath of God; Luther, WA, 18:766.

⁶⁵⁷ “Ubi implantatum et concreatum Ius, scientia rerum Oeconomicarum, Medicinae etc. . . .vires et opes sapientiae implantatae in paradiso. Ideo Sacra scriptura non curat, sed approbat leges conditas, inventas artes.” Luther, WA, 40(III):222.

⁶⁵⁸ “Nor did God after the fall of Adam take away this majesty of reason, but rather confirmed it.” Luther, AE, 34:137.

⁶⁵⁹ “[I]t is certain enough to the believers that neither animal nor rational powers have been left undiminished.” Ibid., 34:155.

⁶⁶⁰ “[W]hen we speak about that [pre-Fall] image, we are speaking about something unknown. Not only have we had no experience of it, but we continually experience the opposite; and so we hear nothing except bare words.” Ibid., 1:63.

⁶⁶¹ Bente, *Concordia Triglotta - The Symbolic Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 476–77; “By faith alone we must believe that we are sinners, for it is not manifest to us.” Luther, AE, 25:215.

⁶⁶² Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 66.

rudimentary spiritual explorations, since knowledge of the *existence* of God is manifest in the physical world (Romans 1:20) and even fallen human *ratio* apprehends elements of natural law. But beyond these elementary intellectual queries *ratio* cannot reliably proceed, for “that most beautiful and most excellent of all creatures, which reason is even after sin, remains under the power of the devil”.⁶⁶³ Luther admonishes,

In external and worldly matters let reason be the judge. . . . God has endowed you with reason to show you how to milk a cow, to tame a horse, and to realize that a hundred guldens are more than ten guldens. There you should demonstrate your smartness; there be a master and an apt fellow, and utilize your skill. But in heavenly matters and in matters of faith, when a question of salvation is involved, bid reason observe silence and hold still. Do not apply the yardstick of reason, but give ear and say: Here I cannot do it; these matters do not agree with reason as do the things mentioned above. There you must hold your reason in check and say: I do not know; I will not try to figure it out or measure it with my understanding, but I will keep still and listen; for this is immeasurable and incomprehensible to reason.⁶⁶⁴

The Doctrine of Sin

With this foundation, Luther’s radical and all-important understanding of sin can be examined. Bernhard Lohse declares that Luther’s “new view of sin comprises the actual motif for practically all other themes”⁶⁶⁵ in his theological system. To understand the significance of Luther’s “new view”, it is helpful to consider the models Luther had learned.

Early Scholastics understood original sin as a “defect” or deficiency—a lack of original righteousness⁶⁶⁶ which we inherited from our first parents—although gauging the presence or absence of righteousness in a person’s will is a subjective matter at best. The view of sin as defect led naturally to the idea that such a defect in will and character can be bettered, by the

⁶⁶³ Luther, *AE*, 34:139.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 23:84.

⁶⁶⁵ Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 248.

⁶⁶⁶ St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947), pt. II.1, question 82.

infusion of grace: *forma*.

Erfurt Occamism, by contrast, taught that the original sin we contend with is our lack-of-acceptance by God (*non-acceptatio divina*), on account of Adam and Eve's rebellion; thus the "problem" of original sin is located in God. Actual or individual sins, on the other hand, are acts of the human will that render the sinner guilty. Perhaps most significantly, Occam taught that Man, even post-Fall, could keep the commandments of God by dint of effort.

Luther rejected both Aquinas' and Occam's lines of thought. Remember that the Reformer defined humans as creatures whose existence centers on their being in right relationship with God—by hearing what God says and believing His words and promises.⁶⁶⁷ What, then, would be the result if that essential relationship were sundered? Luther's conclusion was that such a break with God ruined mankind to the extent that "absolutely no man can ever discover or comprehend his [own] wickedness"⁶⁶⁸—for sin is

a total lack of uprightness and of the power of all the faculties both of body and soul and of the whole inner and outer man. On top of all this, it is a propensity toward evil. It is a nausea toward the good, a loathing of light and wisdom, and a delight in error and darkness, a flight from and an abomination of all good works, a pursuit of evil. . . . Therefore, as the ancient holy fathers so correctly said, this original sin is the very tinder of sin, the law of the flesh, the law of the members, the weakness of our nature, the tyrant, the original sickness, etc. For it is like a sick man whose mortal illness is not only the loss of health of one of his members, but it is, in addition to the lack of health in all his members, the weakness of all of his senses and powers, culminating even in his disdain for those things which are healthful and in his desire for those things which make him sick.⁶⁶⁹

Sin, for Luther, was not just a *lack* of something, a deficiency to be remedied by application of some spiritual tonic, as the Scholastics maintained. Nor was it at its core a problem

⁶⁶⁷ cf. Oswald Bayer's analysis in Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 154–58; Luther summarizes this thought well in *The Freedom of a Christian*, Luther, *AE*, 31:350.

⁶⁶⁸ Luther, *AE*, 32:240.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 25:299.

with what God thinks of us. Luther considered sin to be an active thing in the human creature—a virile and virulent *distrust* of God, rather than a passive, *absence* of trust in Him. It was the living desire to establish one’s own righteousness and worthiness before God⁶⁷⁰ and a radical self-absorption which Luther called *incurvatus in se*⁶⁷¹ and self-will—the desire to be one’s own god, adoring self rather than adoring and trusting the Creator.⁶⁷² Further, this unbelief and distrust of God was an ongoing state-of-being, rather than a one-time action, which found its genesis in Adam and Eve’s rebellion. Says Luther,

[H]ereditary sin or natural sin or personal sin is the truly chief sin. If this sin did not exist, there would also be no actual sin. This sin is not committed, as are all other sins; rather it *is*. It lives and commits all sins and is the real essential sin which does not sin for an hour or for a while; rather no matter where or how long a person lives, this sin is there too.⁶⁷³

The proper, dreadful understanding of sin is crucial to the theological task. As Lohse observes, “for Luther, apart from a true knowledge of sin’s nature there is knowledge neither of grace nor the righteousness of God”.⁶⁷⁴ If sin consists in mere actions or deficiencies, then the remedy is comparatively simple (albeit not “easy”), and righteousness before God is, in theory, attainable.

On the other hand, if sin’s root is in the core of our being, remediation is not the answer; redemption and rebirth are. We need a solution that is all-pervasive and originates *extra nos*. It is for this reason that Luther’s definition of sin—endemic to the human condition as it is—is so significant: it provides the foil for his understanding of human righteousness.

⁶⁷⁰ Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 71.

⁶⁷¹ Luther, *AE*, 25:291, et al.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*, 31:46.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, 52:152; emphasis original.

⁶⁷⁴ Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 72.

Righteousness

In keeping with the idea of “taking the Word at His Word”—*i.e.*, taking the Word of God as written instead of imposing our presuppositions or logic on the text—Luther’s study of Scripture disclosed that the term “righteousness” as it applied to Man was *not* used univocally. Rather, the Word declares that the righteousness that humans need to be concerned about was of two distinct types.

His understanding of this important truth developed over time. The concept first appears in 1518, when both the *Heidelberg Disputation* (especially theses 25 and 27)⁶⁷⁵ and his *Sermon on the Three Kinds of Righteousness*⁶⁷⁶ brought it to light. Late 1518 or early 1519 saw clarification (some would say “correction”) with the sermon *Two Kinds of Righteousness*;⁶⁷⁷ his lengthy 1521 work *On Monastic Vows*,⁶⁷⁸ along with the pastoral *Sermon on the Three Kinds of Good Life for the Instruction of Consciences*⁶⁷⁹ and two later series of sermons on Genesis⁶⁸⁰ also developed the theme.

Luther’s full and mature understanding of the two kinds of righteousness, however, is found in the seminal *Galatians Commentary* of 1535.⁶⁸¹ Here he said that “[t]his is our theology,

⁶⁷⁵ Luther, *AE*, 31:41.

⁶⁷⁶ Luther, *WA*, 2:41–47. An English translation has been made; see Zweck, “Luther’s Sermon on the Three Kinds of Righteousness: Commentary with a New English Translation.” Note that there is lively debate over the order in which these works were presented; see, *e.g.*, Dainel E. Keen, “Two Early Sermons by Martin Luther: An Examination of the Theological Implications of the Dating of Luther’s Sermon on Three Kinds of Righteousness and His Sermon on Two Kinds of Righteousness,” *Perichoresis 2004* (2004): 97–107.

⁶⁷⁷ Luther, *AE*, 31:297–306.

⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 44:251–400.

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 44:235–42.

⁶⁸⁰ In 1523 and 1527, respectively; see Luther, *WA*, 24:1–710.

⁶⁸¹ Luther, *AE*, vols. 26–27.

by which we teach a precise distinction between these two kinds of righteousness”.⁶⁸² Kolb and Arand describe this distinction as “the ‘nervous system’ running through the body of Christian teaching”.⁶⁸³

Mirroring Jesus’ own bifurcation of the Law into loving the Lord with heart, soul, and mind and loving our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37 and 39), Luther declared that “we must be righteous before God *and* men”.⁶⁸⁴ But even as our relationship with God is far different from our relationship with other humans, so also the form and source of our righteousness differs. It is that first form of human righteousness we now consider.

Coram Deo Righteousness

Man’s righteousness *coram Deo*—before the face of God—is sometimes called righteousness in the “vertical” or “passive” dimension of human life. The reason for calling it “vertical” is, self-evidently, our position relative to our Creator-God. But in calling it a “passive” righteousness” (eight times in the *Galatians Commentary* preface alone⁶⁸⁵), Luther emphasizes that this right-ness, this right standing in the eyes of God, stems entirely from God’s activity. Humans, as created beings, are ineluctably dependent creatures; they receive all they are from God. For just as we receive everything for this body and life as gifts from the hand of our heavenly Father,⁶⁸⁶ so also our right standing with God is a gift from Him: “[H]ere we work nothing, render nothing to God; we only receive and permit someone else to work in us, namely, God. Therefore it is appropriate to call the righteousness of faith or Christian righteousness

⁶⁸² Ibid., 26:7.

⁶⁸³ Kolb and Arand, *The Genius of Luther’s Theology*, 25.

⁶⁸⁴ Luther, *AE*, 34:162; emphasis added.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid., 26:4–12.

⁶⁸⁶ Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 354.

‘passive’.’⁶⁸⁷

Luther likens the human condition—with Another’s righteousness granted me from outside of me—to earthly fields which can only passively receive rain:

As the earth itself does not produce rain and is unable to acquire it by its own strength, worship, and power but receives it only by a heavenly gift from above, so this heavenly righteousness is given to us by God without our work or merit. As much as the dry earth of itself is able to accomplish in obtaining the right and blessed rain, that much can we men accomplish by our own strength and works to obtain that divine, heavenly, and eternal righteousness.⁶⁸⁸

We human creatures, through sin, have lost the original right standing we had in the Garden of Eden. Through active distrust of God the relationship was broken, and we lack the ability to restore it. Such restoration can only come from outside us.⁶⁸⁹

Thanks be to God that such a restoration has been made. On account of Christ Jesus’ sinless life, innocent death, and glorious resurrection, full satisfaction for our sin has been made. Now the God-Man Jesus offers His righteousness—His right relationship with the Father, His own righteousness of life, action, and speech—to me. It is imputed to me, as a bride is said to own all that is her groom’s because they are one flesh.⁶⁹⁰ This “alien”⁶⁹¹ righteousness restores, indeed entirely *constitutes*, our good standing with God, and that righteousness is by its nature absolute. A human creature who possesses this righteousness is absolutely right with God, absolutely and completely perfect in His sight.

Such righteousness *grants* me my identity as God’s beloved child, apart from any working or achieving of my own. With Luther I can say:

⁶⁸⁷ Luther, *AE*, 26:5.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 26:6.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 31:297.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹¹ From the Latin *alius* meaning “of/belonging to another”.

I put myself beyond all active righteousness, all righteousness of my own or of the divine Law, and I embrace only that passive righteousness which is the righteousness of grace, mercy, and the forgiveness of sins. In other words, this is the righteousness of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, which we do not perform but receive, which we do not have but accept, when God the Father grants it to us through Jesus Christ.⁶⁹²

The Shape of *Coram Deo* Righteousness

Two points need to be made regarding *coram Deo* righteousness. First, the shape, or manifestation of this righteousness is “faith”. Not merely is it that *coram Deo* righteousness is “made one’s own” by the vehicle of faith; *coram Deo* righteousness is—that is, *it takes the form of*—faith.

In the form of faith, the right standing with God that belongs to Christ becomes my own. In the form of absolute trust and dependence upon God my heavenly Father (who loves me on account of my Savior’s finished work), Christ’s identity as sinless and beloved Child of the Father becomes my own.⁶⁹³ No works of my own need apply for recognition, here.

Second, the challenge *and* the blessing of passive righteousness is that it is a hidden rightness and perfection. To the world, passively-righteous Christians may appear little different than anyone else; faults, inadequacies, and deficiencies of performance are all too obvious. But though even the Christians themselves can see (and grieve over) their failings, these do not define their *coram Deo* righteousness. Rather, they anchor their confidence in the Gospel news that God offers a restored relationship with Himself, through (in-the-form-of) faith in Jesus’ death for every human creature. Here they follow in Abraham’s footsteps, for “ ‘Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,’ and he was called the friend of God” (James 2:23, NASB).

⁶⁹² Luther, *AE*, 26:6.

⁶⁹³ In his 1535 Galatians commentary, Luther explains: “To put on Christ is to put on righteousness, truth, and every grace, and the fulfillment of the whole Law. . . . You are righteous. . . . because by believing in Christ you have

The lives of Christians may not always or fully reflect their right standing (or “friendship”) with God. Yet, in keeping with Luther’s understanding that a person may be *simul iustus et peccator*,⁶⁹⁴ it can nonetheless be true. Christians learn to find, and cling to, their true identity as it is *given* to them by God, in His Word. For His Word is more than a collection of propositional statements: it does what it says. When God declares (or “reckons”, in St. James’ words above) a person righteous, it is both a juridical designation *and* it truly and ontologically makes the person right with Him. This new identity, coming as it does as a gift from the almighty God, is not gainsaid by the believer’s feelings, much less the opinions or accusations of others. The newly-bestowed identity is constitutive of the believer’s real nature; further, this righteousness is full and complete, *coram Deo*, the very moment God grants the human creature faith.

You Mean That’s All?

Many people who read Luther’s ideas on this subject objected vociferously. What about all the Scriptural calls to holiness of heart and life, to growth in sanctification and the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ? Passages of exhortation, such as:

“[B]e holy, because I [the LORD] am holy” (Leviticus 11:45),

“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48),

“[G]row in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18),

“[T]rain yourself to be godly. . . . Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress” (1 Timothy 4:7, 15),

“[D]ear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Corinthians 7:1), and even

put on Christ.” Ibid., 27:279–80.

⁶⁹⁴ “simultaneously saint and sinner”

“Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14),

certainly seem to indicate required effort *and* an incomplete holiness/righteousness on the part of believers. How can this be, if we are already fully right with God...and what, then, is the purpose and substance of the Christian life?

Luther recognized that while believers’ *coram Deo* righteousness was complete in God’s eyes the moment they are justified, there is often a significant span of earthly life between conversion and entering eternal rest. During those days or years, believers experience many ups and downs in their lives of faith; Scripture does describe *faith itself* as “growing” (2 Corinthians 10:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Colossians 2:7; *et al.*). This does not mean that believers grow “more justified” or “more right with God” as their faith in God grows, for their justness and rightness in His eyes depends on the finished work of Christ. It is the *human creature’s trust* in the always-trustworthy God that is growing; it is this perspective regarding the alien *coram Deo* righteousness that Luther maintains when he says:

Therefore this alien righteousness, instilled in us without our works by grace alone—while the Father, to be sure, inwardly draws us to Christ—is set opposite original sin, [which is] likewise alien, which we acquire[d] without our works by birth alone. Christ daily drives out the old Adam more and more in accordance with the extent to which faith and knowledge of Christ grow.⁶⁹⁵

The noteworthy elements here are that first, even though believers may grow in *their* trust in God, their *coram Deo* righteousness itself needs no growth since it is full and complete, ἐν Χριστῷ. Second, since the righteousness which avails before God is *extra nos*, it is never like a “substance” we “possess” on our own. John Kleinig, discussing Luther’s commentary on

⁶⁹⁵ Luther, *AE*, 31:297. Note that this sounds remarkably like Wesley’s description of Perfection. The difference is that for Luther it is perfected *through* (*i.e.*, by the process of) death, where Wesley is adamant that it be attained *before* death—even ‘in the article of death’ is understood to mean that perfection is worked nanoseconds before one fully dies, since “man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (Heb. 9:27).

Galatians,⁶⁹⁶ summarizes the Reformer’s thought by saying: “Our passive holiness is alien to us, part of the receptive life of faith, something available to us only in Christ; it is an extrinsic heavenly saintliness that is *always received and yet never possessed*.”⁶⁹⁷

This is not intended to be an “excuse” for failing to be (or failing to *strive* to be) a godly person in heart and life. Yet to view the righteousness by which we stand before God (analogous to Wesley’s holiness ‘without which no one shall see the Lord’, Hebrews 12:14) as a substance or quality “instilled in us” is to miss the most important aspect of that righteousness. True, we are declared righteous in God’s sight *propter Christi*. But we are declared “right” before God in order that we might live out that right-ness before the world. Full resolution of the apparent conflict between the creature’s status *coram Deo*, and Scripture’s call to spiritual growth and progress, comes most clearly in the proper understanding of the two kinds of human righteousness presented in Scripture. We consider now the second type of righteousness—the earthbound righteousness called *coram mundo* or *coram humanibus*.

Coram Mundo Righteousness

It is most certainly true that the Word of God is replete with calls to good and holy human performance. Such performance is also properly called “righteousness”...although it is of a different kind, since it relates to life and relationships on the horizontal plane of human existence. A person is “right” with God—the vertical relational plane of existence—through (in-the-form-of) faith in Christ. But that same person is only “right” with other humans—the *horizontal* relational plane of existence—solely through (in-the-form-of) a life that actively

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., 26:25.

⁶⁹⁷ John W. Kleinig, “Luther on Participation in God’s Holiness” (Unpublished Essay, n.d.), 3. This essay is an expansion of the article John W. Kleinig, “Sharing in God’s Holiness,” *Lutheran Theological Review* 1–2 (1995–1996): 105–18.

pursues God’s revealed will for his creation. This is what Luther called *coram mundo* righteousness. And while our vertical “rightness” can be absolute and complete because faith claims the completely finished but invisible work of Christ, our horizontal “rightness” is both patently obvious and woefully *incomplete*. Here in this life, we Christians are ever “works in progress”, with the Father calling and empowering us to grow into that which He has already declared us to be.

Like a child growing to adulthood or an athlete in training, Christians who are growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ experience both successes and failures. But where the athlete’s hope for Olympic gold hinges on ever-increasing skill, honed by dint of sheer effort and grueling regimen, Christians’ hope of the streets of gold (Revelation 21:21) does not. Our place in the Father’s house is already secure (John 14:2–3; John 5:24).

Yet the same gracious God who has given them the Kingdom (Luke 12:32) and declared them already declared them perfect (Song of Solomon 4:7) also urges them to keep working at it—to “be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish” (2 Peter 3:14). Unquestionably, then, there are still issues to address. Hearing their Father’s call to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles” and “run with perseverance the race marked out” for them (Hebrews 12:1), by the power of Christ at work in them, believers *want* to obey.

Luther names this living righteousness “active” or “proper” righteousness—active, because our own willful actions are involved; proper, from the Latin *proprius*, meaning “one’s own”.⁶⁹⁸

In his own words:

⁶⁹⁸ Note that Robert Kolb, eschewing both terms (possibly on account of potential 21st century misunderstanding of their meaning) chooses to call this our “Righteousness of Performance”. See Kolb, “Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness; Reflections on His Two-Dimensional Definition of Humanity at the Heart of His Theology”, esp. 453–55.

The second kind of righteousness is our proper righteousness, not because we alone work it, but because we work with that first and alien righteousness. This is that manner of life spent properly in good works, in the first place, in slaying the flesh and crucifying the desires with respect to the self. . . . In the second place, this righteousness consists in love to one's neighbor, and in the third place, in meekness and fear toward God. . . . This righteousness is the product of the righteousness of the first type actually its fruit and consequence.⁶⁹⁹

The Christian's *coram mundo* righteousness is of such a nature that it is both observable and changeable. Further, the purpose of this "horizontal" righteousness is emphatically *not* for the sake of our "vertical" relationship with God—in fact, it is not for our sake at all. The purpose of horizontal righteousness, or living in a manner that fully reflects God's care for the earth and its inhabitants, is to better enable us to bless, tend, and keep the world He has entrusted to us.

It is within this context that the abundant Biblical injunctions to holiness must be interpreted. Human life is a unity; even if there are different spheres of activity, human creatures and the lives they lead ought not be divided into "spiritual" and "secular" elements. For the Christian, things done "for God" and "for others" are one and the same.

Things pertaining to active righteousness are never done for the sake of a person's vertical relationship with God. God doesn't need our works—our *neighbor* does. The attitudes and actions which flow horizontally from me to my neighbor are expressions of love and trust in the God who restored me—made me "right" again—without my effort or deserving. Expanding on the bride-and-groom image mentioned above, Luther says:

Therefore through the first [passive] righteousness arises the voice of the bridegroom who says to the soul, "I am yours," but through the second [active righteousness] comes the voice of the bride who answers, "I am yours". . . . Then the soul no longer seeks to be righteous in and for itself, but it has Christ as its righteousness and therefore seeks only the welfare of the others.⁷⁰⁰

⁶⁹⁹ Luther, *AE*, 31:299–300.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 31:300. See further use of the bride and groom analogy in *The Freedom of the Christian*. *Ibid.*, 31:351–52.

God calls His fully redeemed children to pour themselves out for the sake of His creation—most especially the people within our sphere of influence. This daily exercise will grant ample opportunity to “take up the cross” (Luke 9:23) of self-denial and follow Christ, for our sinful, stubborn flesh does not want to surrender control to God, much less to our neighbor’s needs.

This ongoing battle is the life-long calling of the Christian, who experiences times of both victory (by the power of the Spirit) and defeat (by the weakness of the flesh). But the Christian’s great comfort in the midst of the fight is that *coram mundo* righteousness cannot affect (much less effect) one’s standing before God, because *coram Deo* righteousness depends on the finished work of Christ, not our faint and inchoate efforts. Any attempt to bring *those* before the Judgment Seat of Christ is an offense to the living God. Luther warns:

In fact, the righteousness of man, no matter how much God honors it here in time with the best gifts of this life, nevertheless is a mask and impious hypocrisy before God. The riddle is astonishing, because God rewards the very righteousness [*coram mundo*] which he himself regards as iniquity and wickedness [*coram Deo*].⁷⁰¹

[Further,]

Any work that is not done solely for the purpose of keeping the body under control or of serving one’s neighbor...is not good or Christian.⁷⁰²

Satan may often use Christians’ sins and shortcomings to accuse and discourage them, prompting them to question whether God could still love and accept them given the magnitude of their failures. But Luther is quick to remind us that such works do not merit *anything* in our relationship with God. The Groom does not love His bride more or less because of what she does...He loves her because He loves her. This permits the bride to respond freely, in love, without obligation or the question of ‘adequacy’ hanging over her every move. Spontaneous acts of devotion delight her Groom, but she will never earn more love, nor will those acts be held up

⁷⁰¹ Luther, *AE*, 34:151–52.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, 31:370.

to the harsh Klieg light of the Law before being accepted. Her acts could *never* make that grade.

In point of fact, the bride needs to be perfect before she ever enters the Groom's presence in the first place; that's why He washes her in His own blood, so that she might be "without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:27). The Law must be satisfied before the union may ever come to be. Luther asserts: "The commandments must be fulfilled before any works can be done, and the works proceed from the fulfillment of the commandments."⁷⁰³

For anyone hoping that active works might earn God's approval, Luther puts those deeds in the same (blessed) category of garbage-needing-to-be-forgiven, explaining that "there is no action which God accepts without reserve (such expressions are fictions of the human heart), but [rather] he pardons and deals sparingly with *all* our actions".⁷⁰⁴ The wonder of the believers' position is that they *are* altogether accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6)—including their imperfect works of mercy and their nascent *coram mundo* righteousness.

- Yes, God commands and desires that such good works be done.
- Yes, He is pleased when we, by the power of the Spirit, do them.
- Yes, He even rewards earthly efforts, imperfect though they are.

But His acceptance of those works, His judgment of them as "good", His pleasure in the doing and His blessing of the doer are based not on the quality of the works themselves but upon the blood-washed standing or identity of the one who does them.⁷⁰⁵

Who is this God that demonstrates such amazing grace?

⁷⁰³ Ibid., 31:353.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid., 31:64.

⁷⁰⁵ This topic will be further explored in chapter six.

The Doctrine of God

In Luther's early years he had learned to think of God as a stern Judge, distanced from His human creatures on account of sin. Jesus was popularly depicted in keeping with the terrifying vision of Revelation 19:15, with a sharp sword to punish the wicked.⁷⁰⁶ According to Bainton,

A book strikingly illustrative of the prevailing mood is a history of the world published by Hartmann Schedel in Nürnberg in 1493. . . . The final scene displays the day of judgment. A full-page woodcut portrays Christ the Judge sitting upon a rainbow. A lily extends from his right ear, signifying the redeemed, who are being ushered by angels into paradise. From his left ear protrudes a sword, symbolizing the doom of the damned, whom the devils drag by the hair from the tombs and cast into the flames of hell. . . . The Christ upon the rainbow with the lily and the sword was a most familiar figure in the illustrated books of the period. Luther had seen pictures such as these and testified that he was utterly terror-stricken at the sight of Christ the Judge.⁷⁰⁷

Luther himself describes the effects of such portrayals by saying that during those years "I let Christ the Savior and Comforter slip away, and fashioned him into a stock-master and hangman over my poor soul."⁷⁰⁸

But with Luther's "tower experience" came a completely different conception of God. Luther's God was *not* principally defined by justice and judgment. Rather, God was the Giver of all things—all Life (John 1:4), all Good (James 1:17), etc., whose attributes were to be understood in light of that giving nature, and in terms of what God does in His interaction with us. Said he, "[T]he work of God [is] what God does in us, the power of God, [is that] with which he makes us strong, the wisdom of God, [is that] with which he makes us wise, the strength of

⁷⁰⁶ "Luther had doubtless seen several such representations of Christ in Wittenberg: on the entrance to the cemetery, on the north tower entrance to the parish church, and on the old Wittenberg church seal. The conception was common in the fourteenth century." Luther, *AE*, 45:59, f/n 6.

⁷⁰⁷ Roland Herbert Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1950), 29–30.

⁷⁰⁸ "*Sic amitto Christum salvatorem et consolatorem et facio ein stockmeister und hencker aus im uber mein arm seele.*" Luther, *WA*, 45:86.

God, the salvation of God, the glory of God”.⁷⁰⁹

The God of love, Luther maintained, is best understood through what He has revealed of Himself in Scripture. Aside from the fact that He created us (as discussed above), what do we learn about God from what He has done?

Grace

Rather than understanding grace as some sort of measurable substance to be infused into humans, Luther understood God’s grace to be His good, kind, merciful and generous disposition towards us. It is this gracious disposition that motivates God to do whatsoever He does on our behalf. Some may read Scriptures about God “giving” grace (*e.g.* James 4:6) and infer that grace is therefore a “thing” which I may possess; Luther understands “giving grace” to be an action, *i.e.*, “showing mercy or undeserved favor”.⁷¹⁰

Redemption

God’s gracious and merciful disposition towards us is what motivated Him to send His Son as our Redeemer. Jesus Christ has “redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, and purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death”.⁷¹¹ Redemption from sin means release from the bondage and dominion of sin (John 8:34, 36). Redemption from death means that the spiritual separation from God has been healed (Ephesians 2:13) and we have peace with God (Romans 5:1). Redemption from the power of the devil means both that his

⁷⁰⁹ Luther, *AE*, 34:337.

⁷¹⁰ He equates God’s “giving grace” to the humble (Jas. 4:6) with His “taking pleasure” in those who fear Him (Ps. 147:11). *Ibid.*, 30:293.

⁷¹¹ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Small Catechism, with Explanation*, Revised edition. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2005), 16.

absolute sway over believers has been broken (James 4:7, Matthew 12:29) *and* that he no longer has any right to accuse those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:33–34).

By His perfect life and innocent death in our place, Christ atoned for the sins of the whole world (Hebrews 2:17). God’s wrath was diverted onto the Lamb of God (John 1:29), satisfaction was made (1 John 2:2), and those who once were lost and condemned are just and right with God (2 Corinthians 5:21) by the gracious working of God.

Justification

The gracious and undeserved application of Christ’s merits to humans is the essence of justification for Luther—a transaction he terms a “glorious exchange”:

Is not this a beautiful, glorious exchange, by which Christ, who is wholly innocent and holy, not only takes upon himself another’s sin, that is, my sin and guilt, but also clothes and adorns me, who am nothing but sin, with his own innocence and purity? And then besides dies the shameful death of the Cross for the sake of my sins, through which I have deserved death and condemnation, and grants to me his righteousness, in order that I may live with him eternally in glorious and unspeakable joy. Through this blessed exchange, in which Christ changes places with us (something the heart can grasp only in faith), and through nothing else, are we freed from sin and death and given his righteousness and life as our own.⁷¹²

This action on the part of our loving, giving God is both forensic (in that it *declares* us just and right) and also creative—a word of power similar to His words of command in Genesis 1.⁷¹³

Luther emphasized this perspective when, in his revision of the 1529 Vulgate, he translated Romans 4:17 to read: “Things which do not exist He calls into being.”⁷¹⁴

Negatively speaking, justification consists in “not counting” our sins against us; positively

⁷¹² Luther, *AE*, 51:316.

⁷¹³ Cf. 2Cor. 4:6—“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.”

⁷¹⁴ “*vocat ea quae non sunt, ut sint.*” Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 119.

speaking, it is God “counting” Christ’s righteousness ours.⁷¹⁵ In this way even original sin—the original corruption inherited from our forebears—is forgiven, even though it remains in us until death.⁷¹⁶

The declaration of right-ness does not come from God’s being “deceived” about our sinfulness, or as a result of His “overlooking” our sin like an indulgent grandfather. Our sin is recognized for the abomination that it is, but satisfaction for that sin has been made. Thus God can justify us—extend mercy to us and count us righteous⁷¹⁷—without demitting His holiness, His omniscience, or His justice. As Luther describes it in his *Heidelberg Disputation*, when God sees the sin I have committed and the sinner that I am, “he neither accepts nor not-accepts [*i.e.*, rejects], but he pardons.”⁷¹⁸

The reality, purity, and completeness of the righteousness we claim, having its origin outside of us (*extra nos*), is not dependent on how we feel or the shape of our human performance on earth. The work was finished on Calvary (John 19:30), and when that finished work is apprehended by faith, the believer, in Christ, is fully justified—fully saved—and 100% heaven-worthy.

But what of the failures and imperfections of Christians—those things so observable in the realm of their horizontal relationships? These issues of human performance should be considered under the head of the believer’s sanctification.

⁷¹⁵ Regarding this action, Luther in his lecture on Ps. 32:2 (“Blessed is the man to whom He has not imputed sin”) said: “This means that whoever is righteous, to whom God reckons righteousness as He did to Abraham, according to the apostle (cf. Rom. 4:3), to such a one He does not impute sin, because He reckons righteousness to him.” Luther, *AE*, 10:146.

⁷¹⁶ Luther, *WA*, 17(II):285.

⁷¹⁷ “In short, the term ‘to be justified’ means that a man is considered righteous.” Luther, *AE*, 34:167.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 31:64.

Sanctification

At the outset here it must be remembered that Luther, the non-systematician, used the term “sanctification” in a variety of ways. Chief among these may be considered sanctification in the “wide” sense (which encompasses “the whole work of the Holy Spirit, by which He brings us to faith *and also* enables us to lead a godly life”⁷¹⁹) and sanctification in the “narrow” sense (which is *only* “that part of the Holy Spirit’s work by which He directs and empowers the believer to lead a godly life”⁷²⁰). Regarding the “wide” sense usage, Scripture parallels sanctification with salvation (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:13). Elsewhere (*e.g.* 1 Thessalonians 4:3) the word sanctification is applied in the “narrow” sense, clearly referring to the Christian’s earthly performance.

Wide or narrow, the gracious and giving God is central to Luther’s understanding of sanctification. The Holy Spirit is the one who purifies us—*He* calls, gathers, enlightens and empowers us to become what He has already declared us to be in our justification. Even where the shape of our human performance is concerned, our sanctification is both

- a) A declared, and therefore total, reality⁷²¹ (though it is hidden in Christ) and
- b) A continuous process of struggle and growth so long as we live this life in the flesh.⁷²²

Luther maintained that this aspect of sanctification would not be complete until the Last Day.⁷²³

⁷¹⁹ Luther, *Luther’s Small Catechism, with Explanation*, 150; emphasis added.

⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁷²¹ Specifically addressing the already-complete-ness of our sanctification in this life, Luther says that Christ “has purified everything through his body, so that because of him everything which belongs to our natural birth and this life does not damage us; but it is considered to be as pure as what belongs to him, because through baptism and faith I have been clothed with his birth and life. Therefore everything I do is pleasing to God and is properly called a holy walking, standing, eating, drinking, sleeping, and waking, etc. In every Christian this becomes a pure and holy thing, even though he still lives in the flesh and is definitely impure in himself; through faith, everything about him is pure. Thus it is an alien holiness, however, and yet our own, because God wills to see nothing which we do in this life as impure in itself; but everything becomes holy, precious, and acceptable to him through this Child who makes the whole world holy through his life. . . . Now everything connected with both Christ’s life and death is our treasure, which makes us thoroughly holy and in which we have everything.” Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, 218,

Caught In-Between the Now and the Not Yet

The apparently contradictory aspects of Luther's theology (complete vs. incipient sanctification, *simul iustus et peccator*, etc.) are not rooted in intellectual incompetence or inconsistency. Rather, they are the result of his determined hermeneutic of letting God's Word tell us what is true, and humbly acknowledging that God's ways and wisdom are higher than ours (1 Corinthians 2:14; Isaiah 55:8–9). Since the creature has no standing to challenge what the Creator says or does (Romans 9:20)—much less what He says is true—the proper human response is *confessio*: to acknowledge His Word as truth, and where that truth is *beyond* human reason, to “grant the Holy Spirit the honor of being more learned than [we] are”.⁷²⁴

in spe vs. *in re*

Luther described this now-vs.-not-yet tension by differentiating between the present, which is lived in hope (*in spe*) of the promises of God, and the future, with its complete realization of those promises. This he called *in re*, or “in reality”. Here he found a means to express (but, *n.b.*, not rationalize away) the dialectic tension in Scripture. It is God's promises, not observation or experience, which define the life of the Christian: “[O]ur refuge consists in hope, not yet in

f/n 73. This is Althaus' translation of Luther, *WA*, 37:57, 59.

⁷²² “This life, therefore, is not godliness but the process of becoming godly, not health but getting well, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not now what we shall be, but we are on the way. The process is not yet finished, but it is actively going on. This is not the goal but it is the right road. At present, everything does not gleam and sparkle, but everything is being cleansed.” Luther, *AE*, 32:24.

⁷²³ “But such we shall be only at the last day, the day of the resurrection of the dead. As long as we live in the flesh we only begin to make some progress in that which shall be perfected in the future life.” *Ibid.*, 31:358; “Sin remains, then, perpetually in this life, until the hour of the last judgment comes and then at last we shall be made perfectly righteous.” *Ibid.*, 34:167. In the realm of early Lutheran theology it was Melancthon, not Luther himself, who set the goal of moral improvement of the world around him; see Wilhelm Dilthey, “Das Nätürliclie System Der Geisteswissenschaften Im Siebzehnten Jahrhundert,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 6 (1893): 225–56, esp. 228.

⁷²⁴ “so thue dem heiligen geist die ehre, das er gelerter sen denn du.” Luther, *WA*, 24:20.

reality”, he says.⁷²⁵ In fact, “the *entire* life of believers consists only of hope, not yet of reality”.⁷²⁶ “They will be perfectly satisfied [only] in the future”⁷²⁷ life, face to face with their Lord. This theme of *in spe* vs. *in re* recurs in Luther’s discussion of virtually every facet of soteriology.

Righteousness *redux*

This hope/reality distinction sheds light on the question of righteousness for the believer. Bear in mind that *Christian* “hope” is not to be equated with mere “wishful thinking”, as is common today. Rather, Christian hope is an absolute certainty that that which has been promised is (already) true—it has already come to pass—even if it is not visible. This is the nature of both our *coram Deo* and our *coram mundo* righteousness. Regarding peace and rightness with God, God has promised it; Christ has won it; it is ours only to trust and acknowledge that what God says is true, no matter how hard it may be to believe. At just the right time, we will see with our own eyes that we are acceptable in the presence of the Almighty. In like manner we are told that even our faulty human performance is accepted in God’s eyes⁷²⁸—not *in re*, but *in spe*, because hope clings to and hides itself in the active righteousness of Jesus which has been credited to us.

The Sum of the Matter

This is our theology, by which we teach a precise distinction between these two kinds of righteousness, the active [*i.e.*, *coram mundo*] and the passive [*i.e.*, *coram Deo*], so

⁷²⁵ “*per spem est refugium, nondum in re*”; Ibid., 4:67.

⁷²⁶ “*tota vita fidelium est tantummodo in spe et nondum in re*”; Ibid., 55(I), 752; emphasis added.

⁷²⁷ “*perfecte satiabuntur in futuro.*” Ibid. 314. In contrast, this life continues to be one of struggle; sin remains but is not credited against us. As he explains in *Table Talk*, “After baptism original sin is like a wound which has begun to heal. It is really a wound, yet it is becoming better and is constantly in the process of healing, although it is still festering, is painful, etc. So original sin remains in the baptized until their death, although it is in the process of being rooted out. It is rendered harmless, and so it cannot accuse or damn us.” Luther, *AE*, 54:20.

⁷²⁸ See note 721, above.

that morality and faith, works and grace, secular society and religion may not be confused. Both are necessary, but both must be kept within their limits.⁷²⁹

This distinction is vital to the well-being of God's church. It can be argued that failing to distinguish between the two kinds of righteousness has led to nearly as many errors and schisms in Christendom as have arisen from the failure to distinguish between Law and Gospel. It has not been as exhaustively deliberated among the doctors of the church in the centuries since Luther penned these words, but perhaps this is because its impact is most often encountered at the parish level, comforting souls who struggle with the vicissitudes of daily life under the cross. This is where Luther's focus ever remained.

For him, all theology was pastoral. Its purpose was to shepherd believers in their lives here on earth, *with heaven in mind*...neither confusing nor separating those two dimensions of human existence. His theology was unapologetically Bibliocentric, immensely practical, and focused on the needs and problems of his ministry in the mid-sixteenth century.

Luther's writing and preaching inaugurated the turbulent Reformation period by restoring the Gospel message to a darkened and wounded church. It challenged and refuted the teaching of salvation by works, yet at the same time it clearly—through the teaching of the two kinds of righteousness—called Christians to live lives of holiness and piety. The difference lay in the purpose of that holy and pious life: instead of trying to earn favor with God, all such holy living was for the glory of God and the benefit of one's neighbor.

In short, Luther restored the Scripture's teaching on what it meant to be truly right—truly human—with respect to both God and Man. How did his message affect and influence the zealous English student of Scripture who would come 150 years later? What did John Wesley have to say about the Father of the Reformation? This is the focus of the next chapter.

⁷²⁹ Luther, *AE*, 26:7.

