

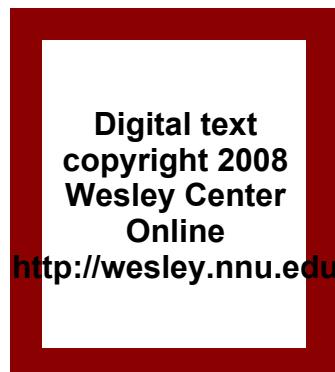
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# ***Wesleyan Theological Journal***

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Editor  
Paul Merritt Bassett



# **PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: THE WESLEYAN OPTION FOR THE POOR**

by  
Donald W. Dayton

“‘To the poor the gospel is preached’—Which is the greatest mercy,  
and the greatest miracle of all.”

John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*,  
commenting on the last phrase of Luke 7:22

Tonight, I would like to explore the theology of the Wesleyan tradition—in both its eighteenth and nineteenth century manifestations—in light of several questions posed by contemporary theological reflection.

I have become increasingly convinced that one of the most important themes of contemporary theology is the growing claim that God’s mercy contains an element of “divine partiality,” and that this element of “divine partiality” is an integral dimension of the Biblical witness which must find expression in the life of the church. To speak specifically, this claim is that God’s impartiality and universal grace are qualified by a “preferential option for the poor.”

It is “liberation theology” that has most forcibly brought this theme to our attention in the last couple of decades. And it was the 1979 Latin American Bishops’ Conference (CELAM) in Puebla (Mexico) that issued its most controversial document under the title “A Preferential Option for the Poor.” But such concerns have also been advocated in more “evangelical” circles by, for example, Ronald J. Sider of the Brethren in Christ in *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: A Biblical Study* under the rubric of the “Biblical bias of God toward the poor.” Such themes also play an important part in one of the most influential recent interpretations of Biblical ethics: *The Politics of Jesus* by Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder.

The Biblical basis of this claim is perhaps seen most clearly in the Gospel of Luke. In recent years Luke 4:18-19 has come to play the clichéd role that John 3:16 plays in some circles as a summary of the gospel. But the Nazareth Sermon of Jesus with its quotation from Isaiah is clearly intended to signal the organizing motif of the book of Luke:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

These themes are anticipated in the Magnificat of Mary (chapter one) and are explicitly reaffirmed in the answer of Jesus to the disciples of John the Baptist sent to ask whether He is the Messiah (chapter seven). They find expression in Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount or the Plain (chapter six), where the woes against the rich prevent us from a too easy spiritualization of the key text. Once this theme is brought into focus it is seen to be not only organizing for the gospel of Luke but pervasive throughout the gospels, present especially in the Epistle of James, the prophets, and the Psalms; and it is also to be discerned in the writings of Paul and elsewhere. This understanding of the texts has revolutionized our reading of the scriptures in the twentieth century and pushed the church toward new expressions of political and social engagement.

Tonight, however, I would like to bracket the complex questions about the political implications of this reading of the Scripture and concentrate more fundamentally on the *theological* grounding of this claim of divine partiality. Many have noticed this "Biblical preferential option for the poor" and have attempted to find a praxis reflective of it, but fewer have articulated the theological grounding of this theme. One of the clearest of such *theological* articulations is to be found in various writings of Karl Barth beginning with the second decade of this century. Barth's Christology is deeply rooted in the "kenotic" text of the second chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians-and one of its most remarkable features is the careful integration of synoptic themes of the teachings of Jesus into the Pauline Christological motifs-thus bridging a gap that has bedeviled Protestant theology since the conflicts between the magisterial and radical wings of the Reformation. In Barth the gratuity of grace is grounded in the downward motion of the incarnation in a form of "condescension" that lies at the heart of the gospel. It is in the incarnation and especially in the movement of Jesus toward the poor that we see clearly the character and mercy of God:

. . . almost to the point of prejudice-He [Jesus] ignored all those who are high and mighty and wealthy in the world in favor of the weak and meek and lowly. He did this even in the moral sphere, ignoring the just for sinners, and in the spiritual sphere, finally ignoring Israel for the Gentiles. It was to the latter group and not the former that He found Himself called. It was among the latter and not the

former that He expected to find the eyes and ears that God had opened, and therefore the men of good-pleasure of Luke 2:14. It was in the latter and not the former that He saw His brethren. It was with the latter and not the former that His disciples were to range themselves according to His urgent counsel and command. Throughout the New Testament the kingdom of God, the Gospel and the man Jesus have a remarkable affinity, which is no mere egalitarianism, to all those who are in the shadows as far as concerns what men estimate to be fortune and possessions and success and even fellowship with God.<sup>2</sup>

Barth treats sanctification under the rubric “the direction of the Son,” arguing that we must allow our individual lives and the shape of our church life to be determined by this incarnational movement of Jesus. Thus

The church is witness of the fact that the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost. And this implies that-casting all false impartiality aside-the Church must concentrate first on the lower and lowest levels of human society. The poor, the socially and economically weak and threatened, will always be the object of its primary and particular concern. . . 3

And Barth is willing to draw the negative implication of this position. “We do not really know Jesus (the Jesus of the New Testament) if we do not know Him as this poor man, as this (if we may risk the dangerous word) partisan of the poor. . . .”<sup>4</sup>

This last strong comment of Barth calls to mind another major theological controversy of recent years within those traditions rooted in the magisterial wing of the continental Reformation. It reminds us of those debates in the confessional traditions about whether ethical issues can ever have a *status confessionis*-that is, whether failure to take a particular position on a given social issue can ever constitute apostasy. Such conflicts have in recent years focused on the South African situation and the question of whether one might argue that support of the system of “apartheid” constitutes in and of itself “apostasy.” The World Alliance of Reformed Churches has been especially bitterly polarized over proposals to expel the South African Dutch Reformed Church for its failure to renounce the system of “apartheid.”

For at least two reasons such debates about this *status confessionis* seem strange to Wesleyan ears. In the first place, the Wesleyan tradition has not been confessional in the same sense. In contrast to the continental Reformation with its emphasis on the theological virtue of “faith” (resulting in both Lutheran and Reformed traditions of “confessions of faith”), the Wesleyan tradition has seen faith as instrumental to love and sanctification. As a result the Wesleyan tradition has been more likely to leave a trail of acts of love than confessions of faith. Similarly, and in the second place, The Wesleyan tradition is more accustomed to patterns of “boundary maintenance” based on behavioral and ethical criteria. This could be illustrated at a number of points from the general rules to the debates

about slavery. Early American Methodism attempted to make liberation of slaves a condition of membership-and it was compromise on this issue that led to the founding of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and played a role in the emergence of the Free Methodist Church. At Oberlin College slaveholders were barred from the Lord's Supper, and the Wesleyans debated, somewhat like the second degree of separation of the Fundamentalists, not whether slaveholders could be admitted to communion (that was not at issue), but whether to admit those who remained in fellowship with slaveholders in churches that were not yet prepared to raise this issue to the level of *status confessionis*.

But reference to these debates is a useful way to focus the question of whether there are such issues that are so central to the Biblical expression of the gospel that without them we do not have the Biblical gospel. Thus Barth in the quotation above insists that we do not know the real Jesus-the Jesus of the New Testament-if we do not know Him as this partisan of the poor.

It is with reference to these questions that I wish to look at the "Wesleyan preferential option for the poor," asking not only whether there was such a move in the Wesleyan tradition, but how it was grounded theologically and whether it was made constitutive of the gospel. To anticipate my conclusions, I will argue that Wesley clearly moved toward the poor and made such a move a central feature of his Christian praxis, that he did not for the most part ground this move theologically, but that his followers in the nineteenth-century holiness movement more clearly articulated a theological grounding for the Wesleyan option for the poor and made it constitutive of the Gospel.

Anyone who has read at all in the *Journals* of Wesley will know that Wesley was systematic in cultivation of the poor. He made it a regular practice from his Oxford student days to visit the sick, the poor, and those in prison-and he regularly insisted that his followers do likewise. He urged "a member of the society" in 1776 "frequently, nay, constantly to visit the poor, the widow, the sick, the fatherless, in their affliction."<sup>5</sup> Wesley's commitment to this practice is made clear in Sermon 98, on "On Visiting the Sick," based on the classic text of Matthew 25. In this sermon Wesley argues that the visiting of the poor is an absolute duty of the Christian without which one's "everlasting salvation" is endangered. Wesley built into the life of Methodism collections for the poor and on occasion went publicly begging for the poor.

Wesley's struggle with and final acceptance of field preaching must also be related to this theme. It is no accident that his first major experience with this practice was a sermon based on Luke 4:18-19. After a brief experience preaching in Nicolas Street on April 1, 1739, he initiated the practice on the next day (a Monday):

At four in the afternoon, I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people. The scripture on which I spoke was this, (is it possible any-

one should be ignorant, that it is fulfilled in every true minister of Christ?) “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind: to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”<sup>6</sup>

It is also possible to argue that Wesley’s message was peculiarly adapted to the poor. Robert D. Hughes, III, grounds this in Wesley’s theology-in his “Arminian evangelicalism” with its “twin pillars of universalism and insistence on the role of man’s free will in salvation.”<sup>7</sup> These principles meant that all could come and find acceptance in the Gospel and in the societies of Methodism. In his book *The Methodist Revolution* Bernard Semmel makes the same point through the doctrines of Christian Perfection and Assurance-”an experience more accessible to the humble and unsophisticated than to their better situated or better educated fellows.”<sup>8</sup>

However we make the case, it is clear that Wesley’s theology and preaching tended toward a profound “gospel egalitarianism” that the poor found attractive. As the Duchess of Buckingham wrote to the countess of Huntingdon:

I thank your ladyship for the information concerning the Methodist preachers. Their doctrines are most repulsive, and strongly tinged with impertinence and disrespect towards their superiors, in perpetually endeavoring to level all ranks, and do away with all distinctions. It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting, and I cannot but wonder that your ladyship should relish any sentiment so much at variance with high rank and good breeding.<sup>9</sup>

No doubt the poor were also attracted to Wesley because he did not blame them for their poverty. “So wickedly, aevilishly false is that common objection, ‘They are poor, only because they are idle.’”<sup>10</sup> Wesley’s favoritism for the poor was also revealed negatively by his hostility toward the rich-as evidenced in many of his sermons that we tend to neglect because they fall outside the “standard sermons” that we usually consult: “The Danger of Riches” (#87); “On Riches” (#108); “The Rich Man and Lazarus” (#112); “On the Danger of Increasing Riches” (#126). If anything Wesley became more cranky on this issue as he grew older and more worried about the departure of Methodism from his principles. In this sense Wesley did not shirk from the “woes” that parallel the “beatitudes.”

We could explore other aspects of Wesley’s commitment to the poor: the role of his extensive publishing program in the education of the poor; his concern for health; Methodist structures for the relief of the poor and so forth. We can thus understand why Theodore Jennings argues that “every aspect of Methodism was subjected to the criterion, how will this benefit the poor?” I would not wish to dispute this judgment in terms of the life of Methodism, but I am less clear

than Jennings that Wesley lifts this to the level of theological principle. His practice seems to make an option for the poor constitutive of the life of the church, but I am less clear how he would argue the theological grounding for this praxis.

I have indicated above how Wesley seems to make visiting the sick and the poor a dimension of discipleship without which one's salvation is endangered. Very occasionally Wesley appeals to the precedent of the life of Jesus and the Apostles.<sup>12</sup> Other times Wesley implies an egalitarianism based in the death of Jesus for all without distinction.<sup>13</sup> He also hints that the character of grace may be at stake: "Religion must not go from the greatest to the least, or the power would appear to be of men."<sup>14</sup> But as I have explored these passages, I do not think that I find a self-consciously theological articulation of the grounds for this preferential option for the poor. For this we must turn to the American experience and especially to the holiness churches that began to emerge in the middle of the next century.

Here we may need to make a parenthetical comment about how we are to understand the relationship between classical Methodism and the "holiness" tradition of the nineteenth century. Many of you have heard me argue that we have become "evangelicalized" in our understanding of this relationship-in that we have come to see ourselves as the "conservative" manifestation of the Methodist spirit in the wake of a "liberal" departure from the true tradition. No doubt there is truth in this position-though much less, I am convinced, than is generally assumed. The developments that I am about to sketch on the American scene might better be described as a radicalization of the Methodist trajectory. Similarly, the more I have reflected on the nineteenth century fragmentation of Methodism and the emergence of the holiness movement, the more my attention has been drawn to social questions and issues of class. I am convinced that we have neglected the extent to which the common factor in the various aspects of the holiness movement is a shared reaction to the nineteenth century *embourgeoisement* of Methodism. "Liberalism" may be related to and a product of *embourgeoisement* but they are not exactly the same phenomenon and we miss a key part of the story by neglecting the social dimension of the struggle.

All of this is to say that a major part of the dynamic of the emergence of the holiness movement is the effort on the part of the founders of the various churches and institutions to maintain a vital contact with the masses in the face of the *embourgeoisement* of mainstream Methodism. I have collected much of the evidence for this in *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage*,<sup>15</sup> and do not have the time to develop this in detail. I will instead indicate the sort of evidence that moves me in this direction. It was explicitly acknowledged in the formation of the National Camp Meeting Association that a major motive was to cultivate the masses-the camp meeting was the vehicle designed for this purpose. This dynamic was nowhere more obvious than in the Salvation Army with its polemic against high steeple churches that neglected the poor and the masses. But such issues were at the heart of the battles over "free pews" within Methodism and

Presbyterianism. Pew rentals were adopted to support ever more elaborate church buildings leading to a pattern that marginalized the poor in the life of the church-in apparent violation of the guidance of the Epistle of James. Charles Grandison Finney's "Third Presbytery" in New York City consisted of "free churches." The emergence of the Free Methodist Church, as we shall indicate in a moment, was deeply grounded in these conflicts. Similar dynamics were present in the founding of the Pilgrim Holiness Church and the Church of the Nazarene- both churches boasted of their commitment to the poor and neglected, especially of the cities. And to return again to the Presbyterian context we cannot understand the emergence of the Christian and Missionary Alliance without attention to this theme. A. B. Simpson announced his departure from his eastside Manhattan church to work among poor immigrants in a sermon based on Luke 4:18-19. But let me turn to the Church of the Nazarene and the Free Methodist Church to explore this development in more detail. I will reverse the chronological order to pursue an increasing radicalization of the theme.

The very name of the Church of the Nazarene is an expression of this theme; it was meant to express the commitment of the church to the mission of the "lowly Jesus of Nazareth." The first stationery of the Church quoted Jesus, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." And the preface to the first Articles of Faith and General Rules of the new church in 1895 clearly alluded to work among the poor.<sup>16</sup> Bresee was quite explicit about these commitments:

The first miracle after the baptism of the Holy Ghost was wrought upon a beggar. It means that the first service of a Holy Ghost baptized church is to the poor; that its ministry is to those that are lowest down; that its gifts are for those that need them the most. As the Spirit was upon Jesus to preach the gospel to the poor, so His Spirit is upon His servants for the same purpose.<sup>17</sup>

Bresee developed from this position a polemic against elaborate and expensive church buildings.

But the clearest and most coherent articulation of this theme is probably to be found in the writings of B. T. Roberts, the founder of the Free Methodist Church. This concern permeates the writings of Roberts but his thinking on the question is epitomized in the lead article in the first issue of *The Earnest Christian* (January, 1860)-the heart of which was reprinted as the introduction to early *Disciplines* of the Church. This article is preceded by a description of the "object and scope" of the magazine, including affirmation that

*"The claims of the neglected poor, the class to which Christ and the Apostles belonged, the class for whose special benefit the Gospel was designed, to all the ordinances of Christianity, will be advocated with all the candor and ability we can command."*

The key article is entitled "free churches." B. T. Roberts argues that *"Free Churches are essential to reach the masses."* In making this case Roberts care-



fully balances both the universality of the gospel and its particular commitment to the poor. “The provisions of the gospel are for all . . . to civilized and savage, black and white, the ignorant and the learned, is freely offered the great salvation.” But Roberts goes on to ask, “*for whose benefit are special efforts to be put forth?*” In answering this question Roberts makes an interesting appeal to Luke 7, where he links his answer directly to the messianic office of Jesus:

Jesus settles this question. When John sent to know who He was, Christ charged the messengers to return and show John the things which they had seen and heard. “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up,” and if all this would be insufficient to satisfy John of the validity of his claims, he adds, “*AND THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.*” This was the crowning proof that He was the One that should come. It does not appear that after this John ever had any doubts of the Messiahship of Christ. He that cared for the poor must be from God.

But Roberts goes on to make this theme decisive for the church and the disciples of Jesus: “In this respect the Church must follow in the footsteps of Jesus. She must see to it, that the gospel is preached to the poor.” This fact is grounded in the plan of God, who “hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.”

But Roberts goes on to make this theme defining of the nature of the church:

There are hot controversies about the true Church. What constitutes it, what is essential to it, what vitiates it? These may be important questions, but there are more important ones. It may be that there cannot be a Church without a bishop, or that there can. There can be none without a gospel, and a gospel for the poor. Does a church preach the gospel to the poor-preach it effectively? Does it convert and sanctify the people? Are its preaching, its forms, its doctrines, adapted *especially* to these results? If not, we need not take the trouble of asking any more questions about it. It has missed the main matter. It does not do what Jesus did, what the Apostles did.<sup>18</sup>

This strikes me as a very remarkable and radical position. B. T. Roberts seems to be arguing that a “preferential option for the poor” is defining of the true church-that it belongs to its *esse* rather than to its *bene esse*. As such Roberts has more than any other in the Wesleyan tradition (at least that I have read) clearly articulated the Wesleyan “preferential option for the poor,” grounding it theologically in the messianic office of Jesus and making it defining of the church-thus raising it to the level of the *status confessionis* of more confessional traditions.

How then shall we live with this tradition? This question is too complex for an easy answer and cannot be handled in the time we have available for us tonight. But let me raise a few questions for our reflection-a few suggestions of issues that we need to pursue:

(1) I consider this articulation by B. T. Roberts one of the most important gifts that we have to share with other Christians. Yet I am struck with the fact that I have no memory of sermons or other expressions of these themes in my own experience within the holiness movement. Why is it that we are busy suppressing within our own movement such themes as this and the ministry of women just when they have begun to achieve wider cultural acceptance?

(2) I have become more and more convinced that we are very ambivalent about our own Wesleyan heritage-both theologically and culturally. There are many reasons for this, but I wonder if there is a sense in which the Wesleyan tradition often fails to make sense because we have lost its center-or at least a key dimension. It may be that various pieces of the tradition come together in an integral whole when this center is restored. I remember when I realized that some inherited dress patterns were not just absolutizations of cultural patterns or quaint attempts to preserve “modesty” but that plain dress was required by the central missiological intention of the movement-to welcome the poor. We dressed down to go to church so that the poor would not feel uncomfortable in our midst.

(3) I am also convinced that part of the issue is that historically and culturally we have entered the stage of our own *embourgeoisement*. In very profound ways we have come full circle and are moving (or have moved!) in the very directions that in Methodism during the last century produced our own movement as a reaction. How do we move from here?

(4) I am also convinced that B. T. Roberts and others in the Wesleyan tradition were basically right. The more I read the Scriptures with such questions in mind, the more I become convinced that they had a grasp on a truth that we neglect to our own peril. If indeed, a “preferential option for the poor” is a genuine feature of “scriptural Christianity,” Wesley’s oft-quoted words of warning to the Methodists gain a new poignancy:

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? For 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 this world and every tempex that is destructive of Christianity.<sup>19</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>These documents are analyzed by the pioneer of liberation theology in Latin America, Gustavo Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983).

<sup>2</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), pp. 168-9. The German original was published in 1955

3Karl Barth, *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-War Writings 1946-52* (London: SCM Press, 1954), p. 36. This passage is paragraph 17 of Barth's famous essay on "The Christian Community and the Civil Community."

4Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, IV/2*, p. 180.

5"Letter to a member of the society, February 26, 1776," *Works* (Jackson), Vol. XII, p. 302

6*Journal*, April 1, 1739, *Works* (Jackson), Vol. 1, p. 185.

7"Wesleyan Roots of Christian Socialism," *The Ecumenist* 13 (May-June, 1975), p. 50.

8(New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 17.

9See Aaron C. H. Seymour, *The Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon* (1844), I, 27, as cited by Oscar Sherwin, *John Wesley: Friend of the People* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1961), pp. 40-1.

10*Journal*, February 9-10, 1753, *Works* (Jackson), Vol. II, pp. 280.

11Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., "Wesley's Preferential Option for the Poor," *Quarterly Review* 9 (1989), p. 16. I assume that this argument will be expanded in *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), due to be published the month this address was given.

12"Letter to a member of the society" #270 dated February 7, 1776, *Works* (Jackson) Vol. XII, p. 301.

13"Letter to a member of the society" #271 dated February 26, 1776, *Works* (Jackson), Vol XII, p. 302.

14*Journal*, May 21, 1764, *Works* (Jackson), Vol. III, p. 178.

15Donald W. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976, reprinted by Hendrickson Publishers), chapter 9.

16These developments are described in Timothy Lee Smith, *Called Unto Holiness* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1962), pp. 110-15 and in Donald P. Brickley, *Man of the Morning: The Life and Work of Phineas F. Bresee* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1960), pp. 135-164.

17This is taken from the *Messenger*, September 12, 1901, as quoted in Harold Ivan Smith, *The Quotable Bresee* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1983), 167.

18B. T. Roberts, "Free Churches," *The Earnest Christian* 1 (January, 1860), pp. 6-10.

19John Wesley, "Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity," Sermon #116, *Works* (Jackson), Vol VII, p. 290.

## APPENDIX

The following article (included in its entirety) is by B. T. Roberts. It appeared under the title "Free Churches" in Roberts' new periodical, *The Earnest Christian*, Vol. I, No. 1 (January, 1860), pp. 6-10.

### FREE CHURCHES

By the Editor

Mankind need nothing so much, as the universal prevalence of the Christian religion, in its purity. This would allay the evils under which humanity is groaning, by removing their cause. It would bring Paradise back to earth. For the blessings of the Gospel of Christ there is no substitute. He who enjoys them, in their fullness, has all he needs to make him happy. In their absence, man is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Things, trifling in themselves, become important when they affect the accomplishment of some great, beneficent enterprise. "A glass of wine overthrew the Orleans dynasty, resulted in the horrors of civil war, and deluged France with the best blood of her children. A passing cloud suggested to Franklin the theory of electricity, and led to the transmission of messages upon the swift wing of the trained lightning. A small file may render worthless the heaviest piece of artillery, and decide the battle on which the fate of nations is suspended."