CHAPTER FIVE

WESLEY'S PERSPECTIVE ON MARTIN LUTHER

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans.⁷³⁰ About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.⁷³¹

This famous passage from John Wesley's journal describes the very direct connection between Martin Luther and Wesley's experience of May 24, 1738. However the event is labeled—evangelical conversion,⁷³² climactic personal assurance,⁷³³ or otherwise—no one disputes that the Aldersgate Street meeting was a turning point for both John Wesley and the church he would establish.⁷³⁴ To what extent did the great Reformer's writings affect the architect of Methodism? This chapter will explore the extent of Wesley's familiarity with, as well as his expressed opinions about, Martin Luther and his teachings.

⁷³⁰ Despite various conjectures to the contrary through the years, the treatise Wesley heard read at the Aldersgate meeting was most certainly Luther's *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans* (WA, DB 7:3–27; AE 35:365–80) in a 1594 English translation of Justin Jonas' 1522 Latin edition. See McNeill, "Luther at Aldersgate."

⁷³¹ Wesley, *Works* (BE), 18:249–50; emphasis original.

⁷³² Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 48.

⁷³³ Wesley, *Works* (BE), 1:38–39.

⁷³⁴ Respected nineteenth-century theologian Simeon W. Harkey opined that "the Methodist Church is immensely indebted to the Lutheran—being really her ecclesiastical mother. . . Justification by faith alone, as held and taught by Luther, is what they experienced and preached—a present salvation, and an inward life of piety and holiness, precisely as Luther enjoyed and practiced it. . . And the peace, rest, joy, and hope in God which Luther had...is what [Wesley] and his companions so zealously proclaimed and sought to promote among men." Simeon W. Harkey, "The Conversion of John Wesley and His Indebtedness to Martin Luther," *The Lutheran Quarterly* 14 (1884): 543–44.

“Glorious Champion of the Lord of Hosts” or “Rough, Untractable Spirit”?

Depending upon the date and context of his comments, John Wesley’s opinion of Martin Luther varies dramatically. Positively, he called Luther a “great man”⁷³⁵—a “greater man” than himself⁷³⁶—even once extolling him as “that glorious champion of the Lord of Hosts”.⁷³⁷ Yet he also found “failings” and “mountainous offences” in him.⁷³⁸ What were the contours of John’s approval and censure?

When speaking of the need for reform in the sixteenth-century Catholic church, Wesley held Luther in highest regard:

When iniquity had overspread the church as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against it. He raised up a poor monk, without wealth, without power, and at that time without friends, to declare war, as it were, against all the world; against the Bishop of Rome and all his adherents. But this little stone, being chosen of God, soon grew into a great mountain; and increased more and more till it had covered a considerable part of Europe.⁷³⁹

He also found reason to admire Luther’s defense of Scripture’s “chief doctrine”, rhetorically asking “Who has wrote [sic] more ably than Martin Luther on justification alone?”⁷⁴⁰ At other times he expressed admiration for Luther’s turn of a phrase, crediting him with saying that “divinity is nothing but a grammar of the language of the Holy Ghost”.⁷⁴¹ He

⁷³⁵ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:340.

⁷³⁶ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XIII:300.

⁷³⁷ This remarkable appellation is from Wesley’s sermon *Salvation by Faith*, which he preached in June of 1738, scarcely two weeks after his Aldersgate experience; Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:129. Interestingly, Wesley deleted these words from the text of this sermon when he published it as part of his *Sermons On Several Occasions* collection in 1746.

⁷³⁸ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:241–42.

⁷³⁹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:556–57.

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:505. Of course, it cannot be ignored that Wesley’s very next words were: “And who was more ignorant of the doctrine of sanctification, or more confused in his conceptions of it?” (*Ibid.*) This passage, perhaps better than any other in the Wesley *corpus*, demonstrates that Wesley was neither a blind follower, nor an intractable enemy, of any one theologian.

⁷⁴¹ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XIV:238. Whether or not this attribution is deserved remains open to debate.

would not let doctrinal differences interfere with his admiration of Luther's bravery and integrity for the sake of the Gospel; in his 1750 sermon *A Caution against Bigotry*, he said: "Let Luther call me an hundred devils; I will still reverence him as a messenger of God."⁷⁴²

Yet Wesley was also willing to criticize the "glorious champion of the Lord of Hosts". Theological disagreements aside, John decried Luther's "rough, untractable [sic] spirit and bitter zeal for opinions", which Wesley believed to be "so greatly obstructive to the work of God".⁷⁴³ He lamented that, in Luther's work, there was too much "strife over words"⁷⁴⁴ and he faulted Luther and Calvin alike for "[t]heir vehement tenaciousness of their own opinions; their bitterness toward all who differed from them; their impatience of contradiction, and utter want of forbearance, even with their own brethren".⁷⁴⁵

For the champion of Methodism most certainly desired peace and reconciliation among believers. He considered theological disputes to be often more bane than blessing, and a distraction from what Christianity ought to be about. In his *Journal*, he mused: "How hard it is to fix, even on serious hearers, a lasting sense of the nature of true religion! Let it be right opinions,

While Wesley's version has not yet been located among Luther's works, the Reformer did discuss a similar topic in his *Disputation on the Divinity and Humanity of Christ*, February 27, 1540. There, in response to Argument VII, he states: "The Holy Spirit has his own grammar." Luther, WA, 39(II):92–121.

⁷⁴² Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:78. Interestingly, Wesley's sentiments here are an extrapolation of words written by John Calvin—a theologian with whom Wesley was generally not enamored—more than two hundred years earlier. In a November, 1544 letter to Heinrich Bullinger, Calvin had said "*Sed haec cupiō vobis in mentem venire: primum quantus sit vir Lutherus, et quantis dotibus excellāt, quanta animi fortitudine et constantia, quanta dexteritate, quanta doctrinae efficacia hactenus ad promgandum Antichristi regnum et simul propagandam salutis doctrinam incubuerit. Saepe dicere solitus sum: etiam si me diabolum vocaret, me tamen hoc illi honoris habiturum, ut insignem Dei servum agnoscam: qui tamen ut pollet eximiis virtutibus, ita magnis vitiis laboret. Hanc intemperiem, qua ubique ebullit, utinam magis fraenare studisset. Yehementiam autem, quae illi est ingenita, utinam in hostes veritatis semper contulisset, non etiam vibrasset in servos Domini.*" See Jean Calvin, *Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, ed. Cunitz, Edouard, Baum, Johann-Wilhelm, and Reuss, Eduard Wilhelm Eugen (Brunsvigae: Apud C.A. Schwetschke, 1863), XI:774.

⁷⁴³ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 20:285.

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 22:294.

⁷⁴⁵ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:242.

right modes of worship...*anything* rather than right tempers!”⁷⁴⁶

Yet Wesley balanced his desire for ecumenical unity with dedication to biblical truth; in his sermon *On the Death of George Whitefield*, he said:

First, let us keep close to the grand scriptural doctrines which he [*i.e.*, Whitefield] everywhere delivered. There are many doctrines of a less essential nature, with regard to which even the sincere children of God (such is the present weakness of human understanding) are and have been divided for many ages. In these we may think and let think; we may ‘agree to disagree.’ But, meantime, let us hold fast the essentials of ‘the faith which was once delivered to the saints’, and which this champion of God [Whitefield] so strongly insisted on, at all times, and in all places!⁷⁴⁷

In point of fact, Wesley was willing to welcome people from many different branches of the Christian church; unity in his estimation only required a common desire to “flee the coming wrath”⁷⁴⁸ and agreement on those doctrines “vital to salvation”. As to exactly which doctrines comprise that set, he clarifies:

We believe, indeed, that ‘all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God’; and herein we are distinguished from Jews, Turks, and Infidels. We believe the written word of God to be the only and sufficient rule both of Christian faith and practice; and herein we are fundamentally distinguished from those of the Romish Church. We believe Christ to be the eternal, supreme God; and herein we are distinguished from the Socinians and Arians. But as to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think.⁷⁴⁹

Luther the Man

As previously noted, Wesley admired Luther as a courageous man of God. He admired the Reformer enough to translate an early work about Luther’s life into English⁷⁵⁰—apparently J. D.

⁷⁴⁶ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 23:382; emphasis added.

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:341. It is worth recognizing that Luther *also* viewed divisions within Christ’s church to be an offense; see his comments in this regard in *WA*, 52:830. In addition, Wesley’s tolerance of theological diversity was somewhat elastic, depending upon when and where these differences were found. See, *e.g.*, *Ibid.*, 22:159–60; 23:54.

⁷⁴⁸ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 4:78.

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 9:33–34. Martin Luther also championed the idea of Christian freedom in indifferent matters. The rub, of course, comes when deciding *which* matters “strike at the root of Christianity”.

⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 20:285.

Herrnschmidt's Latin *opus*⁷⁵¹—and include it over the course of five monthly installments in the very first volume of his *Arminian Magazine*.⁷⁵² The Rev. Dr. Herrnschmidt (1675–1723) was a hymn-writer, professor of theology at Halle, and colleague of August Franke. He has been called “one of the more important poets of the older pietistic school”,⁷⁵³ and some of his hymns can still be found in Lutheran hymnals today.

Unfortunately for John Wesley, Herrnschmidt's competence as an historian was not on par with his poetic proficiencies. The Halle hymn-writer reported that Luther's death was from “a fit of the stone” precipitated when Luther realized how ungodly his followers' lives had become! After hearing of their lawless behavior, (Herrnschmidt claimed) Luther's dying lament was: “I have spent my strength for nought. Those who are called by my name are, it is true, reformed in opinions and modes of worship; but in their hearts and lives, in their tempers and practice, they are not a jot better than the Papists.”⁷⁵⁴

Tarred with a Moravian Brush

But Johann Herrnschmidt's work was neither Wesley's first nor his most significant exposure to the Father of the Reformation. Although there is not much evidence to show that Wesley had more than passing exposure to Luther early in his life or career, his pivotal shipboard

⁷⁵¹ Johann Daniel Herrnschmidt, *Commentatio Historica De Vita D. Martini Lutheri, Qua Externis Eius Rationibus Breviter Tactis Interna Praecipue Indoles Ipsius Et Agendi Principium Ex Vero Describitur* (Halle: Saale Halae Magdeburgicae Orphanotropheum, 1742).

⁷⁵² John Wesley, “The Arminian Magazine: Consisting Chiefly of Extracts and Original Treatises on Universal Redemption” 1 (1778): 68–77 (February), 116–27 (March), 165–75 (April), 210–18 (May), and 264–73 (June).

⁷⁵³ “Herrnschmidt, Johann Daniel,” *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1880), 222.

⁷⁵⁴ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:557. This is Wesley's rather free translation of Herrnschmidt's wording; see Herrnschmidt, *Vita D. Martini Lutheri*, X.10. He attributed these apocryphal “melancholy last words” to Luther once again, in a sermon three years later, but he added to them a parenthetical rumination wherein Luther said he wished his followers were called only by Christ's name, rather than his: Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:449. Unlike the body of Herrnschmidt's report, sentiments like this can be found among Luther's writings—see, for example,

experience with the Moravians (discussed in chapter two) exposed him to a group of serious, devout Christians who claimed Luther as a theological forbearer. Yet if the early respect for the Moravians that sprang from those encounters positively influenced his opinion of Martin Luther, it also appears that his later *disenchantment* with Zinzendorf’s people prejudiced Wesley against him.

English Moravians within the Fetter Lane Society were a source of great trouble for the Wesleys. After repeated attempts at reason and reconciliation, John formally dissociated with the Moravian Brethren due to their theological assertions, on July 20, 1740.⁷⁵⁵ Three years later he wrote his open letter *To the Moravian Church*,⁷⁵⁶ in which he detailed his doctrinal disagreements by appending almost two years of Journal extracts covering the time of his interaction with them.⁷⁵⁷ Letter and extracts together were available as a one-shilling tract printed at the Foundry; this intentionally-delayed publication was Wesley’s polemic against Moravian doctrine.

Friction between Zinzendorf and Wesley centered largely—and ultimately—upon whether a believer with holy life and holy affections is holy “in himself” (as Wesley maintained) or holy “in Christ only” (as Zinzendorf taught). This portion of their September 3, 1741 exchange ran:

W. Your Brethren, it is true, did not use me well. Afterward they desired forgiveness. I answered—that was superfluous, that I had never been offended with them; but I feared, (1) lest they should teach falsely; (2) lest they should live wickedly. This is, and was, the only question between us.

Z. Speak more fully [on that question].

Luther, *AE*, 45:70–71.

⁷⁵⁵ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 19:162.

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 116–18. The letter was dated June 24, 1744.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 19:119–224.

W. I feared lest they should teach falsely; (1) Concerning the end of our faith in this life, to wit, Christian Perfection. (2) Concerning the means of grace, so termed by our church.

Z. I acknowledge no inherent perfection in this life. This is the error of errors. I pursue it through the world with fire and sword. I trample upon it: I devote it to utter destruction. Whoever follows inherent perfection, denies Christ.

W. But, I believe, that the spirit of Christ works this perfection in true Christians.

Z. By no means. All our perfection is in Christ. All Christian Perfection is, Faith in the blood of Christ. Our whole Christian Perfection is imputed, not inherent. We are perfect in Christ: In ourselves we are never perfect.

W. I think we strive about words. Is not every true believer holy?

Z. Highly so. But he is holy in Christ, not in himself.

W. But does he not live holy?

Z. Yes, he lives holy in all things.

W. And has he not a holy heart?

Z. Most certainly.

W. And is he not consequently holy in himself?

Z. No, no. In Christ only. He is not holy in himself: He hath no holiness at all in himself.

W. Hath he not the love of God, and his neighbour, in his heart? Yea, and the whole image of God?

Z. He hath. But these constitute legal holiness, not evangelical. Evangelical holiness is Faith.

W. The dispute is altogether about words. You grant that a believer is altogether holy in heart and life: That he loves God with all his heart, and serves him with all his powers. I desire nothing more. I mean nothing else [by the term] PERFECTION, OR CHRISTIAN HOLINESS.

Z. But this is not his holiness. He is not more holy if he loves more, or less holy, if he loves less.

W. What! Does not every believer, while he increases in love, increase equally in holiness?

Z. Not at all. In the moment he is justified, he is sanctified wholly. From that time he is neither more nor less holy, even unto death.

W. Is not therefore a father in Christ holier than a new-born babe?

- Z.** No. Our whole justification, and sanctification, are in the same instant, and he receives neither more nor less.
- W.** Does not a true believer increase in love to God daily? Is he perfected in love when he is justified?
- Z.** He is. He never can increase in the love of God. He loves altogether in that moment, as he is sanctified wholly.
- W.** What therefore does the Apostle Paul mean by, ‘We are renewed day by day?’
- Z.** I will tell you. Lead, if it should be changed into gold, is gold the first day, and the second day, and the third: And so it is renewed day by day; but it is never more gold than in the first day.
- W.** I thought that we should grow in grace!
- Z.** Certainly; but not in holiness. Whenever anyone is justified, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, dwell in his heart; and from that moment his heart is as pure as it ever will be. A babe in Christ is as pure in heart as a father in Christ. There is no difference.
- W.** Were not the Apostles justified before the death of Christ?
- Z.** They were.
- W.** But were they not more holy after the day of Pentecost, than before Christ’s death?
- Z.** By no means.
- W.** Were they not on that day filled with the Holy Ghost?
- Z.** They were. But that gift of the Spirit did not respect their holiness. It was a gift of miracles only.⁷⁵⁸

To this point Zinzendorf follows Luther’s teaching rather closely...and Wesley understands it to be so. But as Wesley notes at the outset of this conversation, there were *two* main points of contention: inherent vs. imputed holiness, and the necessity of self-denial or adherence to the law. To wit, the conversation concludes with this remarkable assertion by Zinzendorf:

⁷⁵⁸ According to his Journal, Wesley and Zinzendorf conversed in Latin; this is an English translation of the exchange. *Ibid.*, 19:212–14, f/n 53. The full literal translation can be found in Henry Moore, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford in Which Are Included, the Life of His Brother, the Rev[erend] Charles Wesley, A.M., Student of Christ Church, and Memoirs of Their Family: Comprehending an Account of the Great Revival of Religion, in Which They Were the First and Chief Instruments* (New York: N. Bangs and J. Emory, 1824), 1:481–88.

W. Perhaps I do not comprehend your meaning. Do we not while we deny ourselves, die more and more to the world and live to God?

Z. We reject all self-denial. We trample upon it. We do, as believers, whatsoever we will, and nothing more. We laugh at all mortification. No purification precedes perfect love.

W. What you have said I will thoroughly weigh, God being my helper.⁷⁵⁹

As well he might—this kind of antinomianism was anathema to the English reformer’s soul. And since he understood the Moravians to be deriving their theology from Luther’s works,⁷⁶⁰ he naturally filtered his reading of Luther through the lens of their error. In his stinging critique of Luther’s *Comment on the Epistle to the Galatians*⁷⁶¹ Wesley says: “Here (I apprehend) is the real spring of the grand error of the Moravians. They follow Luther, for better, for worse. Hence their ‘No works, no law, no commandments.’ But who art thou that ‘speaketh

⁷⁵⁹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 19:215.

⁷⁶⁰ This has been a point of dispute for many years. The Lutheran historian S. M. S(ch)mucker says, “The doctrinal belief of the Moravians has always been a very undefined and unsettled one”, noting: “They have constantly avoided much argument or dispute on these points”—Samuel Mosheim Smucker, *A History of All Religions: Containing a Statement of the Origin Development, Doctrines, and Government of the Religious Denominations in the United States and Europe* (Philadelphia, PA: D. Rulison/Quaker City, 1859), 68. Belying this is the testimony of Lewis David von Schweinitz, Zinzendorf’s grandson and *senior civilis* of the *Unas Fratrum*, who describes Moravian theology by saying, “As a body they have at all times, when required by governments to point out their creed, professed general adherence to the Confession of Augsburg, as most congenial to the views of a majority; and although they do not pledge their ministers to an express adoption of its articles, it is agreed among them not to insist upon any doctrines utterly repugnant thereto.” Israel Daniel Rupp, ed., *History of All the Religious Denominations in the United States: Containing Authentic Accounts of the Rise and Progress, Faith and Practice, Localities and Statistics, of the Different Persuasions* (Harrisburg, PA: J. Winebrenner, 1849), 318. It is this affinity for Luther, rather than an “undefined and unsettled” doctrinal system or any “think and let think” mentality, which Wesley seems to have recognized over the course of his interaction with the Moravians.

⁷⁶¹ This is Wesley’s name for Luther’s 1535 *Lectures on Galatians*—Luther, *AE*, vols. 26–27. An English translation of this work came into Charles Wesley’s hands and was instrumental in his evangelical conversion on May 19, 1738; see Martin Luther, *A Commentarie of M. Doctor Martin Luther upon the Epistle of S. Paul to the Galathians: First Collected and Gathered Word by Word out of His Preaching, & Now out of Latine Faithfully Translated into English for the Unlearned: Wherein Is Set Forth Most Excellently the Glorious Riches of Gods Grace and Power of the Gospell, with the Difference Betwene the Law and the Gospell, and Strength of Faith Declared: To the Joyfull Comfort and Confirmation of All True Christian Beleueers, Especially such as Inwardly Being Afflicted and Greeued in Conscience, Doe Hungre and Thirst for Iustification in Christ Iesu: For Whose Cause Most Chiefely This Booke Is Translated and Printed, and Dedicated to the Same.*, ed. John Foxe and Henry Bull (London: Thomas Vautroullier, 1575). Given Wesley’s given title for the work, it is quite likely that this English translation was what he read.

evil of the law, and judgest the law’?”⁷⁶²

Guilt by Association with Early Opinions

Antinomianism was not the only charge Wesley laid at the Reformer’s feet. He was aware that Luther had edited and (re)published *Theologia Germanica*, the work of an anonymous fifteenth-century priest whose penchant for mysticism was unmistakable. Concerning this treatise, in 1518 Luther said: “Next to the Bible and St. Augustine no other book has come to my attention from which I have learned—and desired to learn—more concerning God, Christ, man, and what all things are.”⁷⁶³

The *Theologia Germanica* urged a life of simplicity and self-denial, and it proved extremely popular among elements of the Radical Reformation and the later-developing pietistic movements. Jakob Spener heartily endorsed Johann Arndt’s rerelease of the work, and all together it enjoyed more than sixty print runs.⁷⁶⁴ Interestingly, John Wesley himself spent considerable time reading and meditating upon this work during his time in Georgia;⁷⁶⁵ it had been given him by William Law himself.⁷⁶⁶ When pressed, Wesley does admit that he was drawn to the writings of the Mystics for some time,⁷⁶⁷ but later came to despise them as intensely as he had once cherished them. In an addendum to his January 25, 1738 Journal (four months before Aldersgate) he says that “my present sense is this: all the other enemies of Christianity are

⁷⁶² Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 19:201.

⁷⁶³ Martin Luther, ed., *Theologia Germanica 1518*, trans. Bengt Hoffman (New York: Paulist, 1980), 54.

⁷⁶⁴ Bernard McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*, *The Presence of God* 4 (New York: Crossroad, 2005), 393.

⁷⁶⁵ He documents his reading of the work in his Journal entries from December, 1735 through January, 1736: Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 18:335–42.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 25:547.

⁷⁶⁷ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, X:438.

triflers; the mystics are the most dangerous of all its enemies. They stab it in the vitals, and its most serious professors are most likely to fall by them. May I praise him who hath snatched me out of this fire likewise, by warning all others that it is set on fire of hell.”⁷⁶⁸

This attitude towards the mystics did not soften over time. In 1741 Wesley wrote: “On Wednesday I read over once again *Theologia Germanica*. O how was it that I could ever so admire the affected obscurity of this unscriptural writer! Glory be to God that I now prefer the plain apostles and prophets before him and all his *mystic* followers.”⁷⁶⁹

Apparently Wesley felt the sixteenth-century editor of the *Theologia Germanica* deserved the same censure as its fifteenth-century author, for when he read “that celebrated book, Martin Luther’s Comment on the Epistle to the Galatians” on a horseback journey from Markfield to London, he said:

I was utterly ashamed. How have I esteemed this book, only because I had heard it commended by others! Or, at best, because I had read some excellent sentences occasionally quoted from it. But what shall I say, now I judge for myself? Now I see with my own eyes? Why, not only that the author makes nothing out, clears up not one considerable difficulty; that he is quite shallow in his remarks on many passages, and muddy and confused almost on all; but that he is deeply tinctured with *mysticism* throughout, and hence often fundamentally [the 1774 edition of his Journal reads ‘dangerously’] wrong.⁷⁷⁰

The next evening Wesley preached on Galatians 5:6 (“In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love”), explaining in his Journal that “After reading Luther’s miserable comment upon the text, I thought it my bounden duty openly to warn the congregation against that dangerous treatise and to retract whatever

⁷⁶⁸ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 18:212, f/n 95.

⁷⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 19:239; emphasis original.

⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 19:200–201; emphasis original. Apparently Wesley assumed that Luther’s proclivity toward mysticism could not have changed over the course of seventeen years (1518–1535), despite that fact that *his* had done so—and in a much shorter span of time: *Ibid.*, 18:239.

recommendation I might ignorantly have given of it.”⁷⁷¹

Thus it is clear that by 1741, Wesley’s opinion of Luther was much less than favorable, though it is equally clear that he had not studied the Reformer’s writings in any great depth. Sadly, as even some of his staunchest supporters admit, if Wesley had read Luther’s writings more thoroughly he would have realized that his perspective was incomplete. As Leo Cox puts it,

Wesley was a busy man. One wishes that at this time in his life he could have made a special study of Luther’s writings. Even if he had read this *Commentary on Galatians* with more care, he would have found Luther explaining himself⁷⁷². . . . If Wesley could have read some of Luther’s other writings, he would have discovered that Luther “disposed of antinomians and mystical quietists in phrases more violent than had any place in John Wesley’s genteel vocabulary.”⁷⁷³

Striving over Words—Wesley’s Objection to Specific Quotes and Phrases

Wesley can also be found reacting to certain individual comments of Luther’s—some apocryphal, some not. Certainly these reactions shaped the Englishman’s overall impression of him. His reactions to what he believed Luther said can give further insight into his own theology.

The Straw Man

Perhaps most famously, John Wesley (along with a fair number of other Christians through the years) objected to Luther’s calling the Epistle of James “an epistle of straw”. In his Journal, describing the Methodist habit of meeting together, he writes:

In the evening three women agreed to meet together weekly, with the same intention as those at London, viz., ‘To confess their faults one to another and pray one for another, that they may be healed’ [James 5:16]. At eight, four young men agreed to meet in pursuance of the same design. How dare any man deny this to be (as to the

⁷⁷¹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 19:201.

⁷⁷² Given that the evaluation in Wesley’s Journal (above) was rendered after only one day’s horseback perusal, Wesley cannot have read the *Commentary* thoroughly.

⁷⁷³ Cox, “John Wesley’s View of Martin Luther,” 87; Cox is quoting from E. Gordon Rupp, *The Righteousness of God: Luther Studies*, The Birkbeck lectures in ecclesiastical history, 1947 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953), 46.

substance of it) a means of grace, ordained by God? Unless he will affirm (with Luther in the fury of his solifidianism) that St. James's Epistle is 'an epistle of straw'?⁷⁷⁴

Regrettably, this judgment is rendered, and censure applied, without having the full context of Luther's original words in mind.

It was in his general introduction to the entire New Testament that Luther, in typical catechetical fashion, asks and answers for his readers a question: "Which are the true and noblest books of the New Testament?"⁷⁷⁵ He then considers all twenty-seven New Testament books *using a Gospel-centered criterion only*—i.e., do they center on the person and (finished) work of Jesus Christ, or do they *assume* the Gospel foundation, and focus instead on other teachings? In his conclusion, borrowing from St. Paul's literary allusion in 1 Corinthians 3:12, Luther's comment about the Epistle of St. James reads as follows:

In a word, St. John's Gospel and his first epistle, St. Paul's epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter's first epistle, are the books that show you Christ and teach you all that is necessary and salvatory for you to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore St. James' epistle is really an epistle of straw, *compared to these others, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it.*⁷⁷⁶

Wesley and Luther were fighting different battles, and found their ammunition in different depots—Wesley was championing a faith that made a discernable difference in believers' lives, while Luther sought to restore the Gospel message of salvation *sola fide*. If Wesley had read the Reformer's writings in more depth, I believe he would have understood Luther's heart toward the entire Word of God, rather than take offense at a sentence fragment. Even a cursory reading of Luther's *Preface to the Epistle of James* would have shown him in an altogether different

⁷⁷⁴ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 19:47.

⁷⁷⁵ Luther, *AE*, 35:361.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 35:362; emphasis added. Rarely are these italicized words included in any censorious analysis of this passage.

light, for there his opening words are: “Though this epistle of St. James was rejected by the ancients,⁷⁷⁷ *I praise it and consider it a good book*, because it sets up no doctrines of men but vigorously promulgates the law of God.”⁷⁷⁸

Thou Shalt Not Covet

On a different head (and *via* a different venue) Wesley took exception to something he *believed* Luther to have said. In his sermon *The Repentance of Believers*, Wesley proclaimed that

Martin Luther used to say he ‘never had any covetousness in him (not only in his converted state, but) ever since he was born’. But if so, I would not scruple to say he was the only man born of a woman (except him that was God as well as man) who had not, who was born without it. Nay, I believe, never was anyone born of God, that lived any considerable time after, who did not feel more or less of it many times.⁷⁷⁹

A remarkable assertion, and one worth examining and disavowing—*if* it were truly Luther’s!

But as was the case with Luther’s purported dying words, Wesley’s source for this claim is somewhat suspect. In all probability he drew his information from a third-hand source: Samuel Clarke’s *Marrow of Ecclesiastical Historie*. There, Clarke had written that “Wellerus[,] also a disciple of Luthers recordeth, that he oft heard his Master thus report of himself, that he had been often assaulted and vexed with all kinde of Temptations, save only unto the sin of covetousness.”⁷⁸⁰

Again, better familiarity with Luther’s published writings would have balanced Wesley’s

⁷⁷⁷ See, among others, Eusebius’ evaluation: Book II:xxiii, in Paul L. Maier, tran., *Eusebius: The Church History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 1999), 84; he says “To be sure, its authenticity is doubted, since not many of the early writers quote it, as is also the case with the epistle of Jude. . . . Still, these two letters have been used regularly, like the others, in most of the churches.” In Book III:xxv, Eusebius also includes James in his list of “disputed” books. *Ibid.*, 115.

⁷⁷⁸ Luther, *AE*, 35:395, emphasis added.

⁷⁷⁹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:340–41.

⁷⁸⁰ Samuel Clarke, *The Marrow of Ecclesiastical History: Contained in the Lives of One Hundred Forty Eight Fathers, Schoolmen, First Reformers and Modern Divines Which Have Flourished in the Church since Christ’s Time to This Present Age*, 2d ed. (London, 1654), 256.

understanding. In his tract *The Freedom of a Christian*, Luther addresses coveting by saying that “the commandment, ‘You shall not covet’ is a command which proves us *all* to be sinners, for *no one can avoid coveting* no matter how much he may struggle against it”.⁷⁸¹ In fact, the only place in which Martin Luther claims to be free from coveting is when he is defending himself and his followers against the charge of sedition.⁷⁸²

The “Thirty Years” War

John Wesley was the architect of a revival movement that swept across England, spread to the Continent, and reached across the sea to America—all within his lifetime. The speed with which his message spread, and the number of people affected, was for him a sign that the Methodists were truly blessed by God. In his sermon *The General Spread of the Gospel*, he asks:

Is it not then highly probable that God will carry on his work in the same manner as he has begun? That he will carry it on I cannot doubt; *however Luther may affirm that a revival of religion never lasts above a generation, that is, thirty years* (whereas the present revival has already continued above fifty); or however prophets of evil may say, ‘All will be at an end when the first instruments are removed.’ There will then very probably be a great shaking; but I cannot induce myself to think that God has wrought so glorious a work to let it sink and die away in a few years. No; I trust this is only the beginning of a far greater work—the dawn of ‘the latter day glory’.⁷⁸³

In this case, Wesley’s ascription was well founded. In his *Fastenpostillen* for Invocavit Sunday of 1525, Luther did say, “It is the case that in no place in the world has the Gospel clarity and purity remained over [that is, beyond the span of] one man’s memory. . . . Swiftly afterwards came rotten spirits and false teachers.”⁷⁸⁴ Wesley was fond of contrasting Luther’s

⁷⁸¹ Luther, *AE*, 31:348; emphasis added. It would be difficult to imagine that Luther actually meant “no one except I can avoid coveting” when he made this categorical assertion.

⁷⁸² See the comments in his treatise *On War Against the Turk*, *Ibid.*, 46:180.

⁷⁸³ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:492; emphasis added.

⁷⁸⁴ “*Das gibt auch die ersarunge, das an keinem ort der welt das Euangelion lauter und rein is blieben uber eins mans gedencken [f/n = laenger als ein Menschenalter]. . . .solgeten so balde drauff rottengeister und falsche*

pronouncement with the longevity of the Methodist revival—his sermons *On Family Religion*⁷⁸⁵ and *Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity*⁷⁸⁶ feature this comparison, as do his personal correspondence⁷⁸⁷ and his tracts.⁷⁸⁸

Yet the contrast between the two leaders and their movements cannot be considered absolute. Over the course of time even Wesley came to acknowledge that evangelical movements are fraught with division and trouble. The devil does not sleep! In a 1779 letter to Elizabeth Ritchie the aging English divine concedes: “The remark of Luther, ‘that a revival of religion seldom continues above thirty years,’ has been verified many times in several countries”, though with trademark confidence he adds: “But it will not always hold.”⁷⁸⁹ Thus he affirms that the principle can be true⁷⁹⁰ without conceding the dour supposition that all works of God must therefore suffer the same fate.

Yet for all he denied the applicability of Luther’s dictum for the Methodist movement, Wesley’s federation can hardly be said to have escaped controversy or corruption of its message. Challenges came long before the Methodists celebrated their thirtieth anniversary.⁷⁹¹ The rifts and divisions that festered during Wesley’s lifetime were kept in check by the remarkable force

lerer.” Luther, WA, 17(II):179–80.

⁷⁸⁵ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:335.

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 4:95.

⁷⁸⁷ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XIII:61.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, XIII:265.

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, XIII:61.

⁷⁹⁰ Wesley appears to have found the proof of Luther’s own maxim in the history of the Reformation in Germany: when speaking of Luther’s brave work in a sermon, Wesley concludes that section by saying: “Yet even before Luther was called home the love of many was waxed cold. Many that had once run well turned back from the holy commandment delivered to them; yea, the greater part of those that once experienced the power of faith made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.” Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:556.

⁷⁹¹ The 1739 dispute with Philip Henry Molther, and the breach with the Fetter Lane society later that same year, are cases in point—these, scarcely a year after Wesley’s Aldersgate experience.

of John's personality and indefatigable involvement, but soon after his death, the very tribulations Luther prognosticated came to Wesley's church body.⁷⁹² Wesley himself admitted the unstable nature of evangelical movements comprised of flawed and inconsistent human beings; in his sermon *Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity* he wonders aloud:

[W]hy is self-denial in general so little practised at present among the Methodists? Why is so exceeding little of it to be found even in the oldest and largest societies? How can we understand it? Does it not seem (and yet this cannot be!) that Christianity, true scriptural Christianity, has a tendency in process of time to undermine and destroy itself?⁷⁹³

Here Wesley certainly seems to lend credence to Luther's "thirty year" dictum. But unlike Luther, Wesley lays the guilt at the feet of worldly Christians, rather than deceitful teachers. He reasons that

wherever true Christianity spreads it must cause diligence and frugality, which, in the natural course of things, must beget riches. And riches naturally beget pride, love of the world, and every temper that is destructive of Christianity. Now if there be no way to prevent this, Christianity is consistent with itself, and of consequence, cannot stand, cannot continue long among any people; since, wherever it generally prevails, it saps its own foundation.⁷⁹⁴

Phrases In Common, Meanings May Vary

There were some expressions which Wesley and Luther used in common. Sometimes they did so in the same manner and with the same meaning. One such case was the expression "the analogy of faith", which Wesley used repeatedly⁷⁹⁵ much as Luther did; in fact, the analogy of faith was one of Wesley's central hermeneutical principles.

In his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, Wesley goes so far as to translate

⁷⁹² Even the most admiring of Wesley biographies acknowledge this, even (if need be) in an epilogue—*e.g.* Green, *John Wesley*, 157–58; Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 309–17.

⁷⁹³ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 4:95.

⁷⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:183;2:483, 501; 4:89, 231.

Romans 12:6 “let us prophesy according to the analogy of faith” and in the notes defends his wording and clarifies what he understands the analogy of faith to be:

Let us prophesy according to the analogy of faith—St. Peter expresses it, “as the oracles of God;” according to the general tenor of them; according to that grand scheme of doctrine which is delivered therein, touching original sin, justification by faith, and present, inward salvation. There is a wonderful analogy between all these; and a close and intimate connexion between the chief heads of that faith “which was once delivered to the saints.” Every article, therefore, concerning which there is any question should be determined by this rule; every doubtful scripture interpreted according to the grand truths which run through the whole.⁷⁹⁶

But there was another expression the two theologians had in common, which did not enjoy such an equivalent meaning. The maxim: “Justification by faith is *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*”⁷⁹⁷—which is not found verbatim anywhere in Luther’s own writings—has long been associated with Lutheran theology nonetheless. True, as early as 1618 Johann Alsted reported that “[t]he article of justification is said to be the article by which the church stands or falls” (*articulus iustificationis dicitur articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*),⁷⁹⁸ but regarding the actual origin of the phrase, A. C. Piepkorn traces it back to Balthasar Meisner, who in 1613 claimed it was a “proverb” of Luther’s—though as Piepkorn points out, “Meisner provides no examples”.⁷⁹⁹ Jack Preus speculates,

Perhaps he [Meisner] was referring to the statement of Luther in his 1540 exposition of Psalm 130:4, in reference to the doctrine of justification by faith, that, *quia isto articulo stante state Ecclesia, ruente ruit Ecclesia*.⁸⁰⁰ Not exactly the wording that later became axiomatic, but pretty close. Perhaps it is enough to justify Meisner’s conclusion that the phrase originated with Luther. Certainly it is enough to justify the

⁷⁹⁶ Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 569–70.

⁷⁹⁷ “The article/doctrine by which the Church stands or falls”

⁷⁹⁸ Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Theologia Scholastica Didactica: Exhibens Locos Communes Theologicos Methodo Scholastica: Quatuor in Partes Tributa* (Hanoviae: Conradi Eifridi, 1618), 711; emphasis added.

⁷⁹⁹ Philip J. Secker, ed., *The Sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions: Selected Writings of Arthur Carl Piepkorn*, 2 (Mansfield, CT: CEC, 2007), 260.

⁸⁰⁰ Luther, WA, 40(III):352.

claim of later Lutherans that Luther pointed the way towards the conclusion that the doctrine of justification is the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*.⁸⁰¹

Whatever its origins, Wesley appreciated the expression, crediting Luther with it in his sermon *The Lord Our Righteousness*...although he does not apply it to the doctrine of justification. Rather, Wesley opines concerning the phrase “the Lord our righteousness”:

Of this, undoubtedly, may be affirmed, what Luther affirms of a truth closely connected with [but, *n.b.*, not equal to] it: It [“the Lord our righteousness”] is *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae*: The Christian church stands or falls with it. It is certainly the pillar and ground of that faith, of which alone cometh salvation—of that *catholic* or universal faith which is found in all the children of God, and which “unless a man keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly”.⁸⁰²

Wesley was challenged on this very point of departure by Sir Richard Hill.

Hill, a 1758 Methodist convert who later aligned himself with Whitefield Calvinism, became a bitter opponent of both Wesley’s Arminian views and what he perceived to be the unfair treatment of Calvinistic believers within the Methodist fold. He took his suit to the court of public opinion, and after some anonymous critiques⁸⁰³ published *A Review of all the Doctrines of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley*⁸⁰⁴ in 1772, which Wesley quickly repudiated.⁸⁰⁵ Then

⁸⁰¹ J. A. O. Preus III, “Standing or Falling? ‘December Letters,’ ” *First Things: a monthly journal of religion and public life*, (1995).

⁸⁰² Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:450–51; emphasis original. Any significance re: the difference between *stantis et cadentis* and *stantis vel cadentis* is not germane to the discussion at hand and need not be pursued here.

⁸⁰³ Cf. *Pietas Oxoniensis, Or, A Full and Impartial Account of the Expulsion of Six Students from St. Edmund Hall, Oxford: With a Dedication to the Right Honourable, the Earl of Litchfield, Chancellor of That University* (London: J. and W. Oliver, 1768); *A Conversation between Richard Hill, Esq the Rev. Mr. Madan, and Father Walsh, Superior of a Convent of English Benedictine Monks at Paris, Held at the Said Convent, July 13, 1771; In the Presence of Thomas Powis, Esq; and Others, Relative to Some Doctrinal Minutes, Advanced by the Rev. Mr. John Wesley and Others, at a Conference Held in London, August 7, 1770. To Which Are Added, Some Remarks, by the Editor, And the Minutes Themselves Prefixed. As Also Mr. Wesley’s Own Declaration Concerning His Minutes Versified, by Another Hand.* (London: E. and C. Dilly, 1771).

⁸⁰⁴ Sir Richard Hill, *A Review of All the Doctrines Taught by the Rev. Mr. John Wesley; Containing, a Full and Particular Answer to a Book Entitled, “A Second Check to Antinomianism.”* (London: E. & C. Dilly, 1772).