The question of free churches derives its importance from its influence upon the purity and the progress of Christianity. It has a greater bearing upon both, than many imagine. The world will never become converted to Christ, so long as the Churches are conducted upon the exclusive system. It has always been contrary to the economy of the Methodist church, to build houses of worship with pews to sell or rent. But the spirit of the

world has encroached upon us by little, and little, until in many parts of the United States, not a single free church can be found in any of the cities or larger villages. The pew system generally obtains among all denominations. We are thoroughly convinced that this system is wrong in principle, and bad in its tendency. It is a corruption of Christianity. This we propose to show. We claim the indulgence of expressing ourself strongly. We cannot adopt the cautious language of doubt, for we have no misgivings. We do not believe merely that there should be free churches, but that *all* churches should be free. Not merely that some unmarketable seats should not be rented or sold, but that no seat in the House of God should be rented or sold. Respected readers, we ask your candid attention to the arguments that may be presented on these pages. Weigh them well. You may have given your countenance to the pew system, as many have, simply because you found it in practice. If you have thought upon the question at all, you may have regarded it merely as one of expediency. We hope to show that the pew system is both inexpedient and wrong. We design to prove that our houses of worship should be, like the grace we preach, and the air we breathe, free to all.

**Free Churches are essential to reach the masses.**

The wealth of the world is in the hands of a few. In every country the

poor abound. The most prudent are liable to misfortunes. Sickness may consume the earnings of the industrious. Death may take from the helpless wife, and dependent children, the heart that loved, and the hand that filled the house with plenty. Man is depraved. Sin has diffused itself every where, often causing poverty and suffering.

God assured His ancient people, favored above all others with precautions against want, that “the poor shall never cease out of the land.” These are the ones upon whom the ills of life fall with crushing weight. Extortion wrings from them their scanty pittance. The law may endeavor to protect them; but they are without the means to obtain redress at her courts. If famine visits the land, she comes unbidden to their table, and remains their guest until they are consumed.

The provisions of the gospel are for all. The “glad tidings” must be proclaimed to every individual of the human race. God sends the true light to illuminate and melt every heart. It visits the palace and the dungeon, saluting the king and the captive. The good news falls soothingly upon the ear of the victim of slavery, and tells him of a happy land, beyond the grave, where the crack of the driver’s whip, and the baying of blood hounds are never heard. The master is assured, that though he be a sinner above all other sinners, yet even he, by doing works meet for repentance, may be forgiven, and gain heaven. To civilized and savage, bond and free, black and white, the ignorant and the learned, is freely offered the great salvation.

**But for whose benefit are special efforts to be put forth?**

Who must be *particularly* cared for? Jesus settles this question. He leaves no room for cavil. When John sent to know who He was, Christ charged the

messengers to return and show John the things which they had seen and heard. “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up,” and as if all this would be insufficient to satisfy John of the validity of his claims, he adds, “AND THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.” This was the crowning proof that He was the ONE THAT SHOULD COME. It does not appear that after this John ever had any doubts of the Messiahship of Christ. He that thus cared for the poor must be from God.

In this respect the Church must follow in the footsteps of Jesus. She must see to it, that the gospel is preached to the poor. With them, peculiar pains must be taken. The message of the minister must be adapted to their wants and condition. The greatest trophies of saving grace must be sought among them. This was the view taken by the first heralds of the cross. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “for ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, you, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

Similar statements in regard to the rich are not to be found in the Bible. On the contrary, the Apostle James asks the brethren, “do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blas-

pheme that worthy name by which ye are called?" He also refers to it, as an undeniable fact, that the poor are elected to special privileges under the gospel dispensation. "Hearken my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love him?"

Thus the duty of preaching the gospel to the poor is enjoined, by the plainest precepts and examples. This is the standing proof of the Divine mission of the Church. In her regard for the poor, Christianity asserts her superiority to all systems of human origin. The pride of man regards most the mere accidents of humanity; but God passes by these, and looks at that which is alone essential and imperishable. In His sight, position, power, and wealth, are the merest trifles. They do not add to the value or dignity of the possessor. God has magnified man by making him free and immortal. Like a good father, He provides for all His family, but in a special manner for the largest number, and the most destitute. He takes the most pains with those that by others are most neglected.

Hence, as that great, good man, Dr. Olin, says: "The Gospel is preached to the poor-to the masses. It is made for them-it suits them. Is it not for the rich, for the cultivated, the intellectual? Not as such. They must become as the poor, as little children, as fools. They must come down to the common platform. They must be saved just like so many plowmen, or common day laborers. They must feel themselves sinners, must repent, trust in Christ, like beggars, like publicans. Sometimes we hear men prate about preaching that may do for common people, while it is good for nothing for the refined, and the educated. This is a damning

heresy. It is a ruinous delusion. All breathe the same air. All are of one blood. All die. There is precisely one gospel for all; and that is the gospel that the poor have preached to them. The poor are the favored ones. They are not called up. The great are called down. They may dress, and feed, and ride, and live in ways of their own choosing; but as to getting to heaven, there is only God's way, the way of the poor. They may fare sumptuously every day, but there is only one sort of manna.

That is the gospel which is effectually preached to the poor, and which converts the people. The result shows it. It has demonstration in its fruits. A great many things held, and preached, may be above the common mind- intricate-requiring logic and grasp of intellect to embrace them. They may be true, important, but they are not the gospel, not its vital, central truths. Take them away, and the gospel will remain. Add them and you do not help the gospel. That is preached to the poor. Common people can understand it. This is a good test. All the rest is, at least, not essential.

There are hot controversies about the true Church. What constitutes it, what is essential to it, what vitiates it? These may be important questions, but there are more important ones. It may be that there cannot be a Church without a bishop, or that there can. There can be none without a gospel, and a gospel for the poor. Does a church preach the gospel to the poor-preach it effectively? Does it convert and sanctify the people? Are its preaching, its forms, its doctrines adapted *specially* to these results? If not, we need not take the trouble of asking any more questions about it. It has missed the main matter. It does not do what Jesus did, what the Apostles did. Is there a

church, a ministry, that converts, reforms, sanctifies the people? Do the poor really learn to love Christ? Do they live purely, and die happy? I hope that Church conforms to the New Testament in its government and forms, as far as may be. I trust it has nothing anti-republican, or schismatic, or disorderly in its fundamental principles and policy. I wish its ministers may be men of the best training, and eloquent. I hope they worship in goodly temples, and all that; but I cannot think or talk gravely about these matters on the Sabbath. They preach a saving gospel to the poor, and that is enough. It is an Apostolic church. Christ is the corner stone. The main thing is secured, thank God.”

It the gospel is to be preached to the poor, then it follows, as a necessary consequence, that all the arrangements for preaching the gospel, should be so made as to secure this object. There must not be a mere incidental provision for having the poor hear the gospel; this is the main thing to be looked after.

There is a feeling of independence in man that prompts him not to go where he fears he shall be regarded as an intruder. This is especially true of our American people. They will not accept as a gratuity, what others claim as a right. Their poverty does not lessen their self respect. Let them be treated at a social visit as objects of charity, rather than equals, and they will not be very likely to repeat it. Hence, houses of worship should be, not like the first class car on a European railway, for the exclusive, but like the streets we walk, free for all. Their portals should be opened as wide for the common laborer, or the indigent widow, as for the assuming, or the wealthy. All who behave themselves in a becoming manner,

should feel at perfect liberty to attend on all occasions of public worship.

The requirement of the gospel is not met by setting apart a certain number of free seats, for those who are too poor, or too indifferent to rent or purchase. As Bishop Morris says: “We know it is the custom in many pewed chapels, to leave certain seats free for the accommodation of such as cannot buy or rent, but it seems to answer almost no purpose, except to give offence. Who is willing, thus publicly, to advertise his poverty or misfortune, his want of ability, or inclination to afford himself a place in the church, by taking the ‘poor seats?’ Such humility is not be expected in those who need the instruction of the gospel most. Besides, to require it, is not only uncharitable and unwise, but unscriptural.”

If it be said that seats would be freely given to those who are unable to pay for them, we answer, this does not meet the case. But few are willing, so long as they are able to appear at church, to be publicly treated as paupers. Neither is it true, as is sometimes assumed, that those who are too poor, too indifferent to religion, to pay for a seat in the House of God, would not be likely to be benefited by its ordinances. Had not such persons been reached, the conquests of the gospel would have been limited indeed. Christianity would have died out long ago. The greatest number of her adherents, and the ablest champions that ever stood up in her defense, were once of this class.

The pew system, wherever it prevails, not only keeps the masses from attending church, but alienates them, in a great degree, from Christianity itself. They look upon it as an institution for the genteel, and the fashionable; and

upon Christians as a proud and exclusive class. "When I came to this city," said a respectable mechanic, "I was a member of a Christian church. I rented a seat, and attended worship regularly. But I found that I could not hire a seat, and attend church at an expense of less than fifty dollars a year, without having my family looked down upon with contempt. This expense I could not afford; so we do not any longer attend religious meetings." His experience is that of multitudes. Many who, on going to the cities, are favorably inclined to religion, finding themselves virtually excluded from the churches, become at first indifferent, and then ready to drink in any error that comes along. Hence the ease with which the advocates of Millerism, and Spiritualism have found hearers and converts.

Perhaps no part of our country has greater religious advantages, than New England. In some portions laws formerly existed, requiring, under penalty, attendance upon church. A habit of church-going was formed. The influence of the immigration of foreigners is less there than any other section of the Union. There the pew system was first introduced. There it almost universally prevails. What is the result? Says the Report on Home Missions, presented to the Massachusetts General Association, 1858:

"From reliable statistics it appears, that in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts, not more than one quarter of the population are in the habit of attending church. There are one million, three hundred thousand people in New England, who, so far as attending church is concerned, are practically like the heathen."

Says the Rev. Edward Stuart, a clergyman in London, "The pew system, which has introduced so unchristian a

distinction in the House of God, between the sittings of the rich and the poor, is (there can be little doubt) doing more to alienate the hearts of tens of thousands in every large town in England from the Church of Christ, than any other thing that could be named." He tells us that the large churches in London are filled almost exclusively with the rich, and adds, "In some cases it is all but impossible for a poor man to find a place in the House of CHRIST-Of CHRIST, who Himself, lived all His life amongst the poor." The editor of the *English Guardian*, remarks that the system of pews "has eaten, and is eating the very life out of the church."

Take a city nearer home. Says the Buffalo *Christian Advocate*: "We have in Buffalo, about forty Protestant churches. These reach, and influence, more or less, about twenty thousand of our eighty thousand people. This leaves sixty thousand either unprovided for, or to Catholic influence. It may be safe to calculate that forty thousand of our inhabitants attend no place of worship whatever."

Friends of Jesus, we call upon you to take this matter into serious consideration. The Gospel is committed to your trust. Your business is to save souls—first your own, then the souls of others. You are to dig for rough diamonds amid the ruins of fallen humanity, and polish them up for jewels in the crown of your Redeemer. The church edifice is your workshop. Do not, we beseech you, convert it into a show room, to display, not the graces of Christians, but the vain fashions of the world.

Politicians teach us an important lesson. How do they reach the masses? The places for their public gatherings, often rough and uncomfortable, are always free. The rich and poor associ-



ate as equals. What party could long survive, should they build splendid temples for the propagation of their principles, and then sell, at a high rate, the right to the occupancy of their seats? It is no feeble proof of the Divine origin of Christianity, that it has been able to survive a practice so absurd. But it can never spread with the rapidity with which

we are authorized-from its sublime doctrines affecting man's highest interests for time and for eternity, from the beneficent influence it ever exerts upon society, and from the gracious efficacious assistance which God has promised to those who labor, as He directs, for its promotion-to expect it should, until all its houses of worship are free.

# **THE EPWORTH-CANTERBURY- CONSTANTINOPLE AXIS**

by A. M. Allchin

I must begin by saying what a joy and a privilege it is for me to be here and to have a part in this meeting on Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy. The subject is one which for many years has seemed to me to be of great importance, and one on which I have worked from time to time. The chance to take it up again in a new context and with new encouragement has been very precious to me.

I bring with me on this occasion, at least in the spirit, a very dear friend, colleague and teacher who died some fourteen years ago, but, who has not ceased to influence me, H. A. Hodges (1905-1976). To him I owe my whole initiation into this topic.

Herbert Hodges, by temperament a quiet, retiring man, was one of the most distinguished lay theologians that the Church of England has known in the twentieth century. By family background and upbringing he was a Methodist. At Oxford, as an undergraduate, he passed through a time of unbelief. When he regained his Christian faith it was in a distinctly Anglican and Catholic form. In this, his personal evolution parallels that of his friend and contemporary Austin Farrer, who also came from a free church background, and, after a period of agnosticism, reached a Catholic Anglican position.

By profession Hodges was a philosopher, for the greater part of his working life Professor of Philosophy in the University of Reading. But he became more and more known as a theologian as well. Books such as *The Pattern of the Atonement, or Death and Life Have Contended*, brought the clarity and penetration of his mind to the exposition of Christian doctrine, while *Languages, Standpoints and Attitudes*, and his posthumously published Gifford lectures, *God Beyond Knowledge*, showed him as a man powerfully equipped to discuss the philosophical problems of Christian belief, in a time when such discussion in Britain was rare.

Hodges had recovered his Christian faith in a strongly Anglo-Catholic form. But he felt more and more the limitations of the Latin Catholic tradition, impressive though its many achievements are. He became convinced that the Catholicism of the Greek East, Eastern Orthodoxy, presented a fuller and more balanced picture of the Christian faith. For him, Eastern Orthodoxy became normative. He expressed that view in *Anglicanism and Orthodoxy*, a small book published in 1955, in which he argued that it is the vocation of Anglicanism to become a kind of orthodoxy of the West. I think that in his later years, Hodges came to feel that this essay had oversimplified large and complex issues. But he did not repudiate it, and there is much in it which expressed his abiding convictions, not least that the discovery of Eastern Orthodoxy allows a Western Christian to turn back and rediscover his own tradition in a new way. He learns to see it afresh with new eyes.

I came to know Hodges through the annual meetings of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, an ecumenical association, primarily Anglican and Orthodox. It was there that I first heard him expounding the theology of the Wesleys, especially the theology of Charles Wesley's hymns. This was the context in which we were working when we came to write the long introduction to our selection of those hymns published in 1966 as *A Rapture of Praise*. We were mainly concerned with Anglican-Methodist relations just then, so we did not stress the Eastern Orthodox element in that introduction. But it is there to be seen by those with eyes to see it. We knew by this time, of course, of Outler's views on the patristic influences on Wesley, published in his 1964 selection of John Wesley's writings, and they greatly encouraged us. But our own approach, or rather Hodges' approach, since I learnt it from him, long antedated our acquaintance with Outler's writing.

From the point of view of our meeting today, Hodges' most important contribution to the discussion is to be found in his essay in the little book *We Belong To One Another*, published in 1965. It is entitled simply "Methodists, Anglicans, and Orthodox." It is here that he speaks of the Epworth Canterbury-Constantinople axis and says, "If this axis does not yet exist as an acknowledged fact it is something which could and ought to exist."<sup>1</sup> Hodges would not, of course, have denied the importance of other, better known axes, Rome-Wittenberg or Rome-Geneva, for instance, but as an Anglican who had been a Methodist this was the direction which seemed to him important and which he wanted to explore.

Part of his essay in that book is directly concerned with the terms of Anglican-Methodist unity then under discussion in England. But much of it is, I believe, of permanent value, and indeed I wonder whether parts of it would merit reprinting. He suggests that it is the idea of Christianity as a fullness, a fullness of faith, experience and life, which can unite the three traditions. This is the fullness of God's own inherent life and being, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, imparted to his creation in the incarnation of the Son and in the life-giving presence and activity of the Spirit in the midst of his people, a fullness which in the end lifts up not

humanity alone but all creation into the communion of the divine life. In different ways he finds that vision at the heart of Orthodoxy, of Anglicanism, and of the Methodism of John and Charles Wesley.

I have mentioned H. A. Hodges here, partly out of a sense of loyalty and indebtedness to a very fine scholar and a remarkable Christian, but also to insist that the positions which I shall affirm today are not only of my own making. They owe much to one who had known Methodism from inside, as I have never done, and who was a professional philosopher, with a very acute, analytical mind, something to which I have never pretended.

Now there is one point in Hodges' discussion of the nature of Anglican unity in *Anglicanism and Orthodoxy* which I want to underline, because it seems to me to give us another way of thinking about that which unites Anglicanism, Methodism and Orthodoxy across all of their evident differences. This is the stress he lays on the idea of the co-inherence of human and divine, as it is expressed in Archbishop Crammer's Communion rite. It is this which he feels gives substance to that rite.

By faith we live in Christ and He in us, and this is not figuratively, but substantially and effectually, so that from this union we receive eternal life. When in the Eucharist we make our act of faith and thanksgiving our union with Christ is strengthened and deepened ... Crammer reminds us of St. Ignatius' phrase about the Holy Communion as the "salve of immortality," and Dionysius' reference to it as "deific" with other strong and graphic phrases from the Fathers to the same effect. It is this doctrine, this spirit . . . which has kept alive a vein of Eucharistic devotion through the most arid and apparently hopeless times . . . the doctrine of the mystical union of Christ with the believing soul "2

This vision of the mutual indwelling of human and divine which Hodges sees at the heart of the worshiping experience of the post-reformation Church of England, is not something which was at all strange to John Wesley. Consider how Albert Outler keeps coming back to this point in his introduction to the four volumes of sermons. He speaks of Wesley's "lifelong interest in the patristic ideal of divine-human participation expressed in every Eucharist in the Prayer of Humble Access," and in another place he speaks of this as being Wesley's "central theme." Further on he refers to "the 'catholic substance' of Wesley's theology in the theme of Participation, the idea that all life is of grace and all grace is the mediation of Christ by the Holy Spirit."<sup>3</sup> These are points to which we shall return.

I turn now to a very familiar place, to the best known day in the life of John Wesley, Wednesday, May 24th, 1738. There can be no doubt where the climax of that day comes. It comes in the evening in Aldersgate when Luther's commentary on the Epistle to the Romans is being read. By that fact it relates the life, the teaching, the ministry of John Wesley firmly to the tradition of Western Christen-

dom, and specifically to the tradition of the sixteenth-century reformation. Nothing that I shall say is intended to deny or minimize the importance of that fact. But John Wesley was a large and many-sided man, and his life needs to be seen as a whole. There were other moments in that day in May, 1738, which have not always been sufficiently appreciated, moments which may give us a different perspective on the evening in Aldersgate. There are moments which suggest to us other aspects of his life and character, aspects which root him firmly in the tradition of the Church of which he was a minister, and which reflect its own character as a body which cherishes its continuity with the Church before the sixteenth-century reformation, as well as with the Church after it.

Let us now look at two of those incidents.

1). In the afternoon, Wesley tells us, "I was asked to go to St. Paul's." We do not know who proposed that he should attend evensong in the Cathedral that day, but it was evidently nothing unusual for him. We can see in his journal that he was present at evensong in St Paul's on the Thursday and Friday following, and on both occasions he notes with attention the words of the anthem sung. It is a small but interesting example of the steadiness of his devotional habits through the week of the Aldersgate experience.

Wesley was a priest of a Church which alone of the reformation Churches had preserved the pre-reformation tradition of the daily office of prayer and praise, an office made up for a large part of the words of Scripture, in particular the Psalms. This way of prayer is of course of a primarily monastic origin. It was part of the genius of Thomas Crammer that he adapted and simplified this tradition, making out of the seven hours of monastic prayer the two services of Morning and Evening Prayer. It was his intention that these hours should be used daily not only by the clergy but also by the laity. In the first half of the eighteenth century that intention was honored not only in the cathedrals, where the offices were sung every day, but also in the parish churches where they were usually said. It was a striking feature of the religious life of the city of London at that time, that in many of the churches the daily offices were said, often supported by members of the various religious societies which flourished at the turn of the century.

This was not only a matter which touched cathedral and major city churches. It also touched at least some private households. Morning and Evening Prayer was said either in whole or in part in quite a number of families. And there were some who went further than this. Office books were published, notably those of John Cosin in 1627 and Susannah Hopton in 1701, which provided material for an almost monastic round of daily worship, with five or six or seven offices a day. The example of the Ferrar family at Little Gidding was not forgotten and although we know of no other example of a family whose days were so wholly given to prayer it stood for something which attracted many. In his life of John Fletcher, published in 1786, John Wesley writes, "When I was young I was exceedingly affected with a relation in *Mr. Herbert's Life*; an account of *Fer-*

rar's family at *Little Giddings*, in Huntingdonshire . . . I longed to see such another family, in any part of the three kingdoms.”<sup>4</sup>

It is clear that within the large, extended families of the time, there were those who felt themselves called to a life of special prayer and devotion. Jeremy Taylor, in *Holy Living*, a book which we know influenced Wesley greatly, provides rules “necessary for virgins that offer that state to God, and mean not to enter into the state of marriage.”

While the Church of England of this period vehemently repudiated “popish monkery,” by which perhaps the fully developed monastic system of the later middle ages is to be understood, it appealed to the first centuries of the Church’s history for an example of Christian living, and found that those were the centuries in which monasticism had its origin. William Law’s life of prayer and withdrawal at Kingscliffe was not so unusual in eighteenth-century England as the “Behmenist” theology (from Jacob Boehme) with which he accompanied it.

It seems indeed that at the end of the seventeenth century there was a special interest in the possibility of forming some kinds of religious community. The notable Christian feminist, Mary Astell, put forward a plan for such a community of women in her book, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, first published in 1694, and revised and republished in 1697. Wesley read this book in 1733 and it attracted him. In 1698, Sir George Wheeler published *The Protestant Monastery; or Christian Economics, containing Directions for the Religious Conduct of a Family*. This book primarily considers family life, but it is notable that its author has positive things to say about the monasteries of Greek Orthodoxy which he had got to know on his travels in the Near East. He also is not unfavorable to plans for “Monasteries for Women.” Nothing came of these proposals; indeed, their proponents scarcely seemed to think that anything would. But John Wesley lived in a Church where such ideas were entertained, and he was not uninfluenced by them.

In a recent and very valuable article, John Walsh has written about Wesley’s lifelong fascination with the example of the community of goods in the Apostolic Church as described in the Book of Acts. That model was not, in Wesley’s view, something for the apostolic age alone. It spoke of latent possibilities within the Church of his own day.

... like Law, Wesley regarded the primitive community of goods as retaining a prescriptive authority for Christians of all ages. Pushing his inherited High Church primitivism beyond its conventional limits, he saw the early Church as a model not only for credal orthodoxy, ecclesiological correctness, and personal spirituality, but as an important guide to contemporary social ethics. Most authors of his day drew a firm caesura between the world of the earliest Christians and the normative course of Christian history which followed it, sealing off the world of Acts, with its charismatic explosiveness and radical potential, into a separate historical compartment. Wesley saw in the *koinonia* of Acts not only a vision of what Christianity had

been at the moment of its miraculous conception, but of what it should and might be again. In his 1755 *Notes on the New Testament* he asserts of the apostolic community of goods, "To affirm ... that Christ did not design it should continue is neither more nor less than to affirm that Christ *did not design that love should continue*. I see no proof of this."<sup>5</sup>

In later life, Wesley seems to have come to the conclusion that this ideal was beyond the reach of most even faithful Christians. In a late sermon (1787), *The More Excellent Way*, he sets out a kind of double standard: "It is the observation of an ancient writer that there have been from the beginning two orders of Christians," the first content to lead a good life following the Gospel but conformed to the world in all that is not unlawful, the second aiming at Christian perfection.<sup>6</sup> Albert Outler in his note to this place points us back to *The Shepherd of Hermas* and Clement of Alexandria as early witnesses to such a vision.

I wonder whether we should not also see here a reminiscence of the eloquent passage at the end of chapter nine of William Law's *Serious Call*, which begins, "Ever since the beginning of Christianity, there hath been two orders or ranks of People among good Christians." The first serve God in the responsibilities of the world; the second, renouncing marriage and property, seek "to live wholly unto God in the daily exercise of divine and heavenly life." John Wesley's vision of Christian perfection is more active and apostolic, less withdrawn and contemplative than William Law's; but both men seem to envisage the possibility of a variety of callings within the body of the Church.

I do not say that John Wesley was conscious of all of these things as he sat listening to the chanting of the Psalms in St. Paul's Cathedral on May 24. But by being present at that office he was inserting himself again into a way of prayer which goes back into the earliest Christian centuries. In recent years it has been common to say that there is something distinctly Benedictine about Anglican ways of life and worship. Perhaps one can make too much of this, but it is nonetheless true that when in the middle of the nineteenth century religious communities, first of women and then of men, came to life again in our Church after a break of three centuries, the members of those communities could see in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries at least traces of the ideal to which they responded.

It has been one of the more unexpected developments of the last forty years in Continental Europe that both among Lutherans and Reformed, in France and Switzerland and Scandinavia, but above all in Germany, such semimonastic type communities should have come to life again and been acknowledged and indeed welcomed by the Churches to which they belong. They are in themselves remarkable witnesses to the one life shared by Catholic, orthodox and Protestant alike. Were such developments to take place in American Methodism, I can see nothing in the teaching of Wesley to inhibit them. Indeed I can see many reasons why, in the face of the acquisitive individualism of our European and American societies,

such communities might be considered desirable in the life of the Church at the end of the twentieth century, no less than at earlier times. But that is a matter which takes us beyond the scope of this paper.

2). If St Paul's Cathedral has its place within the total experience of May 24, still more has the Biblical text which Wesley read and prayed at five o'clock that morning. It was 2 Peter 1:4: ". . . whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature."

It is striking that Wesley notes the verse down in Greek before putting it in English, as if to underline its significance. Martin Schmidt in his great theological biography comments that this was a favorite text with some of the pietists.<sup>7</sup> This indeed is true. But he does not remark that this was a key text in the development of the classical theology of the Church to which Wesley belonged. But, as I have tried to show in a recent study, the doctrine of our participation in the divine nature as a direct consequence of God's participation in our human nature, is a key to understanding the teaching of two of the greatest and most influential of all post-reformation Anglican theologians, Richard Hooker and Lancelot Andrewes.<sup>8</sup>

In the case of Richard Hooker, as Olivier Loyer points out in his masterly study of the whole range of Hooker's thought, legal, political and philosophical, as well as strictly theological, the concept of mutual participation is throughout of crucial importance. We see this in the central passages of Book Five of the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, in which Hooker expounds in detail his understanding of how God is in Christ and Christ in us, and how through the work of the Holy Spirit the sacraments serve to make us partakers of Christ. And Francis Paget, in his old but invaluable commentary, is surely right in pointing to this text of 2 Peter as providing the underlying theme of the whole complex argument.<sup>9</sup>

Writes Hooker:

Life as all other gifts and benefits groweth originally from the Father, and cometh out to us but by the Son; nor by the Son to any of us in particular but through the Spirit. For this cause the Apostle writeth the church of Corinth, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost," which three St. Peter comprehendeth in one, "The participation of the divine nature."<sup>10</sup>

For Hooker, the phrase from 2 Peter sums up the whole Gospel.

If this is the case with Richard Hooker it is still more evidently the case with his contemporary, Lancelot Andrewes. Because Andrewes lived a quarter of a century longer than Hooker, we are inclined to think of him as a writer of the seventeenth century. But all of his distinct theological positions were already formed in principle in the reign of Elizabeth I. Andrewes' *Ninety-Six Sermons* preached before the royal court over a period of more than twenty-five years, at the great feasts of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsun, can stand together with Hooker's book on *The Laws* as a classical statement of the Anglican position; this time in a scrip-



tural and kerygmatic style, as opposed to the more philosophical and reflective method of Hooker. Here we are fortunate indeed to have a study of this body of teaching which has particular relevance to our subject today, *Lancelot Andrewes, Le Predicateur* (1986) by Nicholas Lossky, a book which will be published in English translation early next year.<sup>11</sup> We have in this book, for the first time, a detailed and masterly study of an Anglican theologian by an Eastern Orthodox scholar. The affinity between Orthodoxy and Anglicanism is affirmed here not by a romantic Anglican anxious to establish links with a vanished patristic past, but by a Russian orthodox lay theologian, who has lived all his life in the West and is one of the acknowledged spokesmen of his Church in Western Europe. He is a man who is also an authority on the literature and religion of seventeenth-century England, and he sees in Andrewes, whose work he has studied over three or more decades, a kind of Eastern father living in the post-reformation Christian West.

I allow myself to dwell on this book because it is a work which I think would be of great value to anyone concerned, first, to understand Wesley against his Anglican background, and then to explore how deep were the patristic influences, and in particular the Greek patristic influences in the formation of that background. I am not claiming that there was any special link between John Wesley and Lancelot Andrewes. I do not know even whether he had read him. There are elements in Andrewes' "metaphysical" style which the eighteenth century found uncongenial, though it is interesting to see that both John and Charles thought highly of George Herbert, Andrewes' intimate friend and disciple. But what is evident is that the theological school which is characteristic of the seventeenth-century Church of England was formed by Hooker and Andrewes and finds one of its classical expositions in John Pearson's commentary, *On the Creed*. And we do know John Wesley's evaluation of Pearson, whom he describes in his *Letter to William Warburton*: "as learned and orthodox a divine as ever England bred." Writing in May, 1764, to Cradock Glascott, a student, Wesley says,

In order to be well acquainted with the doctrines of Christianity you need but one book (beside the New Testament), Bishop Pearson *On the Creed*. This I advise you to read and master thoroughly: it is a library in one volume.<sup>12</sup>

In the letter to Bishop Warburton in which he refers at length to John Pearson, Wesley gives special attention to Pearson's doctrine of the Holy Spirit the teaching that it is God Himself who is at work throughout the whole development of Christian faith and prayer and life. Now, anyone who begins to become acquainted with the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes must soon be struck by the quality of the Pentecost sermon, every bit as valuable and original as the Christmas sermons (which influenced T. S. Eliot so much). In his Whitsun sermons, Andrewes expresses the doctrine of the Holy Spirit with wonderful vigor and variety, and with constant application to the growth of Christian faith and life. Throughout his preaching Andrewes circles around the classical themes of Christian doctrine as they were developed and expounded in the first five or more cen-

turies of the Church's life. He does not argue against the distinctive tenets of Calvinism, which were already attracting so much attention in the old England of his day and which were to have such an important role in the setting up of New England. He simply focuses our attention elsewhere, on the mystery of Christ's redemptive incarnation, on God's coming to be where we are so that we may come to be where He is, on the mystery of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost where the whole economy of Christ is fulfilled and made real for men and women of all times and in all places. Here is a theology at once practical and mystical, a theology of proclamation and worship, at once kerygmatic and doxological. It has a weight and a complexity of style which is very different from the hurried plainness of much of Wesley's preaching, but the faith and experience which it propounds is unexpectedly the same.

All of this is set out by Nicholas Lossky with clarity and care, and in considerable detail.

The importance given to pneumatology in the theology of Andrewes is to be explained, in my view, by the stress which he puts on the deification of man as the supreme goal of the way of salvation. It is a question of the union of man with God in Christ by the Holy Spirit.<sup>13</sup>

This is a thoroughly functional doctrine of the Trinity, a doctrine which works itself out in the daily experience of prayer and life. It is in this sense that Lossky speaks of Andrewes as a mystical theologian, using the word "mystical" in a sense very different from that which it commonly had in Wesley's day.

The final goal of spiritual life being union with God, one can say that the theology of Lancelot Andrewes is a mystical theology, as long as one elucidates the meaning of the word "mystical." It is not a question of exceptional experience, reserved for a few, in some way outside the traditional ways of theology. On the contrary, it is a question of the interiorisation of the revealed Christian mystery, to which Andrewes calls all the baptized. This theology is mystical in the sense that it is not an abstract reflection, but a concrete way of living the mystery in the deepening of the faith through prayer and the renunciation of one's own will. It is a way of the submission of the human to the divine will, which allows the grace of the Holy Spirit to impregnate human nature.<sup>14</sup>

It could be said of Andrewes no less than of Wesley that, in Melvin Dieter's words, "A Christ-centered trinitarian pneumatology became the heartbeat of [his] understanding of the believer's relationship with God. At every point it is life in and from the Holy Spirit.<sup>15</sup> In this Christ-centered Trinitarian pneumatology we can see a dynamic description of that *fullness* of faith and experience which Hodges believed to be characteristic of Methodism, Anglicanism and Orthodoxy alike.

We have come, here, to the very heart of our subject, to what Albert Outler calls “the ‘catholic substance’ of Wesley’s theology in the theme of *participation*, the idea that all life is of grace and all grace is the mediation of Christ by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>16</sup>

I would like to quote some passages of Wesley which express this idea with great power, in a way which is totally typical of him, but in a way which I believe is totally at one with the deepest and most constant teaching of the Fathers of the Church. Note that in the first two passages which I shall quote, there seems to be an echo of the Jesus Prayer, the Eastern formula, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.” I do not for a moment suggest that Wesley knew of that prayer and its central place in Orthodox spirituality. What is so striking is that for him, as for Eastern Orthodoxy as a whole, the simple cry, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on me, God be merciful to me a sinner,” carries within itself by implication a prayer for healing as well as pardon, for new creation, transformation and participation in the life of God himself. All of this is hidden, latent in God’s mercy.

The Spirit or breath of God is immediately inspired, breathed into the newborn soul; and the same breath which comes from God, returns to God. As it is continually received by faith, it is continually rendered back by love, by prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving love, praise and prayer being the breath of every soul which is truly born of God. And by this new kind of spiritual respiration, spiritual life is not only sustained but increased day by day, together with spiritual strength and notion and sensation; all the senses of the soul being now awake, and capable of “discerning” spiritual “good and evil.”

The eyes of his understanding are now open, and he “seeth him that is invisible.” He sees what is “the exceeding greatness of his power,” and of his love towards them that believe. He sees that God is merciful to him a sinner; that he is reconciled through the Son of his love. He clearly perceives both the pardoning love of God and all his “exceeding great and precious promises.” . . . Thus the veil being removed which before interrupted the light and voice, the knowledge and love of God, he who is born of Spirit “dwelling in love, dwelleth in God and he in him.”<sup>17</sup>

Or, again from the second of the sermons on the Sermon on the Mount.

Whosoever thou art whom God hath given to “hunger and thirst after righteousness,” cry unto him that thou mayest never lose that inestimable gift, that this divine appetite may never cease. If men rebuke thee, and bid thee hold thy peace, regard them not; yea, cry so much the more, “Jesus, Master have mercy on me.” Let me not live but to be holy as thou art holy! . . . Leave all “for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ; for *the entire renewal of thy soul in the image of God wherein it was originally created.* . . . Let nothing

satisfy thee but the power of godliness, but a religion that is spiritual life; the dwelling in God and God in thee, the being inhabitant of eternity; the entering in by the blood of sprinkling “within the veil,” and sitting in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.<sup>18</sup>

For John Wesley, as for the Christian tradition as a whole, and particularly for the Greek fathers, this change, “this entire renewal of the soul in the image of God in which it was originally created,” which is the work of the Holy Spirit within us, grows and is strengthened as human beings grow in the basic virtues of faith and hope and love, all of them God’s gifts which make us participants in the divine life. This is particularly so in the case of love. We are to grow in love for God and in love for all our fellow men and women. We are to love God above all, and paradoxically in doing so we shall find that we can love God in all, and so love others as ourselves. This change wrought in the whole soul affects both the active and outward dimensions of human life no less than its inward and contemplative ones. Our social existence is to be transformed no less than our personal existence. You are, Wesley says,

to love God who has so loved you, as you never did love any creature, so that you are constrained to love all men as yourself with a love not only ever flaming in your heart, but flaming out in all your actions and conversations, and making your whole life one labor of love, one continual obedience to those commands, “Be ye merciful as God is merciful,” “be ye holy as I the Lord am holy,” “be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.”<sup>19</sup>

Let us place next to these texts of John some verses of Charles from the neglected collection of hymns on the Trinity.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
Saved by Thee  
Happy we  
Shall thy Throne inherit.  
Here our heavenly banquet tasting  
In thy love  
Joy we prove  
Ever, everlasting.

Rapturous anticipation!  
Who believe  
We receive  
Sensible salvation.  
Silent bliss and full of glory  
In thine eye  
While we lie  
Prostrated before thee.  
Manna spiritual and hidden  
Perfect peace,

We possess  
Our recover'd Eden;  
Till we find the fullness given  
In that sight, Mercy's height,  
Love's sublimest heaven.<sup>20</sup>

Having quoted Charles may I make a plea for a more frequent study of the hymns and sermons of the two Wesleys together, taken as a single corpus. I believe that it is when we study them together that we see all of the richness, theological and spiritual, of the original Methodist vision. Here we have something to learn from the Danish scholars who in recent years have made a very close study of the interrelationship between hymns and preaching, between the imaginative and the expository, between kerygmatic and doxological in the work of N. F. S. Grundtvig.<sup>21</sup> Of course, that interrelationship is closer and more constant in the case of a single writer than it can be in the case of two. But despite their differences of temperament, and their occasional differences of judgment, what is astonishing is the depth of collaboration between the brothers Wesley. Is there any other example in Church history, apart from that of St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nyssa, of two brothers so united by a common genius and a common devotion?

Both in John and in Charles the goal of the Christian life is in that transformation of our human nature by which we became partakers of the divine nature, sharers in the divine life, "changed from glory into glory." The warmth and assurance of the Aldersgate experience set fire to John's faith, gave him a wholly new freedom of speech and of life. But the contents of that faith were already there before that momentous evening. They were summed up in the verse on which he had meditated that morning.

I shall try to make my conclusion brief.

1). An important part of the makeup of that great and complex man, John Wesley, can be traced to his indebtedness to the Christianity of the early centuries, particularly in its Greek and Syriac forms. This indebtedness can be seen in two ways. First, it can be seen in Wesley's stated appeal to the primitive Church; that is, to the witness of the centuries before the conversion of Constantine. The influence of these early centuries is evident particularly in Wesley's view of the spiritual life as a life of growth in grace and in his teaching on Christian perfection. Second, it can be seen in his almost unconscious acceptance of the christological and trinitarian inheritance of the early centuries, something which he had learnt and assimilated through his whole Anglican upbringing, and which he verified in his subsequent experience. Here he is heir to at least the first five centuries of early Christian thought and decision-making, much of it distinctly Greek in nature.

2). This aspect of Wesley's character has great ecumenical significance. First, it can help us to understand the way in which he does not easily "fit in" to

the customary Western debates. It sheds light on his attempted synthesis of an evangelical doctrine of justification with a Catholic doctrine of sanctification. Then, it can help us to discover the vital importance of the contribution of Eastern Orthodox Christianity to the resolution of the problems of the Christian world today. If we follow out the implications of the Epworth-Canterbury-Constantinople axis we shall discover that an encounter with Eastern Orthodoxy in its contemporary form is not an optional extra for a Western Christian in search for the fullness and integrity of Christian faith.

3). This Eastern quality in Wesley's thinking has relevance to his understanding of the difference between what is essential and therefore necessarily one, and what is inessential and therefore properly various. It is not that Wesley's formulation of this question is in itself Orthodox. It is certainly not. But there is something here about the relationship of faith to theology, of the knowledge of the head to the knowledge of the heart, in which Wesley needs to be confronted with the Eastern tradition and *vice versa*. In Hodges' words, we need to understand how "to make criticism serve the fullness," how to make the activity of the critical, analytical intellect not something destructive, but something which clarifies and illuminates faith. The example of the Greek fathers can help us here.

4). Finally, this rediscovery of the total context of Wesley's life and work, the realization, on which Outler insisted, of the extent to which John and Charles were heirs to a whole long Christian tradition of thought and experience, can help us to make a positive response to those kinds of ahistorical fundamentalism, linked, as they often are, with a grievously truncated and rigidified version of the Christian Gospel, which confront us everywhere in the English-speaking Protestant world. John and Charles Wesley speak to us from an older and deeper tradition. Their gospel is empowered by an optimism of grace, not by the threat of judgment; it is a gospel which sees the fulfillment of God's purposes not in the redemption of humankind alone but in the redemption of the whole creation. And in both of these ways they came near to characteristically Eastern ways of understanding the heart of Christian faith.

This theme of the cosmic scope of redemption is one which seems particularly to recur in John Wesley's later sermons. There is a confidence here in the power of God's love to encompass and transform his whole creation; there is an assurance here which speaks from the heart of the New Testament. There is a joy here, a boldness of access into the holy places, a participation in the exceeding great and precious promises of God's love which tells us how that love goes beyond all of the desires and longings of the human heart, bringing us to that mutual indwelling of God in us and we in Him.

That is a life into which we are brought even now, but which is not bounded by the moment of our earthly death; it is a life for all eternity, an everdeeper entry into the dwelling places of the Three in One, in the Kingdom of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

## Notes

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1900 (London, 1958), p.33. For all that refers to this subject of the late seventeenth and eighteenth-century proposals for communities, see Chapter 1 (pp.1535) in this work.

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16Albert C. Outler, "Introduction," to John Wesley, *The Sermons of John Wesley*, ed. cit., p 106. Also see Albert C. Outler, "The Place of Wesley in the Christian, Tradition," in Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden, eds., *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage* (Grand Rapids, 1991), pp.92-95. This citation is to a reprint of Outler's essay, "The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition," in

Kenneth Rowe, ed., *The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition: Essays delivered at Drew University in celebration of the commencement of the publication of the Oxford Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (Metuchen, N.J., 1976).

17Wesley, *Sermons*, ed. cit., 1:434435.

18Ibid., p.498.

19Ibid., p.294.

20Charles Wesley, *Hymns on the Trinity* (Bristol, 1767), pp.6869.

21See Christian Thodberg, "Grundtvig the Hymn-writer," in Christian Thodberg and A. P. Thyssen, eds., N. F. S. *Grundtvig, Tradition and Renewal* (Copenhagen, 1983), pp.160-196.



# **THEOSIS IN CHRYSOSTOM AND WESLEY: AN EASTERN PARADIGM ON FAITH AND LOVE**

by Steve McCormick

Winds of change are blowing the sweet sounds of freedom throughout our world these days. Just a little over a year ago, we watched with both shock and joy as the Berlin Wall tumbled; and just a few weeks ago, we celebrated the reunification of Germany. Now, as the rest of the Eastern Bloc looks to the West for help in understanding its newly found freedom, the West must begin to rethink its own freedom and identity in a context which includes parts of the world which have for some time, until just now, been closed to its ideology. The Wesleyan tradition has not been untouched by these changes. As East looks to West and West to East, Wesleyans, who are for the most part Westerners, find themselves looking eastward, seeking to understand Wesley's relationship to Eastern Orthodoxy.

For a Wesleyan to make sense of Orthodoxy, the Wesleyan must listen as if to a fiddler playing a tune in which divine grace and human freedom are in perfectly balanced harmony. The tune is sweet, but it is unfamiliar to western ears. It is a tune which correlates the mysteries of incarnation and redemption, and it has not always been clearly heard, for the lyrics sound both western and eastern. Western in their crying out that the pardoning gift of the Cross is for me; eastern in their crying out that Christ reveals both God and my real self to me. Western in their words of justification and of the forgiveness of guilt; eastern in their words of sanctification, with its healing of corrupt nature and its restoration of the *imago dei*. The Wesleyan tradition's own lyrics pick up those of the East. The Wesleyan variation on the tune which balances divine grace and freedom harmonizes the mystery of the incarnation with the mystery of redemption in such a way that the western word of pardon and the eastern word of participation in the divine nature do not drown out each other.

To leave the figure, one begins to understand the theological differences between East and West by considering the theological anthropologies of each, most especially the way in which each correlates the doctrines of incarnation and redemption.<sup>1</sup> The East, on the one hand, with its basic interest in sanctification, has understood humankind to be basically corrupt and in desperate need of healing. The incarnation is understood to be a recapitulation of humankind which makes possible our participation in God, our true and absolute healing. The West, on the other hand, with its fixation on justification, has understood humankind as absolutely powerless to atone for itself. The incarnation is understood in the light of the Cross, which juridically pardons one of guilt.

One of these two paradigms stubbornly resists the delicate and harmonious balancing of divine grace and human freedom; the other embraces it. An understanding of the incarnation which arises from some need to satisfy God's justice (Anselm) would seem to slight the possibility of that kind of participation in the divine nature which enables us to become "like" God. Viewing the death of Christ primarily in terms of the pardoning of humankind tends to make redemption essentially forensic. An understanding of the incarnation which is based in the conviction that God became what we are in order to reveal what we might become, to the glory of God, looks to the Cross as therapeutic. Redemption is a recapitulative work, as we become like him who has become like us.

The eastern tradition maintains that *theosis*, the "way" into this deifying union or restoration of the *imago dei*, comes by way of the mysterious coinciding of a gift of divine energy and human freedom. This transforming union with God, "is not (says Lossky) the result of an organic or unconscious process: it is accomplished in persons by the cooperation of the Holy Spirit and our freedom."<sup>2</sup> It is just such an understanding of *theosis* which Wesley seems to employ as the organizing principle of his *ordo salutis*. And, as Wesley wrote his *ordo salutis* to the tune of *theosis*, it is probably better to understand it as a *via salutis*: that is to say, we are *becoming* "like" God by the energy of love (coinciding with our freedom) as He was *becoming* what we are in condescending love.

Although these two perspectives are not mutually exclusive, they have quite often functioned that way. And many have attempted, sometimes quite deliberately, to overshadow the motifs of participation and pardon precisely at the point of the correlation (whether eastern or western) of the doctrines of incarnation and redemption. It was Albert Outler who first proposed the thesis that Wesley's legacy and "place" in the Christian tradition lay in his "third alternative," his synthesis of pardon and participation as "pardon in order to participation," a synthesis of *sola fide* and holy living.<sup>3</sup>

It is from this nexus that this essay takes its rise. It is an exploration of the possibilities of Outler's thesis, and it is an attempt to "bolt it to the bran" once and for all.