⁸⁰⁵ See his *Some Remarks on Mr. Hill’s “Review of all the Doctrines taught by Mr. John Wesley”* published in September of the same year: Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, X:374–414.

came the 1773 satirical rejoinder entitled *Farrago Double-Distilled*,⁸⁰⁶ in which Hill showed (among a host of other things) that Wesley was not faithful to the Reformation use of the *stantis* adage. In parallel columns Hill demonstrates that, in some places, Wesley used it to reference justification-by-faith, while in others he applied it to the phrase “The Lord Our Righteousness”. Hill challenges the Englishman to state once and for all what the referent of the *stantis* designation is. Wesley parries Hill’s thrust as follows:

Is Justification by Faith *articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesiae*?

In the beginning of the year 1738, I believed it was so. Soon after I found reason to doubt. Since that time I have not varied. “Nay, but in the year 1763 you say, ‘This is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness. A truth this, of which may be affirmed, (what Luther affirms of a truth nearly connected with it, justification by faith,) it is *articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesiae*. It is certainly the pillar and ground of that faith of which alone cometh salvation.’ ” (*Farrago*, page 15.)

I answered: “It is certain, here is a seeming contradiction; but it is not a real one; for these two opposite propositions do not speak of the same thing. The latter speaks of justification by faith; the former, of trusting in the righteousness or merits of Christ. (Justification by faith is only mentioned incidentally in a parenthesis.) Now, although Mr. Law denied justification by faith, he might trust in the merits of Christ. It is this, and this only, that I affirm (whatever Luther does) to be *articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesiae*.”⁸⁰⁷

Wesley does not feel bound by his predecessor’s precise application of an extra-biblical proverb.

Doctrinal (Dis)Agreements

Thus far we have considered Wesley’s opinions of

1. Luther’s character, and
2. of comments (reputedly) by Luther not directly pertaining to Bible doctrines.

⁸⁰⁶ Sir Richard Hill, *Logica Wesleiensis: Or, the Farrago Double Distilled. With an Heroic Poem in Praise of Mr. John Wesley* (London: E. & C. Dilly, 1773) This work consists mainly of a side-by-side presentation of places where Wesley contradicts himself in matters of doctrine.

⁸⁰⁷ Wesley, *Works* (Jackson), X:432–33.

But quirks of personality and outward piety⁸⁰⁸ aside, Wesley's teaching conflicted with Luther's in a number of places. While Luther is not necessarily called out by name in the Englishman's writings when the following issues and doctrines are discussed, very clear contrasts can be discerned between the two theologians in areas such as:

Deus Absconditus

Wesley, with his consistent focus on Love as both God's archetypal attribute *and* the defining element of the God/Man relationship, could not conceive of that God willfully "hiding Himself" from His creatures. He rejected Luther's teaching of the *Deus absconditus*, fuming:

[T]hat he [God] ever withdraws himself because he will, merely because it is his good pleasure, I absolutely deny: there is no text in all the Bible which gives any colour for such a supposition. Nay, it is a supposition contrary not only to many particular texts, but to the whole tenor of Scripture. It is repugnant to the very nature of God; it is utterly beneath his majesty and wisdom (as an eminent writer strongly expresses it) 'to play at bo-peep with his creatures'. It is inconsistent both with his justice and mercy, and with the sound experience of all his children.⁸⁰⁹

But if it is not because God hides Himself, why do even the most devout believers experience "dry" seasons, when it seems He is nowhere near? Wesley could not deny the reality of this experience, nor put it down to the sufferer being only a false Christian; both his own experience⁸¹⁰ and the observations of other respected divines⁸¹¹ belied those suggestions.

⁸⁰⁸ Wesley was unimpressed with the lifestyle of the Lutherans he met outside the Moravian pale. In his Journal entry for June 25, 1738, he sniffs: "We hoped to reach Rheinberg in the evening, but could not; being obliged to stop two hours short of it, at a little house where many good Lutherans were concluding the Lord's day (as is usual among them) with fiddling and dancing!" Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 18:258.

⁸⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:229.

⁸¹⁰ Concerning the very evening of his Aldersgate experience he wrote in his journal, "After my return home I was much buffed with temptations." *Ibid.*, 18:250; he further disclosed, two days later, "My soul continued in peace, but yet in heaviness, because of manifold temptations." *Ibid.*, 251.

⁸¹¹ Thomas à Kempis declared: "I never yet found any religious person so perfect, but that he had sometimes absenting of grace, or some [di]minishing of fervour; and there was never yet any Saint so highly ravished but that he first or last had some temptation." Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, trans. Richard Whitford (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1953), 88.

Wesley presents his solution to this dilemma in a pair of sermons entitled *The Wilderness State*⁸¹² and *Heaviness through Manifold Temptations*.⁸¹³ Regarding times of spiritual distress, he admits the causes “are indeed various”, but says:

I dare not rank among these the bare, arbitrary, sovereign will of God. He rejoiceth ‘in the prosperity of his servants’. He delighteth not to ‘afflict or grieve the children of men’. His invariable ‘will is our sanctification’, attended with ‘peace and joy in the Holy Ghost’. These are his own free gifts; and we are assured ‘the gifts of God are’ on his part ‘without repentance.’ He never repenteth of what he hath given, or desires to withdraw them from us. Therefore he never deserts us, as some speak: it is we only that desert him.⁸¹⁴

Means of Grace

There is a theological expression that both men used, but applied in quite different ways: *means of grace*. Luther, like many before him, considered the phrase *means of grace* to refer to avenues “whereby one is reconciled with God”.⁸¹⁵ For the Saxon Reformer, this meant nothing more—and certainly no less—than the Word of God and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These delivery points of God’s gracious promise of forgiveness *proper Christum* were the means whereby the Holy Spirit worked faith in the heart of the hearers. Forgiveness of sins and strengthening of faith were the purpose of Luther’s means of grace.

Wesley’s understanding of the “means of grace” was much broader. As noted above, Wesley also considered “the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren”⁸¹⁶ a means of grace.⁸¹⁷ While Luther did believe such conversation was able to deliver the Good News,⁸¹⁸ his

⁸¹² Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:205–21.

⁸¹³ *Ibid.*, 2:222–35.

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:208.

⁸¹⁵ Luther, *AE*, 31:283.

⁸¹⁶ SA III:4; see Bente, *Concordia Triglotta - The Symbolic Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 491.

⁸¹⁷ See footnote 774774, above.

⁸¹⁸ Bente, *Concordia Triglotta - The Symbolic Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 491.

regard for the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper sets his perspective apart from Wesley's. We first consider the two men's pronouncements on the *primum sacramentum*:

Perhaps reacting to the moral and spiritual decline he saw in the Established Church of his day (which practiced infant baptism), Wesley railed against relying on a long-ago baptism for present-day assurance. In his sermon *The Marks of the New Birth*, he warns:

Say not then in your heart, I was once baptized; therefore I am now a child of God. Alas, that consequence will by no means hold. How many are the baptized gluttons and drunkards, the baptized liars and common swearers, the baptized railers and evil-speakers, the baptized whoremongers, thieves, extortioners! What think you? Are these now the children of God? Verily I say unto you, whosoever you are, unto whom any of the preceding characters belong, 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye do.' Unto you I call in the name of him whom you crucify afresh, and in his words to your circumcised predecessors, 'Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?'⁸¹⁹

Such reasoning has often been directed against those who speak comfortingly of baptism—including Luther himself. But in fairness to the Reformer, it must be noted that he, also, warned against this mindset. Baptism for Luther was a current relational reality, not a mere historical fact. Consider the contrast between the two ideas, presented in these closing words from his treatise on *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism*:

[I]f we hear and firmly believe that in the covenant of baptism God receives us sinners, spares us, and makes us pure from day to day, then our heart must be joyful, and love and praise God. . . . And the work itself we must magnify and acknowledge.

At the same time, however, *we must also beware lest a false security creep in* and say to itself, "If baptism is so gracious and great a thing that God will not count our sins against us, and as soon as we turn again from sin everything is right by virtue of baptism, then for the present I will live and do my own will. Afterward, or when about to die, I will remember my baptism and remind God of his covenant, and then fulfil the work and purpose of my baptism."

Baptism is indeed that great a thing, that if you turn again from sins and appeal to the covenant of baptism, your sins are forgiven. But *watch out, if you thus wickedly and wantonly sin [and go presuming] on God's grace*, that the judgment does not lay hold upon you and anticipate your turning back. Beware lest, even if you then desired to believe or trust in your baptism, your trial [*anfechtung*] be, by God's decree, so

⁸¹⁹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:428–29.

great that your faith is not able to stand. If they scarcely remain who do not sin or who only fall because of sheer weakness, where shall your wickedness remain, which has tempted and mocked God's grace?

Let us therefore walk with fear, that with a firm faith we may hold fast to the riches of God's grace and joyfully give thanks to his mercy forever and ever. Amen.⁸²⁰

Yet the dissonance between the two men regarding the means of grace went far beyond contretemps about the nature and efficacy of Baptism (or the Lord's Supper)⁸²¹ The fundamental distinction is rooted in the differing *purposes* they claimed for means of grace.

As presented at the beginning of this section, for Luther, "means of grace" were delivery points for forgiveness. That's what grace was for: reconciling Man to God through justification. But in Wesley's *ordo*, the goal of religion was to regain the image of God⁸²²—therefore, anything which served as a tool "by which we strengthen and shape our character into Christ-likeness"⁸²³ was a means of grace.⁸²⁴ That's what grace was for, in his understanding: entire sanctification—the holiness without which "no man will see the Lord".

Because this was so, anything that aided Man toward that glorious end was a "means" (or "vehicle") of grace—not only were there means of *justifying* grace (a concept with which Luther would agree) but there were means of *sanctifying* grace. Wesley included all sorts of things under the means-of-grace umbrella. There were, of course, biblically-identifiable practices such

⁸²⁰ Luther, *AE*, 35:42–43; emphasis added.

⁸²¹ In Wesley's sermon *The Means of Grace*, he defends the Lord's Supper (along with prayer and reading/hearing/meditating upon Scripture) from Moravian misunderstandings, and declares them to be God's "ordinary channels of conveying his grace to the souls of men"; Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:381. Yet the purpose for which such grace is conveyed is not necessarily the same for Wesley as for Luther.

⁸²² "Ye know that the great end of religion is to renew our hearts in the image of God, to repair that total loss of righteousness and true holiness which we sustained by the sin of our first parent." *Ibid.*, 2:185.

⁸²³ Maddox, "A Change of Affections: The Development, Dynamics, and Dethronement of John Wesley's 'Heart Religion,'" 19.

⁸²⁴ See Henry H. Knight III, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace*, *Pietist and Wesleyan studies* 3 (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1992) for a most comprehensive contemporary study of Wesley's many means of grace.

as fasting and praying⁸²⁵—these, along with a few others, he called “Instituted” means of grace.⁸²⁶

But he also identified other things which he called “Prudential” means of grace—such as personal plans and rules of holy living, Methodist class and band meetings, temperance in food and drink.⁸²⁷ There were also what he termed “works of mercy”—visiting the sick and imprisoned, welcoming the stranger, and the like (Matthew 25:34). These Wesley also termed “real means of grace” and not only encourages his hearers to pursue them but warns that “those that neglect them do not receive the grace which otherwise they might. Yea, *and they lose, by a continued neglect, the grace which they had received.*”⁸²⁸

While Luther would certainly not have condemned such activities, he would have objected in the strongest of terms to calling them “means of grace”. Helpful as they may be to forging what Wesley called “holy tempers”,⁸²⁹ even the ones sanctioned by Scripture did not convey the forgiveness of sins—and that, for Luther, was the definitive characteristic of true means of grace.

It’s the Law

Wesley understood the function and uses of the Law differently than Luther. While scholars have long debated whether the *triplex usus legis* was Luther’s brainchild⁸³⁰ or

⁸²⁵ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 4:381. Scripture, the Eucharist, prayer and fasting he termed “works of piety”; *Ibid.*, 3:385.

⁸²⁶ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:322.

⁸²⁷ *Ibid.*, VIII:323–24.

⁸²⁸ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:385; emphasis added.

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3:319.

⁸³⁰ Edward A. Engelbrecht, “Luther’s Threefold Use of the Law,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 75, (2011): 135–50.

Melancthon's,⁸³¹ there is far less disagreement over the contours of those uses.

Usus Legis à la Luther

For Luther, the Law first served a “political” or “civic” purpose, wherein it maintained social order and punished evildoers.⁸³² Enforcing and maintaining this civic tranquility was the duty of government as an extension of the created order of families.⁸³³ Obedience to the Law for the sake of this good order is commanded by God⁸³⁴ and is a blessing to everyone.

Yet the highest and best use of the Law for Martin Luther was its second, “theological” use. In this realm, the Law shows people where and how they have sinned and are guilty in the sight of God. Such knowledge crushes and terrifies sinners, for they realize that they have no excuse for their transgressions. It is true that, as Luther says, “Both the devil and Christ use the law to terrify, but the goals are quite different, entirely opposed.”⁸³⁵ The devil may wish to crush all life and hope, but Christ’s intent is to bring sinners to the end of themselves, so they turn to Him for salvation.⁸³⁶ Important to this *usus* is recognition that, on account of our sinfulness, there is no way that the Law can ever serve as a means to righteousness *coram Deo*: “God prescribes nothing to a person that would be impossible [for one], *but through sin one sinks into an impossible situation.*”⁸³⁷

The third use of the law in Lutheran understanding is to serve as a guide for living a

⁸³¹ Gerhard Ebeling, *Word and Faith*, trans. James W. Leitch, 1st ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1963), 62–78.

⁸³² Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 311.

⁸³³ *Ibid.*, 405.

⁸³⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁸³⁵ Bernhard Lohse’s translation of Luther, WA, 39(I):426–27; Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 270.

⁸³⁶ Luther, WA, 39(I):456.

⁸³⁷ Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 272 (emphasis added); this is his translation of Luther, WA, 39(I):515.

Christian life—to impress God’s ways on the believer inwardly *and* outwardly.⁸³⁸ Important, however, is the understanding that any growth in sanctification derived from following this third use is *not* indicative of being “more saved” than other Christians.

Wesley’s Way

The most effective summary of Wesley’s understanding in this area may be found in his sermon appropriately titled *Original [sic], Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law*, and it is worthy of lengthy excerpt. In Section IV we read:

It remains only to show, in the fourth and last place, the uses of the law. And the first use of it, without question, is to *convince the world of sin*. This is indeed the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost, *who can work it without any means at all*, or by whatever means it pleaseth him. . . . But it is the ordinary method of the Spirit of God to convict sinners by the law. . . . To slay the sinner is then the first use of the law; to destroy the life and strength wherein he trusts, and convince him that he is dead while he liveth; not only under sentence of death, but actually dead unto God, void of all spiritual life, ‘dead in trespasses and sins’. . . .

The second use of it [the law] is to *bring him unto life, unto Christ, that he may live*. ‘Tis true, in performing both these offices it acts the part of a severe schoolmaster. It drives us by force, rather than draws us by love. And yet love is the spring of all. It is the spirit of love which, by this painful means, tears away our confidence in the flesh, which leaves us no broken reed whereon to trust, and so constrains the sinner, stripped of all, to cry out in the bitterness of his soul, or groan in the depth of his heart. . . .

The third use of the law is to *keep us alive*. . . . when it has brought us to him [second use] it has yet a farther office, namely, to keep us with him. For it is continually exciting all believers, the more they see of its height and depth and length and breadth, to exhort one another so much the more. . . . allowing we have done with the moral law as a means of procuring our justification. . . . yet in another sense we have not done with this law. For it is still of unspeakable use, first, in convincing us of the sin that yet remains. . . . secondly, in deriving strength from our Head into his living members, whereby he empowers them to do what his law commands; and thirdly, in *confirming our hope of whatsoever it commands and we have not yet attained, of receiving grace upon grace*, till we are in actual possession of the fullness of his promises.⁸³⁹

⁸³⁸ Luther, *WA*, 10(I):456; see also the Formula of Concord Epitome/Solid Declaration VI: Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 502–3, 587–91.

⁸³⁹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:15–17; emphasis added.

Wesley's uses of the law have been described as "Wesley's revised order, (1) to convince, (2) to convert, (3) to sustain".⁸⁴⁰

Thus, in comparing Luther and Wesley, we see:

- John Wesley does not address Luther's "civic" use at any length in his theological analysis.
- Wesley's first use corresponds in significant measure to Luther's second, although Luther maintained that the Holy Spirit worked only through means—*i.e.*, the Word⁸⁴¹—and repeatedly condemned claims of direct revelation apart from Scripture as an ungodly mark of the *Schwärmerei*.⁸⁴² Wesley goes further than Luther, regarding the power of natural law to convict. Luther's "nature" is able to convey the sense (*via* that which Wesley agrees is "vulgarly called 'natural conscience' "⁸⁴³) that you have somehow done wrong. But Luther maintained that natural revelation would never bring you to an accurate understanding of your wrongdoing without the special revelation of the Word—and, of course, the working of the Spirit. Wesley, on the other hand, places the possibility of conviction of sin against God within the reach of immediate revelation, due to the prevenient grace all humans have been given.
- Wesley's second use, while admitting that it serves as a "severe schoolmaster", still credits the law with the power to "*bring him [i.e., the sinner] unto life, unto*

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid., 2:15, f/n 60.

⁸⁴¹ "For the Holy Spirit does not come without the Word," Luther, *AE*, 5:111.

⁸⁴² Ibid., 2:162–63; 4:125; 7:119–20; et. al.

⁸⁴³ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:207.

Christ, that he may live”.⁸⁴⁴ Luther would not grant this. For him, the law can do no more than kill, and while Wesley’s *description* above sounds much like Luther’s perspective, Wesley granted the law some degree of converting power. Luther, for his part, recognizes that *converting* power—that is, the power to reveal Christ as the true and only Savior, and the power to work saving faith in Him—belongs to the Gospel alone.⁸⁴⁵

- In his third use, Wesley finds in the law an ability to “keep us alive. It is the grand means whereby the blessed Spirit prepares the believer for larger communications of the life of God. . . . [W]hen it has brought us to him [Wesley’s second use] it has yet a farther office, namely, to keep us with him.”⁸⁴⁶

Therefore,

I cannot spare the law one moment, no more than I can spare Christ; seeing I now want it as much to keep me to Christ, as I ever wanted it to bring me to him. Otherwise, this “evil heart of unbelief” would immediately “depart from the living God.” Indeed each is continually sending me to the other, the law to Christ, and Christ to the law. . . . And if thou art thoroughly convinced, that it is the offspring of God, that it is the copy of all his imitable perfections, and that it is “holy, and just, and good,” but especially to them that believe; then, instead

⁸⁴⁴ Wesleyan scholar Thomas Oden ways that according to Wesley, “The law brings us to despair over our own righteousness *and gives us readiness to trust in God’s righteousness.*” (Oden, *John Wesley’s Scriptural Christianity*, 203; emphasis mine.). This general meaning is supported in Wesley’s preaching and writing—*e.g.* Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 11:196–197—where Wesley assumes that these things are the natural consequence of the law showing us our sin. The “killing us by the law”, as Luther would say, is such that we do despair of our own righteousness—in this much the two are in agreement. But Wesley goes further, adding that (through the gift of ‘convincing’ grace), at the same time that we despair, we also on account of the law cry out for someone to save us. This aspect of repentance—the “crying out for a savior” coming through the law *via* convincing grace—is what Wesley means when he says the law brings us (literally, “drives us by force” [Ibid., 2:16]) to Christ.

On account of the various forms of prevenient grace, even a man feeling the full, crushing condemnation of the law need not feel utter despair any more than he need feel total depravity, because the prevenient grace of God is with him, pointing him past utter despair, to Jesus Christ.

In this, of course, Wesley apparently presumes that the law only leaves one possible savior to cling to—the Christ of that “most reasonable of all religions”: Christianity. Cf. Clarke, “The Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion.”

⁸⁴⁵ Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 355.

⁸⁴⁶ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:16.

of casting it away as a polluted thing, see that thou cleave to it more and more. Never let the law of mercy and truth, of love to God and man, of lowliness, meekness, and purity, forsake thee. “Bind it about thy neck; write it on the table of thy heart.” Keep close to the law, if thou wilt keep close to Christ; hold it fast; let it not go. Let this continually lead thee to the atoning blood, continually confirm thy hope, till all the “righteousness of the law is fulfilled in thee,” and thou art “filled with all the fulness of God.”⁸⁴⁷

- In contrast, for Martin Luther the law in its third use has no “benefit” for the Christian’s salvation at *all*; third-use law is observed purely out of love for the triune God. It is not kept with any thought toward self whatsoever—not even the goal of increased closeness to God. Regarding people who are right with God through faith in Christ, Luther warns that a preacher “must not preach the Law to [believers] as an instrument of righteousness; this were perversion”.⁸⁴⁸ To be sure, the law serves as a guide, showing the Christian what pleases the Lord. Yet no matter how noble the intent, observance of the law must never be allowed to become a means of righteousness *coram Deo*—or else, as Paul warns the Galatians, “Christ died for nothing” (Gal. 2:21).

With such discrepancies in understanding, it is not surprising that Wesley recoiled in horror at the things Luther said about “works” and “keeping the law”. Luther, trying to keep salvation free of human effort, blasted any attempt to inject works into the *ordo salutis*. Wesley, trying to rekindle obedience to God’s law and true holiness of life among his countrymen two centuries later, exclaimed “how blasphemously does he [Luther] speak of good works and of the law of God! Constantly coupling the law with sin, death, hell, or the devil! And teaching that Christ ‘delivers us from’ them all alike. Whereas it can no more be proved by Scripture that Christ

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid., 2:18–19.

⁸⁴⁸ Martin Luther, *The Sermons of Martin Luther*, ed. John N. Lenker, trans. John N. Lenker (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992), 6:273; cf. Luther, WA, 10(I).1:457.

‘delivers us from the law of God’ than that he delivers us *from holiness or from heaven.*”⁸⁴⁹

Doing What Is In One

A significant point of contrast between the two theologians is that Luther railed against the Scholastic notion of “doing what is in one”, while Wesley enjoined it. Granted, their understanding of the expression differed, but their reaction to this expression further clarifies the distinction between them.

Luther objected to Aquinas’ teaching on meritorious work—notably, for our consideration, what was termed works of “condign merit”. For in *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas had written:

Man’s meritorious work may be considered in two ways: first, as it proceeds from free-will; secondly, as it proceeds from the grace of the Holy Ghost. If it is considered as regards the substance of the work, and inasmuch as it springs from the free-will, there can be no condignity because of the very great inequality. But there is congruity, on account of an equality of proportion: for it would seem congruous that, if a man does what he can, God should reward him according to the excellence of his power. If, however, we speak of a meritorious work, inasmuch as it proceeds from the grace of the Holy Ghost moving us to life everlasting, it is meritorious of life everlasting condignly.⁸⁵⁰

Howsoever bracketed by purported gracious operations of the Holy Spirit, Martin Luther rejected the idea of meritorious work of any kind, declaring that “those who say that a man ‘in doing what is in him’ is able to merit the grace of God” philosophize impiously⁸⁵¹ no matter what level of grace they seek. He further castigates: “They say that the man who does what is in him is invariably given the grace which makes him acceptable by the merit of congruity, which is a horrible blasphemy against Christ, nor do they repent of this up to the present day.”⁸⁵² He bluntly summarizes: “The person who believes that he can obtain grace by doing what is in him adds sin

⁸⁴⁹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 19:201; emphasis original.

⁸⁵⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1:2605; Part 1.II, question 114, article 3.

⁸⁵¹ Luther, *AE*, 34:139.

to sin so that he becomes doubly guilty.”⁸⁵³

Wesley had a very different perspective. Although he believed natural Man “very far gone from original righteousness”,⁸⁵⁴ still he said: “[T]his excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature.”⁸⁵⁵ As presented in chapter three,⁸⁵⁶ Wesley taught that (due to God’s gift of prevenient grace) “there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God”.⁸⁵⁷ Aversion to the indolent attitude toward righteousness he saw among the “almost Christians”,⁸⁵⁸ coupled with his upbringing and experience, led him to formulate a distinctive synergistic system whereby God gets all the glory, but Man still needs to work.

It begins with the undeserved outpouring of prevenient grace. As he explains in the sermon *On Working Out Our Own Salvation*,

No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called ‘natural conscience’. But this is not natural; it is more properly termed ‘preventing grace’. Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man. Everyone has sooner or later good desires, although the generality of men stifle them before they can strike deep root or produce any considerable fruit. Everyone has some measure of that light, some faint glimmering ray, which sooner or later, more or less, enlightens every man that cometh into the world. And everyone, unless he be one of the small number whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron, feels more or less uneasy when he acts contrary to the light of his own conscience. So that no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he hath.

Therefore inasmuch as God works in you, you are now able to work out your own salvation. Since he worketh in you of his own good pleasure, without any merit of yours, both to will and to do, it is possible for you to fulfil all righteousness. . . . You

⁸⁵² Ibid., 34:305.

⁸⁵³ Ibid., 31:40.

⁸⁵⁴ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:225, 1:409, et al.; the use of this phrase shows clear and intentional fealty to Article IX of the Church of England’s Thirty-nine Articles; John H. Leith, *Creeeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine, from the Bible to the Present*, 3d ed. (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1982), 269.

⁸⁵⁵ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:207.

⁸⁵⁶ See the section in chapter three entitled “Prevenient Grace”.

⁸⁵⁷ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:207.

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid., 1:131–42.

can do something, through Christ strengthening you. *Stir up the spark of grace which is now in you, and he will give you more grace.* . . .

Secondly, God worketh in you; therefore you must work. . . . The general rule on which his gracious dispensations invariably proceed is this: ‘Unto him that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not’, *that does not improve the grace already given, ‘shall be taken away what he assuredly hath’* (so the words ought to be rendered).⁸⁵⁹

Using this framework, Wesley believed he had found a way to preserve the importance of a Christian’s holy actions without granting them primacy of place.

The logical extension of his thinking is manifest in a March 10, 1762 letter, in defense of his doctrines, to the Rev. Dr. George Horne:

That works are a necessary condition of our justification, may be proved, Secondly, from scripture examples; particularly those recited in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. These all “through faith wrought righteousness; without working righteousness, they had never obtained the promises.” I say the same thing: None are finally saved, but those whose faith “worketh by love.”⁸⁶⁰

In *Minutes of Several Conversations* he goes further, as part of his critique of Calvinism:

We have received it as a maxim, that “a man is to do nothing in order to [sic] justification.” Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find favour with God, should “cease from evil, and learn to do well.” So God himself teaches by the Prophet Isaiah. Whoever repents, should “do works meet for repentance.” And if this is not in order to find favour, what does he do them for?

[Q:] Is not this salvation by works?

[A.] Not by the merit of works, but by works as a condition. . . . We are rewarded according to our works, yea, because of our works. How does this differ from, “for the sake of our works?” And how differs this from *secundum merita operum*? which is no more than, “as our works deserve.” Can you split this hair? I doubt I cannot.⁸⁶¹

The Doctrine of Man

Pre-Fall

Wesley’s and Luther’s anthropologies present some instructive points of comparison. In his

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid., 3:207–8; emphasis added. Elsewhere Wesley defends this exegesis, and concludes by saying: “Accordingly, whoever improves the grace he has already received, whoever increases in the love of God, will surely retain it. God will continue, yea, will give it more abundantly.” Ibid., 3:283–84.

⁸⁶⁰ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, IX:112–13.

sermon on *The Image of God*, the Methodist leader agreed⁸⁶² with Luther's assessment⁸⁶³ of Adam and Eve's amazing pre-Fall capabilities. He also agreed that, in the Garden, their will was a perfect reflection of God's will⁸⁶⁴—although Wesley places special emphasis on their possessing perfect love⁸⁶⁵ as the essence of the *imago Dei*. This emphasis proves significant in Wesley's teaching on the “perfecting” of Man, for not only did he hold the pre-Fall capabilities of Man to be God's “norm” for humanity,⁸⁶⁶ salvation itself consisted of the restoration of the *imago Dei*. He reminded his hearers, “*Ye know* that the great end of religion is to renew our hearts in the image of God, to repair that total loss of righteousness and true holiness which we sustained by the sin of our first parent.”⁸⁶⁷

The physiologically-minded theologian also agreed with Luther that, had Adam and Eve not sinned, they never would have died,⁸⁶⁸ though unlike Luther, it is not clear that Wesley believed a sinless Adam and Eve would eventually have been translated to a different kind of spiritual and eternal life.⁸⁶⁹

Yet he did believe that our future is brighter than our first parents' life had been even in Eden. Regarding our life in eternity, he says: “Hence will arise an unmixed state of holiness and

⁸⁶¹ Ibid., VIII:337–38.

⁸⁶² Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 4:293–94.

⁸⁶³ Luther, *AE*, 1:119–20.

⁸⁶⁴ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:475.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid., 4:294–95.

⁸⁶⁶ “Who shall restore our native immortality?” Ibid., 4:299.

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid., 2:185; emphasis added. See also 1:310 and 1:117, f/n 5.

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid., 4:296; Luther, *AE*, 1:110.

⁸⁶⁹ Luther, *AE*, 1:92, 65.

happiness *far superior to that* which Adam enjoyed in paradise.”⁸⁷⁰

Post-Fall

Not surprisingly, Wesley and Luther part ways when discussing human capacity after the Fall into sin. As previously noted, Wesley technically agrees with Luther about the total depravity of human creatures post-Fall, but claims that such a state is only theoretical. The battle centers on the question of free will—even though Wesley would hasten to add that it is prevenient-grace-enabled free will. Says he, “[A]lthough I have not an absolute power over my own mind, because of the corruption of my nature, yet through the grace of God assisting me I have a power to choose and do good as well as evil. I am free to choose whom I will serve, and if I choose the better part, to continue therein even unto death”.⁸⁷¹ Luther’s repudiation of this line of reasoning is in the exhaustive polemic of his *Bondage of the Will*.⁸⁷² There, in his debate with Erasmus, the Reformer declares that fallen Man is not able to change the bent of his desires. True, fallen human creatures have freedom to decide what to do with their possessions and such, but in spiritual matters they have no free will—in fact, Luther insists that “free will” in its fullest sense is an expression applicable to God alone. Since the Fall, mankind has lost its liberty and is compulsively bound to the service of sin. Only in the gracious action of the free God does Man have any hope.

The Reason for Reason

Some of Wesley’s most intense criticism of Martin Luther came in response to the

⁸⁷⁰ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:510; emphasis added.

⁸⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 4:24. It is important to note that Wesley here is not talking exclusively about Christians. Rather, he maintains that this God-assisted liberty is the property of all mankind, since all have some measure of prevenient grace—“[t]o deny this would be to deny the constant experience of all human kind”—*Ibid.*

Reformer's comments on human reason. In justifying his censure of the *Comment on the Epistle to the Galatians*—saying that Luther was “deeply tinctured with *mysticism* throughout, and hence often fundamentally [1774: dangerously] wrong”—he exclaims: “How does he [Luther] (almost in the words of Tauler) decry *reason*, right or wrong, as an irreconcilable enemy to the gospel of Christ! Whereas, what is *reason* (the faculty so called) but the power of apprehending, judging, and discoursing? Which power is no more to be condemned in the gross than seeing, hearing, or feeling.”⁸⁷³

Luther's (admittedly negative) comments about reason struck at Wesley's very heart, for it seemed as if Luther was denying mankind even a vestige of what Wesley called the natural image of God.⁸⁷⁴ Yet if the Englishman had had better familiarity with Luther's writings, he would have known that the “reason” the Reformer denounced was *not* “the power of apprehending, judging, and discoursing” but the use of those totally corrupted-faculties in spiritual matters.⁸⁷⁵ Luther said, “This is the beginning and the main part of every temptation, when reason tries to reach a decision about the Word and God on its own without the Word.”⁸⁷⁶

It is unfortunate indeed that Wesley's univocal understanding of the word “reason” led him to project *his* concepts upon Luther's discourse and criticize it, for at various times Wesley *also* reproached men (including himself) for theological conclusions reached by flawed human reasoning.⁸⁷⁷ In this respect at least, his anthropology is not so far removed from Luther's.

⁸⁷² Luther, *AE*, 33:15–295.

⁸⁷³ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 19:201; emphasis original.

⁸⁷⁴ Which could not be removed without rendering people less than human—see chapter three.

⁸⁷⁵ Cf. the discussion of Luther and *ratio* in chapter four.

⁸⁷⁶ Luther, *AE*, 1:154.

⁸⁷⁷ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 18:210–15 and notes, et al.

Justification

John Wesley enthusiastically endorsed Luther's proclamation of justification by faith alone.⁸⁷⁸ He also agreed with the priority of justification in the order of salvation.⁸⁷⁹ But unlike Luther, Wesley did not consider justification by faith the be-all and end-all of Christianity. As noted in chapter three, Wesley believed Scripture spoke of *two* justifications—an initial justification, and a final justification on the “great day”.⁸⁸⁰ Further, he rejected the (Lutheresque) notion that justification actually makes a person righteous, saying that is the purview of sanctification.⁸⁸¹ For him the fundamental concept of justification was *pardon*—the forgiveness of sins—only.⁸⁸²

Sola Fide

At first, Wesley's reaction to this Reformation axiom may seem surprising. Who would object to faith? But objection came because he felt that Lutherans and Calvinists alike “magnified faith to such an amazing size that it quite hid all the rest of the commandments”. Upon reflection, he concludes that “this was the natural effect of their overgrown fear of popery, being so terrified with the cry of ‘merit and good works’ that they plunged at once into the other extreme”.⁸⁸³

The Witness of the Spirit

This phrase was as familiar to Martin Luther as it was to John Wesley. But did they

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid., 3:505.

⁸⁷⁹ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:373. Surprisingly, he later declared that “some may doubt [the doctrine] of justification by faith, and yet not perish everlastingly”. Ibid., X:433.

⁸⁸⁰ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:190.

⁸⁸¹ Ibid., 1:187.

⁸⁸² Ibid., 1:188–90.

understand it to mean the same thing?

From his youth Wesley had been told that the inward witness of the Spirit was the greatest proof of Christianity.⁸⁸⁴ As an adult he championed it, saying: “It more clearly concerns the Methodists, so called, clearly to understand, explain, and defend this doctrine[of the witness of the Spirit], because it is one grand part of the testimony which God has given them to bear to all mankind.”⁸⁸⁵ He then asks and answers the question at issue:

But what is ‘the witness of the Spirit’? The original word, μαρτυρία, may be rendered either (as it is in several places) ‘the witness’, or less ambiguously ‘the testimony’ or ‘the record’: so it is rendered in our translation, ‘This is the record’ (the testimony, the sum of what God testifies in all the inspired writings), ‘that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.’ The testimony now under consideration is given by the Spirit of God to and with our spirit. He is the person testifying. What he testifies to us is ‘that we are the children of God’.⁸⁸⁶

Wesley said that this “great evangelical truth...had been for many years wellnigh [sic] lost and forgotten” by those who had gone before. In his mind it had either been lost as an emphasis, or perverted (as in elements of the radical Reformation), becoming so internalized and individualized that it led its adherents into “all the wildness of enthusiasm”.⁸⁸⁷

Oddly, although Wesley believed that the doctrine had been obscured before the advent of Methodism, he claimed Lutheran support for his renewed emphasis. In a 1756 letter to Richard Thompson he asserts: “I know likewise that Luther, Melanchthon, and many other (if not all) of the Reformers frequently and strongly assert that every believer is conscious of his own

⁸⁸³ Ibid., 18:212, f/n 95. The legitimacy of this charge will be considered in chapter six.

⁸⁸⁴ Wilder, *Father of the Wesleys: A Biography*, 218.

⁸⁸⁵ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:285.

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid., 1:286.

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid., 1:285–86. Wesley eschewed unbridled enthusiasm, examining it in depth in his sermon *The Nature of Enthusiasm* and concluding that enthusiasm is “an evil—a misfortune, if not a fault. As to the nature of enthusiasm, it is undoubtedly a disorder of the mind, and such a disorder as greatly hinders the exercise of reason.” Ibid., 2:49.

acceptance with God, *and that by a supernatural evidence*, [to wit: the witness of the Spirit] which if any choose to term immediate revelation he may.”⁸⁸⁸ Luther certainly would not!

Luther spoke in terms of a “witness of the Spirit”, but it was not the assurance of believers’ personal salvation. Rather, for him the Spirit bore witness to the Word—*through* the Word—that these were the true and precious promises of God.⁸⁸⁹ The vehicle of this assurance (Scripture) was as worthy of praise as God Himself; in contrast, the Reformer was never wont to focus on a person’s ephemeral feelings in spiritual matters. Even (or *especially*) where salvation itself was concerned, the focus should be *extra nos*. He asks: “Is it not true that the Word of God is greater and more important than faith, since faith builds and is founded on the Word of God rather than God’s Word on faith? Furthermore faith may waver and change, but God’s Word remains forever [Isaiah 40:6–9; 1 Peter 1:24].”⁸⁹⁰

Concerning Sin

As might be expected given the outlines of Wesley’s and Luther’s theology presented in chapters three and four, significant differences exist between the two men’s teaching on sin. Elements of their hamartiology that have bearing on our issue at hand are discussed individually, below.

***Fomes Peccati*—Are There Ineradicable Remains of Sin in Believers?**

In keeping with many theologians before him, Luther taught:

[T]he Christian faith is given in such a way that many evil lusts still remain in the flesh as long as we live, since there is no saint who is not in the flesh. But that which

⁸⁸⁸ John Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. John Telford (London: Epworth, 1931), III:159; emphasis added.

⁸⁸⁹ Luther, *What Luther Says*, 664. Cf. Luther, *AE*, 26:377.

⁸⁹⁰ Luther, *AE*, 40:260.

is in the flesh cannot be completely pure. Therefore St. Peter says: Be armed in such a way that you guard against sins which still cling to you, and that you constantly fight against them. For our worst foes are in our bosom and in our flesh and blood. They wake, sleep, and live with us like an evil guest whom we have invited to our house and cannot get rid of.⁸⁹¹

He bemoans—but does not deny—“our persistent frailty and sinfulness, our flesh and blood, and so many evil lusts even after our Baptism”, urging his hearers to “wrestle and contend with our flesh and our sins, which God has a perfect right to judge and punish. So much of the old Adam still creeps into our being, and it will never be different.”⁸⁹²

Wesley agreed with Luther to a certain extent. While preaching on original sin, he said that “this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh...is not subject to the law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe, yet this lust hath of itself the nature of sin.”⁸⁹³ Pointedly, after questioning Luther’s alleged freedom from covetousness⁸⁹⁴ he counters: “We may therefore set it down as an undoubted truth that covetousness, together with pride, and self-will, and anger, remain in the hearts even of them that are justified.”⁸⁹⁵

Another significant distinction between Luther and Wesley relates to the *power* that sin exerted in believers’ lives. The English prelate protested that “some of these [other denominations] seem to carry the thing too far; so describing the corruption of heart in a believer as scarce to allow that he has dominion over it, but rather is in bondage thereto. And by this

⁸⁹¹ Ibid., 30:47.

⁸⁹² Ibid., 22:139–40.

⁸⁹³ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:318. As was the case with his teaching on the depravity of natural man (see footnote 854), Wesley’s words here are taken directly from Article IX of the Thirty-Nine Articles—see Leith, *Creeds of the Churches*, 270. But this time, there are some instructive *lacunae*. Notably, Wesley does not mention (although Article IX does) that it is concupiscence and lust that “hath of itself [note the singular verb and pronoun, effectively treating concupiscence and lust as one and the same] the nature of sin.”

⁸⁹⁴ See the section entitled *Thou Shalt Not Covet*, above.

means they leave hardly any distinction between a believer and an unbeliever.”⁸⁹⁶ In a certain sense, Luther would certainly have agreed with some of those “others”: he taught that, although ἐν Χριστῷ, believers are not *slaves* to sin, they will battle sin throughout their earthly lives.

Is Sin Destroyed by Death?

In his 1519 treatise *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism*,⁸⁹⁷ Luther presents and supports the idea that sin remains in Christians all their natural lives, and is only removed from them through death and Last Day resurrection:

[I]t should be properly understood and known that our flesh, so long as it lives here, is by nature wicked and sinful.

To correct this wickedness God has devised the plan of making our flesh altogether new. . . . In the first birth we are spoiled; therefore he thrusts us into the earth again by death, and makes us over at the Last Day, that we may be perfect and without sin. . . .

Therefore when a person comes to mature age, the natural and sinful appetites—wrath, impurity, lust, greed, pride, and the like—begin to stir; whereas there would be none of these if all sins were drowned in the sacrament [of Baptism] and were dead. But the sacrament only signifies that they are to be drowned through death and the resurrection at the Last Day. So St. Paul, in Romans 7[:17–20], and the saints with him, lament that they are sinners and have sin in their nature, even though they were baptized and were holy. They lament in this way because the natural and sinful appetites are always active so long as we live.⁸⁹⁸

Early in his career, John Wesley agreed with this teaching. It appears in three pre-Aldersgate sermons: *On Mourning for the Dead*⁸⁹⁹ and *The Trouble and Rest of Good Men*⁹⁰⁰ both give reference to it, and in his first-ever sermon, preached on October 3, 1725 on *Death and*

⁸⁹⁵ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:341.

⁸⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:318.

⁸⁹⁷ Luther, *AE*, 35:29–43.

⁸⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 35:32–33.

⁸⁹⁹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 4:237–43.

⁹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:533–41.

Deliverance, he proclaimed that those who have died

are freed from the tyranny of sin, a yoke they could never hope to cast off entirely as long as they carried about them those mortal bodies in which the seeds of corruption were so deeply implanted. The law of our members is now continually warring against the law of our mind, and even when we would do good, evil is present with us. But we lay down these infirmities with this veil of flesh, and the spirit will then be able as well as willing to perform its duty; and the more sensible we are of our present weakness, the more shall we rejoice at our deliverance from it.⁹⁰¹

But as his theology developed—about entire sanctification in particular—Wesley found himself in a quandary. For if the message he had once preached were true—if death and resurrection were the means whereby sin was eradicated—that would militate against the necessity of experiencing entire sanctification before death. He could not remain with Luther on this head, as his Methodist doctrines coalesced.

This left the English divine in a quandary regarding his early sermons. Loath to discard them, unwilling to renounce them, he retained the manuscripts but quite intentionally did not include them in any edition of *Sermons On Several Occasions (SOSO)* published during his lifetime. These collected sermons, it will be remembered, Wesley intended to serve as theological touchstones for friends (*e.g.*, his itinerant preachers) and foes alike. He published them with the express purpose that “every serious man who peruses these will therefore see in the clearest manner what those doctrines are which I embrace and teach as the essentials of true religion”.⁹⁰²

But Wesley also said in the Preface to the first (1746) *SOSO* edition: “The following sermons contain the substance of what I have been preaching for between *eight and nine years*

⁹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 4:212.

⁹⁰² *Ibid.*, 1:103.

past”,⁹⁰³ which coincides with the epoch of his Aldersgate experience. Since the sermons in which he affirmed death-as-deliverance-from-sin were preached long before then, he could justifiably leave them out of the *SOSO*. As the editors of the *Bicentennial Edition* wryly note, concerning 1735’s *The Trouble and Rest of Good Men*, “when he [Wesley] later changed his basic understanding of ‘sin in believers’, he quite pointedly left this sermon in limbo, where it has remained ever since, as far as any attention paid to it in Wesley studies is concerned”.⁹⁰⁴ It is to this very topic that we now turn.

The Manner and Status of Sin in Believers

One of Wesley’s central spiritual tenets was that “even babes in Christ are so far perfect as not to commit sin.”⁹⁰⁵ He reached this conclusion after long study and reasoning—which he documented for his followers in *Sermons On Several Occasions*. The theme is reflected in *The Witness of the Spirit*,⁹⁰⁶ *The Means of Grace*,⁹⁰⁷ *The Circumcision of the Heart*,⁹⁰⁸ and *The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God*;⁹⁰⁹ it reaches its fullest *SOSO* expression in a 1750 sermon fittingly titled *Christian Perfection*.⁹¹⁰

This understanding was not forged in a theological vacuum. On the one hand there was the

⁹⁰³ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid., 3:532.

⁹⁰⁵ He continues “This St. John affirms expressly”—no doubt referring to the Evangelist’s words “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin” (1Jn. 3:9). Wesley, *Plain Account*, 23.

⁹⁰⁶ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:269–84.

⁹⁰⁷ Ibid., 1:378–97.

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid., 401–14.

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid., 1:431–43.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid., 2:97–124. It is true that Wesley later released his most comprehensive statement of the belief in the lengthy *Plain Account* tract (referenced earlier). But that late (1777) work was summarized, rather than established, his teaching; it comprised many excerpts from earlier works including his journals, hymns, tracts, minutes...and of course his sermons.

Scylla of Lutheranism, claiming that sin remains but is not imputed,⁹¹¹ while on the other loomed the Charybdis of English Moravianism, which interpreted St. John’s words to mean that true Christians are so far perfect that they *could no longer* sin. This, of course, formed the foundation of the extreme antinomianism Wesley abhorred. With even some of his own preachers being drawn into the sinless-perfection camp,⁹¹² and many of his followers struggling with temptation and doubt, Wesley had to clarify his understanding on this head.

The tension between the two extremes (“your sin is and always will be 100% still-there” vs. “sin is and always will be 100% gone”) seemed irreconcilable. Wesley’s unique solution was to *re-define* Sin...or as he preferred to say, to distinguish between “sin, properly so-called” and “sin, improperly so-called”.⁹¹³ By declaring the decisive characteristic of sin to be a matter of the human will, Wesley believed he had found a way to cut the Gordian knot. Differentiating in this way, the “holiness” of not-willfully-transgressing could be placed within theoretical reach of his Methodists, without having to claim or expect the guiltless perfection of the Antinomians.

This theological reformulation was not without its detractors, however, and as even Albert Outler admits, “[T]here was an unstable tension between the claims that a Christian may be delivered from sin’s bondage, and that ‘sin remains but no longer reigns’; this continued to

⁹¹¹ Augsburg Confession Article II, Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 117–19; cf. also Luther, *AE*, 35:34–35.

⁹¹² Notable among these are Thomas Maxfield—one of Wesley’s first lay preachers—and William Cudworth, who is described as “the leading spirit of an offshoot from (Calvinistic) Methodism, the adherents of which were called ‘The Hearers and Followers of the Apostles’.” (J. C. Whitebrook, “Wesley and William Cudworth,” *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 12, [1919]: 32.) Wesley suspected Cudworth of being the author of a 1762 article titled *Thoughts on Christianity* in William Dodd’s *The Christian’s Magazine*, which asserted that “all who are united to Christ by the Holy Spirit’s dwelling in them are delivered from the guilt, the power, or, in one word the being of sin”. See William Dodd, ed., *The Christian’s Magazine, or a Treasury of Divine Knowledge 1760–1766* (London: J. Newbery and J. Coote, 1767), 579. Much of Wesley’s polemic concerning sin in believers is directed against Cudworth’s teachings.

⁹¹³ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 54. Wesley’s bifurcation of sin is elaborated in chapter three.

plague Wesley in many ways, as one can see from his frequent references to it”.⁹¹⁴ It does play a significant part in many of his *Standard Sermons*, as well as figuring prominently in his personal correspondence. Wesley, the experiential Anglican, could neither deny that the “infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated”⁹¹⁵ nor surrender his central tenet of heart-holiness. But he was equally unwilling to accept the “un-reasonable” solution Martin Luther proposed:

Simul Iustus et Peccator

A Christian “is righteous and a sinner at the same time”,⁹¹⁶ Luther taught. How can this be? The concept stems from a “positional” understanding of the human creature’s identity. From what perspective are you describing your status? Viewed simply as a human, positioned in the world and standing on my own merits, the truth that I am purely a sinner dominates my view.

But when I consider the reality of my position as a blood-bought child of God; when I look at myself from the perspective of being “in Christ”—*clothed* with Christ (Galatians 3:27)—then the wonderful truth that I am *purely* a saint prevails, since His righteousness and holiness have been imputed to me.

These realities can be (and are) simultaneously true, since their verity depends upon the perspective of the observer. We experience this kind of simultaneity in other areas as well. For example, *in and of myself* I am not “family” with those I call my in-laws, yet *viewed from the perspective of my marriage* I certainly am. That perspective was opened up for me when a new and wonderful marital relationship began...but *apart from it*, I remain a stranger to them, and

⁹¹⁴ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:315.

⁹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:318.

⁹¹⁶ Luther, *AE*, 26:232.

they to me.

For Martin Luther, the dual realities could coexist without contradiction because of the power and promise of God. He can call things that are not as though they were (Romans 4:17) and set at naught the things that are (1 Corinthians 1:28). Luther was willing to let God speak, and apparent logical contradictions stand, simply because the Word spoke that way. The ontological reality of our 100% holiness—declared a *present actuality* though not yet experienced by earth-bound saints—will certainly be ours empirically, in God’s time.

John Wesley was less willing to accept this idea. For him, both real *and* relative changes should be experienced in this life, as part of one’s true Christian life.⁹¹⁷ Furthermore, growth in holiness (2 Peter 3:18) logically implies a decline in sinfulness. Certainly, then, one could not remain 100% sinner and 100% saint—in fact, the idea that 100% plus 100% still only equaled 100%—was utterly illogical foolishness to the Enlightenment-nurtured Oxford don.

Wesley rejected Luther’s *simul*, believing that it fostered a moral and spiritual laxity since the sinner was being taught that s/he would *always be* 100% sinner. What would motivate such a person to strive for holiness of heart and life? Perfection deferred until the resurrection crushed a believer’s hope for growth and victory! So, leaving the Reformer’s formulation behind, Wesley preached his own version of Law and Gospel, saying both:

Vain hope! that a child of Adam should ever expect to see the kingdom of Christ and of God without striving, without ‘*agonizing*’ first ‘to enter in at the strait gate!’ That one who was ‘conceived and born in sin,’ and whose ‘inward parts are very wickedness,’ would once entertain a thought of being ‘purified as his Lord is pure’ unless he ‘tread in his steps,’ and ‘take up his cross daily;’ unless he ‘cut off the right hand,’ and ‘pluck out the right eye and cast it from him;’⁹¹⁸

[*and:*]

[F]ret not thyself because of ungodliness, though it still remain in thy heart. Repine

⁹¹⁷ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 86.

⁹¹⁸ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:412.

not because thou still comest short of the glorious image of God; nor yet because pride, self-will, or unbelief, cleave to all thy words and works.⁹¹⁹

Thus the tension remained.

Wesley's sermons most specifically addressing this issue—*On Sin in Believers*⁹²⁰ and *The Repentance of Believers*⁹²¹—“are designed, as he says, for the encouragement of ‘the weaker brethren’ whose Christian assurance had been all too easily shaken by their awareness of sin’s residues in their hearts, even in their uncertain pilgrimage of grace toward ‘perfect love’ ”.⁹²² They are Wesley’s attempt at formulating a Methodist alternative to Luther’s *simul iustus et peccator*—an alternative perhaps better expressed as *simul fide et sanctitate*.

The Proverbs 27:6 Man

Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.

We have seen that John Wesley thought very highly of Luther’s bravery and integrity as a man of God; he thought considerably less of certain Luther statements and doctrines. Some of Wesley’s disapprobations were undeserved, since his sources were less than reliable, others were based upon their differing theological perspectives. But for all criticism he leveled at the great Reformer, Wesley nonetheless felt that he was acting as a “faithful friend”⁹²³—speaking what he believed was the truth, according to what he believed was love, for any who were enmeshed in Lutheran error.

The differences between the two leaders ranged from differences of temperament and style

⁹¹⁹ Ibid., 1:245.

⁹²⁰ Ibid., 1:317–34.

⁹²¹ Ibid., 1:335–52.

⁹²² Ibid., 1:316.

⁹²³ Ibid., 20:285.

to far more substantive matters of doctrine. Many things John Wesley might dismiss as being mere differences of opinion that would not break the bond of Christian unity.⁹²⁴ Others—notably Luther’s understanding of sanctification—were serious errors indeed, to the Englishman.

Yet there are two ways to evaluate these men; the first (Wesley’s opinion of Luther and his doctrine) has been the subject of this chapter. The second (a Lutheran evaluation of Wesley’s doctrine) is still wanting. In the next chapter we will consider the merits of John Wesley’s theological constructs, in light of Martin Luther’s.

⁹²⁴ Ibid., 1:454.

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

On May 14, 1765, Wesley wrote a letter to John Newton—former slave ship captain but now curate of Olney—expounding the theology of entire sanctification at some length. He closes by saying:

In God’s name I entreat you to make me sensible of this! Show me by plain, strong reasons what dishonour this hope [of Entire Sanctification] does to Christ, wherein it opposes Justification by Faith or any fundamental truth of religion. But do not wrest, and wiredraw, and colour my words, as Mr. Hervey (or Cudworth)⁹²⁵ has done, in such a manner that when I look in that glass I do not know my own face!⁹²⁶

It is the purpose of this chapter to examine Wesley’s theological formulations—*without* “wresting, wiredrawing, or coloring his words”—to determine whether his doctrine of entire sanctification is biblically sound. *Is* it the penultimate Christian hope he claims it to be—the *sine qua non* of eternity with the Lord?

Wesley’s work will be evaluated from the perspective of orthodox Lutheran theology; that is, each Wesleyan point at issue will be compared to the way the Reformer himself might have answered. The goal of such a reconstructed dialogue-across-the-centuries is to stimulate similar conversations among Luther and Wesley’s followers, today—and the truth of Scripture be spoken in love—to the glory of God and the furtherance of His Kingdom.

⁹²⁵ Revs. James Hervey and William Cudworth were long-standing critics of John Wesley; their polemical relationship ran the gamut from exchange of letters to published tract wars.

⁹²⁶ Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, 4:300.

What's Your One Thing?

“I have only one thing to do”, Wesley wrote to Christopher Hopper in 1788, “to save my soul, and those that hear me.”⁹²⁷ To this end Wesley bent his efforts over the course of a lifetime, for this was the purpose of the Christian religion.

Or was it? In his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Wesley writes that in 1729 he “generally considered religion as an [sic] uniform following of Christ, an entire inward and outward conformity to our Master”.⁹²⁸ Lest this be dismissed as a mere pre-Aldersgate anomaly, we find that in his 1759 sermon *Original Sin*, he declares:

Ye know that the great end of religion is *to renew our hearts in the image of God, to repair* that total loss of righteousness and true holiness which we sustained by the sin of our first parent. Ye know that all religion which does not answer this end, all that stops short of this, the renewal of our soul in the image of God, after the likeness of him that created it, is no other than a poor farce and a mere mockery of God, to the destruction of our own soul.⁹²⁹

Manifest holiness of heart and life were essential to Wesley. He writes in his April 10, 1777 Journal, “I preached on Hebrews 12:14, ‘without holiness, no man can see the Lord.’⁹³⁰ I was enabled to make a close application, chiefly to those that expected to be saved by faith—*I hope*

⁹²⁷ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XII:319.

⁹²⁸ Wesley, *Plain Account*.

⁹²⁹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:185; emphasis added. The *BE* editors concur at this point, noting: “The recovery of the defaced image of God is the axial theme of Wesley’s soteriology” (f/n. 70).

⁹³⁰ Hebrews 12:14 was a crucial and oft-referenced *sedes doctrinae* for John Wesley. It is interesting to note, in comparison, the low profile this verse displays in early Lutheran theology: Hebrews 12:14 is cited only once in the entirety of the American Edition of Luther’s Works—in exegetical support of 1 John 3:4; see *AE* 30:268—while it is not referenced at all in the *Book of Concord*. Does this mean Luther and his followers considered holiness (or the book of Hebrews) of only marginal importance? By no means.

Regarding the book of Hebrews itself—considered *antilegomena* by some early Fathers—the Lutheran Reformers certainly cited other Hebrews passages in support of their teaching. From the Augsburg Confession (Article XX:25) to the Formula of Concord (Solid Declaration Article XI:39) and dozens of places in between, the book of Hebrews is used to validate the argumentation.

Nor did Luther eschew holiness of heart and life, as some might insinuate from certain of his comments about works. It is the purpose and benefit of such holiness that is the point at issue—not whether holiness is important for the Christian. Luther was certainly aware of the content of Hebrews 12:14; Luther and Wesley simply interpreted and applied it in vastly different ways.

none of them will hereafter dream of going to heaven by any faith which does not produce holiness.”⁹³¹

Wesley had no interest in a faith that was just “a bare external religion, a round of outward duties, how many soever they be, and how exactly soever performed”.⁹³² But was he correct in his formulation of an alternative?

A Plain Analysis (and Evaluation) of Christian Perfection

From the Lutheran perspective, there are a number of issues with Wesley’s doctrine of entire sanctification; each will be considered under its own heading. At the outset we must consider the approach taken to interpreting and integrating the source(s) of Christian doctrine.

Reason and Scripture

Analysis

Wesley, like Luther, considered Scripture to be the only true and infallible source for doctrine and life.⁹³³ But unlike Luther, Wesley carried his perspective regarding reason into his doctrinal studies.⁹³⁴ There is an obstacle in doing so, however, and it is not the *irrationality* or incomprehensibility of the written Word, but rather its *suprarationality*. “My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts”

⁹³¹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 23:46, emphasis added.

⁹³² *Ibid.*, 2:194.

⁹³³ *Ibid.*, 1:57–58. In the Preface to his *Sermons On Several Occasions*, he says: “God himself has condescended to teach the way: for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price give me the Book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri* [a man of one book].” *Ibid.*, 1:105.

⁹³⁴ Lee evaluates: “The Scriptures are indeed the sole rule of faith and practice; but Wesley assumed that Scriptures are themselves reasonable and must be so interpreted.” Lee, *John Wesley and Modern Religion*, 135.

(Isaiah 55:8–9)—and when the thoughts and ways of God appear illogical to human reason, the interpreter is faced with two choices. One may either subvert the Word to human reason (“make” it make sense), or else let apparent contradictions stand and confess that what God says is true whether or not we understand it.

Luther, for his part, insisted on taking God’s Word as written even if it contradicted the science or philosophy of his age. “[G]rant the Holy Spirit the honor of being more learned than you are”, he told his readers. “For you are to deal with Scripture in such a way that you bear in mind that God Himself says what is written. But since God is speaking, it is not fitting for you wantonly to turn His Word in the direction you wish to go.”⁹³⁵ Thus, for example, Luther let God’s Word declare that sinners were *simul iustus et peccator*; contrary to reason, God is *not* deceived,⁹³⁶ and unholy Man *is* truly righteous because God’s declaration makes it so.

Although the Saxon Reformer agreed with Wesley on the intellectual capacities which were the property of all people,⁹³⁷ he repeatedly emphasized that they were blind—and even dangerous—tools in spiritual matters. Luther distrusted human reason when it ventured into the

⁹³⁵ “[S]o tuhe dem heiligen geist die ehre, das er gelerter sei denn du. Denn du solt also mid der schrift handeln, das du denckest, wie es Gott selbs rede, Weil es aber Gott redet, so geburet dir nicht sein wort as frevel zu lenken, wo du ihn wilt.” Luther, WA, 24:20; translation from Luther, *What Luther Says*, 1523; emphasis added.

⁹³⁶ Cf. Wesley’s sermon *Justification by Faith*, where he defines justification negatively by insisting: “Least of all does justification imply, that God is *deceived* [emphasis original] in those whom he justifies; that he thinks them to be what, in fact, they are not; that he accounts them to be otherwise than they are. It does by no means imply, that God judges concerning us contrary to the real nature of things; that he esteems us better than we really are, or believes us righteous when we are unrighteous. Surely no. The judgment of the all-wise God is always according to truth. *Neither can it ever consist with his unerring wisdom, to think that I am innocent, to judge that I am righteous or holy, because another is so.* He can no more, in this manner, confound me with Christ, than with David or Abraham. Let any man, to whom God hath given understanding, weigh this without prejudice; and he cannot but perceive, that *such a notion of justification is neither reconcilable to reason nor Scripture.*” Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:188–89; emphasis added unless otherwise noted.

⁹³⁷ In his sermon *Heavenly Treasure in Earthly Vessels*, Wesley asks: “[Do not Christians have,] in common with other men...an immaterial principle, a spiritual nature, endued with understanding, and affections, and a degree of liberty; of a self-moving, yea, and self-governing power? Certainly, whether this is natural or superadded by the grace of God, it is found, at least in some small degree, in every child of man. Something of this is found in every human heart...not only in all Christians, but in all Mahometans, all Pagans, yea, the vilest of savages.” *Ibid.*, 4:163.

realm of theology (beyond the ministerial tasks of deciphering grammar and syntax in the Word).

Lohse summarizes:

For Luther, however, theology is heaven, humanity is earth, and human speculations are smoke.⁹³⁸ He insisted that theological tenets, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, cannot be proved through rational deduction [WA, 9:17]. Because the Holy Spirit says it is so, it must be accepted as true [WA, 9:34–5.] As such it has pleased God through foolishness to save those who believe, so as to render foolish the wisdom of the world [WA, 9:56].⁹³⁹

Reason had its place for Luther, and the blending of human experience and reason with God's description of reality was not it.

Evaluation

As noted in the preceding chapter, Wesley took great umbrage at Luther's deprecation of *ratio*. Perhaps influenced by his tendency for univocal understanding of words and phrases, Wesley equated Luther's reason-*viz.*-spiritual-matters with reason-*viz.*-earthly-matters, and his confidence in Man's ability to reason through God's *ordo salutis* became a stumbling block in the development of his theology. Wesley balanced respect for Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience⁹⁴⁰ as he formed his understanding. An extremely methodical man given to minute and exacting evaluation, his analytical mind subdivided many foundational components of doctrine, and led him to find new definitions and uses for key theological elements. Significant among

⁹³⁸ "Volui autem dicere, quia theologia est celum, immo regnum celorum, homo autem terra et ejus speculationes fumi" Luther, WA, 9:65.

⁹³⁹ Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 56.

⁹⁴⁰ In his sermons we find validations such as: "[T]o this agrees the constant experience of the children of God" Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:333; "How clearly does this agree with the experience of every true believer!" *Ibid.*, 2:17; and "To deny this would be to deny the constant experience of all human kind." *Ibid.*, 4:24. Perhaps most tellingly, in his *Journal* he documents a doctrinal debate with Peter Böhler and writes that when he (Wesley) "simply considered the words of God, comparing them together, endeavouring to illustrate the obscure by the plainer passages; I found they all made against me, and was forced to retreat to my last hold, 'that experience would never agree with the literal interpretation of those scriptures. Nor could I therefore allow it to be true, till I found some living witnesses of it.'" *Ibid.*, 18:248.

these are the following:

The Nature, Purpose, and Attainability of the Law

Analysis

When considering “the law” in light of Rom.10:4 (“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to ever one that believeth”), John Wesley distinguished between the Adamic (alternately, the Angelic) law, the Mosaic (political, moral, and ceremonial) law, and the law of faith.⁹⁴¹ He notes that Adam was given a law to follow which was “proportional to his original powers” and that “he was well able so to do: and God could not but require the service he was able to pay”.⁹⁴² But once Adam fell, “his incorruptible body became...a clog to the soul, and hinders its operation,” and “no man is able to perform the service which the Adamic law requires”.⁹⁴³

What is the significance of this “inability”? Wesley taught “ ‘there is no condemnation’ to [believers] for anything whatever which it is not in their power to help; whether it be of an inward or outward nature, and whether it be doing something or leaving something undone”.⁹⁴⁴ While the example he then presents relates to missing the Lord’s Supper due to illness rather than something more directly linked to the Decalogue, the overarching principle remains: “There is no guilt, because there is no choice. As there is ‘a willing mind, it is accepted, according to that a man hath, not according to that he hath not’.”⁹⁴⁵

⁹⁴¹ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 78–80.

⁹⁴² *Ibid.*, 79.

⁹⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁴ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:241.

⁹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Evaluation

While this assertion certainly sounds rational and reasonable, Scripture does not indicate any propensity on God's part to change the demands of His law, depending on Man's ability. "I the LORD do not change", the Word tells us (Malachi 3:6); "He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a human being, that he should change his mind" (1 Samuel 15:29). God's perfect will for Man has not changed from the time of Eden; it is *mankind*, through the fall into sin, which has changed. What was once our joy and delight has now become impossible *due to our own failure*—God's requisite holiness is now beyond our reach. It does not matter how much prevenient grace ability we may be given to work with, nor how much we accomplish therewith; God does not grade on a curve, He grades on a Cross.

The Nature of Sin

Analysis

John Wesley's narrow definition of "sin, properly so-called" is a natural—indeed, necessary—facet of his theological construct. If holiness of heart and life were to be the consummate goal of earthly Christian life, then a *reachable* goal was essential. Given that no one could hope to attain flawlessness in this life,⁹⁴⁶ some form of manifestly achievable victory over sin was necessary.

Capitalizing on the concept of human volition, Wesley presented the concept of "sin, properly so-called" and posited that resisting *this* kind of sin was within man's reach and emotional purview. Along with externally-verifiable behavior ("all outward sin"⁹⁴⁷) there was

⁹⁴⁶ "I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excludes these involuntary transgressions which I apprehend to be naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality. Therefore sinless perfection is a phrase I never use, lest I should seem to contradict myself." Wesley, *Plain Account*, 54.

⁹⁴⁷ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:106.

the call to banish all inward tempers and attitudes which violate known laws of God.⁹⁴⁸ For *these* things godly people could examine themselves, repent, and ask God to purify them of all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Thus the grave designation “sin” was reserved for conscious and deliberate transgressions only. The Methodist leader had a host of less pejorative terms for other (in)actions that missed God’s mark, including but not limited to: omissions, shortcomings, wrong thinking; mistakes in opinion, mistakes in judgment and mistakes in practice, errors, infirmities, ignorance and imperfections, or “a thousand nameless defects either in conversation or behavior”.⁹⁴⁹

Interestingly enough, Wesley taught that, even though these things were not ‘sins, properly so-called’, each of them “is a transgression of the perfect law. Therefore, [e]very such mistake, were it not for the blood of atonement, would expose to eternal damnation.”⁹⁵⁰ He continues, “To explain myself a little farther on this head: Not only sin, properly so called, (that is, a voluntary transgression of a known law,) but sin, improperly so called, (that is, an involuntary transgression of a divine law, known or unknown,) needs the atoning blood. . . . Such transgressions you may call sins, if you please: I do not, for the reasons above-mentioned.”⁹⁵¹

Insistence upon this distinction-without-a-difference led Wesley to say, in defense of one particular man’s ‘mistake’ that “where every word and action springs from love, such a mistake is not properly a sin. *However, it cannot bear the rigour of God’s justice, but needs the atoning blood.*”⁹⁵² This, despite his avowal that transgressions of God’s law were not necessarily sin!⁹⁵³

⁹⁴⁸ Ibid., 1:304.

⁹⁴⁹ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 23, 52–54; Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:100–104, et al.

⁹⁵⁰ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 52.

⁹⁵¹ Ibid., 54.

⁹⁵² Ibid., 52; emphasis added.

Evaluation

Herein lies a curious dissonance within his teaching. If the holiness without-which-no-one-shall-see-the-Lord consists in the eradication of ‘sin, properly so-called’ before death,⁹⁵⁴ and if (by contrast) these other imperfections remain with us until we are in glory⁹⁵⁵ *but still “would expose to damnation” and therefore “need the atoning blood”*, then what functional, soteriological difference is there between Wesley’s ‘mistakes’ and his ‘sins’? What is there that “cannot bear the rigour of God’s justice”, yet still needs atonement, except Sin?

Christ told His disciples in the Upper Room that His blood was poured out for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28). To downgrade certain offenses against God and His perfect Law from “sin” to mere “mistake”

- undermines the doctrine of Man’s total wretchedness and helplessness,
- downplays the culpability of (some) transgressions, *and*
- robs Christ of glory, any time a person takes comfort in the “involuntary” or “ignorant” nature of a given transgression, thereby not repenting in dust and ashes (Job 42:6) due to the magnitude of his or her wickedness. (“I’m sorry for what I did, Lord, but at least it wasn’t a *sin*...”)⁹⁵⁶

Analysis: The Significance and Culpability of Original Sin

Wesley’s verdict on whether Adam’s offspring are guilty on account of Eden’s original sin

⁹⁵³ “St. John says, ‘All sin is a transgression of the law’ . . . but he does not say, ‘All transgression of the law is sin.’ This I deny: let him prove it that can.” Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:79.

⁹⁵⁴ And, of course, the indwelling of perfect love—see chapter three.

⁹⁵⁵ “I do not expect to be freed from actual mistakes, till this mortal puts on immortality. . . . till this corruptible shall have put on incorruption.” Wesley, *Plain Account*, 52.

⁹⁵⁶ Wesley does caution those who claimed to be entirely sanctified to beware of pride (*ibid.*, 95–97), but his admonitions concern interaction with other humans as opposed to false security concerning lack of “sin, properly so-called” in their thoughts, words, and deeds.

builds on the volitional nature of ‘sin, properly so-called’. While freely acknowledging that “we are all in some way guilty of Adam’s sin”⁹⁵⁷ (as evidenced by the fact that all people physically die), he nonetheless does not believe that Adam’s offspring are guilty of damnable sin on account of the forbidden fruit. When Dr. Taylor objects: “God assures us, children ‘shall not die for the iniquity of their fathers’ [Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:20]”, Wesley differentiates between physical death and spiritual death (damnation), saying: “No, not *eternally*. I believe none ever did, or ever will, die *eternally*, merely for the sin of our first father.”⁹⁵⁸ The offspring were not in Eden to willfully transgress the command; they “could not help” what Adam and Eve did. For Wesley, original sin is not a matter upon which eternal destiny hangs; behavioral sin is. In his sermon *On Sin in Believers*, he maintains that “*having sin* does not forfeit the favor of God; *giving way to sin* does”.⁹⁵⁹ Here he parts way with Luther and others, who maintain that original sin truly is damnable.⁹⁶⁰

Analysis: Sin as Substance

Significant also to Wesley’s *ordo* is an idea which he never truly disavowed: that Sin is a “thing” which “has to be taken out of a man, like a cancer or a rotten tooth”.⁹⁶¹ And when sin is perceived as something akin to the burden John Bunyan’s pilgrim carried,⁹⁶² it only stands to reason that, as a Christian grows in grace, the day will arrive when the burden will be completely

⁹⁵⁷ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, IX:243.

⁹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, IX:315; emphasis added.

⁹⁵⁹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:332; emphasis original.

⁹⁶⁰ “The tinder of original sin, even without actual sin, bars the entrance to the kingdom of heaven.” Luther, *AE*, 32:29.

⁹⁶¹ John Wesley, *Wesley’s Standard Sermons*, ed. Edward Holdsworth Sugden (London: Epworth, 1921), 2:459.

⁹⁶² John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, ed. W. R. Owens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 11.

removed⁹⁶³ *before 'entering the celestial city'*.⁹⁶⁴

Unlike Bunyan, however, Wesley viewed the nature of sin somewhat more organically: sin was something deeply inbred, and its poisonous hold on Man was threefold. He therefore claimed we needed three distinct deliverances: from the *guilt* of sin, the *power* of sin, and the *root* of sin. Wesley taught that the “relative change” of justification liberated one from the “guilt” of sin, while the “real change” of the contemporaneous new birth delivers from the “power” of sin,⁹⁶⁵ so that even new converts (“babes in Christ”) are capable of not-sinning.

Yet even these glorious deliverances left something unfinished: the “root” of sin still had to be extirpated. For although the righteousness of Christ accorded to us at justification may “entitle” us to heaven, so long as the root of sin remains in us we do not “qualify” for it; though His righteousness gives us a “claim” to heaven, while the root of sin remains we have no “fitness” for it.⁹⁶⁶ The root of sin must be systematically (methodically?) denied, so that it might weaken and eventually die. This, for Wesley, was the purpose of the Christian life after justification.

That moment, when the root of sin finally dies, was the consummation devoutly to be wished by all Wesley’s adherents. He encouraged them to remain vigilant, for a man “may be dying to sin for some time; yet he is not dead to sin, till sin is separated from his soul; and in that instant he lives the full life of love”.⁹⁶⁷

⁹⁶³ Ibid., 37.

⁹⁶⁴ Ibid., 285. The comparison is not meant to imply that Wesley drew inspiration from this story; there is scant evidence in Wesley’s works that he was intimately acquainted with Bunyan’s allegory.

⁹⁶⁵ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:431–32.

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid., 4:144.

⁹⁶⁷ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 62.

Précis

The Scriptural assessment of sin is much graver than some eradicable quantum. We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners. We are not judged on account of something in we possess; through original sin our very natures are essentially corrupted. Luther described Man as a sinner who is “without fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence. And...this disease or original fault is truly sin, which even now damns and brings eternal death to those who are not born again through baptism and the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁶⁸

Unregenerate Man’s existence is an active distrust of God, and this ‘Old Adam’ life cannot be reformed—Scripture calls it ‘new birth’ for good reason. God’s grace towards us is manifest in His not counting our sins against us and declaring us holy and right. He gives us His Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come.⁹⁶⁹ Until that ἔσχατον we remain locked in the very real battle between the old and the new, which St. Paul describes in Romans six through eight.

In Place of Sin, Holiness

Analysis: The *Need* for Holiness

For Wesley, sinful humans not only needed to be rid of something evil (sin), they also needed something good in its place: holiness. In his sermon *The New Birth*⁹⁷⁰ he presents the needs thus:

- 1) the new birth is “absolutely necessary in order to [sic] holiness”.⁹⁷¹

⁹⁶⁸ Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 38–39.

⁹⁶⁹ 2Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13–14.

⁹⁷⁰ Wesley preached on Jn. 3:7 (“You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again’”) more than sixty times over the course of twenty years. The 1760 printed version of *The New Birth*—included in *SOSO* and cited here—is a concatenation of the various oral presentations and is considered the definitive expression of his thought on this head.

⁹⁷¹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:195.

- 2) “ ‘without holiness no man shall see the Lord,’ shall see the face of God in glory”.⁹⁷²
- 3) He also asks and answers the question “What is holiness according to the oracles of God?” The description is worth citing at length:

[G]ospel holiness is no less than the image of God stamped upon the heart. It is no other than the whole mind which was in Christ Jesus. It consists of all heavenly affections and tempers mingled together in one. It implies such a continual, thankful love to him who hath not withheld from us his Son, his only Son, as makes it natural, and in a manner necessary to us, to love every child of man; as fills us with ‘bowels of mercies, kindness, gentleness, long-suffering’. It is such a love of God as teaches us to be blameless in all manner of conversation; as enables us to present our souls and bodies, all we are and all we have, all our thoughts, words, and actions, a continual sacrifice to God, acceptable through Christ Jesus.⁹⁷³

For John Wesley, *feeling* and *doing* no “sin, properly so-called” was scriptural holiness, or “perfection”.⁹⁷⁴ This was righteousness.⁹⁷⁵ It was the restored moral image of God.⁹⁷⁶ It was what it meant to be “entirely sanctified”.⁹⁷⁷ Without being in this state, Wesley taught, no one would see God in glory. To have “the image of God stamped upon the heart” meant that the believer had had a moral perfection of intention worked *in* them.⁹⁷⁸

⁹⁷² Ibid.

⁹⁷³ Ibid., 2:194.

⁹⁷⁴ “Christian perfection. . . . is only another term for holiness. They are two names for the same thing. Thus everyone that is perfect is holy, and everyone that is holy is, in the Scripture sense, perfect.” Ibid., 2:104.

⁹⁷⁵ “Righteousness is, properly and directly, a right temper or disposition of mind, or a complex of all right tempers.” Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, IX:342.

⁹⁷⁶ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:31.

⁹⁷⁷ Negatively stated, “of grown Christians it can be affirmed, they are in such a sense perfect as . . . to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers” Wesley, *Plain Account*, 26. Positively stated, entire sanctification is “the pure love of God and man; the loving God with all our heart and soul, and our neighbour as ourselves. It is love governing the heart and life, running through all our tempers, words, and actions.” Ibid., 55.

⁹⁷⁸ This is in notable contrast with Luther’s understanding. The Saxon Reformer held that the *imago Dei* was a relational, rather than an ontological, issue. Further, Luther believed that believers battle the sinful flesh all their lives, thus restoration of the *imago Dei* only begins when a person is justified. The totally restored *imago* will be ours once we have laid aside this earthly tent.

Analysis: “How Can I Know that I Have It?” The Doctrine of Assurance

Wesley’s hearers were taught to long for this renewal of heart and mind—to “look for it every hour”.⁹⁷⁹ But how could they be sure they had been so renewed? Wesley addressed the issue at the 1759 Conference:

Q. When may a person judge himself to have attained this [entire sanctification]?

A. When, after having been fully convinced of inbred sin, by a far deeper and clearer conviction than that he experienced before justification, and after having experienced a gradual mortification of it, he experiences a total death to sin, and an entire renewal in the love and image of God, so as to rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in everything to give thanks.⁹⁸⁰

Is it possible for fallible human creatures to *know* that the things they are thinking and feeling are truly ‘of the Lord’? While Methodism’s “initial” or “present” salvation is rooted at least in part upon the objective change in the relationship between God and Man that comes with justification, confidence in having attained entire sanctification’s “final” salvation hinges on a subjective experimental process and my own evaluation of my inner state. Are Man’s capacities equal to such a task? Wesley’s anthropology must be considered next.

Humankind in the Grasp of Grace

Given Wesley’s dark assessment of Man ‘by nature’ discussed in chapter three, the possibility of our attaining such holiness and assurance would seem virtually impossible. But Enlightenment optimism collided with the doctrine of total depravity and led Wesley to conclude that totally depraved Man was only a theoretical reality—he posited a mankind “very far gone

⁹⁷⁹ “Thou therefore look for it every moment. Look for it in the way above described; in all those ‘good works’ whereunto thou art ‘created anew in Christ Jesus’. There is then no danger. You can be no worse, if you are no better for that expectation. For were you to be disappointed of your hope, still you lose nothing. But you shall not be disappointed of your hope: it will come, and will not tarry. Look for it then every day, every hour, every moment. Why not this hour, this moment?” Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:169.

⁹⁸⁰ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 61.

from original righteousness”⁹⁸¹ indeed, but already at birth lifted (albeit ever so slightly) through the gift of prevenient grace.

Analysis: Unwrapping the Gift of Grace

In a manner reminiscent of the sin-as-substance concept, Wesley also viewed *gratia* as a quantum to be given,⁹⁸² possessed,⁹⁸³ and used. By positing the gift of prevenient grace, Man was lifted from hopeless to salvable—if he would only make use of the grace already given, so as to qualify for more.⁹⁸⁴ What could preveniently grace-enabled people do?

- 1) Even unbelievers could harken unto the glimmer of light the Holy Spirit has given to all people.⁹⁸⁵
- 2) For those unbelievers who *had* responded to that prevenient grace, “[s]alvation is carried on by ‘convincing grace’, usually in Scripture termed ‘repentance’, which brings a larger measure of self-knowledge, and a farther deliverance from the heart of stone.”⁹⁸⁶ Wesley expands the idea, saying “By repentance I mean conviction of sin, producing real desires and sincere resolutions of amendment”⁹⁸⁷ along with a

⁹⁸¹ Methodist *Articles of Religion*, Article IX: Leith, *Creeds of the Churches*, 356.