Wesley's lyrics of pardon and participation, with the conspicuous antinomial notes in his *ordo salutis*, prevenient grace and original sin, repentance and faith,

justification (forensically understood) and sanctification, were sung to the (also) antinomous tune of divine energy (grace) and human freedom. The *mysterium salutis* serves as the continuo in harmony with which the antinomous notes are heard. It will be argued, therefore, that Wesley first heard this tune played within his own Anglican tradition, on the *via media* between that which was Roman Catholic and that which was Protestant.<sup>4</sup> The Church of England heard this tune in the Greek fathers of the “Golden Age,” most notably in John Chrysostom and began to play it in its own soteriology as a means of balancing the extremes of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. She constantly faced the problematic of the faithworks debate and the tune from the East seemed to many to offer a greater possibility for harmonizing the systematic demands of that problematic presented by both evangelical and Roman Catholic traditions. It may be that the reestablishment of the eastern paradigm of *theosis* as the organizing principle for the *ordo salutis* in the Wesleyan tradition will enable that tradition once again to hear the fiddler playing the lines, as it were, of divine grace and human freedom in perfect harmony, and to hear the usually dissonant lyrics of pardon and participation as one text “pardoned in order to participate” with the amazing refrain, “faith filled with the energy of love.”

## I. THE QUEST FOR THE “PLACE” OF WESLEY: A WESTERN OR AN EASTERN PARADIGM?

### *The Predominance of Western Categories*

For years, historians and theologians have faced a quandary in understanding John Wesley’s “place” in the Christian tradition.<sup>5</sup> In sampling the history of the theological assessment of Wesley, one quickly notices that the labels attached to him place him chiefly within the western theological spectrum. George Croft Cell, in his timeworn thesis, for instance, argues that Wesley held to a synthesis of the Protestant ethic of grace and the Roman Catholic ethic of holiness.<sup>6</sup> While this thesis has been convincing and helpful in understanding the heart of Wesley’s thought, the simple fact that it operates *exclusively* from a western perspective has made it debilitating, too.<sup>7</sup> It fails to reckon with the proposed thesis of synthesis.

Cell has aptly identified the “original and unique synthesis”<sup>8</sup> at work in Wesley’s thought, but he fails to understand the scope and genius of that thought because of his own enslavement to a western mindset. Cell insists that one cannot fully understand the Catholic “imitation of Christ” as the concrete meaning of Christian perfection in Wesley’s work apart from understanding the synthesis of faith and works as “unequivocally monergistic.”<sup>9, 10</sup> Consequently, Cell has not established his own thesis of synthesis. Rather than showing that Wesley synthesized faith and works, as he claims to have done, Cell actually has Wesley simply conjoining the Catholic ethic of holiness (sanctification) to a Protestant ethic of grace justification). Cell’s failure here lies in part in his failure to discern the

sources from which Wesley himself drew in developing his synthesis. Rather than seeing Wesley's sources in the East's Golden Age, Cell assumes that Wesley goes primarily to western sources and accepts as fundamental the notion of grace as sovereign at the expense of any notion of divine-human interchange, a perfectly plausible assumption if one looks only at the surface of Wesley's thought. Cell's resultant thesis fails to establish a synthesis and has Wesley holding to nothing more than a Catholic ethic of holiness shored up by a Luther/Calvin bias. Cell's Wesley emphasizes the characteristic western doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of grace totally at the expense of the characteristic eastern emphasis on *theosis*- God *becoming* human so that humans might become divine. Thus, Cell misses what could be considered the most important link supporting his proposed thesis of synthesis.

Many who have made use of Cell's thesis have made mistakes similar to his. An exception is Cohn Williams. Williams rejects Cell's thesis outright on the grounds that "the Catholic view of holiness cannot be molded onto the Protestant view of grace."<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, Williams falls into the same snare as Cell. The western, Protestant bias so dominates Williams that he cannot believe any synthesis of faith and works, justification and sanctification, grace and freedom, to be possible. "If it is true that Wesley accepted the Catholic ethic of holiness, it must also be true that he accepted the Catholic and abandoned the Protestant view of grace."<sup>12</sup>

Williams had "discovered" that for Wesley not only must justification be by faith alone, sanctification, too, must come *sola fide*. But Williams went on to interpret Wesley's doctrine of sanctification solely in Protestant (i.e., western) terms and therefore misunderstood him. It would seem that Wesley himself thought of justification/sanctification in terms of a synthesis which held together divine, sovereign grace and human participation, understanding holiness in terms not exclusively Protestant (and western).

Williams insists that Cell has misunderstood Wesley's doctrine of sanctification. Sanctification is not simply grafted on to justification nor is it the basis of justification, says Williams. Rather, says he, it is the purpose of our justification.<sup>13</sup> If sanctification be seen in western terms, e.g., as related to the "ladder of merit,"<sup>14</sup> or as "faith formed by love," Williams' critique of Cell is valid. And, Williams is correct in understanding Wesley to believe that holiness meant "unbroken relationship with Christ," rather than "unbroken ethical status."<sup>15</sup> But Williams' understanding here is still a truncated one, for he says what he says from a strictly Protestant perspective and consequently impugns the whole idea of faith filled with the energy of love. It is this latter idea which in Wesley's thought overcame the usual Protestant bifurcation of faith and works and served as the theological means by which Wesley achieved a synthesis of the two- and thus gained his 'Place' in the Christian tradition. This is to say that Williams' insistence on reading Wesley's understanding of the role of grace in justification and sanctification as a strictly Protestant *sola fide* understanding left Williams unable

to see how these twin doctrines function, theologically, in Wesley's thought. 16 Williams totally overlooked the eastern idea of *theosis*, the idea which would provide a way out of the impasse between divine grace and human freedom. It was sensitivity to this impasse which lay at the heart of Wesley's explicit response to the axial question of the faith/works debate: "Is thy faith filled with the energy of love?"

John L. Peters considers Cell's thesis to be a justifiable characterization of Wesley's thought but believes that the focus could be sharpened by understanding the Catholic tradition's concern for works as the goal in Wesley's perspective and Protestantism's concern for faith alone as its dynamic.<sup>17</sup> Peters' concern to sharpen the Cell's focus reflects his western, and Protestant, perspective. He believes that Wesley rejected any notion of "works righteousness," any idea that human merit is factored into the salvific process. So, his Wesley, western and Protestant, avoids teaching "works righteousness" by synthesizing justification *sola gratia* with works on the grounds of the sovereignty of divine grace. This western form of synthesizing creates anomalies. Wesley, seeing in the eastern notion of *theosis* a fundamentally different ontology from that which underlay western syntheses, developed a much richer, deeper one which avoids both the either/or option of the dynamic-of-Protestantism/goal-of-Catholicism paradigm or the divine-grace/human-freedom dilemma common to western schemes.<sup>18</sup> Wesley's synthesis is not first Protestant then Catholic or first grace then free will; rather, it is one of faith filled with the energy of love. (This thesis will be argued later.)

William R. Cannon disputes what he calls the "Luther-Calvin" thesis of Cell primarily because of its claim that Wesley's doctrine of justification is monergistic. Cannon seeks to correct Cell's argument by appealing to Wesley's insistence upon the "free responsiveness of human nature" in the appropriation of justifying grace.<sup>19</sup> The Wesleyan position, argues Cannon, is "neither merely an apportionment of justifying grace to man by God nor simply an appropriation of that same grace by man from God but *both* divine apportionment and human appropriation standing together in a single process."<sup>20</sup> So far, so good. Cannon's Wesley avoids a soteriology in which divine grace is vitiated or at least qualified by human response. Cannon's Wesley insists that prevenient grace underlies all at this point.

But then, Cannon goes on to argue: "if understood properly, the conception of *human* initiative and *divine* response is likewise descriptive of [Wesley's] teaching and is not alien to his theology."<sup>21</sup> Here, even with his qualified insistence upon synergism, Cannon accepts a western, Protestant formulation of justification; he does not see (and therefore does not probe) the depths of the meaning of justification when it is seen in the context of the doctrine of prevenient grace. Not only do this unquestioned acceptance and this oversight put him in danger of advocating a theological anthropology already rejected and continually resisted (at least *de jure*) in western "orthodoxy" viz., semi-Pelagian<sup>22</sup> they also lead

him away from understanding what Wesley saw as the real purpose of human responsiveness to grace i.e., *theosis*. Cannon's semi-Pelagian reading of Wesley corroborates Robert Chiles' thesis that in American Methodism Wesley's doctrine of free grace underwent a transition and became a doctrine of free will.<sup>23</sup> Worse, it makes of Wesley's intriguing response to the grace/works dilemma, i.e., faith filled with the energy of love, a meaningless riddle.

Wesley's response begins with grace and ends with grace, but never at the expense of human responsibility. To explicate it exclusively or almost exclusively in terms of justification, setting aside the language of sanctification, is to complicate and confuse it.<sup>24</sup> This is seen in the fact that Cannon's hermeneutical insistence on the doctrine of justification as the central concern of Wesley's thought would, ironically, make anthropology, not soteriology, its starting point.

Cannon recognizes that western theology's justification language does not readily lend itself to the idea of human responsiveness in the salvific process, and he seeks to show that Wesley corrected it by what Cannon calls a "synergism." But Cannon's Wesley (in contrast to the real Wesley) moves toward the opposite extreme. He eclipses the work of God's prevenient grace by insisting upon the initiative of "free human responsiveness."

Still, even with his thesis that Wesley's soteriology is synergistic, Cannon recognizes Wesley's emphasis on the sovereignty of grace.<sup>25</sup> What he mistakenly believes of it is that it is a typically western understanding of that sovereignty, and he therefore assumes that Wesley would also understand justification to be the source and determinant of his entire theology. In developing Wesley's thought with these ideas in mind, Cannon misses entirely Wesley's insistence upon *theosis* and the eastern soteriological paradigm linking of faith and love. Of course, Wesley's synthesis does contain western as well as eastern emphases, but his *predominant* question was not Luther's. In ideological terms (though not always literally), rather than asking "How can I be justified or pardoned?" Wesley asked, "How can I be healed?" In his descriptions of sin the dominant metaphors are those of disease with subsequent metaphors of healing (sanctification) as the cure.<sup>26</sup> Hence, although Wesley stands squarely with the Reformers' doctrine of justification, with its insistence on the sovereignty of grace at every point in the salvific process, his own doctrine of justification is informed and shaped by his accent upon the "fullness of faith" (sanctification). So it is that he insists on "free human responsiveness," but not as the soteriologically decisive factor. Rather, free human responsiveness is the vehicle by which sovereign grace, still preeminent, enables the human to participate with and in the Great Physician and be healed and be restored to the *imago dei*.

Cannon's misunderstanding of Wesley's insistence on "free human response" leads Cannon to misunderstand Wesley's refutation of Calvin's doctrine of predestination as well, and therefore to evaluate it wrongly.<sup>27</sup> Again placing Wesley's understanding of the soteriological role of the human response in the context of justification (as fundamental), Cannon limits the options which his Wesley may use to reject predestination.

The Wesleyan repudiation of predestination... is without doubt one of the most important issues with which we have to deal, for at once it shifts the balance from an emphasis in which irresistible grace is supreme to one in which human response comes to occupy the chief position.<sup>28</sup>

But suppose that instead of all of this we take seriously Wesley's declaration that holiness is "the grand depositum lodged with the people called Methodists," and begin to look beyond the work of justification to what Wesley sees as the fundamental and ultimate purpose of human response.<sup>29</sup> Suppose we, too, look at human response, as it is prompted by God's preeminently redemptive purpose and will, as the work of the Holy Spirit enabling us to become "sons of God."<sup>30</sup> If we adapt this perspective, the doctrine of predestination does not simply pose a threat to the idea of "free human responsiveness," it "strikes a blow at the root of [the doctrine of] holiness."<sup>31</sup> It limits that grace which enables humankind to participate in the very life of God, thereby to become like God, and thus it threatens the Wesleyan "optimism of grace."<sup>32</sup>

From Wesley's point of view, extreme Calvinistic predestinarianism, ironically enough, threatened the doctrine of the sovereignty of grace. This it did not simply by denying any synergism prior to justification,<sup>33</sup> but by denying that humankind could participate in the divine life of God as the divine had participated in the life of humankind.<sup>34</sup> Wesley answered the error of the doctrine of predestination with the eastern notion of *theosis*.

#### *The Shift to an Eastern Paradigm (?)*

Scholars continue to seek to locate Wesley in the Christian tradition. But what makes it so difficult to identify and place him?

Perhaps some of the labels and characterizations attached to this "Anglican in Earnest" do not stick because they are decidedly and exclusively western in tone and intent. Others do not fully delineate Wesley within his own Anglican tradition, with its attempt to establish a *via media* between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. However, not a few have attempted to help us to see the profoundly eastern elements within the legacy of Wesley and the Methodists.

Alexander Knox (1757-1831), a close friend of John Wesley, claims to have discovered in Methodism "a stronger and purer principle of Christian piety to be in operation, than, I conceive ever appeared before in like circumstances."<sup>35</sup> Knox writes of what he believed Wesley had rediscovered within the Anglican *via media*.

I observe (in Wesley) a Christianity far more elevated and enlarged than even the worthy pietists appear to have had. I see the necessity of *converting grace* insisted on with as much zeal as ever was shown by St. Augustan himself; and in addition to this, *a subsequent progress and perfection of holiness maintained and urged in the very spirit of St. Chrysostom*. What is more gratifying, I find this (I should almost think) *unprecedented union of the doctrines of grace, and holiness*, manifesting its efficacy in a way equally unexampled: . . . Still, however, to me who have read the various records of Methodism with a mind, as I take it, unbiased one way or other,

numberless instances do present themselves of true Christianity, at once in its depths and in its heights;-of radical conversions, in which all the great truths of St. Augustine, respecting human depravity, and efficient grace, are experimentally recognized, followed by a progress, in which the sublime views of St. Chrysostom appear more substantially realized than, I am apt to think, they were before, in a number together, or in that class of society, the untaught and the laborious.<sup>36</sup>

In the process of discovering and declaring this “principle of Methodism” to be a synthesis of Augustine’s notion of efficient grace and Chrysostom’s understanding of perfection or holiness, Knox isolated both the hermeneutical problem and its solution: justification had been the rubric for understanding sanctification rather than sanctification’s being the determining category for understanding justification.<sup>37</sup> Hence, Knox also identified the patristic categories at work in this “leading principle” of Wesleyanism and considered Wesley’s fusion of western (Augustine) and eastern (Chrysostom) emphases to be his most serious response to questions raised concerning his understanding of the nature of the Christian life. Knox also observed that Wesley’s fusion works from its eastern side, its eastern framework, in that it understands the goal of the Christian life to be that of becoming like God (I. e., sanctification) and takes sanctification as both goal and starting point for the Christian life.

*He [Wesley] talks often and earnestly to be sure of justification as well as of sanctification or of regeneration: but his justification, though he did not clearly see it to be so, was a very different thing from the justification spoken of by Calvinists: theirs is a transaction done in heaven, from which the soul derives consolation by a kind of strong affiance or confidence; his justification, whether rightly or erroneously conceived by him, is much rather a transaction which takes place in the soul itself, a matter not of affiance but experience, identical with the first consciousness of that peace which passes all understanding. His view of this point, therefore, might lead him into enthusiasm, but it could not lead him from inward religion, his justification being nothing else than initiation into the inward mystery of godliness. He was even jealous of giving to the idea of justification more weight than belonged to it; and was anxious to rescue certain texts which had been supposed to apply to this, but, as he believed, without warrant. Thus, in his explanatory note on Philip. iii.8, 9, where St. Paul declares his contempt of every thing in comparison with the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, Mr. Wesley’s words are, “The inward experimental knowledge of Christ, as my Prophet, Priest, and King, teaching me wisdom,*



atoning for my sins, and reigning in my heart. *To refer this to justification only, is miserably to pervert the whole scope of the words; they manifestly refer to sanctification also, yea, to that chiefly: and be found by God, engrafted in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, that merely outward righteousness prescribed by the law, and performed by my own strength, but that inward righteousness, which is through faith, which can flow from no other fountain; the righteousness which is from God, from his Almighty Spirit, not by my own strength, but by faith alone. Here, also, the Apostle is far from speaking of justification only.*" I give you this passage at large, because I conceive it draws the clearest possible line of distinction between John Wesley and the whole class of Protestant Dogmatists: I value it, also, as an excellent specimen of the true method of explaining those numerous passages of Scripture which have been thought by so many to maintain an imputed righteousness; an idea which has, of course, become a kind of keystone in the arch of modern theology; but which, I dare say, must be taken out, and a solid substance put in, before the structure will fully bear the weight of man's spiritual and eternal interests. I think my old friend makes no bad beginning here, toward replacing the word with stone from that Rock which our Savior has described in the conclusion of his Divine discourse as alone to be rested on.<sup>38</sup>

Albert Outler repeatedly makes use of Knox's undocumented thesis in giving content to his own label for Wesley's theological spirit and position, namely, "evangelical catholicism."<sup>39</sup> Outler frequently refers to this fusion as a "third alternative," which is, perhaps, among the best of paradigmata for understanding Wesley's place in the Christian tradition.<sup>40</sup> The genius of this dynamic corrective was the careful correlation of the "foundation of faith" (justification) with the "fullness of faith" (sanctification the goal).<sup>41</sup>

At least one modern Reformed theologian, Hendrikus Berkhof, has also acknowledged the significance of Wesley's having teleologically oriented the Christian life from within the context of Christian perfection. Moreover, Berkhof considers Wesley to be an exception to the common bias of the West in giving attention not only to the objective fact of renewal in the life of the believer but in seeing the goal of the Christian life as its activating source and as a source of insight on the way to that goal.<sup>42</sup>

Knox, Outler, and Berkhof, among a few others, would help us to understand that Wesley is remarkable among western Christian thinkers (and hence quite unwestern) in understanding that the goal of the Christian's life (Christian perfection, renewal of the *imago Dei*) is inseparably linked to the way (faith filled with the energy of love, divine-human participation, *theosis*). Knox, in fact, if not Outler and Berkhof as well, considered this to be the very essence of the "principle of Methodism."

*But what has John Wesley done? In my mind, in a manner unprecedented, he has not overlooked the forgiveness of sins, but he has, indeed, looked much above it, and beyond it.* No Platonic, or mystic Christian, ever inculcated a more inward and spiritual salvation; and, all he says of the operation of Divine grace on the heart, from first to last, is but an expansion of that single position of St. Peter, “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by them we might become partakers of the Divine nature.” ... *The faith, therefore, which my friend urged his hearers to implore from God, had not one great fact only for its object. It did not merely relate to the propitiation for our sins, but it was an influential, vital apprehension of all the Divine facts which are placed before us in the Gospel.* An apprehension so strong as to bring us within the predominant attraction of the objects apprehended, and, consequently making them excite in us, according to their respective natures, a fear and a love, rising above all other fears and all other loves, and thus producing a reigning spirituality of mind and heart. God, in John Wesley’s Christian philosophy, is all in all; Christ is Emmanuel, God with us; God united to our nature, that in that nature, and by means of the most impressive and most penetrating of its possible features, He might make every fair and rational principle of the mind~very susceptibility of the imagination, and every tender fiber of the heart, his apt and able auxiliary in the infinitely gracious plan of “redeeming us from all iniquity, and purifying unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Faith, therefore, in John Wesley’s view, is the spiritual sense, the divinely produced organ of the inner man, which holds commerce with those glorious objects, and transmits the impression to the imagination, the affections, and the judgment, as the eye transmits the image formed on its retina to the sentient principle. It is a poor resemblance, but what sensible image can do justice to the highest work of God in our higher nature? Such, however, in substance, is John Wesley’s leading principle 43

At the very core of such discourses on the fusion of Augustine and Chrysostom, on third alternatives, or on the correlation of justification and sanctification is the issue of the divine-human exchange. This aspect of the *mysterium salutis* was best expressed and preserved by the eastern Fathers through their idea of deification (*theosis*) or participation in God. Athanasius encapsulated it best in his *De incarnatione Verbi Dei*: “For He was made man that we might be made God.”<sup>44</sup> Not only does this soteriological perspective connote the differences between eastern and western christological formulations, it is the axiomatic formulation of the mystery of salvation in the east and highlights what has perhaps been the most notable hallmark of eastern soteriology: salvation is not just what God does “for us”; it is also what God does “in us.” Just as the mystery of the incarnation expresses the humanization of God, so likewise, the mystery of salva-

tion expresses the divinization of humankind. God became human so that we might become divine.

Forever in the minds and hearts of the eastern Fathers was not just an obsession with the juridical remission of sins but rather with participation in the divine life of God. John Meyendorff underscores this dominant motif of eastern thought:

Whether one deals with Trinitarian or Christological dogma, or whether one examines ecclesiology and sacramental doctrine, the main stream of Byzantine theology uncovers the same vision of man, called to “know” God, to “participate” in His life, to be “saved,” not simply through an extrinsic action of God’s, or through the rational cognition of propositional truths, but by “becoming God.”<sup>45</sup> There is then no mystery in the fact that as they conceive salvation they perceive its goal and its process as inseparable. The “foundation of faith” is inseparable from the “fullness of faith” because the goal (which is to “know God,” to be renewed in the *imago dei*) is that which shapes the process (which is a matter of divine-human participation, of *theosis*). And the goal is attainable only because of what has been established by God’s having become human. The *via salutis* hinges on the pivot of the incarnation. That is to say, in becoming human, God has laid the foundation of faith; in the fullness of that faith we may become divine. Such is the goal, the *telos*, of the process.

It is this axiomatic motif of divine-human participation in eastern Christian soteriology which would become most basic to Wesley’s own formulation of the Christian life. It would be noted by Knox as the “principle of Methodism” and by Outler as the Wesleyan “third alternative.” It would be most succinctly expressed as faith filled with the energy of love.

## II. THEOSIS IN ANGLICANISM AND CHRYSOSTOM

From the very beginning of his theological and spiritual pilgrimage to the very end of his life, Wesley was obsessed with the question, “How do I *become* a Christian and how do I *remain* a Christian?”<sup>46</sup> Outler describes this all-consuming question as the source of another of Wesley’s third alternatives: “Wesley’s driving passion was to find a third alternative to Pelagian optimism and Augustinian pessimism with respect to the human flaw and the human potential.”<sup>47</sup> C. F. Allison’s study, entitled *The Rise of Moralism*, presents two paradigms which are most helpful for examining the soteriological debate within Anglicanism and also for understanding the very heritage absorbed by Wesley which aided him in finding his third alternative during those formative years.

Allison’s two paradigms show how the later Carolines (such as Jeremy Taylor, Henry Hammond, George Bull, etc.) abetted by certain non-Anglicans (such as Richard Baxter), and motivated by a strong fear of antinomianism, radically abridged classical Anglicanism (represented by Richard Hooker, Beveridge, Danne, Andrewes, etc.) with their new gospel of moral rectitude.<sup>48</sup> The pivotal

soteriological question which underscored the axial motif of divine-human interchange was focused upon the formal cause of justification. To put it another way, the later Caroline Divines' basic question was, "As recipients of the Gospel, what causes our new relationship with God to be what it is?"<sup>49</sup>

The radical abridgement of classical Anglicanism is most detectable in the way in which the question of the formal cause of justification was answered. While classical Anglicanism said that the "imputation of Christ's righteousness" is the formal cause of justification, the later Caroline divines modified their responses and said, instead, that the formal cause of justification is "the imputation of faith." The Carolines' response implied that the emphasis would now fall on the human response rather than on divine grace. This shift would result in another novelty: a gospel of moral rectitude. The later Carolines maintained that justification came "by God's acceptance of our *inadequate strivings and sincere endeavors* on account of the more lenient terms of the new covenant purchased for us by Christ."<sup>50</sup> Allison contends that this imputation of faith was defined so as to "include repentance, amendment of life, and sincere endeavors."<sup>51</sup> In other words, the later Caroline belief in an imputation of faith seemed to translate itself practically as a harsh moralism which echoed a works righteousness similar to that which the Reformers had stubbornly resisted.

Now, again, however, the theme of divine-human participation begins to emerge from the swirling discussions of soteriology. And now, again, the old Reformation dialectic of faith and works comes into play. But this time Anglicanism's concern to be a true *via media* awakens, and it turns eastward rather than to the western branch of Christianity to answer its axial soteriological question. The Greek Christian idea of *theosis*, neglected within the Reformation debates, is recovered. As Anglicanism aims to be a middle way it begins to draw from Chrysostom for its composite response to the question of the formal cause of justification. His note of divine-human participation, until now a "forgotten strand" for Anglicanism, provides a rationale for its appropriation of him in its faith/work debate. And it is there that Wesley finds him.

During those years in which the problematic of soteriology, with its age-old antinomies of sin and grace, justification by faith alone and holy living, faith and works—each with its deep chasm between its terms, plagued Wesley's mind and heart, he began to read voraciously works from many traditions and perspectives, most notably works from his own and the eastern Orthodox traditions.<sup>52</sup> And so it was that he came upon the two paradigms treating the question of the formal cause of justification.<sup>53</sup> After intense study and careful synthesis, Wesley realized that he had found within his own "classical" Anglican heritage what was later to be called a "third alternative."

Classical Anglicanism had long labored to bridge the old chasms between Protestants and Roman Catholics, especially those having to do with the mystery of salvation. Here, the question of divine-human participation loomed large, but Anglican thinkers thought they had found the means of maintaining a *via media*

in appealing to the “golden age,” the period of the early Church, a period in which the eastern Fathers had contributed significantly to the thought of the Church as a whole. This—specially the thought of Chrysostom supplied Anglicanism in general and Wesley in particular with a second paradigm for understanding soteriology; more precisely, a second paradigm for responding to the question concerning the formal cause of justification.<sup>54</sup> Anglicans developed a special love for Chrysostom as they discovered his version of divine-human participation. Here was a better composite response to the question of the nature of the Christian life than anyone in the West could provide. So, says Knox, the Church of England came to call Chrysostom “the great clerk” (i.e., cleric) and “godly preacher.”<sup>55</sup>

It was his father who first personally introduced John Wesley to the importance of Chrysostom. Samuel reinforced that importance in a series of letters in which he recommended carefully selected sources for John to read as he was preparing to enter Holy Orders. In the first of these, he instructed his son to secure a copy of Thirlby’s edition of Chrysostom’s *On the Priesthood (De sacerdotia)*. “Master it: digest it,” he wrote.<sup>56</sup> In July of that same year (1725), he writes in a similar vein: “Master St. Chrysostom, our Articles and the form of Ordination.”<sup>57</sup> And two and half weeks later he is again reminding John that some of the best instruction for preparing for orders (as deacon) is found in these works.<sup>58</sup> Samuel’s timely instruction to his son is much the same as that given to Mr. Hoole in *Advice to a Young Clergyman*.<sup>59</sup> Samuel suggested a rather lengthy bibliography for his son, but it is clear that his true favorite was Chrysostom. “Master St. Chrysostom,” he had written.<sup>60</sup> And he frankly admitted, “If I were to preach in Greek, St. Chrysostom should be my master.”<sup>61</sup>

John Wesley’s love for the early church fathers had arisen early in his life and had never abated. Throughout his work, one may find allusions to and quotations from them, most especially Chrysostom.<sup>62</sup> Samuel’s insistence that John master Chrysostom simply affirms an early and deep patristic-eastern patristic strain that would become a permanent feature in John Wesley’s formulation of the Christian life.<sup>63</sup> To be sure, some of Wesley’s earlier exposure to the eastern Fathers came by way of Anglican sources, but there is much within Wesley’s own writings to suggest that the indirect exposure led to firsthand reading and even direct borrowing from John Chrysostom at least. If Green’s bibliographical treatment of Wesley’s Oxford diary is correct, Wesley was reading Chrysostom as early as 1726-1727.

Direct evidence that Wesley read Chrysostom appears in his *Advice to Clergy* (1756). There, Wesley poses a set of questions.

Can any who spend several years in those seats of learning, be excused if they do not add to that reading of the Fathers? the most authentic commentators on Scripture, as being both nearest the fountain, eminently endued with that Spirit by whom all Scripture was given. It will be easily perceived, I speak chiefly of those who wrote

before the council of Nicea. But who could not likewise desire to have some acquaintance with those that followed them? with St. Chrysostom, Basil, Austin, and above all, the man of a broken heart, Ephraim Syrus?<sup>65</sup>

Wesley probably came to understand the significance of Chrysostom during his earlier period in Oxford and in Georgia, thanks to William Beveridge. Wesley probably first “met” Beveridge in Samuel Wesley’s “Advice” to Mr. Hoole.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps weighing more in John Wesley’s mind than his father’s suggestion that Beveridge be read was the recommendation of his mother. Susanne pushed John in Beveridge’s direction as he moved through his personal struggles with the meaning of faith.<sup>67</sup>

Wesley took his parents’ advice. While he was in Savannah and Frederica, Georgia, he read a two-volume folio edition of Beveridge’s *Pandectae*, which, as it happens, is a vast array of eastern liturgical texts.<sup>68</sup>

Beveridge was a prolific writer and evidenced an impressive knowledge of patristics, including extensive use of John Chrysostom. Page after page of his *Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles* is full of Chrysostom, supporting Beveridge’s his, Beveridge’s, position.

Wesley’s intensive exposure to Beveridge exposed him indirectly as well to Chrysostom. In fact, probably none gave Wesley the indirect exposure to Chrysostom that Beveridge gave. But Beveridge was not alone in Wesley’s bibliography. Wesley’s father had, as we have seen, insisted that John “master and digest” Chrysostom; and he had, of course, recommended Beveridge.<sup>69</sup> He also recommended such writers as Cave,<sup>70</sup> Pearson,<sup>71</sup> Bull,<sup>72</sup> Grabe,<sup>73</sup> Wake,<sup>74</sup> and Baxter.<sup>75</sup> John Wesley’s list of books read while at Oxford suggests substantial compliance with the demands of his parents.

Interestingly, the majority of the specific sources used by John Wesley make frequent appeals to Chrysostom for a variety of reasons. Samuel Wesley, his father, scholar that he was,<sup>76</sup> had seen the significance of the eastern Fathers in general and of Chrysostom in particular and had alerted his son to it in a context in which Anglicanism, seeking a *via media* on the nature of the Christian life between the fideist tendencies of Protestantism and the works righteousness of Roman Catholicism, would (or at least could) find the early eastern perspective congenial.

### **III. THEOSIS AS THE ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE OF THE ORDO SALUTIS**

#### *The Theological Significance of Theosis in Chrysostom and Wesley*

By Wesley’s day, three hundred years of ongoing faith-work debate had sharpened the terms of both principle Anglican soteriological paradigms that developed from a western perspective, and the one developed from an eastern point of view. Wesley had early become totally immersed in both, which meant that his axial question was twofold: How do I both become and remain a Chris-

tian? Eventually, moving from this center, he would recover some of the “forgotten strands inherent in the fundamental motif of divine-human interaction. Meanwhile, he was discovering the “classical “Anglican appeal to Chrysostom, and this would lead to the recovery of the “classical” Anglican “foundation of faith.” In Chrysostom, he recovered the “forgotten strand” of *theosis*, which he came to declare was the “grand depositum lodged with the people called Methodist.” In rediscovering the (eastern) notion of divine-human interaction, he recovered the “foundation of faith.” Rediscoveries and recoveries in place, Wesley was able to meld the two paradigms on the basis of a truly synthetic principle: a faith filled with the energy of love.

Obviously, much needs to be explicated concerning Wesley’s processes in coming to and developing the notion of *theosis*. Equally obvious are our limitations of time and space. Suffice it to say, there’s more where that came from. Both the construction of the principle and its implications bear detailed study.

What we can state as a thesis here is that Wesley’s most comprehensive response to the question of the nature of the Christian life was that it was faith filled with the energy of love; and we can also state it as an aspect of our thesis that this description was a result of the discovery of the strand of *theosis* within his own Anglican heritage, a strand borrowed from the eastern Fathers, most notably John Chrysostom. Wesley in fact made that eastern motif of *theosis* the organizing principle for his understanding of the *ordo salutis*. Early on, he took his Anglican tradition to task, but eventually the glimpses into the *mysterium salutis* provided by that tradition induced him to make it his own. And he came to see that *ordo salutis* was *via salutis*: they were *faith filled with the energy of love*. Again, the eastern paradigm of *theosis* was the organizing principle of his *ordo salutis* as *via salutis*. This would forever be “bolted to the bran.”

Wesley’s rediscovery of the importance of Chrysostom, given his commitment to Anglicanism’s *via media* at the point of the faith-works debate, had important consequences along two lines: first, the discovery of *theosis* as the organizing principle of his *ordo salutis*; and second, his specific correlation of faith and love as a synthesis of pardon and participation.

For Chrysostom, the mystery of the incarnation corresponded to the mystery of redemption. The incarnation not only revealed God to humankind; it also revealed authentic humanity to humankind. Any view of grace which did not entail the divine-human interaction in the processes of incarnation and salvation would have been meaningless to Chrysostom in particular and to the eastern tradition in general. For Chrysostom, it made no sense to speak of God as becoming flesh if humankind could not become divine. Further, if humanity could not enter into God, there could be no meaningful communion with God, shrouded in mystery as it way be. on the other side of that coin, Chrysostom asked how God could enter humanity if humanity could not enter into God. Of what value would it be to speak of salvation in forensic terms at the expense of the idea of union of God? Chrysostom’s notion of *theosis* was an attempt to declare that because of the

incarnation “real” change (sanctification) takes place in human nature, not merely the “relative” change (justification), as was commonly believed in the West. The eastern notion of *theosis* entailed the means by which humanity could partake of God’s nature just as God could partake of human nature.<sup>77</sup>

Chrysostom’s soteriology is marked by the eastern monastic ideal of deification. Consequently his question was not “How can I be pardoned?” but, rather, “How can I ‘know’ God?” or “How can I participate in God?” Often, this idea of “divinization” was expressed in terms which eloquently explained in the language of deification how the goal of the Christian life (restoration in the image of God) provides the means (*theosis*) by which one partakes of God’s nature:

“As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God.” ... all, He saith, are deemed worthy the same privilege; for faith and the grace of the Spirit, removing the inequality caused by worldly things, hath molded all to one fashion, and stamped them with one impress, the King’s. What can equal this lovingkindness? . . . the Only-Begotten Son of God did not disdain to reckon among the company of His children both publicans, sorcerers, and slaves, nay, men of less repute and greater poverty than these, maimed in body, and suffering from ten thousand ills. *Such is the power of faith in Him, such the excess of His grace.* And as the element of fire, when it meets with ore from the mine straightway of earth makes it gold, even so and much more Baptism makes those who are washed to be of gold instead of clay, the Spirit at that time falling like fire into our souls, burning up the image of the earthy,” and producing the “image of the heavenly,” fresh coined, bright and glittering, as from the furnace mould.

*Why then did he say not that “He made them sons of God,” but that “He gave them power to become sons of God”?* To show that we need much zeal to keep the image of sonship impressed on us at Baptism, all through without spot or soil; and at the same time to show that no one shall be able to take this power from us, unless we are first to deprive ourselves of it. For if among men, those who have received the absolute control of any matters have wellnigh as much power as those who gave them the charge; much more shall we, who have obtained such honor from God, be, if we do nothing unworthy of this power, stronger than all; because he who put this honor in our hands is greater and better than all.<sup>78</sup>

Very early on, Wesley began to intromit this eastern notion of *theosis* into his understanding of the Christian life. So it was that his soteriological question was not one characteristic of the West. Rather, he asked, “How can I be healed so that I may be happy and holy?” In his sermon, “The Circumcision of the Heart,” Wesley develops an anthropology which delineates the idea of deification in terms of a Biblical eudaemonism.<sup>79</sup> Once again, Wesley presents an eastern idea of incarnation which teaches us about God and ourselves. For Wesley, holi-



ness is happiness, happiness holiness, because humanity was created by God and for God. So, only in communion with God does one truly find happiness holiness. Our humanity reaches its full potential only in joyous communion with God.

“The desire of thy soul shall be to his name” is none other than this. The one perfect good shall be your ultimate end. One thing shall ye desire for its own sake, the fruition of him that is all in all. One happiness shall ye propose to your souls, even an union with him that made them, the having fellowship with the Father and the Son,” the being “joined to the Lord in one Spirit.” *One design ye are to pursue to the end of time- the enjoyment of God in time and in eternity.* Desire other things so far as they tend to this. Love the creature, as it leads to the Creator. But in every step you take be this the glorious point that terminates your view. Let every affection, and thought, and word, and work, be subordinate to this. Whatever ye desire or fear, whatever ye seek or shun, whatever ye think, speak, or do, be it in order to *your happiness in God, the sole end as well as source of your being.*

*Have no end, no ultimate end, but God. Thus our Lord: “One thing needful.”*<sup>80</sup>

Wesley found Chrysostom’s notion of having received the power at baptism to become “sons of God,” i.e., the potential of entering into the joyous state of communion with God, echoed in Anglicanism’s *Book of Common Prayer*, e.g., in the “Collect for Purity,” with its petition for a heart made pure and filled with love. Repeatedly, Wesley would tie the “Collect for Purity” to his doctrine of Christian perfection. In fact, so important was this to him that he berated George Bull for not seeing that the Collect petitioned for both “inward” and “outward” holiness.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, Wesley saw the divine-human motif at work in the Collect. By speaking of the goal as perfectly loving God, Wesley followed the Collect and made it clear that this communion with God was not passive and private only. This love is active, both inwardly and outwardly.

But in speaking of our loving God, Wesley did not in any way intend to indicate that the initiative lies with us. It does not. The divine initiative, the energy of love, is the very means by which one is “renewed in the image of God.”<sup>82</sup> Wesley found this notion, which is, again, the eastern idea of *theosis*, of divine-human participation, a characteristic note in the homilies of Chrysostom, and in the liturgy, the homilies, and the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England. Wesley was to take that motif of divine-human participation in the *via salutis* and weave it throughout his *ordo salutis*.

### *Theosis in the Ordo Salutis*

Chrysostom’s theological anthropology is inextricably tied to his correlation of incarnation and redemption. And all other rubrics governing his *ordo salutis* are developed out of that correlation. This is demonstrated in the following exam-

ples: creation is seen as an act of grace which fills the created order with gracious energy so that the created order may reciprocate; humankind, fallen though it be, is not fallen to the extent that it cannot reciprocate God's sovereign initiative. In fact, the fall seems to be more relational than ontological, more existential than essential, because the sovereign uncreated energy of grace maintains that point of contact with humankind. Redemption is not simply external to humanity; it also penetrates humanity. Thus, salvation is not simply the remission or pardon of sins but it is also the sanctification from sins which enables us to participate in God's nature or partake of God's nature i.e., to become "sons of God."

A number of foundation stones in Chrysostom's correlation of incarnation with redemption clearly bear elements of the idea of *theosis*. And, since his insistence on the necessity of divine-human interaction is quite bold, it should suffice to highlight the prominent antinomies of his *ordo salutis* which preserve the notion of uncreated energy of grace coinciding with human freedom in the context of the idea of the correlation of incarnation and redemption. As we do this highlighting, it should become clear beyond cavil that Wesley wove Chrysostom's thread of *theosis* into the complex tapestry of his *ordo salutis*. We shall proceed by looking at the idea of theosis in the rubrics of the *ordo salutis* of each man.

The theme of *theosis* is dominant in Chrysostom's thought and it constantly defines the antinomous rubrics of his *via salutis*, keeping them polarized. Yet, to view each element as exclusive of its antinomy would distort the meaning of both. For example, creation, though it is an act of grace that reveals the Creator, would be meaningless if it did not proceed in such a way as to enable humankind, the fallen creature, to "know God," to participate in Him. Here, creation and redemption are inseparable; creation cannot be, should never be, seen apart from grace. Chrysostom sets forward his understanding in his exposition of Romans 1:20:

All things abiding in order and by their beauty and their grandeur, preaching aloud of the Creator. . . . *And yet it is not for this [that] God hath made these things, even if this came of it. For it was not to bereave them of all excuse, that He set before them so great a system of teaching, but that they might come to know Him....*83

Similarly, Wesley speaks of a gracious teleology in the creation which corresponds to the nature of the Creator. He writes to Dr. Conyers Middleton:

*He is happy in knowing there is a God, an intelligent Cause and Lord of all, and that he is not the product either of blind chance or inexorable necessity. He is happy in the full assurance he has that this Creator and End of all things is a Being of boundless wisdom, of infinite power to execute all the designs of His wisdom, and of no less infinite goodness to direct all His power to the advantage of all His creatures.*  
...84

And, in his sermon, “God’s Approbation of His Works,” Wesley argues that the *telos* of all created things reaches us zenith in the fulfilled purpose for humankind.

Such was the state of the creation, according to the scanty ideas which we can now form concerning it, when its great Author, surveying the whole system at one view, pronounced it “very good”! It was good in the highest degree whereof it was capable, and without any mixture of evil. Every part was exactly suited to the others, and conducive to the good of the whole. There was “a golden chain” (to use the expression of Plato) “let down from the throne of God” an exactly connected series of beings, from the highest to the lowest: from dead earth, through fossils, vegetables, animals, *to man, created in the image of God, and designed to know, to love, and enjoy his Creator to all eternity.*<sup>85</sup>

Chrysostom argues for the initiative of grace in creation, that creation is providential, which ensures the means by which the creature may participate.<sup>86</sup> He also argues that, given that graciousness, humanity is continually responsible and morally inexcusable. Moral responsibility is written into the nature and purpose of the creation.

He [God] set before them [the ancients], for a form of doctrine, the world; He gave them reason, and an understanding capable of perceiving what was needful. None of these things did the man of that day use unto salvation, but they perverted to its opposite what they had received.<sup>87</sup> In other words, creation not only revealed God, it was a providential means by which humankind were to come to “know God.” Thus, no one could deny moral responsibility,<sup>88</sup>

In Chrysostom’s day, Manichaeism posed a very grave threat to Christian understandings of the creation, especially to such ideas as *theosis*. In particular, it corrupted the idea of “knowing God” in the creation. That is to say, Manichaeism disputed the idea that humans could participate in and with God on earth, which negation undercut the Christian basis for social and moral responsibility. Manichaeism led all too many to reinterpret the first petition of the Lord’s Prayer “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven” ‘in strictly “other worldly,” “spiritual” terms, thereby to deny the possibility of any real union with God in this life and thereby to deny as well the gracious initiative and providence in the creation. Manichaeism threatened orthodoxy’s soteriology, especially as Chrysostom understood and taught it.

The note of the necessity of divine-human reaction so prevalent throughout Chrysostom’s doctrine of creation is even more pronounced in his anthropology. And, again, as in the case of his development of his doctrine of creation, Chrysostom responds to the menace of Manichaeism as well as to his own desire to construct a soteriology of divinization. Especially to be rejected, as he saw it, was

the Manichaeian use of human frailty and corruptibility as an excuse for moral irresponsibility. This rejection is clearly seen as Chrysostom describes the original creation of humankind.

For what we said of creation . . . we may see take place also in the case of the body. For with respect to this too there are many among the enemies to the truth, as well as among those who belong to our own ranks, who make it a subject of inquiry, why it was created corruptible and frail? Many also of the Greeks and heretics affirm, that it was not even created by God. For they declare it to be unworthy of God's creative art, and enlarge upon its impurities, its sweat, its tears, its labors, and sufferings, and all the other incidents of the body. But, for my part, when such things are talked of, I would first make this reply. Tell me not of man, fallen, degraded and condemned. But if thou wouldest learn what manner of body God formed us with at the first, let us go to Paradise, and survey the Man that was created at the beginning. For that body was not thus corruptible and mortal; but like as some statue of gold just brought from the furnace, that shines splendidly, so that frame was free from all corruption. Labor did not trouble it, nor sweat deface it. Cares did not conspire against it; nor sorrows besiege it; nor was there any other affection of that kind to distress it....89

Nor could one plead that humankind is ignorant of God and God's laws and therefore incapable of participation in the divine nature. Rather, creation is an act of grace in which God makes himself known and ensures the possibility of knowing him. That initial act of grace makes it impossible to plead ignorance; and, it enables participation in him.

Chrysostom's reaction to the Manichaeians' positions is quite unambiguous. We are God-created by an act of grace and we are therefore morally responsible and accountable.

... we shall direct our discourse to another point which is itself also demonstrative of God's providence . . . *when God formed man, he implanted within him from the beginning a natural law.* And what then was this natural law? *He gave utterance to conscience within us;* and made the knowledge of good things, and of those which are the contrary, to be self-taught. 90

Conscience seems to function in the thought of Chrysostom in much the same way that prevenient grace functions in the thought of John Wesley. It is in Chrysostom's understanding of conscience that one finds his antidote to the Manichaeian menace; but it must be recalled that the context is God's gracious providence, not merely nature. It is in John Wesley's doctrine of conscience understood as prevenient grace that one finds his antidote to the antinomian menace. So he writes in his sermon, "On Working Out Your Own Salvation":

Yet this is no excuse for those who continue in sin, and lay the blame upon their Maker, by saying, “It is God only that must quicken us; for we cannot quicken our own souls.” 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 quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is destitute of what is vulgarly called *natural conscience*. But this is not natural: It is more properly termed, *preventing grace*. Every man has greater or less measure of this which waiteth not for the call of man. Every one 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 every one, 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.<sup>91</sup>

In his sermon, “On Conscience,” Wesley repeats this emphasis on the nature and function of conscience in the context of grace.