⁹⁸² To wit: Wesley said that the ‘means of grace’ were “the ordinary channels whereby he [God] might *convey to men* preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace.” Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:381; emphasis added. Similarly, in his Journal for June 28, 1740, he writes: “I showed at large, that the Lord’s Supper was ordained by God to be a *means of conveying* to men either *preventing* or *justifying*, or *sanctifying* grace, according to their several necessities”. *Ibid.*, 19:159; emphasis original.

⁹⁸³ “Every man *has* a greater or less measure of this [prevenient grace]. . . .So that no man sins because he *has* not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he *hath*.” Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:207, emphasis added.

⁹⁸⁴ “Stir up the spark of grace which is now in you, and he will give you more grace.” *Ibid.*, 3:208.

⁹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 3:207.

⁹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 3:204; emphasis added.

⁹⁸⁷ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:428.

recognition of one’s own powerlessness to achieve reconciliation with a just and holy God. But the goal is still ahead.⁹⁸⁸

- 3) Continuing in (hearkening to) the convicting grace⁹⁸⁹ of that repentance opens the person to justifying grace. This, says Wesley, is the point at which “the proper Christian salvation”⁹⁹⁰ is experienced. It is a gift of a special kind of grace—the “faith whereof cometh present salvation”.⁹⁹¹

But even justification is not the end of God’s gifts of grace—nor is it the end of the soteriological line in Wesley’s thought. Justification is only the midpoint of his *schema*; he says: “Our main doctrines, which include all the rest, are three, that of repentance, of faith, and of holiness. The first of these [repentance] we account, as it were, the porch of religion; the next [justifying faith], the door; the third [holiness], religion itself.”⁹⁹² To fully enjoy “religion itself”, further response to grace is needed:

- 4) Continuing in the way of justifying grace sees the beginnings of sanctifying grace.⁹⁹³ This grace “begins the moment we are justified, in the holy, humble,

⁹⁸⁸ “I say unto thee, in the name of the Lord, ‘Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.’ One step more and thou shalt enter in. Thou dost ‘repent’. Now, ‘believe the gospel’.” Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:229.

⁹⁸⁹ Alternately so-called; see John Wesley, “The Arminian Magazine: Consisting Chiefly of Extracts and Original Treatises on Universal Redemption” 7 (1784): 524.

⁹⁹⁰ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:204.

⁹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 3:216. Wesley understands “faith” to encompass more than mere assent to a proposition—the *pro me* element is included in his description of saving faith. He says: “Faith, in general, is a divine, supernatural ἔλεγχος (evidence or conviction) of things not seen, not discoverable by our bodily senses, as being either past, future, or spiritual. Justifying faith implies, not only a divine ἔλεγχος, that God ‘was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,’ but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for my sins, that he loved me, and gave himself for me. And the moment a penitent sinner believes this, God pardons and absolves him. And as soon as his pardon or justification is witnessed to him by the Holy Ghost, he is saved.” Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:48.

⁹⁹² Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:472.

⁹⁹³ *Ibid.*, VIII:286.

gentle, patient love of God and man. It gradually increases from that moment”⁹⁹⁴ if hearkened to.

- 5) Then, at last, “in another instant the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with pure love to God and man”.⁹⁹⁵ This perfecting grace—with its unequivocal death to sin and indwelling of perfect love—comes because (through the diligent application of sanctifying grace by the believer) “the man under grace fights and conquers”⁹⁹⁶ and is granted entire sanctification.
- 6) But even the entirely sanctified are urged to “watch and pray” that they may not fall into temptation, for the mature Wesley believed entire sanctification to be amissible.⁹⁹⁷ He called on his followers to persevere unto the day of “final salvation” when they would be given the ultimate grace of God: glorification.⁹⁹⁸

Via this complex of graces, Wesley’s adherents could be encouraged to “strive to enter through the narrow gate” (Luke 13:24) no matter where on the salvation continuum they found themselves. Are you an unbeliever? Do not extinguish the glimmer of grace “that is vulgarly called ‘natural conscience’ ” but is in fact the “superadded...grace of God” and “is found, at least in some small degree, in every child of man”.⁹⁹⁹ Are you one with the “faith of a servant” who recognizes your sinfulness and fears God’s wrath? Do not stop there, but press on until you have the “faith of a son” through the grace of justifying faith.¹⁰⁰⁰ Beyond justifying faith, Christians

⁹⁹⁴ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:204.

⁹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:263.

⁹⁹⁷ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 114.

⁹⁹⁸ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:68.

⁹⁹⁹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 4:163.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 4:35; also *ibid.*, 1:250: “Those who are influenced only by slavish fear, cannot be termed the sons of

are urged to press on to entire sanctification, and thence to glory. For:

God worketh in you; therefore you *must* work: you must be ‘workers together with him’ (they are the very words of the Apostle); otherwise he will cease working. The general rule on which his gracious dispensations invariably proceed is this: ‘Unto him that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not’, that does not improve the grace already given, ‘shall be taken away what he assuredly hath’ (so the words ought to be rendered).¹⁰⁰¹

Analysis: The Human Progression With Grace—Children, Young Men, and Fathers

In discussing a Christians’ growth to spiritual maturity,¹⁰⁰² Wesley made use of St. John’s appeals to “children, young men, and fathers” (1 John 2:12–14). He begins with newly justified, newly regenerated Christians. These “babes in Christ”, as he calls them, are “so far perfect as not to commit sin. This St. John affirms expressly”.¹⁰⁰³ He elsewhere clarifies: “I believe even babes in Christ, ‘while they keep themselves, do not commit sin.’ By sin, I mean, outward sin; and the word commit, I take in its plain, literal meaning.”¹⁰⁰⁴

But merely eschewing *outward* sin was not the full articulation of the holiness Wesley sought for the faithful. He perceived Scripture to be promulgating both a growth in Christian grace and increasing mastery over sin. After the New Birth, therefore, babes in Christ who have ceased outward sin were to grow into “young men” who “ ‘are strong, and the word of God abideth in [them]’ ”, and who “have quenched the fiery darts of the wicked one, the doubts and fears wherewith he disturbed [their] first peace” and whose “witness of God that [their] sins are forgiven now ‘abideth in [their] heart’ .”¹⁰⁰⁵

God. Yet some of them may be styled his servants, and ‘are not far from the kingdom of heaven’.”

¹⁰⁰¹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:208; emphasis original.

¹⁰⁰² Akin to the extended analogy in his *New Birth* sermon, discussed in chapter three.

¹⁰⁰³ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 23.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XI:451.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:105.

But growth continues beyond young adulthood. The last stage of Christian advancement was becoming “fathers”, who “have known both the Father and the Son and the Spirit of Christ in [their] inmost soul. [They] are ‘perfect men, being grown up to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’ ” and Wesley says “these only are properly Christians”.¹⁰⁰⁶

Are such “fathers” mature beyond all risk of failure? By no means; Wesley claims, “There is no perfection of degrees, none which does not admit of a continual increase”¹⁰⁰⁷—even in heaven.¹⁰⁰⁸ He holds, concerning *every* growing Christian on earth, that “sin remains in him, the seed of all sin, till he is sanctified throughout”.¹⁰⁰⁹ And, of course, even the entirely sanctified “fathers” “are liable to mistake...*but...this is not sin* if love is the sole principle of the action”.¹⁰¹⁰

Evaluation: All My Children

It is worth asking whether Wesley’s scrupulous development of St. John’s tripartite address in 1 John chapter two is justified, or supported, by the analogy of faith. True, the Evangelist often uses the term “children” in his epistles, but he nowhere else separates Christians into three discrete castes.

It is also noteworthy that, while St. John does use the term “children” quite frequently in his letters, those “child” references do not consistently address the same (kind of) people. His epistolary τέκνα variously encompass *all* his readers, *all* Christians, and even the evangelist

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ibid., 2:105. This assertion caused no small stir among friend and foe alike; in the 1750 edition of this sermon Wesley changed it to read “these only are perfect Christians.”

¹⁰⁰⁷ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 23.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid., 62.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ibid., 42.

¹⁰¹⁰ Ibid., 53; emphasis added.

himself. Nor is it likely that, if he intended to preserve a theological distinction between children, young men, and fathers, St. John would, within the brief span of 1 John chapter two itself, switch from addressing children (verses 1–11) to specific subsets (verses 12–14) and then back again to children (verses 18–27), with a closing exhortation that *little* children (alone?) should “continue in” Christ (verse 28).

St. John’s second epistle is addressed to “the chosen lady and her children” (only?), but he then commends her because “some” of her children are walking in the truth (2 John 4).

Logically—according to Wesley’s *schema*—this would have to mean that either

- a) Any “children” who were not “walking according to the truth” should not have been called “children”¹⁰¹¹ at all, or
- b) Such “children” as *were* “walking according to the truth” should have been referred to as “young men” at the least.¹⁰¹²

John’s third epistle similarly rejoices over (his!) “children” who were “walking in the truth” (3 John 4), but he neither commends any “young men/fathers” for their faith, nor exhorts the “children” to grow to maturity.

Neither can the specifics of Wesley’s differentiation be sustained by the analogy of faith. While other New Testament writers do commend individuals and groups for their lively faith at various times and places, the characteristics of those faith-attainments do not coincide with Wesley’s. Paul, for example, commends those whose faith was manifest through giving; Peter encourages those who have stood the test of persecution.

¹⁰¹¹ This, if “walking in the truth” is understood as the initially-regenerated Christian life, where such babes in Christ do not commit outward sin.

¹⁰¹² ...if “walking in the truth” meant having a fuller relationship with God including the inward witness. This interpretation would allow for the less-sanctified to still qualify as “children”—but if the tripartite differentiation *were* such an important part of St. John’s soteriology, one would certainly expect him to have maintained and applied the distinctions consistently.

Why did Wesley place such emphasis on the spiritual milestones of assurance and perfect love? The answer lies in his understanding of Salvation.

Sirs, What Must I Do to be Saved?¹⁰¹³

Wesley asserted that his one goal was to save himself and his hearers.¹⁰¹⁴ But *which* salvation did he have in mind when he said this? In the following excerpt, his *ordo salutis* differentiates three phases of salvation: initial, ongoing, and final. What is the significance of this distinction?

Analysis: “Salvation Begun”—Initial Salvation, Initial Justification

In a conversation with Messrs. Taylor and Glascot, Wesley stated “In asserting salvation by faith, we mean this: (1.) That pardon (salvation begun) is received by faith producing works. (2.) That holiness (salvation continued) is faith working by love. (3.) That heaven (salvation finished) is the reward of this faith.”¹⁰¹⁵

Wesley’s ‘initial salvation’ (“salvation begun”) is commensurate with what he elsewhere identifies as justification and regeneration (a.k.a. the New Birth). This is the point at which a person’s heart is “strangely warmed” with the certainty that Christ has “taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death”;¹⁰¹⁶ at this point Wesley counted such a one justified. As discussed in chapter three, the New Birth is also granted here—simultaneous in time, albeit subsequent in theory, to justification—and this is when “the proper Christian

¹⁰¹³ Cf. Acts 16:30.

¹⁰¹⁴ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XII:319.

¹⁰¹⁵ *Ibid.*, VIII:290.

¹⁰¹⁶ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 18:250; emphasis original.

salvation” *begins*.¹⁰¹⁷

Given that, for Wesley, “justification...means *present* pardon, and acceptance with God ‘by’ or ‘for the remission of sins that are *past*’ ”,¹⁰¹⁸ this level of salvation cannot be all there is. Much Christian life lies ahead for new believers (unless they be on their deathbeds), and Wesley believed initial justification could not and did not cover that time span; he writes: “I cannot find anything in the Bible of the remission of sins, past, present, and to come.”¹⁰¹⁹ Repentance and forgiveness in the life of a *believer* is part of sanctification, not justification.

Analysis: “Salvation Continued”—Faith Working by Love

The Christian life, in Wesley’s understanding, is not merely a matter of temporally protracted justifying grace. The faith which brought pardon and absolution¹⁰²⁰ has done its work. The newborn believer has a lively sense of unworthiness and must continue to grow through continual self-examination. Pride, self-will, lust, love of the world, fear of dispraise, jealousy, covetousness—*whatever* such sin still remains in the heart and clings to words and actions—must be recognized and renounced.¹⁰²¹

This death to sin (which “remains” in believers, although thanks to the new birth, does not “rule” in them any longer¹⁰²²) must also be accompanied by the “fruits” of sanctifying

¹⁰¹⁷ Ibid., 3:204.

¹⁰¹⁸ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:427; emphasis added.

¹⁰¹⁹ Ibid., VIII:427.

¹⁰²⁰ See note 991, above.

¹⁰²¹ Cf. *The Repentance of Believers*, Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:337–46. It is important to Wesley that his hearers understand that the repentance of believers is of a different kind than the repentance experienced pre-justification—believers, although repenting of their sin, do so with “no guilt, no sense of condemnation, no consciousness of the wrath of God”. This, because a justified believer “does not suppose any doubt of the favour of God”. Ibid., 2:164–65.

¹⁰²² Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:337.

repentance. Wesley asks rhetorically,

‘But what good works are those, the practice of which you affirm to be necessary to sanctification?’ First, all works of piety, such as public prayer, family prayer, and praying in our closet; receiving the Supper of the Lord; searching the Scriptures by hearing, reading, meditating; and using such a measure of fasting or abstinence as our bodily health allows.

Secondly, all works of mercy, whether they relate to the bodies or souls of men; such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, visiting those that are in prison, or sick, or variously afflicted; such as the endeavouring to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the stupid sinner, to quicken the lukewarm, to confirm the wavering, to comfort the feebleminded, to succour the tempted, or contribute in any manner to the saving of souls from death. This is the repentance, and these the fruits meet for repentance, which are necessary to full sanctification. *This is the way wherein God hath appointed his children to wait for complete salvation.*¹⁰²³

Thus far the unfolding experience of ever-increasing salvation in this lifetime. This ever-increasing salvation may be described in terms both positive (growth in grace and love) and negative (killing the root of sin, which hinders the positive aspect until that sin-root is truly dead). Both these aspects of Christians’ life require the active involvement of the believers. But what is their final destiny?

Analysis: “Salvation Finished”—Final Salvation, Final *Justification*

Wesley’s description of life in heaven as “salvation finished” is certainly fitting. Yet notice that Wesley declares that the same manner of works “necessary to sanctification” are also necessary to attain a place in heaven. In his *Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, Wesley writes: “With regard to the condition of salvation, it may be remembered that I allow, not only faith, but likewise holiness or universal obedience, to be the ordinary condition of *final* salvation...faith alone is the condition of *present* salvation. . . . Such a faith as is without works

¹⁰²³ *Ibid.*, 2:166; emphasis added. Note that here Wesley *equates* “full sanctification” and “complete salvation”. Contrary to what might be expected, “complete salvation” does not refer to our reaching Paradise, but to attaining entire sanctification.

cannot ‘bring a man to heaven’.”¹⁰²⁴

Wesley, of course, claims that doing such works is actually possible only on account of the grace of God operative in the regenerate believer; in this manner he believes he can direct all honor and glory to God alone while still requiring Man to work. Yet intentionally or not, a person’s final justification winds up dependent on those works. To wit, in the 1744 *Minutes of Some Late Conversations* we find the following exchange:

- Q. 14. St. Paul says, Abraham was not justified by works; St. James, he was justified by works. Do they not contradict each other?
A. No: (1.) Because they do not speak of *the same justification*. St. Paul speaks of that justification which was when Abraham was seventy-five years old, above twenty years before Isaac was born; St. James, of that justification which was when he offered up Isaac on the altar. (2.) Because they do not speak of the same works; St. Paul speaking of works that precede faith; St. James, of works that spring from it.¹⁰²⁵

This is how justification can be by faith alone *and* by faith-plus-works: Wesley posits that there are two distinct justifying events. He says that, in Scripture, justification “*sometimes* means our acquittal at the last day. (Matt. xii. 37.) *But*...that justification whereof our Articles and Homilies speak, meaning [sic; read: “means”] *present* forgiveness, pardon of sins, and, consequently, acceptance with God; who therein ‘declares his righteousness’ (or mercy, by or) ‘for the remission of the sins that are *past*’.”¹⁰²⁶

Somehow the covenant of works remains in force. When asked: “[D]o you consider that we are under the covenant of grace, and that the covenant of works is now abolished?” Wesley replied:

If by the covenant of works you mean, that of unsinning obedience made with Adam before the fall, no man but Adam was ever under that covenant; for it was abolished before Cain was born. *Yet it is not so abolished, but that it will stand, in a measure,*

¹⁰²⁴ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:68–69; emphasis added.

¹⁰²⁵ *Ibid.*, VIII:277.

¹⁰²⁶ *Ibid.*, VIII:46; emphasis added.

even to the end of the world; that is, If we “do this,” we shall live; if not, we shall die eternally: If we do well, we shall live with God in glory; if evil, we shall die the second death. For every man shall be judged in that day, and rewarded “according to his works”.¹⁰²⁷

In this way, for Wesley, final salvation—one’s final justification—presupposes works “as a condition”¹⁰²⁸—for “in fact, every believer, till he comes to glory, works *for* as well as *from* life”.¹⁰²⁹

This stance is all the more surprising when we realize that Wesley himself once excoriated those who championed it. In a letter to a group of Methodist preachers Wesley confirms that, thirty years earlier, he had been “very angry with Bishop Bull...because in his *Harmonica Apostolica* he distinguishes our first from our final justification, and affirms both inward and outward good works to be the condition of the latter, though not the former”.¹⁰³⁰ What could have induced Wesley to so reverse himself on this head?

The answer lies in the kind of salvation that was nearest and dearest to his heart—and is most closely associated with the holiness of “Salvation Continued” presented above. For as noted, “initial salvation/justification” delivers one from the *guilt* of sin and the *power* of sin, but there still remains even in believers the *root* of sin...and for Wesley, “salvation from *all* sin” is the great goal of the Christian faith in this life—without such a salvation *no one* will “see the Lord”. It is instructive that, in his seminal 1765 *Scripture Way of Salvation* sermon—hailed as

¹⁰²⁷ Ibid., VIII:289; emphasis added.

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid., X:432.

¹⁰²⁹ Ibid., VIII:337; emphasis original.

¹⁰³⁰ Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, V:264. Cf. also his unpreached but carefully preserved denunciation of the holiness teaching of both George Bull and John Tillotson in the *Hyponcisy in Oxford* sermons, #150 (English) and #151 (Latin): Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 4:389–419. In standing against Bull, late Bishop of St. David’s, and Tillotson, the enormously popular preacher of the preceding generation who later became Archbishop of Canterbury, Wesley made it plain that he was more concerned about God’s truth as he understood it than he was about the opinions of men. Bull’s *Harmonia Apostolica* was an attempt to reconcile Paul’s *sola fide* with James’ “Faith without works is dead”.

“the most successful summary of the Wesleyan vision of the *ordo salutis* in the entire sermon corpus”¹⁰³¹—Wesley begins:

[F]irst let us inquire, What is salvation? The salvation which is here spoken of [in Ephesians 2:8] is not what is frequently understood by that word, the going to heaven, eternal happiness. It is not the soul’s going to paradise, termed by our Lord ‘Abraham’s bosom’. It is not a blessing which lies on the other side death, or (as we usually speak) in the other world. . . . But we are at present concerned only with that salvation which the Apostle is directly speaking of. And this consists of two general parts, justification and sanctification.¹⁰³²

Evaluation: Salvation Imperiled

Herein lies the greatest Wesleyan threat to a Christian’s hope of glory: sanctification has been inserted into the order of salvation—with disastrous consequences. For although justification remains *sola fide* in his *ordo*, by laying the stress he does upon love and obedience as essential to going to heaven,¹⁰³³ the sanctification necessary to final justification grows from merely one element in the *ordo* to the central tenet. Hence, the same man who wrote: “We allow, we contend, that we are justified freely through the righteousness of the blood of Christ”¹⁰³⁴ could also exhort: “[I]f God ‘worketh in you’, then ‘work out your own salvation’.”¹⁰³⁵

Seeing the Lord in glory thus becomes absolutely dependent on one’s entire sanctification.

Evaluation: Agonizing to Enter In at the Strait Gate¹⁰³⁶

Throughout his ministry Wesley exhorted listeners to “flee the wrath to come”;¹⁰³⁷ he also

¹⁰³¹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:154.

¹⁰³² *Ibid.*, 2:156–57.

¹⁰³³ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:276.

¹⁰³⁴ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 119.

¹⁰³⁵ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:203.

¹⁰³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:412. This is Wesley’s translation of Lk. 13:24; emphasis original.

¹⁰³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:143.

urged justified followers not to linger in that state, but to “go on to perfection”.¹⁰³⁸ He and his sanctified followers likewise extolled the wonderful joys of reaching holiness, entire sanctification, or salvation from sin.¹⁰³⁹

And while the desire (and struggle) for holiness of heart and life might be familiar to Christians of most any denomination (and many would also bear witness to experiences of joy and peace), discord swirls around the question of what those struggles for holiness signify. Luther himself knew *anfechtung* well, but did not place stock in feelings at all—whether of joy or despair, triumph or tribulation. The Reformer anchored his hope in the *extra nos* promises of the Word, rather than his own reactions to it.

Yet Wesley emphasized that such struggle and triumph were lodestones of true Christian spirituality. The moral battle—putting the old man to death through a “constant and continued course of general self-denial”—was the only way “to see the kingdom of Christ and of God”. Wesley described this as “striving...*agonizing*, first ‘to enter in at the strait gate’ ”.¹⁰⁴⁰ This abnegation would facilitate entire sanctification, and *by that holiness* Christians were said to “qualify” for heaven, declared to have a “fitness” for heaven, and by that holiness were “made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light”.¹⁰⁴¹

But the sincerity of our efforts, even efforts that are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, will never make us “meet to be partakers” of glory. Inserting a question of the intensity or

¹⁰³⁸ Heb. 6:1. This phrase is central to Wesley’s soteriology, appearing a dozen times in the published sermons alone, and frequently in his Journals and tracts as well. *Ibid.*, 2:532, and a host of others.

¹⁰³⁹ Although Wesley himself never expressly claimed to have attained entire sanctification, he described and praised it extensively, *e.g.* *Ibid.*, 1:266, et al. In his *Arminian Magazine* he published numerous autobiographical accounts of followers who described their sanctifying moments and the life of joy they lived afterwards; see especially volumes 2–4 (1779–1781).

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:412.

¹⁰⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 4:144.

constancy of our efforts into the *ordo salutis* robs disciples of the certainty of their salvation—even as it robs Christ of glory, by declaring His work on Calvary insufficient. Wesley proclaimed that the righteousness of Christ imputed at justification cleanses the heart only in “low degree”¹⁰⁴²—sin is overcome, but not rooted out; conquered, but not destroyed. The root of sin remains until the heart is fully cleansed and the *perfect love, dwelling within*, renders a person “fit” for heaven.

Nor was this merely “imputed” holiness; Wesley insisted that it was inherent. In a fervent rebuttal of the Moravian teaching that “a believer is not holy in himself, but in Christ only”,¹⁰⁴³ he fumes: “What a heap of palpable self-contradiction, what senseless jargon, is this!”¹⁰⁴⁴ He was adamant that the “great end of religion”—entire sanctification—had to be an indwelling possession before death, if one was to “see the Lord” in eternity.¹⁰⁴⁵

Scripture does not deny the idea of Christians “growing” in their faith. We are all clearly called to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18), and Hebrews 6:1 urges us to “move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to τελειότητα—variously translated “maturity” (ESV, NIV, NAS), “perfection” (KJV, WEB), or “full growth” (DBT). With such Scriptural witnesses to support him, Wesley encountered little resistance to his teaching on gradual sanctification.

But the Word is *not* so clear that there is a particular stage of τελειότητα—called “entire sanctification”—subsequent and superior to justifying faith, where sin is eradicated,¹⁰⁴⁶ all evil

¹⁰⁴² Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:403.

¹⁰⁴³ Cf. the Wesley/Zinzendorf dialogue reproduced in chapter five.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, X:203.

¹⁰⁴⁵ “None go to heaven without holiness of heart and life”; Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, 6:61.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 62.

desires and evil tempers are removed,¹⁰⁴⁷ self-will is obliterated,¹⁰⁴⁸ and perfect love for God and man rules the heart.¹⁰⁴⁹ Much less does Scripture clearly state that this entire sanctification must be acquired in this life, “without which no one shall see the Lord”.

To posit the existence and necessity of this “level”, and to define it with the precise parameters that Wesley does, is to do violence to God’s plan of salvation. Wesley demands particular demonstrable (or attestable) characteristics, attitudes and feelings, which the analogy of faith does not pronounce perfectly achievable—much less indispensable—in this life, in order that God deem a believer qualified/meet/fit for heaven.

All hope of glory is found in Christ: His sacrifice, His righteousness, His holiness imputed to sinful human creatures who cannot save themselves even in the smallest degree, because “to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness” (Romans 4:5). Demanding that believers seek this holy grail leads to a number unwelcome distortions of the faith once for all delivered to the saints:

Consequences of the Doctrine of Entire Sanctification

By maintaining that it is necessary to strive for a level or degree of salvation beyond the “initial” justification by faith, many aspects of Christian doctrine and experience are affected. Some of the most significant are presented below, each under its own head.

Denigration of Faith

Although in many places Wesley maintains that faith is the ground of salvation, his

¹⁰⁴⁷ Ibid., 26.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ibid., 29.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Ibid., 114.

modifying emphasis on “faith *working by love*” (cf. Galatians 6:5¹⁰⁵⁰) diminishes the rôle faith itself plays in Man’s eternal destiny. It is difficult to see how faith *alone* can continue to be the exclusive source of salvation, if constant emphasis is placed on works and feelings that must follow.¹⁰⁵¹ What of the “righteousness that is by faith from first to last” (Romans 1:17)? Despite insistence to the contrary, saying that all good (even faith) is on account of God’s prevenient activity, aspects or elements of saving faith that depend on my action are no longer the *sola fide* of salvation (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Wesley’s emphasis on works and feelings also divides the true Christian faith into two parts. First there is “justifying” faith, which he says nonetheless cannot “save to the uttermost” unless it is active in love; second there is the faith that carries out every act of the “law of faith”¹⁰⁵²—a.k.a. the “law of love”—for as he explains, “Christ...has adopted every point of the moral law, and grafted it into the law of love.”¹⁰⁵³ Therefore, Wesley elaborates, “as ‘by works faith is made perfect,’ so the completing or destroying the work of faith, and enjoying the favour, or suffering the displeasure, of God, greatly depends on every single act of obedience or disobedience”.¹⁰⁵⁴ Intentionally or not, in such a structure, Man’s efforts must become the

¹⁰⁵⁰ This text is the fulcrum upon which Wesley balances *sola fide* and holy living. “*Fides caritatem formata*” is referenced twenty-one times in *SOSO*; Wesley’s records also indicate that, over the course of twenty years, he preached fourteen times more specifically on Gal. 6:5. Jeremy Taylor’s sermon *Fides formata* and William Allen’s seventeenth-century book *A Glass of Justification* appear to have reinforced Wesley’s theology here. See Jeremy Taylor, *Select Sermons*, ed. R. Cattermole (London: Joseph Rickerby, 1836); William Allen, *A Glass of Justification, or The Work of Faith with Power. Wherein the Apostles Doctrine Touching Justification without the Deeds of the Law, Is Opened; and the Sence in Which Gospel-Obedience, as Well as Faith, Is Necessary to Justification, Is Stated* (London: G. Dawson, 1658).

¹⁰⁵¹ E.g., Wesley preached that “faith itself, even Christian faith, the faith of God’s elect, the faith of the operation of God, still is only the handmaid of love. As glorious and honourable as it is, it [*i.e.*, faith] is not the end of the commandment. God hath given this honour to love alone”. Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:38.

¹⁰⁵² “Nor is any man living bound to observe the Adamic more than the Mosaic law. . . . In the room of this, Christ hath established another, namely, the law of faith.” Wesley, *Plain Account*, 80.

¹⁰⁵³ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

principal determinant of eternal felicity.

Martin Luther lived long before John Wesley, or Jeremy Taylor, or even the General Baptist William Allen¹⁰⁵⁵—thus he had no chance to rebut their formulations of the *duplex fides* doctrine, personally. But the Reformer does inveigh against a similar construction by Thomas Aquinas when discussing Galatians 3:11 (“the righteous shall live by faith”). It is true that Wesley himself disliked Aquinas’ teaching, but teaching a “faith *formed* by love” and a “faith *working in love*” functionally yield the same bitter fruit: an enervated “justifying” faith. We shall let the Reformer’s *polemica d’Aquino* rejoin Wesley as well:

The sophists, ready as they are to evade the Scriptures, carp at this passage as follows: “ ‘The righteous shall live by faith,’ that is, by a faith that is active, working, or ‘formed’ by love. . . . They themselves have made up this gloss, and with it they do injury to this passage. . . . and they posit a double faith, namely, formed and unformed. This noxious and satanic gloss I cannot help detesting violently. . . .

Thus they deprive faith of its task and give this to love, so that faith amounts to nothing at all unless the “form,” namely, love, is added to it. According to this malignant figment of the sophists, faith, that miserable virtue, would be a sort of unformed chaos, without any work, efficacy, or life, a purely passive material. This is blasphemous and satanic; it calls men away from Christian doctrine, from Christ the Mediator, and from the faith that takes hold of Christ. For if love is the form of faith, then I am immediately obliged to say that love is the most important and the largest part in the Christian religion [as Wesley specifically and intentionally does—see footnote 1051above]. And thus I lose Christ, His blood, His wounds, and all His blessings; and I cling to love, so that I love, and I come to a moral kind of “doing,” just as the pope, a heathen philosopher, and the Turk do.

But the Holy Spirit knows how to speak and, as the sophists wickedly imagine, could easily have said: “The righteous shall live by a formed faith.” But He purposely omits this and simply says: “The righteous shall live by faith.” Therefore let the sophists go hang with their wicked and malignant gloss! We want to retain and to extol this faith which God has called faith, that is, a true and certain faith that has no doubts about God or the divine promises or the forgiveness of sins through Christ. Then we can remain safe and sure in Christ, the object of faith, and keep before our eyes the suffering and the blood of the Mediator and all His blessings. Faith alone, which takes hold of Christ, is the only means to keep us from permitting this to be

¹⁰⁵⁵ Discussed previously—see footnote 1050.

removed from our sight. Therefore this malignant gloss must be repudiated, and this passage must be understood of faith alone.¹⁰⁵⁶

For his part, Martin Luther is credited with the succinct axiom: “Faith alone saves, but faith is never alone.”¹⁰⁵⁷ But the *significance* Luther ascribes to the works and virtues which accompany faith is markedly different from Wesley’s, as further explored below.

Exaltation of “Perfect Love”

Wesley asserted that entire sanctification was simply another name for perfect love¹⁰⁵⁸—a believer’s perfect love for God and Man.¹⁰⁵⁹ Can pure love of God and Man ever be a bad thing?

It can, if it is brought in as a criterion for my acceptability-to-God. Scripture says: “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19), not “God accepts us because we love Him purely.” Even if it is asserted that God will mercifully give believers this Perfect Love “a little before death”¹⁰⁶⁰ if they have not yet attained it in their lifetime, requiring perfect love on believers’ part still represents a denial of the sufficiency of Christ’s atonement. Yet the perfect love Wesley advances suffers from another malady more germane to our inquiry.

In building his definition of perfect love, Wesley fused—and thereby *confused*—love of God and love of neighbor. But just as our relationship with God is essentially different from our relationship with our neighbors, so also are our righteousness before God and our righteousness

¹⁰⁵⁶ Luther, *AE*, 26:268–70.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Cf. Luther’s comments on Gen. 15:6 (“[Abraham] believed the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness”) where he says: “faith brings with it a multitude of the most beautiful virtues and is never alone. But matters must not be confused on this account, and what is characteristic of faith alone should not be attributed to other virtues. . . it follows with infallible logic that faith alone justifies, inasmuch as faith alone accepts the promise.” *Ibid.*, 3:25–26. For Luther, of course, to be justified *was* to be entirely saved; it was not a mere beginning.

¹⁰⁵⁸ “Scripture perfection is pure love filling the heart, and governing all the words and actions. If your idea includes anything more or anything else, it is not scriptural”; Wesley, *Plain Account*, 60.

¹⁰⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁰⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 42, 90.

before our neighbor essentially different. Even Jesus separated the Law into two parts; loving God and loving neighbor were the greatest commandments. As Robert Kolb says, “Luther realized...that what made him genuinely right in God’s sight had to be distinguished from what made him truly human—genuinely right—in relationship to other creatures of God. This distinction is what he labeled ‘our theology’ in 1535.”¹⁰⁶¹ Loving your neighbor does not make you right with God; it only serves to reflect the character of your already-right relationship with Him.

Mutated Purpose of Good Works

In Luther’s estimation, the blessed virtues God intends us to have, and the good works He intends us to do here on earth, do not in any way direct or determine our soteriological future. His fellow reformers—both during his lifetime and in the years that followed—agreed: virtue and works are expressly excluded from justification in no uncertain terms.¹⁰⁶² In the *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration IV*,¹⁰⁶³ the formulators exhaustively detail the nature and purview of good works in contrast to their opponents.

¹⁰⁶¹ Kolb, “Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness; Reflections on His Two-Dimensional Definition of Humanity at the Heart of His Theology,” 451.

¹⁰⁶² See, e.g., Apology IV, where the right, non-justifying purpose of works is explained: “[O]ur opponents will raise the cry that good works are unnecessary if they do not merit eternal life. We have refuted this slander earlier. Of course, good works are necessary. We say that eternal life is promised to the justified, but those who walk according to the flesh can retain neither faith nor righteousness. We are justified for this very purpose, that, being righteous, we might begin to do good works and obey God’s law. For this purpose we are reborn and receive the Holy Spirit, that this new life might have new works and new impulses, the fear and love of God, hatred of lust, etc. The faith we speak of has its existence in penitence. It ought to grow and become firmer amid good works as well as temptations and dangers, so that we become ever stronger in the conviction that God cares for us, forgives us, and hears us for Christ’s sake. . . . Here is Christian and spiritual perfection, if penitence and faith amid penitence grow together. The devout can understand this teaching better than what our opponents teach about contemplation or perfection. Just as justification belongs to faith, so eternal life belongs to it.” Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1959), 160–61. The reformers, of course, believed in only one justification. For a fuller expression of the Lutheran understanding of the place of works *at the Last Judgment*, see Apology IV.370; Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 171–72.

¹⁰⁶³ See Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 574–81.

By contrast, Wesley said: “I believe, (and that without the least self-contradiction,) that final salvation is ‘by works as a condition’ ”,¹⁰⁶⁴ that “[s]alvation (that is, glory) is not by the *merit* of works, but by works as a *condition*”;¹⁰⁶⁵ he confidently asserts that “we *all* maintain, we are not saved without works; that works are a condition (though not the meritorious cause) of final salvation”.¹⁰⁶⁶ Concerning how to describe the works a Christian does, in conversation with his adherents Wesley muses:

As to [the term] merit itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid: We are rewarded according to our works, yea, because of our works. How does this differ from, “for the sake of our works?” And how differs this from *secundum merita operum*? which is no more than, “as our works deserve.” Can you split this hair? I doubt I cannot.¹⁰⁶⁷

Truly, to say that works are necessary for entrance into glory, and yet deny that they are in any way meritorious, places one in an awkward position indeed. Perhaps it is a “hair” that God never intended His followers to split in the first place.

What’s a Neighbor For?

Placing “works” in the *ordo salutis* does more than merely change the purpose of the works themselves; it also changes the status of the neighbor for whom the works are done. Scripture enjoins us to “love our neighbor as ourselves”—to love and serve them freely for *their* well-being. By contrast, describing the good works we do as necessary-for-final-salvation inescapably turns the neighbor for whom we work into a tool for, or a means to, *our* glorification. While such a bluntly-stated purpose for serving their neighbor would be utterly repugnant to Wesley and his

¹⁰⁶⁴ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, X:432.

¹⁰⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, X:389; emphasis added.

¹⁰⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, X:399; emphasis added.

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, VIII:337–38.

Methodists, the objective reality is that any service rendered which is a “condition” necessary to one’s own glorification is *de facto* self-serving, and the needy neighbor becomes a means to an end.

Introducing Uncertainty

John Wesley believed that the doctrine of entire sanctification was “the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists; and for the sake of propagating this chiefly he appeared to have raised us up”.¹⁰⁶⁸ He urged his listeners to seek this perfection with all their might. Happy indeed were those who professed to have attained it! For those still on the path to perfection, Wesley identified the signposts along the way.¹⁰⁶⁹

But his flock also encountered many who *claimed* to have achieved the death of sin and inception of perfect love...yet were subsequently forsworn as either deceived or deceivers.

Desiring to know how to “test the spirits”, they asked their leader: “What is reasonable proof? How may we certainly know one that is saved from all sin?” to which Wesley replied:

[W]e apprehend those would be sufficient proofs to any reasonable man, and such as would leave little room to doubt either the truth or depth of the work: (1.) If we had clear evidence of his exemplary behaviour for some time before this supposed change. This would give us reason to believe, he would not ‘lie for God,’ but speak neither more nor less than he felt; (2.) If he gave a distinct account of the time and manner wherein the change was wrought, with sound speech which could not be reproved; and, (3.) If it appeared that all his subsequent words and actions were holy and unblamable.¹⁰⁷⁰

So might any number of believers appear and claim. But no matter how sincere their convictions of attainment, their sanctified status could still be gainsaid by a verdict rendered by someone else—which in turn would be based upon that judge’s personal observations and opinion. For

¹⁰⁶⁸ Ibid., XIII:9.

¹⁰⁶⁹ See “How Can I Know That I Have It?”, above.

example, when asked to opine on a number of believers in London who had claimed to be entirely sanctified, Wesley said:

There is something very peculiar in the experience of the greater part of them. . . .

[S]ome who have much love, peace, and joy, yet have not the direct witness; and others who think they have, are, nevertheless, manifestly wanting in the fruit. . . .

[S]ome are undeniably wanting in longsuffering, Christian resignation. . . . They do not in everything give thanks, and rejoice evermore. They are not happy; at least, not always happy; for sometimes they complain. They say, this or that is hard!

Some are wanting in gentleness. They resist evil, instead of turning the other cheek. Nay, they are not able to bear contradiction, without the appearance, at least, of resentment. . . . They speak sharply or roughly, when they reprove others; and behave roughly to their inferiors. . . .

Some are wanting in goodness. They are not kind, mild, sweet, amiable, soft, and loving at all times. . . . They do not long, study, endeavour by every means, to make all about them happy. . . .

Some are wanting in fidelity, a nice regard to truth, simplicity, and godly sincerity They are smooth to an excess, so as scarce to avoid a degree of fawning, or of seeming to mean what they do not. . . .

Some are wanting in meekness, quietness of spirit, composure, evenness of temper.

Some are wanting in temperance. They do not steadily use that kind and degree of food, which they know, or might know, would most conduce to the health, strength, and vigour of the body: Or they are not temperate in sleep; they do not rigorously adhere to what is best both for body and mind; otherwise they would constantly go to bed and rise early, and at a fixed hour: Or they sup late, which is neither good for body nor soul. . . .

[To such people Wesley says] You have not what I call perfection.¹⁰⁷¹

This admittedly lengthy excerpt shows the exacting and fastidious nature of the holiness expected of entirely sanctified believers, based upon what *John Wesley* determined to be proper “proofs”. It also shows that inward confidence and conviction could not give Methodist Christians *assurance* that they really were sanctified; the final stamp of approval for their perfection was an observably blameless life as pronounced by a human authority.