Conscience, then, is that faculty whereby we are at once conscious of our own thoughts, words, and actions, and of their merit or demerit, or their being good or bad, and consequently deserving either praise or censure. .

Can it be denied that something of this is found in every man born into the world? And does it not appear as soon as reason begins to dawn? Does not everyone then begin to know that there is a difference between good and evil, how imperfect soever the various circumstances of this sense of good and evil may be? .

This faculty seems to be what is usually meant by those who speak of “natural conscience,” an expression frequently found in some of our best authors, but yet not strictly just. For though in one sense it may be termed “natural,” because it is found in all men, yet properly speaking it is not natural; but a supernatural gift of God, above all the endowments. No, it is not nature but the Son of God that is the “true light which enlighteneth every man which cometh into the world”. So that we may say to every human creature, “He,” not nature, “hath shown thee, O man, what is good.” And it is his Spirit who giveth thee an inward check, who causeth thee to feel uneasy, when thou walkest in any instance contrary to the light which he hath given thee.<sup>92</sup>

Manichaeism argued for the moral excusability of humankind on both cosmological and anthropological grounds. The world itself is evil and the human body, being natural, is also evil, therefore, we are not morally responsible. Both Chrysostom and Wesley argued that creation was an act of grace; that our creation was an act of incarnational grace, and that

conscience                      is                      an                      integral                      ingredi-

ent of incarnational grace. Chrysostom countered the Manichaeian argument, with its ethical implications, by speaking of conscience as “natural.” Our God’s gracious creating initiative and provision have etched into the creation and the human conscience the capacity to “know God” *naturally*. This is to say that creation and conscience providentially ensure our capacity to become “sons of God.” And, given this capacity, with its providential character, all of creation is made able to respond (responseable) and morally responsible.

Moreover, since the providentially implanted conscience functions to make God known, what is “vulgarly called *natural conscience*” is really a continuing act of grace. Chrysostom’s doctrine of creation and his anthropology repeatedly accent the necessary antecedence of grace to the functioning (as to the very existence) of conscience. The conscience is a prior work of grace which speaks of our capacity to participate in the divine nature.

*For the knowledge of virtue He hath implanted in our nature; but the practice of it and the correction He hath entrusted to our moral choice. . . .* In order to know that it is a good thing to exercise temperance, we need no words, nor instruction; for we ourselves have the knowledge of it in our nature, . . . So also we account adultery to be an evil thing, and neither is there here any need of trouble or learning, that the wickedness of this sin may be known; *but we are all self-taught in such judgments; . . . And this hath been an exceeding good work of God; that he hath made our conscience, and our power of choice already, and before the action, claim kindred with virtue, and be at enmity with wickedness.*

As I said then, the knowledge of each of these things resides within the conscience of all men, and we require no teacher to instruct us in these things; but the regulation of our conduct is left to our choice, and earnestness, and efforts. And why was this? but because if He had made everything to be of nature, we should have departed uncrowned and destitute of reward; and even as the brutes, who receive no reward nor praise for those advantages which they have naturally, so neither should we enjoy any of these things; for natural advantages are not for the praise and commendation of those who have them, but of the Giver. For this reason, then, He did not commit all to nature; and again, He did not suffer our will to undertake the whole burden of knowledge, and of right regulation; lest it should despair at the labor of virtue. But conscience suggests to it what ought to be done; and, it contributes its own exertions for the accomplishment. . . .93

The menace of antinomianism in Wesley’s day made him more cautious in calling conscience “natural” than the menace of Manichaeism had made Chrysostom 1,300 years earlier. Wesley preferred to speak of “preventing grace.” Nonetheless, Chrysostom’s natural conscience and Wesley’s conscience as an expression of preventing grace functioned in the same way. The conscience

is an integral part of the human constitution and it enables one to “know God.” Wesley’s exegesis of Romans 2:14-16 speaks of humanity’s capacity for doing the things of law without having the law.<sup>94</sup> This is because of the conscience, properly called “preventing grace.” Yet, it is “natural” to all of creation because everyone seems to have some *previous* knowledge of good and evil without the written law. It is natural because it is universal. Conscience works in the same way that external law does i.e., it either condemns or excuses. Consequently, conscience as a form of prevenient grace leaves no one without excuse because the Son of God, the full expression of incarnational grace, is the “true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world.”<sup>95</sup> The fact that conscience is a continuation of grace makes one always able to respond (response-able) and morally responsible. This is the point at which the notion of *theosis* in the thought of both Chrysostom and Wesley shapes their understandings of the *via salutis*.

This eastern idea of incarnation grace colors Chrysostom’s doctrine of grace and conscience, and it also affects his understanding of humanity’s fall. Contrary to the plan of providence etched into its creation and its conscience, humanity, through “indolence”<sup>96</sup> and a “listless will,”<sup>97</sup> chose to disobey the voice of conscience and sinned. Hence, humanity took on mortality.<sup>98</sup>

For Chrysostom, the fall is more existential than essential.<sup>99</sup> And, it is more relational than ontological. Missing from the homilies of Chrysostom is any idea of the total obliteration of the *imago Dei*. Understanding the fall to have been ontological could lead off into Manichaeism and it would destroy the notion of the potential of joyous communion with God.

For Chrysostom, the sole serious setback of the fall was mortality; and even then, he would minimize the effects of death. <sup>100</sup> That he held an understanding that the fall was existential rather than essential is most discernible in his treatment of sin and its causes. In his homily on Romans 5:12, he contends that sin is certainly not a consequence of our being natural but of the weakness of our free will.

*He came not to destroy our nature, but to set our free choice aright.* Then to show that it is not through any force or necessity that we are held down by iniquity, but willingly; he does not say, let it not tyrannize, a word that would imply a necessity, but let it not reign. For it is absurd for those who are being conducted to the kingdom of heaven to have sin [as] empress over them, and for those who are called to reign with Christ to choose to be the captives of sin, as though one should hurl the diadem from off his head, and choose to be the slave of a frantic woman, who came begging, and was clothed in rags. Next, since it was a heavy task to get the upper hand of sin, see how he shows it to be even easy, and how he allays the labor by saying, “in your mortal body.” For this shows that the struggles were but for a time, and would soon bring themselves to a close. At the same time he reminds us of our former evil plight, and of the root of death, as it was from this that, contrary even to its beginning, it became mortal. *Yet it is possible even for one with a mortal body not to sin. Do you see the abundancy of Christ’s grace?* For Adam, though as yet he had not a mortal body fell. But thou, who has received one even subject to death, canst be

crowned. How then, is it that “sin reigns”? he (Paul) says. It is not from any power of its own, but from thy listlessness. Wherefore after saying, “let it not reign,” he also points out the mode of this reigning, by going on to say “that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” For it is not honor to concede to it (i.e., to the body) all things at will, nay, it is slavery in the extreme, and the height of dishonor; for when it doth what it listeth, then is it bereft of all liberties; but when it is put under restraints, then it best keeps its own proper rank.<sup>101</sup>

Chrysostom’s optimism of grace would not let him formulate a pessimistic view of humanity.<sup>102</sup> As humanity was created *provisionally* for the purpose of *becoming* “sons of God,” not even the fall and original sin can deny that potential. The overriding theme of *theosis* defined Chrysostom’s view of creation, anthropology and hamartiology. And these enter into the optimism of his anthropology, though, as is seen in his exposition of the fall and original sin, that anthropology is determined more specifically by his incarnational understanding of grace. More narrowly yet, his optimistic anthropology is derived from the prevenience of grace, as depicted in creation. The idea of deification predominates in such a way as not to allow for a pessimistic anthropology derived from certain understandings of the fall.<sup>103</sup>

Such is the anthropological optimism of Chrysostom and much of eastern thought. How does John Wesley relate to it?

As Wesley links prevenient grace to original sin by his distinction between the “natural” and the “moral” images of the human being he departs from Chrysostom’s tone of anthropological optimism.<sup>104</sup> And yet, though he continually maintains the Latin accent on total depravity,<sup>105</sup> he does not do so at the expense of an understanding of *theosis* such as that of Chrysostom.<sup>106</sup> This is most noticeable in his distinction between the ideas of the “natural” and “moral” image of the human being, a distinction which clearly resembles that of some of the eastern Fathers between the image” and “likeness” of God. <sup>107</sup> The teleological significance of *theosis* for Chrysostom and Wesley alike demonstrates the function of this distinction. As God, through and because of the constant energy of his gracious provision, made humankind for the explicit purpose of participating of the divine life, the fall did not result in the loss of capacity for communion with God (i.e., loss of the “image of God”). The constant sovereign energy of grace would not allow such a consequence. Rather, the fall resulted in the loss of an actualized or deified communion with God (i.e., loss of the “likeness of God”). The “image of God” is essentially humankind’s ability to respond responsibly, given the fact that the *telos* of creation is communion with God. And, although the “likeness of God,” i.e., the actuality of communion with God, has been lost in



the fall the constant energy of God's grace is not impaired. Chrysostom's theological anthropology, then, begins with creation-grace and its *telos* rather than with the fall with its abuse of grace. Likewise, Wesley's theological anthropology always begins with grace and the human being is never considered independently of it.

Wesley's anthropology is rooted in grace, and that nuances his doctrine of original sin (its meaning and function), linked to the idea of prevenient grace as it is. The prior presence and work of grace is accented in Wesley's doctrine of original sin and this helps him create his "third alternative": a doctrine of the fall which speaks clearly of total depravity but which avoids the ontic degradation of humanity and opens the way for an optimistic view of humanity under grace.<sup>108</sup> This is to say that because grace is antecedent to human choice, the divine-human capacity for participation remains even after the fall; prevenient grace is forever making humankind responsible for its total depravity and making humankind able to respond to its own never-ending presence. So it is that Wesley uses the eastern understanding of *theosis* to tie together (prevenient) grace and original sin, and in so doing, he avoids both a Pelagian optimism and an Augustinian pessimism.<sup>109</sup>

Since Chrysostom's anthropology looks to the constant energy of grace inscribed in the *telos* of creation rather than to the fall of creation, his response to the question as to how fallen humanity could participate in joyous communion with God escapes the Pelagian overtones that constantly plagued western responses to that same question. The anthropology of the West looked to the fall as a picture of "natural" humanity and therefore saw the idea of participation smacking of *merit*. The West's response to the question as to how fallen humanity could participate in communion with God was always from the perspective of forgiveness for guilt, since the *natural* person is powerless to reciprocate. Chrysostom, with his idea of conscience as the "natural" apparatus by which one has knowledge of one's capacity for and need to participate in God, focuses on the "natural" picture of humanity as forever able to respond to and responsible to the constant energy of love. Conscience is "natural" because it is universal and is part of the *imago Dei* that is not lost in the fall. Hence the antinomous relation of repentance and faith in Chrysostom's *via salutis* becomes the "natural" means by which humankind may be healed and restored to the "likeness of God."

As Chrysostom sees it, repentance, as taught by conscience, provides both the self-knowledge one needs for healing and the capacity to cooperate with the divine energy of grace.

Beloved, God being loving towards man and beneficent, does and contrives all things in order that we may shine in virtue, and as desiring that we be well approved by Him. And to this end He draws no one by force or compulsion; but by persuasion and benefits He draws all that will, and wins them to Himself. Wherefore when He came, some received Him, and others received Him not. For He will have no unwilling, no forced domestic, but all of their own will and choice, and grateful to Him for their service. Men, as needing the ministry of servants, keep many in that state even against their will, by the law of ownership; but God, being without wants, and not standing in need of anything of ours, but doing all only for our salvation, makes us absolute in

this matter, and therefore lays neither force nor compulsion on any of those who are unwilling....<sup>110</sup>

For Chrysostom, condescending love always precedes repentance:

“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son.” Wonderful! How great a thing saith he (Paul) here! How vast is the magnitude of the gift which he declares! . . . Again, “ye have been called;” ye did not yourselves approach His gifts, and the calling of God,” are *without repentance*.”<sup>111</sup>

For Chrysostom, repentance without the precedence of love would be scandalous, as may be clearly seen in those homilies in which he talks of a repentance *before baptism* and that which comes *after baptism*.

Repentance is part of a *process* by which one is healed and restored to the likeness of God. It is therefore to be seen as a constant in the human response to the unceasing energy of love.

Repentance before baptism is related to entrance through the portal of grace. As the catechumen stands before the “laver of grace,” he is exhorted to say: “I renounce thee, Satan.” Here is a returning from Satan to God with a declaration of covenant with God.<sup>112</sup> It is a turning away from Satan and evil habits which are alien to human nature (i.e., unnatural) and a returning to God, who restores that which is “natural” to human nature. This entrance by repentance, through washing from the “laver of grace,” was considered to be once and for all,<sup>113</sup> but continued participation in grace would from time to time necessitate confession. Confession thus was simply another provision of God’s constant energy of love. Repentance, for Chrysostom, is not only a constant attitude in the human response to the divine initiative, it is one of the “many medicines to heal our wounds.”<sup>114</sup>

Faith is the other side of the coin of human freedom from repentance. While repentance emphasizes the negative side of the human response, faith emphasizes its positive side. This is to say that repentance is the rejection of all of that which is unnatural while faith is the acceptance of the energy of love which restores one to health. Faith is the grace-empowered human response of acceptance to the constancy of grace.

“For by grace,” saith he (Paul), “have ye been saved.” In order then that the greatness of the benefits bestowed may not raise thee too high, observe how he brings thee down: “By grace ye have been saved,” saith he, “through faith.” Then, that, on the other hand, our freewill may not be impaired, he adds also our part in the work, and yet again cancels it, and adds, “And that not of ourselves.” Neither is faith, he means, “of ourselves.” Because had He not come, had He

not called us, how had we been able to believe? For “how,” saith he, “shall they believe, unless they hear?” ... So that the work of faith itself is not our own. “It is the gift,” said he, “of God.” It is “not of works.” Was faith then, you will say, enough to save us? No; but God, saith he, hath required this, lest He should save us, barren and without work at all. His expression is, that faith saveth, but it is because God so willeth, that faith saveth. Since [this be true], how, tell me, doth faith save, without works? This itself is the gift of God. “That no man should glory.” That he may excite in us proper feeling touching this gift of grace. “What then?” saith a man, “Hath He Himself hindered our being justified by works in order that the grace and lovingkindness of God may be shown?” He did not reject us as having works, but as abandoned of works He hath saved us by grace; so that no man henceforth may have whereof to boast....115

For Chrysostom, the human capacity to respond in acceptance (faith) of God’s mercy and love is always preceded by the initiative of grace.116

As repentance was one aspect of the human response that allowed one to pass through the portals of grace, faith was another. Moreover, just as repentance was one of the perpetual means of healing and one aspect of a constant attitude of responsiveness to the constant energy of love, faith was another.

For even in these mystical blessings, it is, on the one hand, God’s part to give the grace, one the other, man’s to supply *faith*; and in after time there needs for what remains much earnestness. In order to preserve our purity, it is not sufficient for us merely to have been baptized and to have *believed*, but we must, if we will continually enjoy this brightness, display a life worthy of it.. 117

So Chrysostom. Wesley, too, works with the antinomies of repentance and faith. As he threads his *ordo salutis* with *theosis*, the latter brings the two together as a *via salutis*. But it is here that he meets fierce opposition. The West struggled over the tendency to consider repentance a meritorious work. It looked at repentance in terms of the fall and humanity’s consequent “natural” inescapable bondage and utter powerlessness to reciprocate. The notion of repentance as a meritorious work never became an issue for Chrysostom and the East, for it was there believed that the constant energy of love ensured a constant human capacity for response and responsibility. The East taught that the energy of love made humankind aware of its “natural” capacity to reciprocate or respond to the constant energy of condescending love and that it also made humankind aware of its need (responsibility) to respond.

Amid much controversy, John Wesley sought to accommodate his eastern paradigm of repentance and faith to western categories. He seems to adopt Chrysostom’s understanding of repentance as the self-knowledge of a capacity and a need to return to that which is “natural.”118 But Wesley does try to accommodate this understanding to the classical Lutheran idea of repentance, which is

governed by the law-gospel dialectic. He puts the eastern paradigm into play by insisting that the gift of prevenient grace (the constant energy of love enables the Holy Spirit to evoke an active response of repentance. He negates the usual western understanding that our “nature” since the fall is without means for responding to the beckoning of the Spirit. But he tries to build his case by working from Luther’s understanding of the twofold use of the law.

But it is the ordinary method of the Spirit of God to convict sinners by the law. It is this which, being set home on the conscience, generally breaketh the rocks in pieces. . . . By this is the sinner discovered to himself. All his fig leaves are torn away, and he sees that he is “wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked.” The law flashes conviction to every side. He feels himself a mere sinner. He has nothing to pay. His “mouth is stopped,” and he stands “guilty before God.”

To slay the sinner is, then, the First use of the law; to destroy the law and strength wherein he trusts, and convince him that he is dead while he liveth; not only under the sentence of death, but actually dead unto God, void of all spiritual life, “dead in trespasses and sins.” The Second use of it is, to bring him unto life, unto Christ, that he may live. It is 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.

I give up every plea beside, Lord, I am damn’d; but thou hast died.119

Wesley’s approbation of the twofold use of the law is closely related to his twofold understanding of repentance.<sup>120</sup> The first use of the law is the convincing and convicting of sinners, implying a legal understanding of repentance. The second use of the law is to turn one outward to Christ rather than inward to one’s own idolatrous heart, implying an evangelical understanding of repentance. The sinner would move from the first to the second use, from the legal to the evangelical. Here, Wesley satisfied both the Lutheran and the eastern paradigms. Criticism came, however, when Wesley nuanced the meaning of repentance by accenting the idea of “fruits meet for repentance,” i.e., the necessity of doing good before faith.<sup>121</sup> The eastern paradigm, in which the constant energy of love ensures in the human being a constant attitude of response, came into obvious and inevitable conflict with the western paradigm. To the west, the eastern point of view seems to make repentance meritorious, a good work. Wesley responds:

God does undoubtedly command us both to repent, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance; which if we willingly neglect, we cannot reasonably expect to be justified at all. Therefore both repentance

and fruits meet for repentance are in some sense necessary to justification. But they are not necessary in the *same sense* with faith, nor in the *same degree*. Not in the same degree; for those fruits are only necessary *conditionally*, if there be time and opportunity for them. otherwise a man may be justified without them, as was the “*thief*” upon the cross. . . . But he cannot be justified without faith: this is impossible. Likewise let a man have ever so much repentance, or ever so many of the fruits meet for repentance, yet all this does not at all avail: he is not justified till he believes. But the moment he believes, with or without those fruits, yea, with more or less repentance, he is justified. Not in the *same sense*: for repentance and its fruits are only *remotely* necessary, necessary in order to faith; whereas faith is *immediately* and *directly* necessary to justification. It remains that faith is only the condition which is *immediately* and *proximately* necessary to justification.<sup>122</sup>

Wesley insisted no less than Chrysostom did that it was the constant energy of love which makes possible the human response to the offer of salvation. Wesley and Chrysostom both rejected any attempt to understand either repentance or faith as meritorious. Rather, they argued that in the human response to the constant energy of grace, the active side of repentance is completed in the passive response of faith.<sup>123</sup> Wesley’s consistent description of faith, the other side of human response, as the gift of the Holy Spirit, rules out any thought of faith as meritorious.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, this twofold movement in the human response of saving faith was considered to be the “condition of justification”:<sup>125</sup> i.e., repentance is the negative movement of renouncing evil by actively returning from Satan to God and producing “fruits meet for repentance”; faith is the positive movement of passive “trust” or “reliance on the merits of Christ.”

One can trace the basic understanding of faith as trust, the predominant understanding in Wesley’s thought, to the three homilies of Thomas Cranmer which comprise the standard Anglican soteriology: “Of Salvation,” “Of the True, Lively and Christian Faith,” and “Of Good Works Annexed Unto Faith.” The noted homily, “Of Salvation,” provides the best exposition of what Anglicanism was to mean by ‘justification,’ and it underscores the meaning of faith as trust as well as the eastern motif of divine-human participation.

... *upon God’s part*, his great mercy and grace; *upon Christ’s part*, justice, or [the] price of our redemption, by the offering of his body and shedding of his blood, with fulfilling of the law perfectly and thoroughly; *upon our part*, true and lively faith in the merits of Jesus Christ, which is not ours, but by God’s grace working in us. <sup>126</sup>

Cranmer continues his exposition of justification, which is built on the “foundation of faith,” in the second homily, “Of the True, Lively, and Christian Faith.” Here, he carefully defines “faith alone.” He expands upon that point in his *Notes on Justification*, appealing to the “golden age,” especially to Chrysostom.

The point of his definition of faith is that fact that faith is not an “inherent virtue,” but a “sure trust and confidence of the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and a steadfast hope of all good things to be received at God’s hand.”<sup>127</sup> Faith in its primary function is passive (trust) so that the human response of participating in the salvific process is always dependent upon the divine initiative, always dependent upon the “foundation of faith,” which is the mercy of God and the sacrifice of Christ.<sup>128</sup> Cranmer does not stop with the passivity of faith, however. Insistent on barring the entry of any form of antinomianism or solafidianism, he gives equal emphasis to the necessity of good works as a result of faith. He again turns to Chrysostom: “Faith is full of good works: as soon as a man doth believe, he shall be garnished with them.”<sup>129</sup> Cranmer turned to the “golden age” to balance the dialectic of faith and works and he found Chrysostom to be a major source as he developed what would become the basic stance of classical Anglicanism.<sup>130</sup>

In 1738, Wesley published his first doctrinal manifesto, an abridgment of the three soteriological homilies of Cranmer. Here, Wesley scores a resounding victory in the matter of the faith/works dilemma. In Outler’s judgment, he reduces

Cranmer’s accent on the necessity of “good works annexed to faith” in the direction of a more explicit emphasis upon their spontaneous character as the fruits of faith.<sup>131</sup>

Wesley explicitly reappropriates this idea of the spontaneous character of works as fruits of faith for his reading of the Anglican heritage in his emphasis upon **faith filled with the energy of love**.<sup>132</sup>

Chrysostom filled his homilies with practical examples of how to validate one’s faith. And since the ultimate source of these works of faith is condescending love,<sup>133</sup> one understands faith to be filled with the continuous enabling, strengthening, assisting, and motivating energy of love. Chrysostom wrote of this motivation in his exegesis of Phil. 2:12-16; and Wesley gave us what is perhaps his most complete exposition of *theosis* in his sermon, “On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” which is on the same text.

Here is how Chrysostom expresses the motivation for the human response to the constant energy of love:

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” . . . Be not affrighted, thou are not worsted; both the heart desire and the accomplishment are a gift from Him: for where we have the will, thenceforward He will increase our will. For instance, I desire to do some good work: He has wrought also the will. Or he says in the excess of his piety, as when he declares that our well-doings are gifts of grace.<sup>134</sup>

Chrysostom’s homilies are filled with metaphors of the power and energy of love which enable one to enter joyous communion with God.

For just as the earthen vessel is formed from clay and fire, so also the body of these saints being clay, and *receiving the energy of the spiritual fire*, becomes an earthen vessel. But for what reason was it thus constituted, and so great a treasure, and such a plenitude of graces entrusted to a mortal and corruptible body? “That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” For when thou seest the Apostles raising the dead, yet themselves sick, and unable to remove their own infirmities, thou mayest clearly perceive, that the resurrection of the dead man was not effected by the power of him who raised him, but *by the energy of the Spirit*.<sup>135</sup>

In turn, these metaphors for *theosis* would become grist for Wesley’s mill in his own paradoxical exposition of the mystery of human reaction to divine prevenient action.

The necessity of the co-inherence of human and divine in Chrysostom’s soteriology would become even more pronounced in Wesley’s *ordo salutis*. Wesley explicates this relationship most completely and systematically in his sermon, “On Working Out Our Own Salvation.” Here, he explicitly accents the point by nuances, variations, and interrelatings of the various features of that *ordo*. Especially important is his polarizing of prevenient grace and original sin, repentance and faith, and justification and sanctification.

The mystery of the incarnation continues in the mystery of redemption. As the paradox of the incarnation brought about the divine penetration into the human, the paradox would continue in salvation with the penetration of the human into the divine. And all would bear a certain necessity: How could God dwell in humanity if humanity could not dwell in God? Doctrines related to soteriology would have to be developed in terms of participation, that is to say, in terms of the divine in the human and the human in the divine, for the paradox of divine-human interaction in the incarnation continues in redemption.

Wesley carefully sketches an *ordo salutis* which is motivated by the “necessity” of the co-inherence of the human and the divine.

Salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) *preventing grace*; including 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. Salvation 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. Afterwards we experience the *proper Christian salvation*; whereby, “through grace,” we “are saved by faith;” consisting of those two grand branches, *justification and sanctification*. *By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favor of God; by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of*

*sin, and restored to the image of God.* All experience, as well as Scripture, show this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual. It begins the moment we are justified, in the holy, humble, gentle, patient love of God and man. It gradually increases from that moment, as “a grain of mustard seed, which, at first, is the least of all seeds,” but afterwards puts forth large branches, and becomes a great tree; till, in another instant, the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with pure love to God and man. But even that love increases more and more, till we “grow up in all things into Him that is our Head;” till we attain “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”<sup>136</sup>

Wesley goes on to articulate an understanding of *theosis* in conjunction with his doctrine of prevenient grace: “First, God works, therefore you can work: Secondly, God works, therefore you must work.”<sup>137</sup> Here, then, he moves to his version of Chrysostom’s understanding of *theosis*.

First, God worketh in you; therefore, you can work otherwise it would be impossible. If he did not work it would be impossible for you to work out your salvation. . . . Seeing all men are by nature not only sick, but “dead in trespasses and sins,” it is not possible for them to do anything well till God raises them from the dead.

Yet this is no excuse for those who continue in sin, and lay the blame upon their Maker. . . . For allowing that all 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 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.” Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man. . . . 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 fulfill all righteousness. It is possible for you to “love God, because he hath first loved us,” and to “walk in love,” after the pattern of our great Master. . . You can do something, through Christ strengthening you.

Secondly, God worketh in you; therefore you must work: you must be “workers together with him” ... otherwise he will cease working.... He will not save us unless “we save ourselves from this untoward generation”; ...

“Labor” then, brethren,...”My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” In consideration that he still worketh in you, never “weary of well doing.” Go on, in virtue of the grace of God preventing, accompanying, and following you.

Wesley recovered Chrysostom’s strand of *theosis*, forgotten or overlooked in the West. And he did it by making explicit that which was implicit in the “middle



way” of his own “classical” Anglican heritage. He did this in unambiguous fashion in his sermon, “The Catholic Spirit,” asking and responding to the axial question of the faith-work debate and Chrysostom’s notion of condescending love: “Is thy faith filled with the energy of love?”<sup>139</sup> He also answered the question in a series of three sermons on faith and love: “The Original, Nature, Property and Use of the Law,” “The Law Established by Faith, Discourse I,” and “The Law Established by Faith, Discourse II.”<sup>140</sup>

Consequently, as Wesley made explicit this notion of *theosis* in his *ordo salutis*, he would further articulate that motif in his correlation of faith and love. And as he wove the forgotten strand into this correlation, he made faith subservient to love. Faith is not an end in itself. It is a means. Love is not the product of faith. Faith exists only because of love. On the other hand, faith, which is a gift of grace, exists in order to love. Hence, faith is a grace-empowered response which leads to a holy love of God and neighbor.<sup>141</sup>

Faith filled with the energy of love was Wesley’s answer to the mystery of redemption and it was an answer which avoided either a Pelagian optimism or an Augustinian pessimism. <sup>142</sup> “Is thy faith filled with the energy of love?”

And what of Wesley’s understanding of the possibilities of our participation in the very life of God? Here, we must return for a time to Chrysostom and then come back to Wesley.

In harmony with his doctrine of creation and his theological anthropology, Chrysostom’s idea of *theosis* is most pronounced in his explication of the doctrine of redemption. Responding to the question as to why fallen humanity should be allowed to participate in joyous communion with God, Chrysostom’s response was quite simple: the condescension of divine love. Here, in this love, was preliminary grace, the grace seen in creation and conscience, the grace necessary to the definition and functioning of them all. This is best seen in his doctrine of predestination.

God’s original plans for humanity to “become sons of God,” plans vouchsafed initially in creation and in the conscience, would not, could not be, lost in the fall. The constant energy of grace in creation and conscience even after the fall guarantees the active presence of a potential for joyous communion with God. It should be obvious, therefore, that *theosis* is vital to God’s absolute will for us. Of course, the energy of God’s love is always contingent upon the divine-human interaction, and the greatest of these interactions was the incarnation, in which God became human not simply to remove the sin of Adam which has been imputed to us but to “restore [us] to the likeness of God”<sup>143</sup> so that we could truly become “sons of God.” As Chrysostom expounds on God’s foreordination of the incarnation of God’s foreordained will to become human so that humans might become divine, he speaks of God’s preliminary love, the condescending love etched into the creation and into conscience, which preserves the potential for deification or *theosis*.

Having thus spoken of the good works of these, [Paul] again recurs to His grace. “In love,” saith he, “having predestinated us.” *Because this comes not of any pains, nor of any good works of ours, but of love; and yet not of love alone, but of our virtue also.* For if indeed of love alone, it would follow that all must be saved; whereas again were it the result of our virtue alone, then were His coming needless, and the whole dispensation. But it is the result neither of His love alone, nor yet of our virtue, but of both; “He chose us” saith the Apostle; and He that chooseth, knoweth what it is that He chooseth. “*In love,*” he adds, “*having fore-ordained us;*” *for virtue would never have saved anyone, had there not been love.* For tell me, what would Paul have profited, how would he have exhibited what he has exhibited, if God had not both called him from the beginning, and, in that He loved him, drawn him to Himself? But besides, His vouchsafing us so great privileges, was the effect of His love, not of our virtue. Because our being rendered virtuous, and believing, and coming nigh unto Him, even this again was the work of Him that called us unto Himself, and yet, notwithstanding, it is ours also. But that on our coming nigh unto Him, He should vouchsafe us so high privileges, as to bring us at once from a state of enmity, to the adoption of children, this is indeed the work of a really transcendent love.<sup>144</sup>

Although this divine-human interaction is God’s foreordained plan by which humanity partakes of God, Chrysostom makes it clear that the condescending love which brought about the incarnation is the sole “cause” of salvation (deification).

“In love,” saith he (Paul), “having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself.”

Do you observe how that nothing is done without Christ? Nothing without the Father, the one hath predestinated, the other hath brought us near. And these words he adds, by way of heightening the things which have been done, in the same way as he says also elsewhere, “And not only so, but we also rejoice in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. V.11) For great indeed are the blessings bestowed, yet are they made far greater in being bestowed through Christ; because He sent not any servant, though it was to servants He sent, but the Only-begotten Son Himself.

“According to the good pleasure,” he continues, “of his will.”

That is to say, because He earnestly willed it. This is, as one might say, His earnest desire. From the word “good pleasure” everywhere means the precedent will, for there is also another will. As for example, the first will is that sinners should not perish; the second will is, that, if men become wicked, they shall perish. For surely it is not by necessity that He punishes them, but because He wills it. . .

...What he means to say then is this, God earnestly aims at, earnestly desires, our salvation. *Wherefore then is it that He so*

*loveth us, whence hath He such affection? It is of his goodness alone; For grace itself*

*is the fruit of goodness. And for this cause, he saith, hath He predestinated us to the adoption of children; this being His will, and the object of his earnest wish, that the glory of His grace may be displayed.* 145

For no other reason than the goodness and mercy of God is fallen humanity constantly given the possibility of participating in God through Christ. The very nature of God is the initiating “cause” of joyous communion with him. 146 The merciful nature of God is the only basis of condescending love. Thus, the incarnation is the objective reality in (or the objective side to) what God does “for us” in making us to become his sons i.e., “sons of God.”<sup>147</sup> Chrysostom best expressed this in his description of the cross.

Let no man therefore be ashamed of the honored symbols of our salvation, and of the chiefest of all good things, whereby we even live, and whereby we are; but as a crown, so let us bear about the cross of Christ. Yea, for by it all things are wrought, that are wrought among us. Whether one is to be newborn, in baptism the cross is there; or to be nourished with that mystical food, or to be ordained, or to do anything else, everywhere our symbol of victory is present. Therefore both on house, and walls, we inscribe it with much care.

For of the salvation wrought for us, and of our common freedom, and of the goodness of our Lord, this is the sign.<sup>148</sup>

As Chrysostom sees it, the work of the incarnation and of the cross are continuations of the earlier workings of preliminary grace in creation and in the human conscience. They are objective acts of God’s mercy, of his condescending love.<sup>149</sup> Condescending love is meaningless, however, unless it can penetrate humanity to the extent that humanity can reciprocate. And here we must consider the subjective side of participation in the divine, that which is done “in us” at baptism <sup>150</sup>

“And such were some of you, but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the spirit of our God.” We promise to show you that they who approach the laver become clean from all fornication; *but the word has shown more, that they have become not only clean, but both holy and just, for it does not say only “ye were washed,” but also “ye were sanctified and were justified.” What could be more strange than this, when without toil, and exertion, and good works, righteousness is produced? For such is the lovingkindness of the Divine gift, that it makes men just without this exertion.* For if a letter of the Emperor, a few words being added, sets free those who are liable to countless accusations, and brings others to the highest honors; much rather will the Holy Spirit of God, who is able to do all things, free us from all evil and grant us much righteousness, and fill us with much assurance, and as a spark falling into the wide sea would straightway be quenched, or would become invisible, being overwhelmed by the multitude of the waters, so also all human wickedness, when it falls into the pool of the divine fountain, is more swiftly and easily overwhelmed by the multitude of the waters, so also all human wickedness, when it falls into the pool of the divine fountain, is more swiftly and easily overwhelmed, and made invisible,

than that spark. And for what reason, says one, if the laver take away all our sins, not a laver of remission of sins, nor a laver of cleansing, *but a laver of regeneration? Because it does not simply take away our sins, nor simply cleanse us from our faults, but so as if we were born again.* For it creates and fashions us anew, not forming us again out of earth, but creating us out of another element, namely, of the nature of water. *For it does not simply wipe the vessel clean, but entirely remolds it again. For that which is wiped clean, even if it be cleaned with care, has traces of its former condition, and bears the remains of its defilement, but that which falls into the new mould, and is renewed by means of the flames, laying aside all uncleanness, comes forth from the furnace, and sends forth the same brilliancy with things newly formed.* As therefore any one who takes and recasts a golden statue which has been tarnished by time, smoke, dust, rust, restores it to us thoroughly cleansed and glistening; so too this nature of ours, rusted with the rust of sin, and having gathered much smoke from our faults, and having lost its beauty, which He had from the beginning bestowed upon it from Himself. *God has taken and cast anew, and throwing it into the waters as into a mould, and instead of fire sending forth the grace of the Spirit, then brings us forth with much brightness, renewed, and made afresh, to rival the beams of the sun, having crushed the old man, and having fashioned a new man, more brilliant than the former.*<sup>151</sup>

As Chrysostom sees it, baptism effects a miraculous metamorphosis, a regeneration, which enables humanity to enter into joyous communion with God.<sup>152</sup> But the process of restoration is not here completed. Condescending love has restored the baptizands to the “image of the heavenly” and now “the energy of the Spirit” continues to enable them to become “sons of God.”<sup>153</sup> So, in the baptismal instructions themselves, Chrysostom speaks of the life of the believer after having come to the “laver of grace.” One who has been renewed by “the grace of the Spirit”<sup>154</sup> in baptism must thereafter remain dead to the sin once destroyed.<sup>155</sup>

As with much of his soteriology, Chrysostom’s notion of the objective/subjective character of salvation can be found in the antinomous rubrics of justification and sanctification in Wesley’s *ordo salutis*. Chrysostom’s understanding that the objective act of condescending love “for us” and the subjective work of the “energy of the Spirit” “in us” at baptism finds a strong parallel in Wesley’s thought.

For Wesley, faith is the condition of “proper salvation.” One receives this salvation only after one gives the active response of faith (repentance) and the

passive response of faith (trust). Moreover, as Wesley hammered out his idea of “proper Christian salvation” on the anvil of the faith-works debate, salvation came to be identified with the concomitant doctrines of justification and sanctification 156

As one looks at the faith-works problematic which Anglicanism sought to resolve with its *via media*, one can retrace the tracks that led Wesley to his specific synthesis of the evangelical and Catholic notions of faith and love. The Roman Catholic understanding of “faith formed by love,” with its ancillary notion of “infused grace” led to a tendency to confuse justification with sanctification. It made the latter the basis of the former. The Protestant concern for pardon, with its commitment to the notion of “faith formed Christ” and to the doctrine of justification as “imputed righteousness,” tended to obscure the participatory motifs of sanctification.<sup>157</sup> It would appear that the western debate over the question of the merit of human response and the western tendency to view the alternatives of faith and love as a dilemma had their roots in the West’s pessimistic anthropology, an anthropology built upon considerations of the fall. The Roman Catholic solution declared meritorious the efforts of those who “do their very best.” Infused grace, given in consequence of such efforts, led on to “faith formed by love,” and sanctification became the basis for justification.<sup>158</sup> Protestants countered with the insistence that no human response ever merits God’s acceptance. The gift of sovereign, saving grace brought faith with it, “faith formed by Christ.” After all, said they, our wills are in bondage. Justification must be the work of God alone.

The West responded as it did to the question of whether the human response to grace was meritorious for two reasons: its pessimistic anthropology, an anthropology which focussed upon the fall as a central or basic rubric; and its linking of the doctrine of justification to the problematic of the dialectic of divine grace and human freedom. This, of course, created a theological impasse in the West. The East bypassed this impasse because of its optimism of grace, an optimism grounded in its understanding of the *telos* of creation, a *telos* the essence of which the fall could not affect. God had, in condescending love, become what we are so that by the energy of that love we might become like Him. In soteriological terms, the East, by looking to the doctrine of sanctification (the *telos* of the redemptive process) to understand and evaluate the human response bypassed the impasse posed by and in the West. In yet other words, in the context of the doctrine of a real sanctification, divine grace and human freedom are not mutually exclusive; rather, divine grace coincides with human freedom. Pardon is granted with participation expressly in view.

Wesley’s concomitant doctrines of justification and sanctification conjoined the western motif of pardon and the eastern motif of participation. And, the process was reciprocal: the eastern correlation of faith and love enabled Wesley to fuse the motifs of pardon and participation in his doctrines of justification and sanctification. Then, the eastern paradigm of *theosis* overcame both the Pelagian

optimism that could be inferred from the idea of “faith formed by love” and the Augustinian pessimism that could be inferred from the idea of “faith formed by Christ.”

*Justification is another word for pardon.* It is the forgiveness of all our sins, and (what is necessarily implied therein) our acceptance with God. The price whereby this hath been procured for us (commonly termed the “meritorious cause” of our justification) is the blood and righteousness of Christ,...

*And at the same time that we were justified, yea, in that very moment, sanctification begins.* In that instant we are “born again” “born from above,” “born of the Spirit.” There is a real as well as a relative change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel the “love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us,” producing love to all mankind, and more especially to the children of God; and expelling the love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honor, or money; together with pride, anger, self-will, and every other evil temper, in a word, changing the “earthly, sensual, devilish mind” into “the mind which was in Christ.”<sup>159</sup>

The eastern paradigm of *theosis* was the missing link which helped Wesley to re-define the relationship between faith and love on the one hand and the concomitant doctrines of justification and sanctification on the other. The relative change in justification is not without real change in sanctification because both the “guilt of sin” and the “power of sin” have to be atoned for if one is to participate with the Great Physician and be healed and restored to the image of God.<sup>160</sup> Wesley overcame the problem posed by the Roman Catholic understanding of a “faith formed by love” by developing the synthesizing notion of a faith filled with the energy of love in justification and sanctification. The constant energy of love constantly interacts with the human character, making one constantly able to respond and responsible. A faith filled with the energy of love enables one actively to respond with “fruits meet for repentance” and to trust in the merits of Christ. One participates (may participate) precisely because of the constant energy of love. On the other hand, Wesley overcame the problem posed by the Protestant understanding of a “faith formed by Christ” by developing the idea of a faith filled with the energy of love. God became what we are by condescending love, not only to pardon us from the guilt of sin, but also to release us from the power of sin. And from that pardon and release, by the power of the energy of love, we may partake of God and be restored in his likeness. The relative change of pardon underwrites the real change of participation. In Wesley’s *ordo salutis*, faith filled with the energy of love becomes the capstone and in the polemics of debate, it overcomes the fusion, pardoned-in-order-to participate.

#### **IV. CONSIDERATIONS**

I have deliberately left a number of doors ajar here, hoping for further development in understanding both Wesley and the eastern tradition and for explo-

ration into the implications of shifting the paradigm from a western to an eastern one. Could it be that the various labels attached to Wesley, the “Anglican in earnest,” have not stuck because he is operating from an eastern paradigm, albeit he seeks to accommodate to western categories? Is the form of Wesley’s composite answer to the Christian life western while the substance is eastern?

Although the theological categories of West and East are not necessarily mutually exclusive, the theological rhetoric of each tradition becomes confusing if their respective points of departure are not grasped. For example, the teleological framework of eastern Christian thought is inscribed in the creation; eastern Christian thought does not take its intellectual or methodological point of departure from the fall. This means that the ontology of the East differs radically from that of the West. In soteriological terms, this means that the idea of divine grace and human freedom was not considered on a strictly rational plane; it was considered on a creational plane, where the two are in no way mutually exclusive. When it comes to understanding Wesley, it would seem that we will not grasp Wesley’s mingling of Latin and eastern ideas in developing his perception of original sin apart from some knowledge of how the eastern paradigm is in play. The issue of the merit of human response was not a problem in the East since the constant energy of love always coincides with human freedom, enabling one to participate in the divine nature of God. It is no wonder that Wesley’s understanding of the call for “fruit meet for repentance” met stubborn resistance and still suffers from a Pelagian whiplash in contemporary Wesleyan circles. Moreover the meaning of redemption was not simply that it was an external act, but that it releases and restores to the likeness of God for the purpose of joyous communion in boundless love with him. Wesley’s consequent idea of “proper salvation” as pardoned-in-order-to-participate can still be misleading if justification be taken as the locus, rather than sanctification.

If Wesley’s answer to the question of the nature of the Christian life, that it is faith filled with the energy of love, is a truly unique synthesis of Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions, then there is incredible potential in it for East/West ecumenical dialogue. As the winds of orthodoxy blow in the Wesleyan tradition, perhaps we can hear the fiddler once again, playing the melodious tune of divine grace and human freedom and hear the lyrics pardoned in order to participated and join in the amazing refrain of **FAITH FILLED WITH THE ENERGY OF LOVE.**

## Notes

1See Randy L. Maddox, “John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy: Influences, Convergences, and Differences,” for an excellent overview of the essential features of the relationship. This article will appear this Fall in the *Asbury Semarianian*. I am deeply indebted to Maddox for help and insights regarding critical distinctions between the theologies of East and West. See also, Paul Merntt Bassett

and William M. Greathouse, *The Historical Development*, vol.2 of *Exploring Christian Holiness* (3 vols.; Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1985), esp. pp.1920, 108; John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979); idem, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985); Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976); idem, *The Vision of God* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983); idem, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989); idem, *In the Image of God* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

2Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p.216. Cf. also pp.196200, where Lossky argues that the relationship between divine grace and human freedom is a mystery of coincidence, the explanation of which must not be transposed to the rational planean error made by Pelagius and Augustine. Rational understanding of grace and freedom separates these elements and makes them external to, and mutually exclusive of, one another. The eastern tradition too always viewed them as inseparable and as, together, the mysterious means of redemption.

3Albert Outler, "The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition," in Kenneth E. Rowe, ed., *The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1976), pp.1138, esp. pp.2932.

4Cf. A. M. Allehin, *Participation in God: A Forgotten Strand in the Anglican Tradition* (Wilton, CT; Morehouse-Barlow, 1988); and idem, *We Belong to One Another* (London: Epworth Press, 1956). In the former work, Allchin brings to our attention once again the strand of theosis which lies often forgotten within the Anglican tradition.

5Outler, *ibid.*

6George Croft Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), pp.337362, esp. p.347.

7Cf. Gordon Rupp, *Principalities and Powers* (London: Epworth Press, 1952). Rupp finds Cell's thesis specious and self-serving (p.82): ". . . It has sometimes been explained by saying that John Wesley combined the Protestant teaching of justification by faith with the Catholic concept of holiness. I do not find this an enlightening statement at all. In England it is almost always made by people slightly ashamed of their Protestantism and I do not think that it bears inspection ,

8Cell, *ibid.*, p.347.

9Ibid., pp.242272, esp. p.270. Cell contends that Wesley has taken great pains to deny a synergistic view of faith and repentance, justification and sanctification.



10Cf. *ibid.*, p. 362.

11Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979),p. 175.

12Ibid.

13Ibid. pp 174-175.