But from a Lutheran perspective, basing the reality of *my* entire sanctification on *someone else’s* opinion of me is no recipe for the Christian hope—especially if I must achieve this form of

¹⁰⁷⁰ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 57.

¹⁰⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 91–94.

holiness in order to know that I will “see the Lord”. To insist upon a state of entire sanctification which can be questioned and even denied because someone else’s benchmarks are not satisfied, is to leave believers perennially in doubt of their standing before God—despite whatever inner witness they might claim.

Misplaced Assurance: Dying to Sin

One of Wesley’s touchstones for growth towards entire sanctification was that the believer experience a “gradual mortification of sin”¹⁰⁷²—especially those sins “which did most easily beset them”¹⁰⁷³ formerly. Against these the believer was to contend, confident that God would certainly give the victory, and eventually the blessed release from the root of all sin would be attained. But there is an error, and two subtle dangers, in this premise.

To begin, there is an error in the *object* of assurance. Scripture uses terms like “assurance” to discuss things that we can know about God, not what we can know about ourselves. As Flew describes the dilemma, “A man may bear testimony to his awareness of a God who is willing and able to ‘destroy the last remains of sin.’ He cannot know himself well enough to claim that God has already done it. . . . The first kind of assurance is a conviction about God. The second kind of assurance is a conviction about himself.”¹⁰⁷⁴ The danger lies in the subjectivity of our self-assessment, rendered as it is without the benefit of an external, impartial, vantage point.

Still the aforementioned two dangers remain to be considered. Certainly no Christian should allow sin to run rampant within. But by identifying sin as only those *willful* violations of *known* laws of God, the first danger lies in that the battle against sin (and one’s own opinion as to

¹⁰⁷² Ibid., 61.

¹⁰⁷³ Ibid., 31.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Flew, *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology*, 337.

how the war is going) then depends on that individual's subjective assessment of his/her soul at the outset. If I subject myself to much soul-searching and yet for some reason decide that I'm really not all that bad to start with,¹⁰⁷⁵ I may think I am "not far from the kingdom of God" and that "dying to sin" should be relatively quick and easy. Or, if I am not aware that I have a particular sinful habit—or if I consider it a virtue instead of a vice¹⁰⁷⁶—then I may be led to claim deliverance from all sin when in fact much still remains.

Wesley "judge[d] it as impossible this man should be deceived herein"¹⁰⁷⁷ after careful self-examination—though even he had to admit that the human heart "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). Still he insisted that *feeling* yourself "cleansed of all filthiness of flesh and spirit"¹⁰⁷⁸ was a definitive, essential component of the entirely sanctified state.

Was γνῶθι σεαυτόν easier or more certain in Wesley's century? Even St. Paul showed that personal feelings of innocence are no reliable indicator, saying: "My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me" (1 Corinthians 4:4). And despite Wesley's insistence that Old Testament admissions of sinfulness among God's people were not indicative of New Testament capabilities,¹⁰⁷⁹ God's servant in His Word still recognizes that

¹⁰⁷⁵ Most any pastor long in the parish has discovered some of these among the flock.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Wesley, for example, criticized those who "are not able to bear contradiction, without the appearance, at least, of resentment. If they are reprov'd or contradicted, though mildly, they do not take it well; they behave with more distance and reserve than they did before." Wesley, *Plain Account*, 92. Yet the tendency toward an imperious nature is documented in Wesley's own life, in matters ranging from personal (*e.g.* his married life) to professional (certain disputes within the Methodist Conferences). Where does steadfastness leave off and bull-headedness begin?

¹⁰⁷⁷ That is, as to whether he had been "delivered from all sin"; *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁰⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁰⁷⁹ His catechesis includes the following exchange:
[Q.] "But elsewhere Solomon says, 'There is no man that sinneth not.'"
[A.] Doubtless thus it was in the days of Solomon; yea, and from Solomon to Christ there was then no man that sinned not. *But whatever was the case of those under the law*, we may safely affirm, with St. John, that, since the gospel was given, 'he that is born of God sinneth not.' *The privileges of Christians are in nowise to be measured by*

“You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence” (Psalm 90:8) and cries: “[W]ho can discern their own errors [תְּשַׁאֲרוּת]? Forgive my hidden faults [מִמְסִתְרוֹת]” (Psalm 19:12).

The second danger in emphasizing experimental death to sin is that if “even babes in Christ are so far perfect so as not to commit sin”,¹⁰⁸⁰ then behavioral issues (*i.e.*, observable words and actions) become a measure not only of (un)attained entire sanctification—they are also a continual threat to one’s soteriological status. For hyper-scrupulous, tender-conscienced believers, failure to advance in the drive for death-to-sin can lead to self-condemnation, and even to questioning the assurance and reality of their (initial) justification. Such apprehension can be triggered by the words of their spiritual mentors; Wesley observes, concerning one believer,

[A]ll his holiness was *mixed*. He was humble, but not entirely; his humility was mixed with pride. He was meek; but his meekness was frequently interrupted by anger, or some uneasy and turbulent passion. His love of God was frequently damped by the love of some creature; the love of his neighbour by evil surmising, or some thought, if not temper, contrary to love. His will was not wholly melted down into the will of God¹⁰⁸¹

Yet Christians need not assess their earthly lives with any sense of foreboding or worry. Battles with sin, and “mixed” holiness, are indicators of growth, not failure. Scripture tells us that the process of growing and striving is the life of faith.

Does that mean that it is “okay” to sin? By no means—the continual injunctions to flee and renounce sin prove it. But neither does it mean that believers never fall into sin once they are justified. Luther accounted for the mystery of sin in the life of the believer by letting Scripture describe the struggle in Romans 7. Taking the plain sense (and tense) of the words as written, he

what the Old Testament records concerning those who were under the Jewish dispensation. *Ibid.*, 24; emphasis added.

¹⁰⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁰⁸¹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:176; emphasis original.

described believers' condition with his succinct *simul iustus et peccator*.

With this understanding as a guide, true but struggling believers can be warned against cavalier attitudes toward sin—and urged on to godly living—as Luther does in his sermons and writings. Yet in the midst of the fight against the Old Adam, they know that their acceptance *coram Deo* is secure in Christ no matter how today's battle is going. Love and gratitude for the status already granted—not compulsion towards the construct of entire sanctification—is their motivation. I do not need to “struggle” or “cry out” to achieve “death to all sin” in my life so that I may “see the Lord” in glory; I am baptized into Christ Jesus—thus baptized into His death (Romans 6:3)—and the death He died, He died to sin, once for all (Romans 6:10).

It will be remembered that Wesley did not expect entirely sanctified people to be flawless in performance, merely innocent in motive. So long the heart knows only love for God and neighbor, one's actions are not iniquitous in Wesley's estimate. When asked: “[W]hat does the perfect one do more than others? more [sic] than the common believers?” he answered: “Perhaps nothing; so may the providence of God have hedged him in by outward circumstances. Perhaps not so much. . . he neither speaks so many words, nor does so many works. . . . But what then? This is no proof that he has not more grace; and by this [grace] God measures the outward work.”¹⁰⁸² In this curious instance, Wesley *suspends* his standards for outward behavior in favor of the perfect one's testimony; such a person is declared perfect even though righteousness of performance was wanting. Shades of Luther's description of a justified Christian as *simul iustus et peccator!*

Remarkably, Wesley at one point in 1763 seemed to go even further, effectively *dismissing* the importance of actually being delivered from sin. In a letter to Penelope Maitland he asks and

¹⁰⁸² Wesley, *Plain Account*, 59.

responds:

“But is there no sin in those who are perfect in love?”

I believe not: *But be that as it may*, they *feel* none; no temper contrary to pure love, while they rejoice, pray, and give thanks continually. And whether sin is suspended, or extinguished, I will not dispute: It is enough that they feel nothing but love.¹⁰⁸³

Is this astonishing reversal on a central tenet of entire sanctification—treating the issue of death to the root of sin with a casual “be that as it may”—the result of decades of experience with the οἱ πολλοί who were “sensibly pained at the *sinful nature* that still remains in us”,¹⁰⁸⁴ who continued to struggle with “the *sin* which remains in our heart”¹⁰⁸⁵? This much is certain: whether or not he, personally, had come to a new understanding regarding the root of sin, Wesley did not include any such equivocation in his public proclamations.

Note that the emphasis in Wesley’s letter rests on whether the believer “feels” no sin, returning to the question discussed previously. *Are* subjective human emotions and experience a reliable gauge of spiritual reality? Wesley further distances himself from the question of actual death to sin here, by pointing away from “feelings” about *sin at all*; now, “It is enough that they feel nothing but love.”¹⁰⁸⁶ But is it?

Misplaced Assurance: The Indwelling of Perfect Love

Another of sanctified believers’ required testimonies was that they *felt* only pure love for

¹⁰⁸³ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XII:257, emphasis added.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 63, emphasis added.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:337, emphasis added. In fact, the entirety of this sermon (*The Repentance of Believers*) addresses the reality of the sin which “remains” but “does not reign” in believers even after their justification. In many ways this homily is an excellent presentation of the doctrine of *simul iustus et peccator*, although Wesley’s focus is on the struggle believers have “till it shall please our Lord to speak to our hearts again, to ‘speak the second time, “Be clean”’. And then only ‘the leprosy is cleansed.’ Then only the evil root, the carnal mind, is destroyed, and inbred sin subsists no more.” *Ibid.*, 1:346. It is whether the Lord speaks such a word in this life, or at the Resurrection, that divides Wesley’s progeny and Luther’s in this regard.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XII:260; emphasis added.

God and Man.¹⁰⁸⁷ But like the sense of “no-sin”, saying “I now feel nothing but love”¹⁰⁸⁸ is rooted in ephemeral emotions. Even if, as Wesley says regarding a professing believer, “I know him to be an honest man”,¹⁰⁸⁹ sincerity does not guarantee reality—history is littered with the lives of those who were sincerely wrong in their convictions.

Luther would counter that Christian confidence needs a surer anchor than one’s feelings. I know I am redeemed because the external, eternal, utterly trustworthy Word of God tells me my sins are forgiven. This is true whether I am “feeling” particularly forgiven or not. The Word tells me I am a child of God—in fact, I am a *saint* who is “altogether beautiful” with “no flaw” in me (Song of Songs 4:7)—even though empirically I see and feel all manner of uncleanness and sin within. When the Accuser reminds me of these things, and questions my standing before God, I dare not raise the wobbly standard of my sentiments. Instead, certainty comes from responding the same way our Lord did, when He was tempted: “Be gone, Satan! *For it is written...*” (Matthew 4:10)

Misplaced Assurance: The Witness of the Spirit

The last—and for Wesley the most substantially determinative—internal testimony was “the Witness of the Spirit”, for “[t]he Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16, KJV). As discussed in chapter two, the cardinal importance of this inner witness was impressed upon the Wesley boys by their father on his deathbed, and the concept retained its significance throughout John’s career.¹⁰⁹⁰ In fact, despite his emphases on

¹⁰⁸⁷ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 57.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 21:415.

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁰ In a 1745 letter to John Smith, Wesley writes that “the distinguishing doctrines on which I do insist in all my writings, and in all my preaching, will lie in a very narrow compass. You sum them all up in perceptible

“feeling no sin” and “feeling pure love”, regarding entire sanctification Wesley cautioned: “Not that ‘to feel all love and no sin’ is a sufficient proof. Several have experienced this for a time, before their souls were fully renewed. *None therefore ought to believe that the work is done, till there is added the testimony of the Spirit*, witnessing his entire sanctification, as clearly as his justification.”¹⁰⁹¹

At the same time, Wesley apparently recognized the inherent danger of relying on such an unverifiable, intuitive witness. He laments, “How many have mistaken the voice of their own imagination for this ‘witness of the Spirit’ of God, and thence idly presumed they were the children of God while they were doing the works of the devil! These are truly and properly enthusiasts; and, indeed, in the worst sense of the word.”¹⁰⁹² Since Wesley was often accused of “enthusiasm” himself, due to his teachings, he expended a great deal of energy¹⁰⁹³ clarifying what was, and what was not, an authentic “witness of the Spirit”.

Despite this effort, the difficulties discussed above¹⁰⁹⁴ also plague the hope of assurance said to be found in the inward witness of the Spirit. As good and comforting as it may be to “feel” that I’m a child of God, where assurance is concerned such a feeling it is still a foundation

inspiration. For this I earnestly contend; and so do all who are called Methodist Preachers. . . . This is (so far as I understand them) the main doctrine of the Methodists.” Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XII:70. This emphasis does not, however, appear in Wesley’s collected writings with anything near the consistency or clarity with which he affirms *entire sanctification* to be “the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists; and for the sake of propagating this chiefly he appeared to have raised us up”; *Ibid.*, XIII:9.

¹⁰⁹¹ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 61.

¹⁰⁹² Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 1:269.

¹⁰⁹³ The *Standard Sermons* contain two sermons on The Witness of the Spirit, as well as another on The Witness of Our Spirit; in addition there are twenty-nine other references to Rom. 8:16 found in the remaining sermon *corpus*. Upwards of sixty separate discussions of the witness of the/our spirit populate Wesley’s journals and tracts as well. Note that the sermons *The Witness of the Spirit, I* and *The Witness of the Spirit, II* were in fact published essays, not preached sermons, written twenty-one years apart and intended to clarify his theology and defend against detractors. They were included in *SOSO* in order that all Methodist preachers would have definitive treatises on this important topic readily available in their libraries.

¹⁰⁹⁴ See the sections “Dying to Sin” and “The Indwelling of Perfect Love”, above.

of sand, leaving the adherent vulnerable to self-doubt and endless cycles of re-dedication and re-experience for the sake of attaining (or *retaining*¹⁰⁹⁵) the blessed state.

This is not to deny the value and significance of emotions. God created humans to be physical and spiritual, intellectual and emotive creatures. Far too many philosophies have eschewed emotion as an enemy of clear reason; too many religions view experiential components of faith and worship as suspect or even undesirable. But it is the *significance*, not the *existence*, of experiential religious elements that should be pondered.

The response of the soul to the Gospel message is naturally one of joy. Faith itself is the (Spirit-engendered) “Yes!” to God’s promises, and how could *any* believers hear: “He hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6) without a glad “Amen!” welling up within them? This is “the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God”—it is an attestation to the truth of *God’s Word and promise*, not a validation of my progress in sanctity. Inward emotions are neither a solid nor a defensible basis upon which to assert that I am sanctified *or* justified—no matter how one defines the terms.

Impoverished Justification

Perhaps the most significant consequence of entire sanctification is Wesley’s diminution of justification. By calling forgiveness of sins *proper Christi* “initial justification” and declaring it to be only the “door” of religion¹⁰⁹⁶ whereby we receive “*present* pardon, and acceptance with God ‘by’ or ‘for the remission of sins that are *past*’ ”,¹⁰⁹⁷ God’s wonderful and ongoing work is relegated to a “helping” position at best, instead of being extolled as the complete gift of

¹⁰⁹⁵ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 62.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:472.

¹⁰⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, VIII:427; emphasis added.

everlasting life that it actually is. Consider the wordless deprecation of justification when Wesley says: “Nor does anything under heaven more quicken the desires of those who are justified, than to converse with those whom they believe to have experienced *a still higher* salvation.”¹⁰⁹⁸

Jesus’ simple, straightforward promise is that “he who believes has eternal life” (John 6:47). In Him “we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:14), and as Luther rightly says, “where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation”¹⁰⁹⁹. St. Paul confirms that even our *holiness* is Christ’s, not our own, saying: “Christ Jesus...has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

No works are needed to “complete” our salvation or work “fitness” of any kind; trust in the sure promises of God and His Anointed One is all He requires. Jesus made that clear—when He was asked “What must we do to do the works [plural] God requires?” Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent” (John 6:28–29)—nothing more.

In fact, to posit the need for further works opens the door to impossibly extensive demands. When the rich young man insisted that there *must* be more “good” he had to do to inherit eternal life (Matthew 19:16, 20) Jesus exposed the depth of his actual need while pointing to Himself as the only source of “good” he really needed (Matthew 19:17).

Wesley pointed his adherents to “vigorous, universal obedience, in a zealous keeping of all the commandments, in watchfulness and painfulness, in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily; as well as in earnest prayer and fasting, and a close attendance on all the ordinances of God”¹¹⁰⁰ in order to gain entire sanctification (that “still higher salvation”¹¹⁰¹ than “mere”

¹⁰⁹⁸ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 56; emphasis added.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 362.

¹¹⁰⁰ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 62.

¹¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

justification). But appealing to such efforts to shore up the hope of everlasting life means that the striving Christian is, as St. Paul warns, “obligated to obey the *whole* law” (Galatians 5:3). It is a noble intention—but it is hopeless from the outset, in this sin-poisoned world. As St. James reminds us, “[W]hoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it” (James 2:10).

Martin Luther did not know a weak and partial justification of this kind. For him, the justifying pardon of God *was* “the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end” of religion; it *was* the full and final salvation of God: absolute at the moment faith apprehended it, now only waiting for the eschatological fulfillment of what God has proleptically declared to be so. No porch or door, this! To be justified in Luther’s understanding was to be right with God; any and all subsequent morality or spirituality was a *reflection* (not a determinant) of one’s standing as altogether accepted on account of Christ. To be justified means that our righteousness *coram Deo* is complete, because our righteousness is in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21, *et al.*).

In notable contrast to Wesley’s atomizing tendencies, assigning each term in Scripture (and beyond) its own exclusive meaning, Luther and the reformers who followed him understood many different biblical terms to be referring to the wonder that is justification. In their eyes, righteousness, forgiveness, holiness, and salvation are often used interchangeably, as near-synonyms¹¹⁰²—facets of the same diamond.¹¹⁰³

¹¹⁰² See, *e.g.*, Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Article IV: Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 120–73.

¹¹⁰³ Cf. in this regard, Jack Preus’ *Just Words*, which explores the many scriptural metaphors for the saving action of God in Christ Jesus. None of these were ever intended to operate to the exclusion of the others; instead, each one, used in context, illuminates and magnifies the wonderful work of God for us, outside of us, for our salvation. J. A. O. Preus III, *Just Words: Understanding the Fullness of the Gospel* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2000).

On the Advisability of “Paying it Extra”

“When *I* use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you CAN make words mean so many different things.”

“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master—that’s all. . . . I meant by ‘impenetrability’ that we’ve had enough of that subject, and it would be just as well if you’d mention what you mean to do next, as I suppose you don’t mean to stop here all the rest of your life.”

“That’s a great deal to make one word mean,” Alice said in a thoughtful tone.

“When I make a word do a lot of work like that,” said Humpty Dumpty, “I always pay it extra.”¹¹⁰⁴

John Wesley was a precise and methodical man, rather given to analyzing things and breaking them down into their component parts. Though this penchant, in the realm of theology he divined and classified different degrees of good and evil, love for *and* enmity towards God, self-denial, sincerity, love, joy, peace, assurance, and holiness—to name only a few.¹¹⁰⁵ We have discussed his views on the various stages of grace, justification, sanctification, and salvation; we have also seen how the atomization of each of these terms was essential to constructing his theological system. But most significant of all his segmentations was the parsing of sin.

Certainly, choosing to have “sin” mean *only* “a willful violation of a known law of God” enabled him to place a subjectively-authenticated salvation from sin within reach of his followers. Just as certainly, the hope of reaching this goal did (and still does) motivate the faithful to strive for manifest holiness of heart and life. But do we have the right—can we afford—to use God’s words to mean whatever we want them to mean? Surely, such manipulation and redefinition of the plain sense of Scripture terms comes at too high a price.

Exegetical study *via* the ministerial use of reason is essential to understanding what words

¹¹⁰⁴ Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass: And What Alice Found There* (New York: Rand McNally, 1917), 99.

¹¹⁰⁵ Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification*, 120–21.

mean. Context and the analogy of Scripture guide us in understanding the spiritual meanings represented by the human language God inspired the writers to use. And while there is honest room for debate on *nuances* of meaning, radical departure from or modification of core values is rarely (if ever) warranted. Where does elasticity leave off, and the use of glosses to twist Scripture like a wax nose¹¹⁰⁶ begin?

A priori definitions and assertions led Wesley to controvert the plain meaning of passages that did not agree with his theology. Besides dismissing Old Testament asseverations of universal sinfulness as no longer applicable since we have the gift of the Holy Ghost,¹¹⁰⁷ he “glosses” New Testament texts which similarly indicate pandemic culpability. Consider his presentation of cogent biblical objections, and treatment of the text, in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* where he addresses the question of whether perfect Christians sin:

[James 3:2 says that] ‘In many things we offend all.’

[Rejoinder] True; but who are the persons here spoken of? Why, those ‘many masters’ or teachers whom God had not sent; not the Apostle himself, nor any real Christian. . . . the word “we”, used by a figure of speech...could not possibly include [St. James] himself, or any other true believer.

[But James 3:9 says] ‘Therewith bless we God, and therewith curse we men.’

[Rejoinder] Surely not we Apostles! not [sic] we believers!

[But James 3:8–9 says] ‘My brethren, be not many masters,’ or teachers, ‘knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all.’

[Rejoinder] We! Who? Not the Apostles nor true believers, but they who were to ‘receive the greater condemnation,’ because of those many offences.¹¹⁰⁸

When does “we” not mean “we”?

Manipulation of language and meaning is fraught with danger and unintended consequences. Even today, Wesley’s spiritual descendants continue to grapple with the

¹¹⁰⁶ Luther, *AE*, 42:63.

¹¹⁰⁷ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 24.

defensibility of this central doctrine of entire sanctification, pondering, in Timothy Smith's words, "the relevance of Wesleyan perfection to a generation awed by its rediscovery of the deep sinfulness of man".¹¹⁰⁹ Can such flexible use of language be justified and sustained?

Does the End Justify the Means?

Wesley certainly did not promulgate the doctrine of entire sanctification with devious intent—and indubitably not with the hope of personal gain. Preaching Christian perfection earned him rejection, vilification, and physical abuse. Why, then, did he persist?

First and foremost, he said, "The opinion I have concerning [Christian perfection] at present, I espouse merely because I think it is scriptural." To his credit, he followed this statement by vowing: "If therefore I am convinced it is not scriptural, I shall willingly relinquish it."¹¹¹⁰ Despite the lifelong debate he had with Christians of varying backgrounds, however, no one was able to shake his conviction on this head.

Was there, perhaps, another factor which motivated him to insist on a perfection achievable *in this life*? With the possible exception of the Antinomians, very few in the broader Christian community would dispute that it is good and right for followers of Jesus Christ to grow in grace and sanctity. Whether complete victory can be gained in this life, is a different question.

But there was, demonstrably, another matter which troubled the English divine. The state of England (and her church) in Wesley's day, the moral and spiritual decay he saw all around him, weighed heavy on his heart. His writings are full of a yearning for the revival of true Christian faith, and the reformation of morals which would naturally accompany it. I believe that

¹¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 24–25.

¹¹⁰⁹ Smith, *Called Unto Holiness*, 351.

¹¹¹⁰ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XI:450.

this heart's cry influenced his formulation (and proclamation) of the doctrine of entire sanctification.

Wesley fully and reasonably believed that the experience of entire sanctification in the soul would immediately produce ethical and observable results in time and space—*i.e.*, morally upright living. This is unquestionably desirable, but it does not follow that entire sanctification must be preached in order to realize the goal of a society of “better”, more zealous, Christians.

Yet his own writings confirm that this *was* part of his rationale for preaching it. Writing to the Rev. Freeborn Garrettson of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America about converts there, Wesley says: “[A]s soon as any of them find peace with God, to exhort them to ‘go on to perfection.’ The more explicitly and strongly you press all believers to aspire after full sanctification...the more the whole work of God will prosper.”¹¹¹¹

That 1785 letter shows it was Wesley's mature and settled conviction that preaching the hope of entire sanctification was essential to the desired increase in godliness among his followers. Nor was the letter's rationale a *hapax legomenon* in Wesley's thought—the same sentiments are found ranged throughout the latter half of the English Reformer's ministry years:

In his 1762 Journal:

The more I converse with the believers in Cornwall, the more I am convinced that they have sustained great loss for want of hearing the doctrine of Christian perfection clearly and strongly enforced. I see, wherever this is not done, the believers grow dead and cold. Nor can this be prevented but by keeping up in them an hourly expectation of being perfected in love. I say, an ‘hourly expectation’; for to expect it at *death*, or *some time hence*, is much the same as not expecting it at all.¹¹¹²

In a 1766 letter to George Merryweather:

Where Christian perfection is not strongly and explicitly preached, there is seldom any remarkable blessing from God; and, consequently, little addition to the Society

¹¹¹¹ Ibid., XIII:70.

¹¹¹² Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 21:389; emphasis original.

. . . . Till you press the believers to expect full salvation *now*, you must not look for any revival.¹¹¹³

In a 1774 letter to John Mason:

If you press all the believers to go on to perfection, and to expect deliverance from sin every moment, they will grow in grace. But if ever they lose that expectation, they will grow flat and cold.¹¹¹⁴

In his 1776 Journal:

I preached at Tiverton and on Thursday went on to Launceston. Here I found the plain reason why the work of God had gained no ground in this circuit all the year. The preachers had given up the Methodist Testimony. Either they did not speak of perfection at all (the peculiar doctrine committed to our trust), or they spoke of it only in general terms, without urging the believers to ‘go on to perfection’, and to expect it every moment. And wherever this is not earnestly done the work of God does not prosper.¹¹¹⁵

In his 1786 Journal:

I have not for many years known this [St. Margaret’s, York] society in so prosperous a condition. *This is undoubtedly owing, first to the exact discipline which has for some time been observed among them, and next, to the strongly and continually exhorting the believers to go on to perfection.*¹¹¹⁶

But personal reflection and individual correspondence were not the only vehicles wherein he expressed this conviction. During the course of the 1766 Conference Wesley was asked: “What can be done in order to revive the work of God where it is decayed?” After offering a number of other practical suggestions, he concludes with what certainly seems to be his most important counsel: “(7) Strongly and explicitly exhort all believers to ‘go on to perfection.’ That we may ‘all speak the same thing,’ I ask, once for all, Shall we defend this Perfection, or give it up? You all agree to defend it, meaning thereby, (as we did from the beginning,) salvation from

¹¹¹³ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, XII:270–71; emphasis original.

¹¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, XII:252–53.

¹¹¹⁵ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 23:28.

¹¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 23:392; emphasis added.

all sin, by the love of God and man filling our heart.”¹¹¹⁷

In an effort to explain why this is so important to “reviving the work of God”, Wesley rehearses for them the dual nature of sanctification as a gradual work culminating in an instantaneously-attained perfection, and then notes that encouraging all believers to expect instantaneous, entire sanctification is important

*because constant experience shows, the more earnestly they expect this, the more swiftly and steadily does the gradual work of God go on in their soul; the more watchful they are against all sin, the more careful to grow in grace, the more zealous of good works, and the more punctual in their attendance on all the ordinances of God. Whereas, just the contrary effects are observed whenever this expectation ceases. They are “saved by hope,” by this hope of a total change, with a gradually increasing salvation. Destroy this hope, and that salvation stands still, or, rather, decreases daily. Therefore whoever would advance the gradual change in believers should strongly insist on the instantaneous.*¹¹¹⁸

So Wesley carried in his heart a burden for a faith that showed—holiness of heart *and* life. But in urging the faithful on to holiness, with Christian perfection as the goal, it was important to him that the goal be at least theoretically attainable. Set it too high—as he felt his brother Charles often did—and seekers give up in despair;¹¹¹⁹ set it too low, and spiritual growth is arrested since the goal is too quickly achieved. So the English reformer posited an achievable perfection—and then made the logically remarkable assertion that this perfection can be improved upon.¹¹²⁰

The Savior Himself taught us to pray: “Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done”, which would naturally include believers “going on to τελειότητα” (Hebrew 6:1). Paul urges the Christians who love each other to “do so more and more” (1 Thessalonians 4:10). Old and New Testament alike describe God-pleasing behavior and attitudes, showing “what is good and what

¹¹¹⁷ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:328.

¹¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, VIII:329; emphasis added.

¹¹¹⁹ See his July 9, 1766 letter to Charles Wesley, *Ibid.*, XII:131.

¹¹²⁰ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 62, 114.

the Lord requires” of us (Micah 6:8).

On the other hand, Jesus Himself *also* said—and we have seen that the analogy of Scripture bears witness to it—that all we need to be saved is to believe in Him (John 3:16; Acts 16:31; etc.). What, then, are we to make of all the exhortations to love and good works described in the passages mentioned above? Where does living a life that adorns the Gospel (Titus 2:10) fit in? As Wesley himself asks, where doing “works meet for repentance” are concerned, “[I]f this is not in order to find favour, what does [a person] do them for?”¹¹²¹

A Still More Excellent Way

Working at Cross Purposes

The questions about godly living and the significance of Christian good works were by no means lost on Martin Luther. In keeping with his hermeneutical principle, the Saxon Reformer willingly let Scripture sound its urgent call to holiness through his sermons and essays. At the same time—and on account of that same hermeneutic—he also let that Word of God, rather than man’s logic, describe the import thereof. A right understanding of Scripture’s two kinds of righteousness clarifies how “motivation to do good works” can be engendered, without dangling the improper hope of any soteriological reward before the faithful.

The burden of works-as-condition is lifted if the life of the believer takes a cruciform shape, with the “vertical” righteousness (which avails *coram Deo* and is seen only by God) being clearly distinguished from the “horizontal” righteousness which is seen by one’s neighbor. Where God’s absolute and unchanging demand for pure holiness is concerned, we cannot stand *at all*—except ἐν Χριστῷ. That alien righteousness, precisely *because* it is *extra nos*, remains unaffected by our imperfect performance—nor does it change based upon the degree of love we

feel. Rather than maintaining an hourly record of the temperature of our devotion to God as Wesley did,¹¹²² or striving to bolster confidence by dint of fervor and faithfulness, the Christian can rest in the faithfulness of God, “who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17). The intensity and purity of our love for God determines nothing re: our eternal destiny, for: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). It is not the purity of our intention that matters, but the purity of the atoning blood.

This atoning blood, shed two thousand years ago on Calvary, is appropriated by faith—and even the faith which trusts the promise of God is not a “work” of ours. As Luther explains,

It is up to God alone to give faith contrary to nature, and ability to believe contrary to reason. That I love God is the work of God alone. Although that I believe is also a work, still it should not be spoken of as a work. We ought to let every word remain in its own category so that the question is not thrown into a complete jumble. Those words should not be confused, since faith is not a work, nor is work faith. But faith is a gift of God and on that account ought not be called a work.¹¹²³

What, then, of the calls to righteousness and holiness Scripture undeniably makes? If not for the sake of our justification/salvation, what *is* the purpose or significance of our earthly works and lives? God-ordained works (Ephesians 2:10) belong exclusively to the sphere of our “horizontal” or *coram mundo* righteousness. They are things God desires of His people—but not to “qualify” them for life in heaven. Rather, His desire is to better qualify His children for life on *earth*, in service to His creation¹¹²⁴—the very same purpose for which He first put Man in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15).

The already-heaven-worthy children of God, with nascent *imago Dei* and the full assurance

¹¹²¹ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:337.

¹¹²² Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 18:303. See also page 92, above.

¹¹²³ Luther, *AE*, 34:160.

of God's love, now set about the serious business of living unto God. Like newlyweds who have never cooked a meal or balanced a checkbook before, they can put their full energy and zeal into whatever tasks are presented without fear of rebuke for any "failure"—why? Because the acceptance by, and the love of, their spouse is already guaranteed, and does not hinge upon the righteousness of their performance. Love and acceptance are theirs even when they fail, and this unconditional love motivates them to strive all the harder to please their Beloved—*not because they "have" to*, but simply for love's sake, and because they know it would delight His heart.

God certainly values and even rewards good works, but this does not mean that the rewards accorded would ever include salvation. That has been given already, as gift rather than reward. On the contrary, "what we do, live, and are, in works and ceremonies, we do because of the necessities of this life and of the effort to rule our bodies. Nevertheless we are righteous, not in these, but in the faith of the Son of God."¹¹²⁵ Luther describes the believer's ongoing struggle against sin by saying that "the whole life of the faithful is a kind of exercise against, and hatred of, the remnants of sin in the flesh, which murmur against the spirit and faith. . . . This battle continues in the godly for as long as they live, in some more violently, in others more mildly Therefore, their life is one of continual repentance until death."¹¹²⁶

This kind of "effort", this kind of "growth in sanctification", is properly termed "righteousness". Yet all such works, and any benefits derived (even by the doer), are of this earth and need to remain here. Any attempt to bring them before the Judgment Seat of Christ is an affront to the living God who saved us.

¹¹²⁴ "[W]e mortify sin in the flesh and thus are able to serve our neighbor better"; Ibid., 30:118.

¹¹²⁵ Ibid., 31:373.

¹¹²⁶ Martin Luther, "The Antinomian Disputation," trans. Jeffrey Silcock, n.d., 201.

If I grow in Christlikeness, this does not “help” God in any way¹¹²⁷—nor would it make me more worthy of the inheritance in light. On the other hand, such increase in godliness *would* enable me to serve God and neighbor more effectively in whatever my Lord calls me to do. Close attention to His Word, faithfulness in His Sacraments, the daily dying to self and living unto Christ...all these help me to be transformed by the renewing of my mind (Romans 12:2), to “find out what pleases the Lord” (Ephesians 5:10), and then do it by the power of the Spirit (Philippians 2:13).

Then, when my earthly work is done and He calls me home, my Lord will *not* measure whether I qualify for heaven based on my spiritual progress. All such progress is left behind on earth; my sanctification, and the benefits it brought, were for this life. Where the life to come is concerned, Christ’s righteousness entitles me to heaven; His holiness qualifies me. He is my claim to glory, and His fitness for heaven is mine in a glorious exchange. Through faith I am co-heir with Christ; I am “meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light” because of what He has done.

What About “By Their Fruit You Will Recognize Them” (Matthew 7:16)?

Reasoning such as given in the preceding section is often countered by accusing the proponent of some form of Antinomianism. If works do not save—if they have no place at all in the *ordo salutis*—then what is to be done with the clear words of Christ quoted in the title above? For He continues, “[E]very good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.” (Matthew 7:17–18).

It appears to be something of a conundrum: Scripture is clear in its commands to think,

¹¹²⁷ “What pleasure would it give the Almighty if you were righteous? What would he gain if your ways were blameless?” (Job 22:3)

speaking, and act rightly, and warns that those who do not do right are subject to judgment.¹¹²⁸ Yet the Word is even more forceful in asserting that we are saved *sola fide, sola fide, propter Christum*. Jesus begins this good fruit/bad fruit chapter in Matthew by warning His disciples not to judge, yet shortly thereafter offers “fruit” (words and actions) as a means of differentiating between true disciples and hypocrites! Are we to take note of someone’s life and deeds, or not? Can “works” reliably indicate anything about a person?

Obviously none of us can infallibly know what is in another’s heart. We human creatures can only judge by outward appearances; God alone can see the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). Thus it is that what *outwardly* appears to be a good, chaste, even “Christian” life may mask a heart of evil. The Pharisees were shown to be such men (Matthew 23:27), and on the other end of the spectrum, this is also why the world calls some generous, philanthropic people “good Christians” when in fact those benefactors have never claimed the Name of Christ in their lives.

The spiritual reality is that two people—one a believer, one not—can do the very same “good deed” *coram mundo* and be equally praised by their peers, yet only the first is considered righteous *coram Deo*. No matter how commendable our actions are in the eyes of Man, they are still filthy rags in the eyes of God (Isaiah 64:6). He does not accept them on their face, nor on the basis of our sincerity, nor the purity of our love; our works are ever and only “good” because we are in Christ—and in love, Christ’s righteousness is applied to our weak efforts and ardor. Trust, not talent, determines the new creature’s identity as a child of God.

Yet, although *coram mundo* righteousness cannot provide reliable *positive* evidence of our standing with Christ, might it not be said that *negative* evidence can be found here? For while we cannot say for certain that a person who is outwardly doing Scripture’s bidding is a Christian, is

¹¹²⁸ “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.” (Jas. 4:17)

it not right to say that the steadfast, manifest *refusal* to do what God commands indicates a person who not right with God?

The issue is somewhat akin to taking a person's temperature at the doctor's office. The thermometer may register a perfect 98.6°F, but this is no guarantee of health. All manner of illness may be present beyond the thermometer's ability to detect—cancer, broken bones, and the like. In short, a 98.6°F thermometer reading cannot provide positive assurance of the patient's complete health.

On the other hand, should the thermometer register 105.6°F, the negative assurance of health is unmistakable. Whatever else may be true about the fellow on the table—whatever parts of his body may be perfectly okay—he himself is *not* “right”.

This is not a question of “sinning”, period. As Luther himself emphasized, “[W]e daily sin much, and indeed deserve nothing but punishment.”¹¹²⁹ The issue is what sinners do when confronted with their failure to do right. The “third use” of the law (guidance for Christian living) becomes “second use” (revealing our sin) when we transgress. What should the child of God do then?

Like King David, confronted by Nathan (2 Samuel 12:1–12), the answer is “repent”. David was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22) not because he was entirely sanctified, but because he heeded the Lord's rebuke and asked for forgiveness (2 Samuel 12:13; Psalm 51). Had he rejected Nathan's counsel and stubbornly continued in his immoral ways, this steadfast refusal of *coram mundo* righteousness would have demonstrated (horizontally) his broken relationship (vertically). Luther put it this way:

I say, therefore, that works justify, *that is, they show that we have been justified*, just as his fruits show that a man is a Christian and believes in Christ, since he does not

¹¹²⁹ Bente, *Concordia Triglotta - The Symbolic Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 549.

have a feigned faith and life before men. For the works indicate whether I have faith. I conclude, therefore, that he is righteous, when I see that he does good works. In God's eyes that distinction is not necessary, for he is not deceived by hypocrisy. But it is necessary among men, so that they may correctly understand where faith is and where it is not.¹¹³⁰

Active righteousness is an observable measure of passive righteousness. We are justified by faith in Christ, and yet we do good works such that, if they're not in evidence, faith is dead.¹¹³¹

Luther gave his listeners a similar exhortation in a 1522 sermon on Luke 16:

You are to interpret all passages of Scripture which treat of works to mean that God would have us let the holiness we have received in faith [that is, *coram Deo* righteousness or holiness] shine forth by such [*coram mundo*] good works, to prove itself, and be of benefit to others that false faith may be recognized and rooted out. God grants no one His grace that it should lie still and be of no further use. Rather He grants it in order to have it profitably employed and to have it attract everybody to God by its confession and public manifestation, as Christ says Matt. 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."¹¹³²

He maintains his dual emphasis, warning:

A proper distinction must be made. The [*coram mundo*] holiness of works is different from the [*coram Deo*] holiness of the Word of or faith. The latter triumphs over the devil and makes me a child of God. This is not done by the holiness of the flesh or of works, not even through the works of the Ten Commandments. . . . Therefore this holiness of the Word and of faith must be preached first and principally, it must not be minimized, as the adversaries do by insidiously urging the holiness of works.¹¹³³

God's call to His children for *coram mundo* righteousness is for their good as well as the good of the creation around them. Thus this call and command is good and proper (as are *all* aspects of God's law). The law can also, in this "negative" sense, guide Christians in identifying the "wolves among the sheep" Jesus warned against in Matthew chapter seven—but it must

¹¹³⁰ Luther, *AE*, 34:161; emphasis added.

¹¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 34:111.

¹¹³² Luther, *WA*, 10(III):287; translation from *What Luther Says*, 655.

¹¹³³ Luther, *WA*, 43:589; translation from *What Luther Says*, 657.

never be allowed to encroach upon the pure holiness and righteousness of Christ by which, alone, we are saved.

The Pastoral Significance of the Two Kinds of Righteousness

So it is that by maintaining the proper distinction between the two kinds of righteousness, “good works” of all kinds find (and keep) their proper place in the Christian life. It *does* matter whether we Christians live upright and God-pleasing lives—God desires it. He wants us to have pure thoughts, words, and actions. God has commanded such things, and has even planned specific good works for each of us (Ephesians 2:10). It is His will that we do them, and as such it *does* matter whether we look after widows and orphans in their distress, visit those who are sick or in prison, give a cup of cold water to one who bears the Name.

Neither is the pursuit of, or longing after, holiness to be mocked when it is seen in other believers. It is a false modesty which tries to downplay *coram mundo* righteousness as if being holy were a form of spiritual pride. Luther counters: “To say that you are holy and righteous is not pride. In fact, to say the opposite and to hold in your heart that you are *not* righteous is to deny Christ and to blaspheme the name of Christ, who gave Himself for us in order to be our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption [1 Corinthians 1:30].”¹¹³⁴

The faithful under-shepherd ought to exhort God’s flock to strive for these things. There is a place for the redeemed to “co-operate” with the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as we still retain the awesome power to reject God’s will. It is Scripture itself that urges us to “consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24).

The servant of God must also, in the midst of this endeavor, teach this doctrine rightly so as not to turn the congregation into a *κοινωνία* of condemnation. On our horizontal plane we can

¹¹³⁴ Luther, WA, 25:368; translation from *What Luther Says*, 658.

indeed observe and opine upon the right-ness of a person's actions, yet are not able to verify that he or she has right standing before God since only God can see the heart. This does not mean that God's children should devalue right actions; it only means that good works should be seen by others as the effect, not the efficient cause, of righteousness *coram Deo*.¹¹³⁵

When the Scripture doctrine concerning righteousness is rightly taught, followers of Christ can understand and wholeheartedly agree with statements that offend human reason such as: “We confess that good works must follow faith, yes, not only must, but [they] follow voluntarily, just as a good tree not only must produce good fruits, but [it] does so freely [Matt. 7:18]”¹¹³⁶—for only if the “must” is tautologous can the statement make sense. It is in the *nature* of passively righteous believers to produce good works—in that sense only “must” they produce them—yet at the same time, their identities are not rooted in doing so.

It is undeniable that many preachers react with almost phobic intensity when asked by parishioners about “sanctification” or “doing good works”. The fear (or erroneous assumption) is that *any* talk of good works equals “preaching works-righteousness”. Wesley, as discussed in chapter five, laid this charge at the door of Lutheran clergy. Sadly, I have witnessed it myself—sometimes even *in* myself.

But a proper understanding of Scripture doctrine—notably the doctrine of the two kinds of righteousness which Luther championed—releases the faithful servant of God from this fear of preaching about works. The Saxon Reformer was *anything but* “soft on sin” or “against good works” or godly living. His battle was against works-righteousness, not works-per se. Somehow the essential message of what he called “our theology” of the two kinds of righteousness has lost

¹¹³⁵ Luther's exhortations in this regard are too numerous and lengthy to be quoted here, but one representative thought can be found in *Freedom of the Christian*; see especially Luther, *AE*, 31:373.

¹¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 34:110.

its vital place in the systematic that is Lutheran doctrine. The right understanding of the purpose, scope, and importance of good works is *maintained*, not lost, when the two kinds of righteousness are properly distinguished.

Contrary to accusation, Luther’s emphasis on good works can be clearly discerned—though it is most always found in connection with a denial of the justifying power of those works:

This is that Christian liberty, our faith, which does not induce us to live in idleness or wickedness but makes the law and works unnecessary for any man’s righteousness and salvation. . . . ¹¹³⁷

Our faith in Christ does not free us from works but from false opinions concerning works, that is, from the foolish presumption that justification [*dignum memoria*: or sanctification] is acquired by works. Faith redeems, corrects, and preserves our consciences so that we know that righteousness does not consist in works, although works neither can nor ought to be wanting; just as we cannot be without food or drink and all the works of this mortal body, yet your righteousness is not in them, but in faith; and yet those works of the body are not to be neglected on that account. ¹¹³⁸

“True Lutherans”—indeed, true preachers of the Word anywhere—have the freedom to exhort their hearers unto godliness of heart and life. In fact, it is a Scriptural mandate! The people in the pews are longing to hear the “so what” of the Gospel message, the answer to the “What do I do now?” that rises up in the heart of every newborn believer. The genius of the two kinds of righteousness is that it permits us to proclaim the full counsel of God; the challenge is knowing when and how to apply the Law and the Gospel in such a way that *coram mundo* and *coram Deo* righteousness are never confused.

The term “righteousness” is used in different ways in Scripture; properly distinguishing between those uses is the responsibility of all diligent students of the Word. How much more the shepherds of God’s flock! It is an art; it is a privilege. It is God’s call to His people: “Study to

¹¹³⁷ Ibid., 31:349–50.

¹¹³⁸ Ibid., 31:372–73.

shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV). To this end help us, dear Father in heaven.¹¹³⁹

¹¹³⁹ Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord*, 356.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Early in John Wesley's career, the Archbishop of Canterbury advised him: "If you desire to be extensively useful, do not spend your time and strength in contending for or against such things as are of a disputable nature; but [rather] in testifying against open, notorious vice, and in promoting real, essential holiness."¹¹⁴⁰ This Wesley certainly set out to do. Drawing on his Anglican theological background, he combined its traditions with Scripture, reason, and experience to build a theological method and understanding that he believed would both redeem his hearers and spur them unto love and good works.

His method was a practical mysticism that wed *sola fide* with the principles instilled in his formative years—both at home and in print.¹¹⁴¹ It remained a hallmark of the movement he began. Popular and persistent legend credits him with telling his people: "Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can." Certainly apropos injunctions for any Christian!

Wesley's passion was ignited by his aversion to the dead formalism he perceived within the church, and the godless living he saw outside her walls. A longing for purity of heart and life,

¹¹⁴⁰ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:478.

¹¹⁴¹ In 1761 he told his friend John Byrom that "Thomas à Kempis was next to the Bible" in his estimation. Telford, *The Life of John Wesley*, 38. This makes his excoriation of the mystics *en masse* (see chapter five) and his denunciation of Luther as being "deeply tintured with *mysticism* throughout, and hence often fundamentally ['dangerously'] wrong" all the more surprising. Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 19:201; emphasis original.

combined with the desire to save souls from damnation, fanned the flame. He found the call for “holiness unto the Lord” in God’s Word and sought to bring order out of the chaos.

The impact of the movement he began is undeniable. According to W. H. Fitchett, Wesley’s “true monument” is not merely some denomination or movement. Rather, it is “the whole changed temper of the modern world: the new ideas in its politics, the new spirit in its religion, the new standard in its philanthropy”.¹¹⁴² It is true that Fitchett’s paean was written more than a hundred years ago, and some today might respond to his words rather cynically, given the temper, politics, and state of Christian religion in our century. But the historian’s words do reflect the pragmatic intent and significant results derived from the goals Wesley set—he wanted to change lives *now* and in eternity.

His approach, as we have seen, was to press hard after what Luther termed “horizontal” righteousness, as the necessary antecedent of an entire sanctification without which, no one will “see the Lord” in glory. In the process, however, justification (and the “vertical” righteousness it bestows) gradually diminished in importance until it was finally relegated to the “porch” of religion. Final salvation required human striving, presuming there was sufficient time in the believer’s life post-conversion to do so.¹¹⁴³ Ultimately, sanctification took center stage in Wesley’s *ordo salutis*, and on account of his theological rationale he did not consider the admixture of Man’s activity a breach of Scriptural fidelity—in himself or in others.¹¹⁴⁴

The Sum of the Matter

Wesley’s exhortations unto holiness had, as their base motivation, the hope of attaining

¹¹⁴² Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century*, 3.

¹¹⁴³ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:389.

¹¹⁴⁴ He wrote John Fletcher in 1775 that even Pelagius “very probably held no other heresy than you and I do

entire sanctification—and eternity with the Lord. But as we have seen, growth in holiness ought to be for the sake of the neighbor, not one’s own heavenly hopes. There is little in Wesley’s writing which advances a theology of the cross, or echoes Job’s *Deus absconditus* cry of faith.¹¹⁴⁵ In presenting the testimonies of those who claimed entire sanctification, the emphasis on witness of the Spirit, and “rejoicing evermore”, Wesley’s theology became so heavily focused on the positive experiential of these perfect believers that the primary *locus* of Christianity shifted from without them to within.

This is not the *extra nos* theological method and structure Luther knew. He said:

Knowledge of God and man is divine wisdom, and in the real sense theological. It is such knowledge of God and man as is related to the justifying God and to sinful man, so that in the real sense the subject of theology is [the objective reality of] guilty and lost man and [the objective truth about] the justifying and redeeming God. What is inquired into apart from this question and subject is error and vanity in theology.¹¹⁴⁶

True theology is not speculative—it is concrete, objective, biblical, and salvation-oriented.

Coming to Terms

John Wesley’s distinctive definitions of biblical terms and phrases are also at issue.

- Sin (discussed at length in the preceding chapter);
- Being “saved from sin” (interpreted as meaning “there isn’t any more inside” rather than “it shall no longer be your master”—Romans 6:14);
- Even the term “perfection” itself, being downgraded (from the superlative that it is, to a counterintuitive “imperfect perfection”);

these definitions (and others) opened the English cleric to vociferous criticisms which he often

now”; Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, VI:175.

¹¹⁴⁵ “Though He slay me, yet shall I trust in Him.” (Job 13:15)

¹¹⁴⁶ Luther, WA, 40(II):327–28. Translation by Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 39–40.

declared “idle controversies and strife of words”¹¹⁴⁷ and which, he claimed, were far more subversive to the souls of men than were his teachings.

Yet those teachings did have significant and sometimes deleterious effect upon Scripture doctrine. Likely motivated by his synergistic leanings, Wesley was willing to allow *one* thing of God’s to be imparted to human creatures (namely, various kinds of grace) but was *not* willing to have *another* (namely Christ’s active righteousness) imputed to us. But who is to say, aside from God’s own Word, what He can and cannot give? In fact, due to the shift in emphasis—from objective gifts, to Man’s use thereof—in Wesley’s *ordo*, Man became the determinative factor even in his own justification.¹¹⁴⁸

Common-sense ratiocination led to such a formulation. Rather than let God’s supra-rational Word stand—which ascribes salvation to God and damnation to Man, despite the logical contradiction it entails—the ever-rational Wesley assumed that the God of nature’s laws would never operate contrary to the laws of reason. There *must* be a single source for acceptance or rejection—and since Wesley despised Calvin’s solution of a double predestination pronounced by God, he chose instead to say that where the “eternal life-or-death” choice is concerned, “every child of God...has in himself the casting voice.”¹¹⁴⁹

The Voice of Reason

The conclusion that God demands, or will bestow, a state of entire sanctification stems from a similar flow of logic:

¹¹⁴⁷ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 19:134.

¹¹⁴⁸ “[P]revious to justifying faith, there must be repentance, and, if opportunity permit, ‘fruits meet for repentance’ . . . Faith may be . . . the sole condition of justification; and yet not only repentance be our duty before, but all obedience after, we believe.” Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:389.

¹¹⁴⁹ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:490.

1. First premise: God has never required more of us than we can do *via* His promises.¹¹⁵⁰
2. Second premise: Jesus said “ ‘Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’ [and] ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.’ But if the love of God fill all the heart, there can be no sin there.”¹¹⁵¹ (These are the hallmarks of Wesley’s entire sanctification.)
3. Third premise: We *must* have this entire sanctification in order to “see the Lord” in glory (Hebrews 12:14),
4. Conclusion: Since we need it, God will grant it “in the article of death”, if need be...for those who seek it sincerely.¹¹⁵²
5. Extrapolation: Since God *will* give entire sanctification to those who need it “in the article of death”, there is no reason that He could not/would not give it sooner to those who expect it sooner.¹¹⁵³ Concerning such logic as this, in connection with entire sanctification’s temporal proximity to initial justification Wesley says that it is surely so; “I know of no conclusive argument to the contrary.”¹¹⁵⁴

Thus Wesley reasoned—but the first premise itself is open to debate, based upon one’s understanding of the nature and purpose of God’s law, as discussed in chapter six. In like

¹¹⁵⁰ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 70.

¹¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹¹⁵² Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:285. The tenability of entire sanctification itself aside, it is difficult to find clear and compelling Scriptural *sedes doctrinae* for this assertion so important to Wesley’s systematic. Nonetheless, when asked: “What will become of a Heathen, a Papist, a Church of England man, if he dies without being thus [that is, entirely] sanctified?” Wesley responds, “He cannot see the Lord. *But none who seeks it sincerely shall or can die without it*; though possibly he may not attain it, till the very article of death.” *Ibid.*, 285–86; emphasis added. Was this deathbed provision Wesley’s way of keeping the door open for salvation by faith alone? It was certainly a *locum tenens* consolation for those whose struggles seem never to abate.

¹¹⁵³ Wesley, *Works (Jackson)*, VIII:285.

¹¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, XI:446.

manner, the extrapolation (number 5, above) proffers the reasonable-to-the-human-mind suggestion that, since (!) God grants entire sanctification in the article of death, He can or will *also* give it sooner, to those who expect it sooner. But without clear biblical assertions to that effect,¹¹⁵⁵ this suggestion is a *non sequitur*.

Parting of the Ways

Luther and Wesley share, at their core, concern for the redemption of God's human creatures—but the two were shaped by different historical situations, theological traditions, and temperaments. Luther's protest was against an ossified religion of works-righteousness that had obscured the Gospel message of salvation *sola gratia, sola fide, propter Christum*. Wesley in his day fought against a sterilized Christianity that was scarcely more than dead formalism, with little or no impact on the lives of the hearers. Repulsing the inert, internalized religiosity of eighteenth-century England, Wesley declared: "The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness."¹¹⁵⁶

In this regard, of course, Wesley had more in common with Luther than he might have realized. The Englishman's detailed descriptions of proper daily holiness are strongly reminiscent of Luther's explanations of the second table of the Ten Commandments—God's law *viz.* our neighbor does not merely prohibit evil; it commands us to do good as well.

But the two reformers parted theological ways in a number of significant areas. They had different understandings of

- Man—*in concreto*, if not *in abstracto*;

¹¹⁵⁵ In-depth examination of all the various texts Wesley relied upon is beyond the scope of this paper, although many, many treatises have been written on both sides of the debate. For a classic list of key texts, with a brief but cogent critique of each, see Sangster, *The Path to Perfection*, 37–52.

¹¹⁵⁶ Wesley, *Works* (Jackson), XIV:305.

- Sin—whether “properly” so-called, or not;
- The nature and use of the Law;
- The nature and significance of Justification;
- The sources and meaning of Christian assurance;
- The nature and condition of the Christian’s *imago Dei*;
- Even the vehicle or medium of grace—where Luther found grace evinced in the external, objective Word, Wesley found it in the immediate, internal work of the Spirit.

Examination of these *loci* (and others) shows in how many ways their paths diverged.

When all is said and done, however, it appears that fundamental to the divide is a rather Kennedyesque¹¹⁵⁷ question. To wit: If you should die tonight, and find yourself standing before God, what would you say to God when He asks you: “Why should I let you into My heaven—where’s your holiness?”

Wesley’s answer would be “I have it within me...look inside and see.” Luther’s answer would be “I have it credited to my account...look in Your Book of Life and see.” Luther knew only a theology of aspiration, not realization: desiring to be altogether righteous, yet recognizing that only in the ἔσχατον will all sin be purged away. The blessed comfort is that—even though the sinful stain *remains*, in this life—God will not ‘see’ it. But this is neither because God is dishonest, *nor* because He is deceived.

Wesley’s logic was that, if God were to declare a patently evil person ‘holy’, He would be guilty of an unjust act. But God’s action in declaring the sinner righteous is taken in light of Christ’s suffering and death—propitiation has been made. God is not ignoring the sinner’s guilt; punishment for that guilt has been meted out already.

¹¹⁵⁷ D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion: Equipping Churches for Friendship, Evangelism, Discipleship*,

Finding the Center

The thesis of this dissertation¹¹⁵⁸ was that John Wesley's doctrine of entire sanctification—in fact, his entire *ordo salutis*—was predicated upon a different theological starting point than Luther. This much we have certainly seen to be so.

- Luther for his part, asked: “How can I be reconciled with a righteous God? What will deliver me from damnation?” For him the whole of the issue was justification; beyond this he sought nothing else regarding his eternal standing.
- Wesley was unquestionably concerned with justifying the sinner, but he just as clearly did not consider that justification to be the “great goal of religion”. Understanding justification to be only the pardon of past sins, he *assumed* justification, as a ‘given’, in the true Christian's life. *His* burning question was: “How can I be (or become) ‘fit’ for heaven—‘made meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light’?” The center of Wesley's concern was *beyond* “mere” justification—the issue for Wesley was sanctification.

In short, Luther sought to be reconciled to God; Wesley sought a restored *imago Dei*. These differing *foci* set the two men on vastly different trajectories for their theological development.

It was also proposed in chapter one that Wesley was faced with a different set of *issues* than Luther—a thesis borne out in the preceding analyses and summarized in the section above. The moral turpitude Wesley saw in the England of his day prompted him to preach holiness of heart and life—ignited by the promise of an experiential entire sanctification while still in the flesh. Wesley's hope and goal—his “great end” for religion—was repair, renewal, and

and Healthy Growth (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1996), 58.

¹¹⁵⁸ See chapter one, “The Thesis”

restoration.¹¹⁵⁹ He preached a righteousness of performance that “qualified” the believer for eternal glory.

But Luther was convinced that “repair” was not our Lord’s central hope and goal for mankind’s righteousness. God does not want to “repair” us, either instantaneously *or* by incremental infusions of grace. He doesn’t want to “fix” us; He wants to make us altogether new. While “to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due” (Romans 4:4), the blessed Gospel says that “to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness” (Romans 4:5).

Wesley looks to an attained entire sanctification to deliver from sin—for it is then that the Lord will speak to our hearts “the second time”¹¹⁶⁰ and say: “Be clean.” From that time onward, Wesley avers, the believer will love God and neighbor with heart, soul, mind and strength. *The love we have for God—and the love for Man that springs therefrom*¹¹⁶¹—*is the essence of Wesley’s entire sanctification.*¹¹⁶²

One cannot fault John Wesley for his heartfelt desire to serve God in holiness and purity. But the question remains: does Scripture teach a theology of aspiration or of realization? True, Jesus said: “I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). But in making this declaration, was He “setting the bar” and expecting us to jump? Or was He showing

¹¹⁵⁹ “Ye know that the great end of religion is to renew our hearts in the image of God, to repair that total loss of righteousness and true holiness which we sustained by the sin of our first parent. Ye know that all religion which does not answer this end, all that stops short of this, the renewal of our soul in the image of God, after the likeness of him that created it, is no other than a poor farce and a mere mockery of God, to the destruction of our own soul.” Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 2:185.

¹¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:346.

¹¹⁶¹ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 55.

¹¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 55, 60, 114, etc.

us our helplessness so that He might have mercy on us all (Romans 11:32)?

Luther contended that, although we are altogether perfect and accepted in God's eyes on account of Christ, we will never be free of the stain of sin until we stand in His presence.¹¹⁶³ Yet acknowledging that our τελειότητα must wait until we are in the Kingdom of Glory need not leave us despairing or discouraged; there is still much to hope in this life. We “wait patiently for” what we do not have (Hebrews 8:25), reminded by every tribulation to seek the Lord in our distress (Psalm 77:2) in the means of grace He provides, and to grow. There will be a harvest for us, in due time, if we do not grow weary and give up (Galatians 6:9). Unlike Wesley, who looked for the Lord to “speak the second time” to purify us in this life, Luther expected to hear his Savior's second call at the ἔσχατον.¹¹⁶⁴

What's Love Got to Do with It?

The question of Love also remains. As discussed in the previous chapter, the human heart can provide only tenuous support or assurance at best. Even our most fervent, Spirit-succored antiphons are weak and wan compared to the all-surpassing love of God for His creation. This is not to suggest that emotional human response should be eschewed—but our love to God is an unbidden, unfreighted *response* to the love God has shown us (1 John 4:19). Such genuine adoration withers, once commanded or declared “necessary” in any way...and it is insignificant at best, where our standing with God is concerned.

¹¹⁶³ “If we believe in Christ, we are considered absolutely just for His sake, in faith. Later, after the death of this flesh, in the other life, we shall attain perfect righteousness and have within us that absolute righteousness which we now have only by imputation through the merit of Christ. . . . In this life we have these things only under the shadow and cover of the wings of the Sun of Righteousness [Malachi 4:2], and we are just only by faith, for His sake; but then we also shall be truly just within ourselves.” Luther, WA, 40(II):527; translation from *What Luther Says*, 659.

¹¹⁶⁴ “We are to sleep, until he [Christ] comes and knocks on the little grave and says: Doctor Martin, arise! Then I will come to life in an instant and will be happy with him forever”; Luther, WA, 37:151; translated in Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 328. He will be happy because: “When we die, then all will be completely healed.” (“*Wenn wir aber nun sterben, da werden sie alle vollkommenlich gehailt sein.*”) Luther, WA, 17(II):285.

It is God's love for us that matters, not the other way around. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in [not “fervently loveth”] him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). The choices God makes concerning our eternal destiny is based on His true ἀγάπη love, which does not change depending upon the fervency of response by the beloved. *Our* love may wax and wane—hence it is a splintered reed upon which to lean—but the steadfast (ἰσχυρῶς) love of the LORD never ceases (Lamentations 3:22).

It is God who is at work in us, to will and to do according to His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13); He has begun the good work in us, and He will carry it on to completion (Philippians 1:6). In Wesley's doctrine, by contrast, “man is the sole determinative factor in the decision of his own justification”¹¹⁶⁵—and, due to the emphasis on our response to infusions of grace, Man is the determinative factor in his entire sanctification as well.

I have many other things to write to you...¹¹⁶⁶

At the outset of this dissertation it was noted that there has been relatively little scholarship directly comparing the persons and works of Martin Luther and John Wesley. Several intriguing questions surfaced during the course of this research which time and space do not allow me to pursue; I leave the following ideas as avenues of future inquiry:

Great stock is often placed in a person's dying words, and while it is true that there are many sayings apocryphally ascribed to famous people, the things Wesley and Luther said in their last hours are reasonably well attested.¹¹⁶⁷ How do these final testaments square with their teachings over the course of their lifetimes? In like manner, comparing certain aspects of

¹¹⁶⁵ Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 117.

¹¹⁶⁶ 2 John 1:12, NET

¹¹⁶⁷ Note, however, the discrepancies in Luther's last words (discussed in chapter five) as well as the divergent

Wesley's sermons with others in the *SOSO* corpus may prove informative as well. I was particularly interested in the changes in his theology discernable between the seminal sermons *Salvation by Faith* and *Justification by Faith*. Additionally, the concept of death-as-cure-for-sin (expressed in his little-published *The Trouble and Rest of Good Men*¹¹⁶⁸) shines a clear light on at least *one* place where Wesley and Luther agreed...once upon a time. The (dis)similarities in these sermons and the viewpoints of the two theologians could be productively examined.

Wesley was not the only holiness advocate of his era; the doctrine won adherents in Calvinist and Lutheran areas as well. What effect, if any, did Luther's doctrine of the two kinds of righteousness have on the holiness and pietist movements in the centuries after the Reformation? Did it help to balance the emphasis on holiness of heart and life as *sine qua non* of salvation? Was it articulated at *all*, in the preaching and teaching of the time?

Lastly, I have theorized that Wesley's exacting discipline for spiritual life—in fact, his entire *ordo salutis*, including the steps leading to entire sanctification—was influenced by his proclivity for anatomizing most *everything* into its component parts. It seems that the eighteenth-century zeal for scientific enquiry, and confidence in the human mind's ability to identify and quantify, influenced the English prelate.

Luther was not of the same era. As Bernhard Löhse and others have amply noted,¹¹⁶⁹ Luther's analytic focus took the form of dialectic tensions—perhaps most famously, the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. Dialectic was part of his training; it is worth asking how significant this *a priori* shaping influence was. Did Luther's other theological dichotomies—the two kinds of righteousness, the two kingdoms, Spirit vs. letter, etc.—derive their contours from

envis attributed to Wesley—such as Telford's and Moore's biographies of Wesley disclose.

¹¹⁶⁸ Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 3:530–41.

¹¹⁶⁹ Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 268.

the plain sense of Scripture, or were they shaped by a dialectically-predisposed mind?

Opportunities for further exploration abound.

Conclusion

It is sadly true than any potential danger in a theological system usually bears its bitter fruit in the following generations. So it has been among both Luther's and Wesley's followers. While Luther himself never showed himself "soft on sin", his progeny tended to leave themselves open to charges of antinomianism or the like because of a *lessened* emphasis on sanctification.

Wesley's adherents, on the other hand, were tempted to lose their focus on salvation by faith alone, and pursue personal sanctification—or societal improvement—*apart* from the doctrines of depravity and regeneration that are so foundational to their leader's theology.

It is true: Christians can grow lax in their faith, leaning on *simul iustus et peccator*, or "once saved, always saved", or what have you. Such was Wesley's concern.¹¹⁷⁰ Yet this concern does not justify the creation of steps and stages. There is a way to exhort unto holiness and sanctification without building an incremental stairway to salvation, even as there is a way to exhort believers to be eschatologically-minded without setting a date for the Lord's return.

Artificial incentives ultimately lead to disillusionment or self-deception. How much better to follow Scripture's guidance when it says: "I urge you, brothers and sisters, *in view of God's mercy*, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship" (Romans 12:1, emphasis added). In St. Paul's calculus, "God's mercy" is nothing more or less than the grace and (full) salvation already experienced by believers, and the "living sacrifice" is a worshipful response, as opposed to a means to some other end.

Holiness of heart and life are fitting *and* important for the followers of Christ. There is

much to learn from, and appreciate in, John Wesley’s zealous and untiring advocacy of a living, busy, active faith—a faith that shows. But Martin Luther also has something important to contribute to the dialogue between denominations. *Via* the two kinds of righteousness, Luther presents a framework within which our good works and holy living fit—a framework that incorporates most fully the whole counsel of God in Scripture, and benefits everyone who espouses it.

For those in Lutheran pulpits, two-kinds-of-righteousness provides “permission” to preach sanctification without apology or the fear of being “un-Lutheran” in their homiletics. Careful but emphatic two-kinds-of-righteousness preaching will instruct, encourage and direct the hearers in God’s call to holiness. This is critically important, for: “Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint” (Proverbs 29:18, ESV) and God Himself laments: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6, ESV). Let us feed His sheep!

Sanctification, properly preached, will certainly shift from “third use” to “second use” of the law when need be—a shift and application best done by the Spirit Who inhabits the Word. But rightly done, such sanctification preaching will also inspire and exhort without ever intruding upon the hearers’ confidence in Christ.

To our friends and co-laborers in other streams of Christendom, the two kinds of righteousness offers a right, Christ-centered focus for all our hopes. Holiness unto the Lord can remain their watch-word and song,¹¹⁷⁰ but none need agonize over perceived (lack of) progress. All such progress and growth is ever and only *for* the purpose of serving our neighbor, *to* the

¹¹⁷⁰ Wesley, *Plain Account*, 55, 68, 99–101, 110.

¹¹⁷¹ Cf. the refrain of the classic hymn by Methodist songwriter Lelila Morris: “ ‘Holiness unto the Lord’ is our watchword and song. ‘Holiness unto the Lord’ as we’re marching along. Sing it, shout it, loud and long, ‘Holiness unto the Lord,’ now and forever.” Lelila Naylor Morris, “Called Unto Holiness,” 1900. Words and music: public domain.

glory of God and the increase of His kingdom.

John Wesley once described the priority of his affections as follows: “I love Calvin a little, Luther more; the Moravians, Mr. Law, and Mr. Whitefield far more than either. . . . *But I love truth more than all.*”¹¹⁷² Specifically concerning the Wittenberg cleric he said: “Doubtless he was a man highly favoured of God and a blessed instrument in his hand. But Oh! what pity that he had no faithful friend!—none that would at all hazards rebuke him plainly and sharply for his rough, untractable spirit and bitter zeal for opinions, so greatly obstructive of the work of God.”¹¹⁷³

Asseverations to the contrary notwithstanding, John Wesley maintained more than a little zeal for his own opinions, himself—though he was unquestionably raised in a more tactful era and environment than Brother Martin. What a pity that Wesley had no Luther of his own, to “at all hazards” counsel *him* concerning the finest way to spur others on to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24)!

Such a task—truly part of the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren¹¹⁷⁴—now falls to those who follow in Luther and Wesley’s train. Despite differences in perspective, background, and even terminological content, it is our Christian privilege and duty to meet together in holy and respectful conversation. God calls us to it—may we continue the dialogue, speaking the truth in love, “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). *Soli Deo Gloria!*

¹¹⁷² Wesley, *Works (BE)*, 26:113–14; emphasis added.

¹¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 20:285.

¹¹⁷⁴ Bente, *Concordia Triglotta - The Symbolic Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, 491.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abraham, William J. "Chapter 34: Christian Perfection." In *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, 587–601. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Alexander, Donald, ed. *Christian Spirituality—Five Views of Sanctification*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988.
- Allen, William. *A Glass of Justification, or The Work of Faith with Power. Wherein the Apostles Doctrine Touching Justification without the Deeds of the Law, Is Opened; and the Sence in Which Gospel-Obedience, as Well as Faith, Is Necessary to Justification, Is Stated*. London: G. Dawson, 1658.
- Alsted, Johann Heinrich. *Theologia Scholastica Didactica: Exhibens Locos Communes Theologicos Methodo Scholastica: Quatuor in Partes Tributa*. Hanoviae: Conradi Eifridi, 1618.
- Althaus, Paul. *The Theology of Martin Luther*. Translated by Robert C. Schultz. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1966.
- Anderson, Neil Douglas. "The Influence of Clement of Alexandria upon the Thought of John Wesley." PhD diss., Drew University, 1999.
- Andrews, Robert, ed. *The Columbia Dictionary of Quotations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
- Anstadt, Rev. Peter. *Luther, Zinzendorf, Wesley: An Account of John Wesley's Conversion Through Hearing Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans Read in a Moravian Prayer Meeting in London, England: To Which Is Added a New Translation of Luther's Preface*. York, PA: P. Anstadt & Sons, 1920.
- Aquinas, St Thomas. *Summa Theologica*. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. 3 vols. New York: Benziger Bros., 1947.
- Arand, Charles P. "A Two-Dimensional Understanding of the Church for the Twenty-First Century." *Concordia Journal* 33, (2007): 146–65.
- . "The Ministry of the Church in Light of the Two Kinds of Righteousness." *Concordia Journal* 33, (2007): 344–56.
- . "Two Kinds of Righteousness as a Framework for Law and Gospel in the Apology." *Lutheran Quarterly* 15, (1999): 417–39.
- Arand, Charles P., and Joel D. Biermann. "Why the Two Kinds of Righteousness?" *Concordia Journal* 33, (2007): 116–35.

- Arnett, William M. "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Entire Sanctification in the Writings of John Wesley." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 14, (1979): 15–30.
- Augustine, St. *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*. Translated by John K. Ryan. Image Books edition. Garden City, NY: Image, 1960.
- Baik, Chul. "Christian Religious Education for the Formation of Full Humanity: A Comparative Cross-Cultural Study of Yi T'oegeye and John Wesley." PhD diss., Claremont School of Theology, 2001.
- Bailie, John. "John Wesley: A Theology of Liberation." MTh thesis, University of South Africa, 2005.
- Bainton, Roland Herbert. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1950.
- Ball-Kilbourne, Gary. "The Christian as Steward in John Wesley's Theological Ethics." *Quarterly Review* 4, (1984): 43–54.
- Bayer, Oswald. *Living by Faith: Justification and Sanctification*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Lutheran quarterly books. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003.
- . *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans Pub, 2008.
- Becker, Carl Lotus. *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers*. 2d ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Bente, F., ed. *Concordia Triglotta - The Symbolic Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1921.
- Bevins, Winfield. "Wesley and the Pentecostals." *Pneuma Review* 8, (2005): 10–17.
- Biederman, Patricia Ward. "A Queen Who Shaped Era and Image." *Los Angeles Times*, December 23, 2002, sec. Entertainment.
- Bielfeldt, Dennis. "Freedom, Love and Righteousness in Luther's Sermo De Duplici Iustitia." In *Freiheit Als Liebe Bei Martin Luther/Freedom as Love in Martin Luther—8th International Congress for Luther Research*, edited by Klaus Schwarzhäller and Dennis Biefeldt, 19–34. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995.
- Biermann, Joel D. "Virtue Ethics and the Place of Character Formation within Lutheran Theology." PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2002.
- Bizer, Ernst. "Die Beiden Predigten Über Die Gerechtigkeit." In *Fides Ex Auditū: Eine Untersuchung Über Die Entdeckung Der Gerechtigkeit Gottes Durch Martin Luther*, 106–12. Neukirchen Kreis Moers: Verlag der Buichhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1961.

- Bloesch, Donald G. *Freedom for Obedience: Evangelical Ethics in Contemporary Times*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. Translated by R. H. Fuller and Irmgard Booth. 2d ed. New York: MacMillan, 1961.
- Bready, John Wesley. *England, Before and After Wesley: The Evangelical Revival and Social Reform*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938.
- Brendlinger, Irv, and Eric E. Mueller. "Psychological Implications of the Doctrine of Christian Perfection with Special Reference to John Wesley's View." *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 60, (2006): 275–86.
- Brierley, P. W., and Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. *World Churches Handbook: Based on the Operation World Database by Patrick Johnstone, WEC International, 1993*. London: Christian Research, 1997.
- Bunyan, John. *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Edited by W. R. Owens. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Burgess, Stanley M, and Ed M. Van Der Maas, eds. *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Burns, Michael T. "John Wesley's Doctrine of Perfect Love as a Theological Mandate for Unity and Diversity." PhD diss., University of Manchester, Nazarene Theological College, 2009.
- Burtner, Robert W., and Robert E. Chiles, eds. *A Compend of Wesley's Theology*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1954.
- Calamy, Edmund. *A Continuation of the Account of the Ministers, Lecturers, Masters and Fellows of Colleges and Schoolmasters, Who Were Ejected or Silenced after the Restoration in 1660. By, or Before, the Act for Uniformity*. 2008 reformat. Vol. 1. London: R. Ford, R. Hett, & J. Chandler, 1727.
- Calvin, Jean. *Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*. Edited by Cunitz, Edouard, Baum, Johann-Wilhelm, and Reuss, Eduard Wilhelm Eugen. 58 vols. Brunsvigae: Apud C.A. Schwetschke, 1863.
- Cannon, William Ragsdale. *The Theology of John Wesley, with Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1946.
- Carroll, Lewis. *Through the Looking Glass: And What Alice Found There*. New York: Rand McNally, 1917.
- Carver, Fran. "Biblical Foundations for the 'Secondness' of Entire Sanctification." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, (1987): 7–23.
- Cell, George Croft. *The Rediscovery of John Wesley*. New York: Henry Holt, 1935.

- Cheetham, J. Keith. *On the Trail of John Wesley*. Edinburgh: Luath, 2003.
- Choi, Meesaeng Lee. "In Search of Full Salvation: The Fourfold Gospel and the Korea Holiness Church in Relation to the American Holiness Movement." PhD diss., Drew University, 2002.
- Christensen, Michael J. "John Wesley: Christian Perfection as Faith Filled with the Energy of Love." In *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, edited by Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung, 219–29. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.
- . "Theosis and Sanctification: John Wesley's Reformulation of a Patristic Doctrine." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31, (1996): 71–94.
- Clarke, Charles David. "A Still More Excellent Way: An Historical, Theological and Biblical Evaluation of John Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Perfection." PhD diss., Potschefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1998.
- Clarke, Eliza. *Susanna Wesley*. Eminent Women Series. London: W. H. Allen, 1886.
- Clarke, Samuel. "The Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion." In *A Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God, the Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation*, by Samuel Clarke and Joseph Butler, 131–414. Glasgow: Richard Griffin, 1823.
- . *The Marrow of Ecclesiastical History: Contained in the Lives of One Hundred Forty Eight Fathers, Schoolmen, First Reformers and Modern Divines Which Have Flourished in the Church since Christ's Time to This Present Age*. 2d ed. London, 1654.
- Clark, Jonathan Charles Douglas. *English Society, 1688–1832: Ideology, Social Structure, and Political Practice During the Ancien Regime*. Cambridge studies in the history and theory of politics. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- . "The Eighteenth-Century Context." In *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, 3–29. Oxford Handbooks. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Del Colle, Ralph. "John Wesley's Doctrine of Grace in Light of the Christian Tradition." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 4, (2002): 172–89.
- Collins, Kenneth J. *A Faithful Witness: John Wesley's Homiletical Theology*. Wilmore, KY: Wesley Heritage, 1993.
- . *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003.
- . "Recent Trends in Wesleyan/Holiness Scholarship." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35, (2000): 67–86.

- . *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley's Theology*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1997.
- . *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2007.
- Colón-Emeric, Edgardo Antonio. "Perfection in Dialogue: An Ecumenical Encounter Between Wesley and Aquinas." PhD diss., Duke University, 2007.
- . *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection: An Ecumenical Dialogue*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009.
- Corlett, D. Shelby. *The Meaning of Holiness: Messages on the Wesleyan Doctrine of Entire Sanctification*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1944.
- Cortright, Charles Lloyd. "'Poor Maggot-Sack That I Am': The Human Body in the Theology of Martin Luther." PhD diss., Marquette, 2011.
- Cox, Leo George. *John Wesley's Concept of Perfection*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1964.
- . *John Wesley's Concept of Sin*. Salem, OH: Schmul, 2002.
- . "John Wesley's View of Martin Luther." *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 7, (1964): 83–90.
- Cracknell, Kenneth, and Susan J. White. *An Introduction to World Methodism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Cranz, Ferdinand Edward. *An Essay on the Development of Luther's Thought on Justice, Law and Society*. Harvard Theological Studies 19. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959.
- Crawford, Nathan. "Science and Theology in Conversation: Emergence Theories of Consciousness and Entire Sanctification." *Asbury Journal* 64, (2009): 40–53.
- Cubie, David L. "Wesley's Theology of Love." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 20, (1985): 122–54.
- Dabney, D. Lyle. "What Has Aldersgate to Do with Wittenberg?" *Lutheran Forum* 43, (2008): 47–50.
- Darby, John Nelson, tran. *Holy Bible: Darby Translation*. London: G. Morrish, 1890.
- Davies, Horton. "Justification, Sanctification, and the Liberation of the Person." In *Sanctification and Liberation: Liberal Theologies in the Light of the Wesleyan Tradition*, edited by Theodore Runyon, 64–82. Nashville: Abingdon, 1981.
- Deschner, John. *Wesley's Christology: An Interpretation*. First Edition. Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960.

- Dicker, Gordon S. "The Concept Simul Iustus Et Peccator in Relation to the Thought of Luther, Wesley and Bonhoeffer, and Its Significance for a Doctrine of the Christian Life." ThD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1971.
- Dilthey, Wilhelm. "Das Nätürlie System Der Geisteswissenschaften Im Siebzehten Jahrhundert." *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 6 (1893): 225–56.
- Dobrée, Bonamy. *John Wesley*. Reprint of 1933 edition. Philadelphia, PA: Richard West, 1977.
- Dodd, William, ed. *The Christian's Magazine, or a Treasury of Divine Knowledge 1760–1766*. London: J. Newbery & J. Coote, 1767.
- Doo, Jin Kim. "Holiness in Calvin and Wesley." PhD diss., University of Bristol, 1995.
- Drury, John. "Luther and Wesley on Union and Impartation in Light of Recent Finnish Luther Research." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 40, (2005): 58–68.
- Drysdale, Alexander Hutton. *History of the Presbyterians in England: Their Rise, Decline and Revival*. London: Publication Committee of the Presbyterian Church of England, 1889.
- Dunning, H. Ray. *Grace, Faith & Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1988.
- . "Perspective for a Wesleyan Systematic Theology." In *Wesleyan Theology Today*, edited by Theodore Runyon, 51–55. Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1985.
- Ebeling, Gerhard. *Word and Faith*. Translated by James W. Leitch. 1st ed. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1963.
- Edwards, Maldwyn. *John Wesley and the Eighteenth Century: A Study of His Social and Political Influence*. London: Epworth, 1955.
- Engelbrecht, Edward A. "Luther's Threefold Use of the Law." *Concordia Theological Monthly* 75, (2011): 135–50.
- English, John C. "The Path to Perfection in Pseudo-Macarius and John Wesley." *Pacifica* 11, (1998): 54–62.
- Fielding, Henry. *Miscellanies, Volume Three: The History of the Life of the Late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great (1742?)*. Edited by Hugh Amory. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Fitchett, William Henry. *Wesley and His Century: A Study in Spiritual Forces*. New York: Eaton & Mains, 1908.
- Fleetwood, William. *The Perfectionists Examin'd Or, Inherent Perfection in This Life, No Scripture Doctrine. To Which Is Affix'd, the Rev. Mr. Whitefield's Thoughts on This Subject, in a Letter to Mr. Wesley*. London: J. Roberts, 1741.

- Fletcher, W. Brian. "Christian Perfection in Wesley and Fletcher with Implications for Today." PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1997.
- Flew, Robert Newton. *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology: An Historical Study of the Christian Ideal for the Present Life*. London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1934.
- Fourqurean, David N. "The Politics of Christian Perfection as Peace: Karl Barth and John Wesley in Dialogue." PhD diss., Duke University, 1996.
- Gee, Henry, and William John Hardy, eds. *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*. New York: MacMillan (1896); Reprint: Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, 2009.
- Gladwell, Penelope Anderson. "'That We May Perfectly Love Thee': Christian Perfection Shaping the Mission of a Local United Methodist Congregation." DMin thesis, Wesley Theological Seminary, 1990.
- Goldsmith, Oliver. *The Works of Oliver Goldsmith*. Edited by Peter Cunningham. Vol. 3. 4 vols. London: J. Murray, 1854.
- Goodwin, Charles H. "Setting Perfection Too High: John Wesley's Changing Attitudes toward the London Blessing." *Methodist History* 36, (1998): 86–95.
- Greathouse, William M. *Wholeness in Christ: Toward a Biblical Theology of Holiness*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1998.
- Green, John Brazier. *John Wesley and William Law*. Fernley-Hartley lecture, 1945. London: Epworth, 1945.
- Green, Lowell C. *How Melancthon Helped Luther Discover the Gospel: The Doctrine of Justification in the Reformation*. Fallbrook, CA: Verdict, 1980.
- Green, Vivian Hubert Howard. *John Wesley*. London: Nelson, 1964.
- . *The Young Mr. Wesley: A Study of John Wesley and Oxford*. New York: St. Martin's, 1961.
- Gregory, Jeremy. "The Long Eighteenth Century." In *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, edited by Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers, 13–39. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Grider, J. Kenneth. *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1994.
- . *Entire Sanctification: The Distinctive Doctrine of Wesleyanism*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1984.
- Halévy, Elie. *England in 1815*. Translated by E. I. Watkin and D. A. Barker. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968.

- . “La Naissance Du Méthodisme En Angleterre.” *Revue de Paris* (1906).
- Harkey, Simeon W. “The Conversion of John Wesley and His Indebtedness to Martin Luther.” *The Lutheran Quarterly* 14 (1884): 518–44.
- Harmon, Rebecca Lamar. *Susanna, Mother of the Wesleys*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1968.
- Hasker, William. “Holiness and Systematic Evil: A Response to Albert Truesdale.” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 19, (1984): 60–62.
- Hatch, Nathan O. *The Democratization of American Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Heitzenrater, Richard P. *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1995.
- Herrnschmidt, Johann Daniel. *Commentatio Historica De Vita D. Martini Lutheri, Qua Externis Eius Rationibus Breviter Tactis Interna Praecipue Indoles Ipsius Et Agendi Principium Ex Vero Describitur*. Halle: Saale Halae Magdeburgicae Orphanotropheum, 1742.
- Hicks, Sally. “Unlocking the Code: How Richard Heitzenrater’s Discovery Shaped the Course of Wesleyan Studies.” *Divinity Magazine* 8, (2008).
- Hildebrandt, Franz. *Christianity According to the Wesleys*. London: Epworth, 1956.
- . *From Luther to Wesley*. London: Lutterworth, 1951.
- Hills, Aaron Merritt. *Fundamental Christian Theology: A Systematic Theology*. 2 vols. Pasadena, CA: C.J. Kinne, 1931.
- . *Holiness and Power*. Cincinnati, OH: Martin Wells Knapp, 1897.
- Hill, Sir Richard. *A Review of All the Doctrines Taught by the Rev. Mr. John Wesley; Containing, a Full and Particular Answer to a Book Entitled, “A Second Check to Antinomianism.”* London: E & C Dilly, 1772.
- . *Logica Wesleiensis: Or, the Farrago Double Distilled. With an Heroic Poem in Praise of Mr. John Wesley*. London: E & C Dilly, 1773.
- Hocken, Peter. D. “Europe, Western (Survey).” In *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, edited by Stanley M Burgess and Ed M. Van Der Maas, 96–98. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.
- Howard, Ivan. “Wesley versus Phoebe Palmer: An Extended Controversy.” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 6, (1971): 31–40.
- Hynson, Leon O. “Original Sin as Privation: An Inquiry into a Theology of Sin and Sanctification.” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, (1987): 65–83.

- Irelan, Rebecca Jane. "A Little Experiment in Pragmatic Divinity: Charles Sanders Peirce and the Women of Early Methodism Socialize the Subject of John Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification." PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, 2008.
- Jackson, Thomas. *The Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley: Comprising a Review of His Poetry, Sketches of the Rise and Progress of Methodism, with Notices of Contemporary Events and Characters*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. London: John Mason, 1841.
- Johnson, Samuel. *Marmor Norfolciense, Or, An Essay on an Ancient Prophetic Inscription, in Monkish Rhyme, Lately Discovered near Lynn in Norfolk (1739)*. London: Printed for J. Williams, 1775.
- Johnson, W. Stanley. "Christian Perfection as Love for God." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 18, (1983): 50–60.
- Jones, Rufus M. *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries*. London: MacMillan, 1914.
- Kalme, Guntis. "'Words Written in Golden Letters'—a Lutheran Anthropological Reading of the Ecumenical Creeds: 'for Us' as the Constitutive Factor of What It Means to Be Human." PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2005.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics (1783)*. Translated by James Fieser. Charleston, SC: Forgotten Books, 1982.
- Keeling, Annie E. *Eminent Methodist Women*. London: C. W. Kelly, 1889.
- Keen, Dainel E. "Two Early Sermons by Martin Luther: An Examination of the Theological Implications of the Dating of Luther's Sermon on Three Kinds of Righteousness and His Sermon on Two Kinds of Righteousness." *Perichoresis* 2004 (2004): 97–107.
- Kennedy, D. James. *Evangelism Explosion: Equipping Churches for Friendship, Evangelism, Discipleship, and Healthy Growth*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1996.
- Kent, John. "The Wesleyan Methodists to 1849." In *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, edited by Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George, and E. Gordon Rupp, 2:213–75. London: Epworth, 1978.
- Kim, Hong Ki. "The Theology of Social Sanctification Examined in the Thought of John Wesley and in Minjung Theology: A Comparative Study." PhD diss., Drew University, 1991.
- Kim, Hyung Gyum. "A Theological Comparison of Yi Yulgok's Concept of Ch'eng and John Wesley's Concept of Love." PhD diss., Boston University, 2001.
- Kirk, John. *The Mother of the Wesleys: A Biography*. London: Henry James Tresidder, 1864.
- Kisker, Scott. "Progressively Justified: Justifying Grace and Justifying Faith Prior to Justification." Duke University Divinity School, 2007.

- Kittelson, James M. *Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and His Career*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003.
- Kleinig, John W. "Luther on Participation in God's Holiness." Unpublished Essay, n.d.
- . "Sharing in God's Holiness." *Lutheran Theological Review* 1–2 (1995–1996): 105–18.
- Knight, Henry H., III. *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace*. Pietist and Wesleyan studies 3. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1992.
- Kolb, Robert. "Christian Civic Responsibility in an Age of Judgment." *Concordia Journal* 19, (1993): 10–34.
- . "Deus Revelatus—Homo Revelatus: Luthers Theologia Crucis Für Das 21. Jahrhundert." In *Gottes Wort Vom Kreuz: Lutherische Theologie Als Kritische Theologie*, edited by Robert Kolb, Christian Neddens, and Werner Klän, 13–34. Oberurseler Hefte 40. Oberursel: VLB-Harms Druckerei, 2001.
- . "Die Zweidimensionalität Des Mensch-Seins: Die Zweierlei Gerechtigkeit in Luthers 'De Votes Monasticis Iudicium.'" In *Luther Und Das Monastische Erbe*, edited by Christoph Bultmann, Volker Leppin, and Andreas Lindner, 207–20. Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation 39. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007.
- . "God and His Human Creatures in Luther's Sermons on Genesis: The Reformer's Early Use of His Distinction of Two Kinds of Righteousness." *Concordia Journal* 33 (2007): 166–84.
- . "God Calling, 'Take Care of My People': Luther's Concept of Vocation in the Augsburg Confession and Its Apology." *Concordia Journal* 8, (1982): 4–11.
- . "Here We Stand: Confessing the Faith in Luther's Footsteps from Worms to Smalcald." *Concordia Journal* 62, (2006): 175–88.
- . "Human Performance and the Righteousness of Faith: Martin Chemnitz's Anti-Roman Polemic in Formula of Concord III." In *By Faith Alone: Essays on Justification in Honor of Gerhard O. Forde*, edited by Joseph A. Burgess and Marc Kolden, 125–39. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.
- . "Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness; Reflections on His Two-Dimensional Definition of Humanity at the Heart of His Theology." *Lutheran Quarterly* 13, (1999): 449–66.
- . *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- . "Niebuhr's 'Christ and Culture in Paradox' Revisited." *Lutheran Quarterly* 10, (1996): 259–79.

- . “‘Not without the Satisfaction of God’s Righteousness’: The Atonement and the Generation Gap between Luther and His Students.” In *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte: Sonderband: Die Reformation in Deutschland Und Europa, Interpretation Und Debatten*, edited by Hans R. Guggisberg and Gottfried G. Krodel, 136–56. Gütersloh: Gütersloh Verlagshaus, 1993.
- . *Speaking the Gospel Today: A Theology for Evangelism*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1995.
- . “The Chief Controversy between the Papalists and Us: Grace, Faith, and Human Righteousness in Sixteenth-Century Ecumenical Exchange.” In *A Justification Odyssey: Papers Presented at the Congress on the Lutheran Confessions, Bloomington, Illinois, April 19–21, 2001*, edited by John A Maxfield, 62–82. Luther Academy lecture series 8. St. Louis, MO and Minneapolis, MN: Luther Academy and Association of Confessional Lutherans, 2001.
- . *The Christian Faith: A Lutheran Exposition*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1993.
- . “The Influence of Luther’s Galatians Commentary of 1535 on Later Sixteenth-Century Lutheran Commentaries on Galatians.” *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte* 84 (1993): 156–84.
- Kolb, Robert, and Charles P. Arand. *The Genius of Luther’s Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Kolb, Robert, and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. *The Book of Concord*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000.
- Kong, Byung Young. “A Model for Spiritual Formation: Toward the Wesley’s Ideal of ‘Christian Perfection.’ ” DMin thesis, Claremont School of Theology, 2003.
- Kreutziger, Sarah Sloan. “Going on to Perfection: The Contributions of the Wesleyan Theological Doctrine of Entire Sanctification to the Value Base of American Professional Social Work Through the Lives and Activities of Nineteenth-Century Evangelical Women Reformers.” DSW thesis, Tulane University, 1991.
- Lancaster, Sarah H. “Current Debates Over Wesley’s Legacy Among His Progeny.” In *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, edited by Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers, 298–315. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Langford, Thomas A. *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1983.
- Law, William. *A Practical Treatise Upon Christian Perfection*. Vol. 3. 9 vols. The Works of the Reverend William Law. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2006.
- . *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life Adapted to the State and Condition of All Orders of Christians*. Vol. 4. 9 vols. The Works of the Reverend William Law. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2006.

- Lecky, William Edward Hartpole. *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*. 8 vols. London: D. Appleton, 1879.
- Lee, Sir Sidney, ed. *Dictionary of National Biography*. Vol. LXI: Whichcord-Williams. New York: Macmillan, 1900.
- Lee, Sung-Duk. "Der Deutsche Pietismus Und John Wesley." PhD diss., University of Münster, 2003.
- Lee, Umphrey. *John Wesley and Modern Religion*. Nashville, TN: Cokesbury, 1936.
- Leith, John H. *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine, from the Bible to the Present*. 3d ed. Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1982.
- Lindberg, Carter. "Do Lutherans Shout Justification but Whisper Sanctification?" *Lutheran Quarterly* 13, (1999): 1–20.
- Lindner, Eileen W, ed. *Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches, 2010*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2010.
- Lindström, Harald Gustaf Åke. *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri A.B., 1946.
- Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Edited by Roger Woolhouse. London: Penguin Classics, 1998.
- Lohse, Bernhard. *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1986.
- . *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999.
- Loyer, Kenneth M. "Spirit of Love: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life in Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley." PhD diss., Southern Methodist University, 2010.
- Lu, Cindy Su-Chin. "The Exegetical and Theological Foundation of the Concept of Perfection in Heb. 10:19–25 from a Chinese Perspective." ThM thesis, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1997.
- Lull, Timothy. "Luther's Writings." In *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, edited by Donald K. McKim, 340. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Lumpp, David. "Luther's 'Two Kinds of Righteousness': A Brief Historical Introduction." *Concordia Journal* 23, (1997): 27–38.

Luther, Martin. *A Commentarie of M. Doctor Martin Luther upon the Epistle of S. Paul to the Galathians: First Collected and Gathered Word by Word out of His Preaching, & Now out of Latine Faithfully Translated into English for the Unlearned: Wherein Is Set Forth Most Excellently the Glorious Riches of Gods Grace and Power of the Gospell, with the Difference Betwene the Law and the Gospell, and Strength of Faith Declared: To the Ioyfull Comfort and Confirmation of All True Christian Beleeuers, Especially such as Inwardly Being Afflicted and Greeued in Conscience, Doe Hungre and Thirst for Iustification in Christ Iesu: For Whose Cause Most Chiefely This Booke Is Translated and Printed, and Dedicated to the Same.* Edited by John Foxe and Henry Bull. London: Thomas Vautroullier, 1575.

———. *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimarer Ausgabe).* Weimar, Germany: Hermann Böhlau/H. Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 2009.

———. *Dr. Martin Luthers Sämmtliche Schriften.* Edited by Johann Georg Walch. Vol. 4. St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1898.

———. *Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters.* Edited by Preserved Smith and Charles M. Jacobs. Translated by Preserved Smith and Charles M. Jacobs. Vol. 2. Philadelphia, PA: Lutheran Publication Society, 1918.

———. *Luther's Small Catechism, with Explanation.* Revised edition. St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2005.

———. *Luther's Works.* 55 vols. American Edition, 55 vols. St. Louis, MO and Philadelphia, PA: Concordia and Fortress, 1958.

———. "The Antinomian Disputation." Translated by Jeffrey Silcock, n.d.

———. *The Life and Letters of Martin Luther.* Edited by Preserved Smith. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1911.

———, ed. *Theologia Germanica 1518.* Translated by Bengt Hoffman. New York: Paulist, 1980.

———. *The Sermons of Martin Luther.* Edited by John N. Lenker. Translated by John N. Lenker. 8 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992.

———. *What Luther Says: An Anthology.* St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1959.

Macarius (pseudo-) of Egypt. "Primitive Morality; Or, The Spiritual Homilies of St. Macarius the Egyptian." In *A Christian Library: Extracts from and Abridgments of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity Which Have Been Published in the English Tongue*, edited by John Wesley, translated by Thomas Haywood, 1:81–155. 1st ed. Bristol: William Pine, 1750.

- Maddox, Randy L. "A Change of Affections: The Development, Dynamics, and Dethronement of John Wesley's 'Heart Religion.'" In *"Heart Religion" in the Methodist Tradition and Related Movements*, edited by Richard B. Steele, 3–31. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2001.
- . "John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy: Influences, Convergences, and Differences." *Asbury Theological Journal* 45, (1990): 29–53.
- . "John Wesley on Holistic Health and Healing." *Methodist History* 46, (2007): 4–33.
- . "Prelude to a Dialogue: A Response to Kenneth Collins." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35, (2000): 87–98.
- . "Psychology and Wesleyan Theology: Precedents and Prospects for a Renewed Engagement." *Journal of Psychiatry and Christianity* 23, (2004): 101–9.
- . *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994.
- . *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism*. Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1998.
- . "Wesley's Understanding of Christian Perfection: In What Sense Pentecostal?" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 34, (1999): 78–110.
- Maddox, Randy L., and Jason E. Vickers, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*. 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Magallanes, Hugo. "The Preferential Option for the Poor: A Wesleyan Liberation Ethic." PhD diss., Drew, 2002.
- . "'Who Do You Say That I Am?' Jesús or Jesse: A Reflection on Christology and Christian Identity." In *Jesus in the Hispanic Community: Images of Christ from Theology to Popular Religion*, edited by Harold Recinos and Hugo Magallanes, 105–17. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2010.
- Maier, Paul L., tran. *Eusebius: The Church History*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 1999.
- Mann, Mark H. "Perfecting Grace: Holiness, Human Being, and the Sciences." PhD diss., Boston University, 2004.
- Masaki, Makito. "Luther's Two Kinds of Righteousness and His Wartburg Postil (1522): How Luther Exhorted People to Live Christian Lives." PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2008.
- McEwan, David Bernard. "An Examination of How John Wesley's Theological Methodology Functions in Pastoral Practice, Illustrated by His Doctrine of Christian Perfection." PhD diss., University of Queensland, 2006.

- McGinn, Bernard. *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*. The Presence of God 4. New York: Crossroad, 2005.
- McNeill, John T. "Luther at Aldersgate." *London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 164 (1939): 200–217.
- Mead, Frank Spencer, Samuel S. Hill, and Craig D. Atwood. *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*. 12th ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2005.
- Meistad, Tore. *Martin Luther and John Wesley on the Sermon on the Mount*. Pietist and Wesleyan studies 10. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1999.
- Merritt, John G. "Dialogue Within a Tradition: John Wesley and Gregory of Nyssa Discuss Christian Perfection." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22, (1987): 92–116.
- Miller, Richard A. "Scriptural Authority and Christian Perfection: John Wesley and the Anglican Tradition." PhD diss., Drew University, 1991.
- M'Mworia, Miriti Silas. "An Examination of the Wesleyan Doctrine of Christian Perfection with Particular Reference to Its Socio-Cultural Implications and Its Significance in Shaping the Polity and Practice of Methodist Church in Kenya." PhD diss., Drew University, 2005.
- Monk, Robert C. *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1999.
- Moore, Henry. *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford in Which Are Included, the Life of His Brother, the Rev[erend] Charles Wesley, A.M., Student of Christ Church, and Memoirs of Their Family: Comprehending an Account of the Great Revival of Religion, in Which They Were the First and Chief Instruments*. 2 vols. New York: N. Bangs and J. Emory, 1824.
- Morris, Lelila Naylor. "Called Unto Holiness," 1900.
- Moyer, Bruce Eugene. "The Doctrine of Christian Perfection: A Comparative Study of John Wesley and the Modern American Holiness Movement." PhD diss., Marquette University, 1992.
- Newton, John A. *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism*. London: Epworth, 1968.
- Nichols, John, and Samuel Bentley, eds. *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*. Vol. 5. 6 vols. London: Nichols, Son, & Bentley, 1812.
- Niebuhr, Reinhold. *The Nature and Destiny of Man. 1, Human Nature*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941.
- Oden, Thomas C. *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.

- O’Gorman, Frank. *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History, 1688–1832*. The Arnold history of Britain. London: Arnold, 1997.
- Oh, Sang-Gil. “A Study About an Alternative Ministry Visiting of the Korean Church in the Light of Wesleyan Spirituality of Sanctification.” DMin thesis, Claremont School of Theology, 2003.
- Olivier, Daniel. *Luther’s Faith: The Cause of the Gospel in the Church*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1982.
- Olsen, Gerald Wayne, ed. *Religion and Revolution in Early-Industrial England: The Halevy Thesis and Its Critics*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990.
- Oord, Thomas Jay, ed. *Creation Made Free: Open Theology Engaging Science*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009.
- . *Divine Grace and Emerging Creation: Wesleyan Forays in Science and Theology of Creation*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009.
- Oord, Thomas Jay, and Michael E. Lodahl. *Relational Holiness: Responding to the Call of Love*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2005.
- Oswalt, John N. “John Wesley and the Old Testament Concept of the Holy Spirit.” *Religion in Life* 48, (1979): 283–92.
- Outler, Albert Cook. “John Wesley’s Interest in the Early Fathers of the Church.” In *The Bulletin: Number 29, 1980–1982*, edited by Albert Cook Outler and Thomas A. Langford, 5–17. Toronto: Committee on Archives and History of the Church of Canada, 1983.
- . “John Wesley’s Interest in the Early Fathers of the Church.” In *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, edited by Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden, 97–110. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991.
- . *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*. Nashville, TN: Tidings, 1975.
- . “The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition (1976).” In *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, edited by Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden, 75–95. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991.
- . “Towards a Re-Appraisal of John Wesley as a Theologian (1961).” In *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler*, edited by Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden, 39–54. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991.
- Paul, Michael. “Martin Luther’s Two-Dimensional Anthropology in Light of the Theology of Stephen Tong.” PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2010.
- Peck, Jesse Truesdell. *The Central Idea of Christianity*. Boston, MA: H.V. Degen, 1858.

- Persius. *Satire*. Translated by John Dryden, n.d.
- Peters, John Leland. *Christian Perfection and American Methodism*. New York: Abingdon, 1956.
- Pieper, Francis. *Christian Dogmatics*. 3 vols. St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1950.
- Piette, Maximin. *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*. Translated by Joseph Bernard Howard. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1938.
- Plant, Stephen, and Marcus Plested. "Macarius, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and the Wesleys." *Epworth Review* 33, (2006): 22–30.
- Pope, Alexander. "Imitations of Horace." In *The Poems of Alexander Pope: A Reduced Version of the Twickenham Text*, edited by John Butt, 613–87. Chelsea, MI: BookCrafters, for Yale University Press, 1966.
- . "Of the Nature and State of Man with Respect to Society." In *An Essay on Man*, 57–85. London: A. Millar and J & R Tonson, 1763.
- Porter, Roy. "The Enlightenment in England." In *The Enlightenment in National Context*, edited by Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich, 1–18. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Prest, Wilfrid R. *Albion Ascendant: English History, 1660–1815*. The short Oxford history of the modern world. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Preus III, J. A. O. *Just Words: Understanding the Fullness of the Gospel*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2000.
- . "Standing or Falling? 'December Letters.'" *First Things: a monthly journal of religion and public life*, (1995).
- Pudney, John. *John Wesley and His World*. Norwich, Eng.: Jarrod & Sons for Thames & Hudson, 1978.
- Purkiser, W. T., Paul Bassett, William M Greathouse, and Richard S. Taylor. *Exploring Christian Holiness*. 3 vols. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1983.
- Quanstrom, Mark R. *A Century of Holiness Theology: The Doctrine of Entire Sanctification in the Church of the Nazarene*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 2004.
- Rack, Henry D. *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*. Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1989.
- Rhoads, John. "The Crux of Communio: Toward a Common Ecclesiology Beyond the Crisis of Reception." PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, forthcoming.

- Ritschl, Otto. "Der Doppelte Rechfertigungsbegriff in Der Apologie Der Augsbургischen Konfession." In *Zeitschrift Für Theologie Und Kirche*, edited by D. M. Rade and D. W. Herrmann, 292–338. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1910.
- Runyon, Theodore. "The New Creation: A Wesleyan Distinctive." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31, (1996): 5–19.
- Rupp, E. Gordon. *The Righteousness of God: Luther Studies*. The Birkbeck lectures in ecclesiastical history, 1947. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1953.
- Rupp, Israel Daniel, ed. *History of All the Religious Denominations in the United States: Containing Authentic Accounts of the Rise and Progress, Faith and Practice, Localities and Statistics, of the Different Persuasions*. Harrisburg, PA: J. Winebrenner, 1849.
- Saarnivaara, Uuras. *Luther Discovers the Gospel: New Light Upon Luther's Way from Medieval Catholicism to Evangelical Faith*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1951.
- Saleska, Timothy. "The Two Kinds of Righteousness!: What's a Preacher to Do?" *Concordia Journal* 33, (2007): 136–45.
- Sánchez, Leopoldo A. "The Struggle to Express Our Hope." *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 19, (2010): 25–31.
- Sangster, William Edwin Robert. *The Path to Perfection: An Examination and Restatement of John Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Perfection*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1943.
- Schulz, Klaus Detlev. "Two Kinds of Righteousness and Moral Philosophy: Confessio Augustana XVIII, Philip Melancthon, and Martin Luther." *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 73, (2009): 17–40.
- Schumacher, William W. "Civic Participation by Churches and Pastors: An Essay on Two Kinds of Righteousness." *Concordia Journal* 30, (2004): 165–77.
- Scott, Percy. *John Wesleys Lehre Von Der Heiligung: Verglichen Mit Einem Lutherisch-Pietistischen Beispiel*. Studien zur Geschichte des neueren Protestantismus 17. Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1939.
- Secker, Philip J., ed. *The Sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions: Selected Writings of Arthur Carl Piepkorn*. Vol. 2. Mansfield, CT: CEC, 2007.
- Smith, J. Warren. "John Wesley's Growth in Grace and Gregory of Nyssa's Epectasy: A Conversation in Dynamic Perfection." *Bulletin John Rylands Library* 85, (2003): 347–57.
- Smith, Timothy L. *Called Unto Holiness: The Story of the Nazarenes*. Kansas City, MO: Nazarene, 1962.

- Smucker, Samuel Mosheim. *A History of All Religions: Containing a Statement of the Origin Development, Doctrines, and Government of the Religious Denominations in the United States and Europe*. Philadelphia, PA: D. Rulison/Quaker City, 1859.
- Snyder, Howard. "John Wesley and Macarius the Egyptian." *Asbury Theological Journal* 45, (1990): 55–60.
- Solt, Leo Frank. *Church and State in Early Modern England, 1509–1640*. New York: Oxford University Press US, 1990.
- de Souza, José Carlos. "Laicidade E Ecumenicidade de Igreja: O Pensamento Ecclesiológico de John Wesley." Doctor of Religious Studies diss., Methodist University of São Paulo, 2008.
- . *Leiga, Ministerial E Ecumênica: A Igreja No Pensamento de John Wesley*. São Bernardo do Campo: Editeo, 2009.
- Spalding, James Cowell. "Recent Restatements of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin; with Special Reference to Continental Theology." PhD diss., Columbia University, 1950.
- Speaks, Reuben L. "Christian Perfection and Human Liberation: The Wesleyan Synthesis." In *People Called Methodist*, edited by Gordon Rupp, 13–30. Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1984.
- Stanger, Frank Bateman. "The Wesleyan Doctrine of Scriptural Holiness." *Asbury Seminarian* 39, (1984): 8–29.
- Steele, Sir Richard, and Joseph Addison. *The Tatler; Or, Lucubrations of Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq.* Vol. 1. 4 vols. London: Harrison, 1785.
- Stephen, Sir Leslie, ed. *Dictionary of National Biography*. Vol. II: Annesley–Baird. London: Smith Elder, 1885.
- . *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*. 3d ed. Vol. 2. 2 vols. New York: P. Smith, 1949.
- Stevens, Abel. *The History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century, Called Methodism: Considered in Its Different Denominational Forms, and Its Relations to British and American Protestantism*. 2 vols. New York: Carlton & Porter, 1858.
- Stone, Bryan P, and Thomas Jay Oord. *Thy Nature and Thy Name Is Love: Wesleyan and Process Theologies in Dialogue*. Nashville, TN: Kingswood, 2001.
- Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels*. Edited by Albert J. Rivero. New York: W. W. Norton, 2002.
- Sykes, Norman. *Church and State in England in the XVIIIth Century*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1934.
- Synan, Vinson. "The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement." *Paraclete* 23, (1989): 1–8.

- Tappert, Theodore G., ed. *The Book of Concord*. Translated by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1959.
- Taylor, Jeremy. *Select Sermons*. Edited by R. Cattermole. London: Joseph Rickerby, 1836.
- . *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living: In Which Are Described the Means and Instruments of Obtaining Every Virtue, and the Remedies against Every Vice, and Considerations Serving to the Resisting All Temptations: Together with Prayers, Containing the Whole Duty of a Christian and the Parts of Devotion Fitted to All Occasions, and Furnished for All Necessities*. Edited by George Croly. Philadelphia, PA: Willis P. Hazard, 1857.
- Taylor, John. *The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination: In Three Parts; The Third Edition, with Large Additions; To Which Is Added, A Supplement, &c. Containing Some Remarks upon Two Books, Viz. "The Vindication of the Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin" [by David Jennings], And, "The Ruin and Recovery of Mankind" [by Isaac Watts]*. 3 vols. London: J. Waugh, 1750.
- Taylor, Richard. "Why the Holiness Movement Died." *God's Revivalist* (March 1999): 3–19.
- Taylor, Richard Shelley. *A Right Conception of Sin: Its Importance to Right Thinking and Right Living*. Kansas City, MO: Nazarene, 1939.
- Telford, John. *The Life of John Wesley*. New York: Eaton & Maine, 1898.
- Thomas à Kempis. *The Imitation of Christ*. Translated by Richard Whitford. New York: Pocket Books, 1953.
- Toland, John. *Christianity Not Mysterious: Or, A Treatise Shewing, That There Is Nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason, nor above It*. London: s.n., 1702.
- Tomkins, Stephen. *John Wesley: A Biography*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Truesdale, Albert L. "Christian Holiness and the Problem of Systematic Evil." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 19, (1984): 39–59.
- . "Reification of the Experience of Entire Sanctification in the American Holiness Movement." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31, (1996): 95–119.
- Turner, George Allen. *The More Excellent Way: The Scriptural Basis of the Wesleyan Message*. Winona Lake, IN: Light and Life, 1952.
- . *The Vision Which Transforms: Is Christian Perfection Scriptural?* Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1964.
- Tyerman, Luke. *The Life and Times of the Rev. Samuel Wesley: M.A., Rector of Epworth and Father of the Revs. John and Charles Wesley, the Founders of the Methodists*. London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1866.

- Violette, Eugene Morrow, and Henry Morse Stephens, eds. *Select Documents of English Constitutional History*. New York: MacMillan, 1901.
- Walls, Jerry L. "John Wesley's Critique of Martin Luther." *Methodist History* 30, (1981): 29–41.
- Walsh, John. *John Wesley, 1703–1791: A Bicentennial Tribute*. London: Dr. Williams's Trust, 1993.
- Watson, Philip S. *Die Autorität Der Bibel Bei Luther Und Wesley*. Vol. 14. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Evangelisch-methodistischen Kirche. Stuttgart: Christliches Verlagshaus, 1983.
- . *Let God Be God! An Interpretation of the Theology of Martin Luther*. London: Epworth, 1947.
- . "Wesley and Luther on Christian Perfection." *Ecumenical Review* 15, (1963): 291–302.
- Watts, Isaac. *The Ruin and Recovery of Mankind: Or, An Attempt to Vindicate the Scriptural Account of These Great Events upon the Plain Principles of Reason*. London: Printed for J. Brackstone, 1742.
- Wedgwood, Julia. *John Wesley and the Evangelical Reaction of the Eighteenth Century*. London: MacMillan, 1870.
- Wengert, Timothy J., ed. *Harvesting Martin Luther's Reflections on Theology, Ethics, and the Church*. Lutheran quarterly books. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Wengert, Timothy J. *Human Freedom, Christian Righteousness: Philip Melancthon's Exegetical Dispute with Erasmus of Rotterdam*. Oxford studies in historical theology. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Wesley, John, ed. *A Christian Library, Consisting of Extracts from and Abridgments of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity Which Have Been Publish'd in the English Tongue*. 30 vols. London: T. Cordeux, 1819.
- . *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1966.
- . *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*. London: Epworth, 1948.
- . *John Wesley: A Representative Collection of His Writings*. Edited by Albert Cook Outler. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- . *Letters of John Wesley*. Edited by George Eayrs. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1915.
- . "Letter to Augustus Montague Toplady," December 9, 1758. Accessed April 28, 2011. <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-letters-of-john-wesley/wesleys-letters-1758/>.

- . *Primitive Physick Or an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases*. London: W. Straham, 1761.
- . *Sermons on Several Occasions. In Three Volumes. By John Wesley, M.A., Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford*. 3 vols. London: W. Straham, 1746.
- . “The Arminian Magazine: Consisting Chiefly of Extracts and Original Treatises on Universal Redemption” 1 (1778).
- . “The Arminian Magazine: Consisting Chiefly of Extracts and Original Treatises on Universal Redemption” 7 (1784).
- . *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1976.
- . *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M.* Edited by Nehemiah Curnock. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2006.
- . *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*. Edited by John Telford. London: Epworth, 1931.
- . *The Works of John Wesley*. Edited by Thomas Jackson. 3d ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984.
- . *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A. M.* 7 vols. New York: B. Waugh & T. Mason, 1835.
- . *Wesley’s Standard Sermons*. Edited by Edward Holdsworth Sugden. 2 vols. London: Epworth, 1921.
- Wesley, Susanna. *Susanna Wesley: The Complete Writings*. Edited by Charles Jr. Wallace. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Whichcote, Benjamin. “Aphorisms.” In *The Cambridge Platonists: Being Selections from the Writings of Benjamin Whichcote, John Smith and Nathanael Culverwel*, edited by Ernest Trafford Campagnac, 65–75. Oxford: Clarendon, 1901.
- Whitebrook, J. C. “Wesley and William Cudworth.” *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 12, (1919): 34–36.
- White, James W. “The Doctrine of Christian Perfection Its Historic and Contemporary Relevance for Methodism.” DMin thesis, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1997.

- White, John. "The First Century of Scandalous, Malignant Priests Made and Admitted into Benefices by the Prelates, in Whose Hands the Ordination of Ministers and Government of the Church Hath Been, or a Narration of the Causes for Which the Parliament Hath Ordered the Sequestration of the Benefices of Severall Ministers Complained of before Them, for Vitiousness of Life, Errors in Doctrine, Contrary to the Articles of Our Religion, and for Practising and Pressing Superstitious Innovations against Law, and for Malignancy against the Parliament." Last modified 1643. Accessed November 3, 2010. <http://yufind.library.yale.edu/yufind/Record/6879878>.
- Wilberforce, William. *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce*. 2 vols. London: J. Murray, 1840.
- Wilder, Franklin. *Father of the Wesleys: A Biography*. New York: Exposition, 1971.
- Wilder-Smith, Arthur Ernest. *He Who Thinks Has to Believe*. Minneapolis: Bethany, 1981.
- Wiley, H. Orton. *Christian Theology*. 3 vols. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1940.
- Williams, James H. "'Why Should I Strive to Set the Crooked Straight?': Wesley, His Luminaries, Modern Critics, and the 'Sinless Contradiction' in 1 John 1: 8, 10 and 3: 6, 9." PhD diss., University of Sheffield, 2002.
- Wood, Laurence W. "Pentecostal Sanctification in John Wesley and Early Methodism." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 34, (1999): 24–63.
- . "The Attainment of Christian Perfection as a Wesleyan/Holiness Re-Interpretation of the Anglican Rite of Confirmation." *Asbury Theological Journal* 50 (1996): 173–96.
- . "Thoughts Upon the Wesleyan Doctrine of Entire Sanctification with Special Reference to Some Similarities with the Roman Catholic Doctrine of Confirmation." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 15, (1980): 88–99.
- Wood, Timothy L. "'That They May Be Free Indeed': Liberty in the Early Methodist Thought in John Wesley and Francis Asbury." *Methodist History* 38, (2000): 231–41.
- Wynkoop, Mildred Bangs. *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1972.
- Yarnold, Edward. "Duplex Iustitia: The Sixteenth Century and the Twentieth." In *Christian Authority: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, edited by Gillian R Evans, 204–23. Oxford: Clarendon, 1988.
- Yu, Chin Cheak. "Uncovering Seeds for Awakening and Living in the Spirit: A Cross Cultural Study of John Sung and John Wesley." PhD diss., Claremont School of Theology, 2001.

Zweck, Glen E. "Luther's Sermon on the Three Kinds of Righteousness: Commentary with a New English Translation." In *Let Christ Be Christ: Theology, Ethics & World Religions in the Two Kingdoms: Essays in Honor of the Sixty-Fifth Birthday of Charles L. Manske*, edited by Daniel N Harmelink, 349–58. Huntington Beach, CA: Tentatio, 1999.

A Conversation between Richard Hill, Esq the Rev. Mr. Madan, and Father Walsh, Superior of a Convent of English Benedictine Monks at Paris, Held at the Said Convent, July 13, 1771; In the Presence of Thomas Powis, Esq; and Others, Relative to Some Doctrinal Minutes, Advanced by the Rev. Mr. John Wesley and Others, at a Conference Held in London, August 7, 1770. To Which Are Added, Some Remarks, by the Editor, And the Minutes Themselves Prefixed. As Also Mr. Wesley's Own Declaration Concerning His Minutes Versified, by Another Hand. London: E. and C. Dilly, 1771.

"Advertisement for 'The Unforgettable Winston Churchill.' " *LIFE Magazine*, February 12, 1965.

"Hernschmidt, Johann Daniel." *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*. Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1880.

Holy Bible: English Standard Version. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2001.

Holy Bible: King James Version. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub, 2006.

Holy Bible: New American Standard. La Habra, CA: Foundation Publications, for the Lockman Foundation, 1971.

Holy Bible: New English Translation (NET). Biblical Studies, L.L.C., 2006.

Holy Bible: New International Version. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013.

"Holy Bible: World English Bible." <http://worldenglishbible.org/>.

Pietas Oxoniensis, Or, A Full and Impartial Account of the Expulsion of Six Students from St. Edmund Hall, Oxford: With a Dedication to the Right Honourable, the Earl of Litchfield, Chancellor of That University. London: J. and W. Oliver, 1768.

VITA

John Karl (Hans) Trinklein

D.O.B. May 3, 1959

Racine, Wisconsin, USA

Collegiate Institutions Attended

Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York, Bachelor of Business Administration, 1981

Graduate Institutions Attended

Simon Greenleaf School of Law, Anaheim, California, Master of Arts in Apologetics, 1990

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, Master of Divinity, 1995