14Wesley does make a place for the cooperation of the human will with divine grace. But he radically differs in this from the Tridentine understanding, for he denies any merit or soteriological status to the human will either prior to or subsequent to justification. Cf. esp. Wesley, "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," Part I, in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed.in-chief Frank Baker (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984ff [vols. 7, 11, 5 and 26 originally appeared as *The Oxford Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed.in-chief Frank Baker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975 1983)111:107108. Hereinafter, references to this edition will be abbreviated as BE 11:107108, etc. Here, Wesley writes, "The Author of faith and salvation is God alone. It is he that works in us both to will and to do. He is the sole giver of every good gift, and the sole author of every good work. There is no more of power than of merit in man; but as all merit is in the Son of God, in what he has done and suffered for us, so all power is in the Spirit of God Cf. also, Howard Watkin-Jones, *The Holy Spirit from Arminius to Wesley* (London: Epworth Press, 1929), pp. 259273 (Chapter 13: "The Spirit and the Human Will").

15Ibid., 176.

16Ibid. Part of the problem in Williams' insistence in seeing in Wesley the Protestant emphasis on faith alone is a glaring error in assuming that Wesley "had no clear theological guidance to follow" (p.174). Wesley had the rich heritage of Anglicanism's *via media* as a guide and vision for his own synthesis of the Protestant ethic of grace and the Catholic ethic of holiness. Wesley had learned from the eastern fathers as well as his Anglican tradition the meaning of faith in the context of *theosis*.

17John L. Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), p.21. In spite of Peters' apparent ambiguity in his assessment of Cell's thesis, his work stands as a major contribution in the examination of Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection and the aberrant forms which it took when, in American Methodism, it was separated from its sacramental context.

18Cf. Jolin D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985) for a profound treatment of ontology from a Greek orthodox perspective.

19Cf. William R. Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946), pp.105106. Cannon argues that at least at the point at which it considers how one becomes a Christian, Wesley's soteriology is syn-

ergistic: “Once you grant to man a power great enough to make itself felt as a deciding factor in the acceptance or rejection of the means necessary for bestowal of saving faith, you lift him, whether you will or not, out of a state of mere passivity into one of activity and of cooperation or non-cooperation with the grace of God. . . . Wesleyan thought, therefore, is decidedly synergistic in its description of the operations prior to justification and essential to the bestowal of saving faith.”

20Ibid.,p. 116.

21Ibid.

22Ibid., p.117. Also ef, *ibid.*, pp.245246: The Reformers always begin with God, and the cause of man’s justification has no meaning apart from the electing power of divine grace. . . . Wesley always begins with man; and the cause of man’s holiness has no meaning apart from his free and willing acceptance of divine grace . . . and the deciding factor does not lie with God but remains solely within the bounds of man’s own decision.”

23Robert E. Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790]935*.(New York: Abingdon Press, 1965).

24Cf. John Deschner, *Wesley’s Christology, An Interpretation* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960), p.185. Deschner argues that Wesley’s doctrine of justification is “not simply a representation of Reformation doctrine, but a peculiar adaptation of that doctrine, shaped to meet the needs of his doctrine of sanctification.”

25Cf. Cannon, *ibid.*, p.244.

26Cf. Harald Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Wilmore, Ky.: Francis Asbury Publishing Company, 1980), p.42: “The basic corruption of natural man is again portrayed as a disease, salvation as a restoration to health. A conception of religion which accepts such a view of sin must be determined by the idea of sanctification.” Also see, Cohn Williams, *ibid.*, pp.99100; Albert Outler, *ibid.*, pp.2931; *idem*, “John Wesley’s Interests in the Early Fathers of the Church,” *United Church of Canada Committee on Archives and History Bulletin* 29 (19801982), 517, esp. 10: John Wesley, *Sermons*, Albert Outler, ed. (3 vols.; vols. 13 of the *Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, Frank Baker, ed.in-chief; Nashville; Abingdon Press, 1975ff.), 2.170185, Outler’s introductory comment.

27Cannon, *ibid.*, pp.105107. Cannon disagrees with Cell’s insistence that Wesley’s rejection did not affect his “monergism” (p.106): “Yet [Cell] does not see that to deny predestination and to affirm free and universal grace is at once automatically to lift man into the picture and to make him an integral part, if not of the actual act of his own justification, at least of the conditions relative to its execution. Man does not justify himself; he does not merit his own justification

by any positive works that he may perform or by any righteousness that he may acquire. But he does have an active part in the acquisition of faith, which is the sole condition of justification.” Cf. Cell, *ibid.*, pp.242 272.

28Cf. Cannon, *ibid.*, p.106.

29Cf John Wesley, *The Letters of John Wesley*, ed. John Telford (8 vols.; London: Epworth Press, 1960), 4:296300. Also cf. Letter to John Newton, May 14, 1765 (*ibid.*, 6:298300) concerning the real rub in the Reformed doctrine of predestination: “I think on Justification just as I have done any time these seven-and-twenty years, and just as Mr. Calvin does. In this respect I do not differ from him an hair’s breadth.... **“But the main point between you and me is Perfection....** I then saw in a stronger light than ever before that only *one thing is needful, even faith that worketh by the love* of God and man, all inward and outward holiness and I groaned to love God with *all my heart* and to serve Him with *all my strength....* In God’s name I entreat you to make me sensible of this! Show me by plain, strong reasons what dishonour this hope does to Christ, wherein it opposes Justification by Faith or any fundamental truth of religion.” (**Boldface** is my emphasis.)

30Cf. John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), comment on I Peter 1:2: “The true predestination, or fore-appointment of God is, . . . They who receive the precious gift of faith, thereby become the sons of God; and, being sons, they shall receive the Spirit of holiness to walk as Christ also walked. Throughout every part of this appointment of God, promise and duty go hand in hand. All is free gift; and yet such is the gift, that the final issue depends on our future obedience to the heavenly call. But other predestination than this, either to life or death eternal, the scripture knows not of.” Here emerges Wesley’s doctrine of justification from the perspective of sanctification.

31Cf. John Wesley, “A Blow at the Root; or, Christ Stabbed in the House of His Friends,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (14 vols.; 3d ed.; London: Methodist Conference Office, 1872; reprint; Kansas City, Mo.,: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1978), 10:364369. Wesley offers a number of theological reasons for the appearance of antinomianism. Chief among them is the *solafideism* of those Protestant doctrines of justification which see salvation essentially as imputed (as opposed to imparted) righteousness, declaring, “‘we need none (i.e., no righteousness] of our own’ and ‘turn the grace of God into lasciviousness’ thereby striking ‘a blow at the root’ the root of all holiness, all true religion. Hereby Christ is ‘stabbed in the house of his friends,’ (10:366) Wesley’s antidote to a merely forensic doctrine of justification under the umbrella of predestination in the context of the righteousness of God in Christ was “[that the believer is] not only accounted, but actually ‘made righteous.’ ‘The law’the inward power’of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made’ you

‘free’—really, actually free—’from the law’ or power ‘of sin and death.’ . . . Not [granting] freedom from the law of God, or the works of God, but from the law of sin and the works of the devil.” (*ibid.*)

32Cf. Allan Coppedge, *John Wesley in Theological Debate* (Wilmore, Ky.: Wesley Heritage Press, 1987), esp. pp.265-272. Coppedge argues convincingly that “the hub of disagreement was centered on tension between predestination and holiness,” but he struggles with the incessant dilemma over monergism/synergism which is created by looking at Wesley’s soteriology in strictly western terms. Coppedge describes Wesley’s synthesis of divine grace and human freedom as a synergism within a monergistic context, that is to say, when the accent is upon divine grace, Wesley’s synthesis sounds monergistic; when it is upon human freedom, it sounds synergistic. Coppedge attributes the form which Wesley’s synthesis takes to his doctrine of prevenient grace. Having thus described the synthesis in the context of the doctrine of prevenient grace, Coppedge acknowledges that the crux of the matter may lie more deeply; that rather than being a matter of resolving the monergism/synergism dilemma, it is a matter of understanding the categories. Also cf. Cell, *ibid.*, p.362. Here, Cell cites Wesley and says, “the real issue between me and extreme Calvinism is in the doctrine of holiness or Christian Perfection.”

33It should be noted that Wesley’s idea of a synergism in the context of “fruits meet for repentance” is fundamentally different from the idea of synergism opposed by the Reformers~g., “synergism” as described in the Formula of Concord, Art. 11 (of Free Will), in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom* (3 vols.; reprint of 6th ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 3:106-114. For the Reformers, synergism is possible only after justification.

34John Wesley, Letter to John Fletcher (August 18, 1775), *The Letters of John Wesley*, ed. cit., 6:174-175. When one reads Pelagius in the eastern context of *theosis* his understanding of moral responsibility seems quite plausible. The doctrine of justification too takes on a different tone when described from the context of the notion of faith filled with the energy of love. It may be this context which affected Wesley when he wrote in this private letter to John Fletcher (one written long after the Minute Controversy concerning the doctrine of predestination): “Does not he [Dean Tucker in his letters to Dr. Kippisi show beyond all contradiction that it [the doctrine of predestination currently held by the Calvinists] *was hatched by Augustine in spite to Pelagius (who very probably held no other heresy than you and I do now)*; that it spread more and more in the Western Church till the eleventh century; that Peter Lombard then formed it into a complete system; that in the twelfth century Thomas Aquinas bestowed much pains in explaining and confirming it; that in the thirteenth Duns Scotus did the same; that Ignatius Loyola and all the first Jesuits held it, as all the Dominican and Augustine Friars (with the Jansenists) do to this day; that Bellarmine was firm in it, as were the bulk of Romanists, till the Council of Trent, when in furious opposition

to Luther and Calvin, they disclaimed their ancient tenets. . . . *The doctrine of Justification and Salvation by Faith are grievously abused by many Methodists.*” (Emphasis by italics mine.) See also John Wesley, *Concise Ecclesiastical History* (4 vols.; London: I. Paramore, 1781), 1:248n: “I doubt whether he [Pelagius] was more a Heretic than Castellio or Arminius.”

35Alexander Knox, *Remains of Alexander Knox, Esq.* (4 vols.; London: Duncan and Malcolm, 1844), 3:152153.

36Knox, *ibid.*, 3:152153. Emphasis by italics is mine to accent the “how” and “why” of Wesley’s use of Chrysostom, as he learned them from his “classical” Anglican heritage. See also *idem*, “Remarks on the life and character of John Wesley” in Robert Southey, *Life of Wesley*, ed. Maurice Fitzgerald (London: Oxford University Press, 1925). 2.

37Cf. Knox, *Remains of Alexander Knox, Esq.*, 3:482483. Here, Knox writes of these two accents: “In the latter, the reanimating energies of the Gospel, their deep necessity and their infallible efficacy, are profoundly and wisely demonstrated: while, in the founder [I. e., John Wesley], the heights of Christian virtue are pointed to, not only as what ought to be aimed at, but as what may be actually reached and enjoyed when the immortal mind of man has obtained new life and new wings from the omnipotent Spirit of God. On the other hand, Chrysostom seems to have had far less skill in the remedial operation of Christianity than Augustin; while the latter had so contemplated the moral disease of the human mind, as greatly to have lost sight of its restored capability.”

38Knox, *ibid.*, 3:155156. Emphasis by italics is mine. Also see Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, Philippians 3:89: “To refer this to justification only is to pervert the whole scope of the words. They manifestly relate to sanctification also; yea, to that chiefly. . . . Here also the apostle is far from speaking of justification only.

39Cf. Albert Outler, ed., *John Wesley*, Library of Protestant Thought, 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. viii. Outler finds Wesley to be a major contributor to the Christian tradition because he had “glimpsed the underlying unity of Christian truth in both the Catholic and Protestant traditions. . . . In the name of Christianity both Biblical and patristic, he managed to transcend the stark doctrinal disjunctions which had spilled so much ink and blood since Augsburg and Trent. In their stead, he proceeded to develop a theological fusion of faith and good works, Scripture and tradition, revelation and reason, God’s sovereignty and human freedom, universal redemption and conditional election, Christian liberty and an ordered polity, the assurance of pardon and the risks of ‘falling from grace,’ original sin and Christian perfection.”

40Cf. Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1975). Also see *idem*, “The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition,” *ibid.*, p.16. Here, Outler contends that Wesley’s real place in the Christian

tradition is in a “third alternative” formula: “faith alone/holy living.” “It was Wesley, heir to the Protestant agony but rooted in an older, richer tradition of Scripture and tradition, who recognized more clearly than any other theologian of his time that the old Reformation polarities had ceased to define the Christian future . . . Thus in the swirlings of the Revival and in reaction to its anomalies Wesley conceived his theological vocation as the message of ‘faith alone’ and ‘holy living,’ affirmed together in negation of all polarizations.”

41 Outler, John Wesley, p.251. Outler describes the “third alternative” precisely as faith alone and holy living; the foundation of the way being faith, and the fullness of faith (holy living) being the goal. “[Wesley] was as vitally concerned with the ‘fullness of faith’ (i.e., sanctification) as with its beginnings (i.e., justification); as confident of the goal of the Christian life as of its foundation. He tried both by faith! and between those good works appropriate to the reconciled sinner and to the mature Christian as well. This insistent correlation between the genesis of faith and its fullness marks off Wesley’s most original contribution to Protestant theology.”

42 Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith.* *An Introduction to the Study of the Faith* (Grand Rapids: William.B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), pp.424-427. On pp.426-427, Berkhof says, “It is remarkable how rarely the question concerning God’s purpose in the renewal of man has been explicitly discussed in the study of faith. Its attention has focused on the renewal itself; its results were preferably called ‘fruits,’ and so the goal-problematics was by passed. An important exception in this respect was Methodism, particularly its founder, John Wesley. He characterized the goal as Christian perfection, . . . He conceived of perfection as living totally from the love of Christ, which drives out all sin. . . Theologically this position of Wesley deserves to be taken more seriously than is usually done. One could at least acknowledge his goal-problematics and try to find an alternative.”

43 Knox, *ibid.*, 3:162-164. Emphasis by italics is mine.

44 E.g., *Athanasius, De incarnatione Verbi Dei*, 54. Athanasius says this in these and other words many times in his works. Also see, G. W. H. Lampe, “Christian Theology in the Patristic Period,” in *A History of Christian Doctrine*, eds. H. Cunliffe-Jones and Benjamin Drewery (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p.149. Lampe shows how this theme is developed by Chrysostom, who makes it inseparable from the monastic ideal, holiness. “There are two central ideas, repeatedly expressed by the writers of this period, to which all those aspects are related and in the light of which they have to be understood. The first of these is the concept of ‘Deification’ or ‘divinization’ . . . as the goal of salvation and as the process by which the blessings of salvation, the fruit of Christ’s saving work, may be progressively experienced by the believer during this present life. The second is the interpretation of the saving work of Christ as an “exchange of places” by which the Logos/Son took upon himself, or entered into,

the human state in order to enable sinful, alienated and perishing human beings to enter, through incorporation into himself, the state of sonship towards God.

“‘Sonship towards God’ is in fact virtually equivalent to what is generally denoted by ‘deification’ in patristic theology; for ‘deification’ or ‘likeness to God’ (*homoiosis theoi*) means operation of sanctifying grace, already experienced by believers who are indwelt by the Spirit and enjoy communion with God as sons of a Father, but to be brought to its complete realization only in the final consummation ...”

45John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979). p.3; also see pp.1 4, 145146, 224226. On p.146, Meyendorff quotes Theodoret of Cyrus (a contemporary of Augustine of Hippo) and sheds invaluable light on the mystery of salvation from the eastern perspective: “If [says Theodoret] the only meaning of baptism were the remission of sins, why would we baptize the newborn children who have not yet tasted of sin? But the mystery [of baptism] is not limited to this; it is a promise of greater and more perfect gifts. In it are the promises of future delights; it is a type of the future resurrection, a communion with the master’s passion, a participation in His resurrection, a mantle of salvation, a tunic of gladness, a garment of light, or, rather, it is light itself.” Meyendorff then comments further on the mystery of salvation: “Communion in the risen body of Christ; participation in divine life; sanctification through the energy of God, which penetrates true humanity and restores it to its ‘natural’ state, rather than justification, or remission of inherited guilt, these are at the center of the Byzantine understanding of the Christian Gospel.” For particular help in understanding Byzantine theology and the eastern formulation of soteriology, consult the following: Albert Outler, “The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition,” in *The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition*, ed. Kenneth Rowe (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1976), pp.11-38, esp. pp.29 30; Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976); idem, *The Vision of God* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1983); idem, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1989); idem, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985); John D. Zizioulis, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985); John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985); idem, *Catholicity and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1983); idem, *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1982); idem, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1989); Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ: The Nature of the Human Person* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1987); Georgias I. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984); Kallistos (Timothy) Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s

Seminary Press, 1980); idem, *The Orthodox Church* (Penguin ed.; New York: Penguin, 1984 [originally published in 1963]); George Cronk, *The Message of the Bible: An Orthodox Christian Perspective* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982); 1. Patout Burns, "The Economy of Salvation: Two Patristic Traditions," *Theological Studies* 37 (1976), 598-619; idem, "Introduction," in *Theological Anthropology* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981); A. Monk, *Orthodox Spirituality* (3d ed.; Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987).

46Very early in his life, Wesley began to ask the ultimate question: "What must I do to be saved?" Cf. BE 18:212213. His consistent answer seemed to be found in his sincerest endeavors: "'I show my faith by my works,' by staking my all upon it." (Ibid., 211) And after much personal anguish and despondency Wesley reflects on the futility of his works: "This then have I learned... that my own works, my own sufferings, my own righteousness, are so far from reconciling me to an offended God, so far from making any atonement for the least of those sins, ... I have no hope, but that if I seek I shall find Christ, and 'be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' . . . The faith I want is a 'sure trust and confidence in God, that through the merits of Christ, my sins are forgiven, and I am reconciled to the favor of God.'" (Ibid., 214216) For a listing of various accounts of Wesley's life, consult Outler, *John Wesley*, p. 38n4.

47Albert Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*, p.35. From the pen of Wesley came two theologically reflective passages written in the year 1738 which confirm Outler's insightful perception of Wesley's third alternative. The first is a theological memorandum covering the period from the beginning of his ministry to the end of his Georgia interlude. The second ponders the effect of Aldersgate. Both accounts of this theological autobiography help unravel some of the tangled elements of his quandary. Also cf. BE 18:208-255.

48Cf. C. F. Allison, *The Rise of Moralism* (London: S. P. C. K., 1966), p. x. Allison has convincingly substantiated his position with a careful examination of seventeenth-century Anglicans along with a select few non-Anglicans for good measure.

49Ibid., p.1. The axial question of the formal cause of justification seems to be the only traceable theological point on which there was unanimity during that period. This consensus also bred consensus in rejecting the Council of Trent's answer to the question of the formal cause of justification: inherent righteousness. Outler, in his article, "The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition," in *The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition*, p. 37n35: "There is no word of inherent righteousness, apart from grace, in this text or none can rightly be derived from it." Outler had earlier (ibid., p.25) suggested that William Perkins, in his *A Golden Chaine, or the Description of Theologie; Containing the Order of the Cause of Salvation and Damnation, According to God's Word* is responsible for



misconstruing Trent's formal cause as meaning the infusion of an inherent human righteousness. It is the additional accent on human righteousness that radically abridges "classical" Anglicanism with a resultant soteriology of moral rectitude.

50Allison, *ibid.*, p.184. Emphasis by italics is mine. Allison argues that this "imputation of faith" was so defined as to "include repentance, amendment of life, and sincere endeavors."

51Ibid.

52Cf, John Whitehead, *The Life of John Wesley*, MA. (2 vols.; Dublin: John Jones, 1805), 1:402403. Whitehead, a personal friend of Wesley's, writes of the young Wesley's dilemma: "What kept his mind in a state of perplexity, was, a confused notion of justification; which he either confounded with sanctification, or thought a man must be sanctified before he can be justified. This notion hindered him from perceiving, that to justify in the language of Paul, is to pardon a repenting believing sinner, as an act of grace; not for the sake of any previous holiness in him, but through Jesus Christ alone. As soon as he was convinced of this, he was no longer embarrassed and perplexed; he saw immediately the plan which the Gospel proposes of reconciling sinners to God, of making them holy in heart and life, and of giving them a sure hope, full of immortality."

53Cf John Wesley, Sermon: "On God's Vineyard," BE 3:505507. Wesley here states the *raison d'être* of Methodism: "It has been frequently observed that very few were clear in their judgment both with regard to justification and sanctification. Many who have spoken and written admirably well concerning justification had no clear conception, nay, were totally ignorant, of the doctrine of sanctification. Who has written more ably than Martin Luther on justification by faith alone? And who was more ignorant of the doctrine of sanctification, or more confused in his conceptions of it? In order to be thoroughly convinced of this, of his total ignorance with regard to sanctification, there needs no more than to read over, without prejudice, his celebrated comment on the Epistle to the Galatians. On the other hand, how many writers of the Romish Church (as Francis Sales and Juan de Castanza in particular) have wrote more strongly and scripturally on sanctification; who nevertheless were entirely unacquainted with the nature of justification. Insomuch that the whole body of their divines at the Council of Trent in their Catechismus and Parochos totally confound sanctification and justification together. But it has pleased God to give the Methodists a full and clear knowledge of each, and the wide difference between them. . . . It is then a great blessing given to this people that, as they do not think or speak of justification so as to supersede sanctification, so neither do they think or speak of sanctification so as to supersede justification. They take care to keep each in its own place, laying equal stress on one and the other."

54Cf. Frances Young, "Grace and Demand: the Heart of Preaching," *Epworth Review* 12, 2(1985), 4655. Young argues that the balance of grace and

demand in Chrysostom's preaching parallels that of Wesley's, thereby suggesting a striking congruence in their soteriologies. While Young's discovery of parallels in the preaching of the two John's is interesting, her conclusion is disappointing. Young denies the probability of Wesley's dependence upon Chrysostom on the grounds that Wesley read the Fathers through the filters of the Anglican tradition. And (p.55), "apart from the special case of the Pseudo Macarian Homilies which may well have influenced his doctrine of Christian Perfection, he [John Wesley] does not seem to have been stimulated into any distinctive insights by his patristic reading. . . . Wesley did, of course, assimilate his reading and make it his own: unconsciously he probably assimilated from Chrysostom. But the similarities in the 'deep structures' of the preaching of these two must be attributed not to direct dependence but to the natural congruence of those wedded, as these two were, to faithful preaching of the Gospel, irrespective of time, culture and circumstances."

55Knox, *ibid.*, 3:4546.

56BE 25:158.

57BE 25:171.

58BE 25:171. Also see John Wesley, "Address to the Clergy" in *Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 10:480500. It would seem that Wesley used Chrysostom's *On the Priesthood* as a model for this work. There are in it a number of clear parallels and affinities with Chrysostom's essay.

59Samuel Wesley [son of Charles Wesley], *The Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson (2 vol.; London: John Mason, 1841). 2:449534.

60BE 25:171

61Samuel Wesley, *ibid.*, 2:518.

62Cf. for example, Kelly Steve McCormick, "John Wesley's Use of John Chrysostom on the Christian Life: Faith Filled with the Energy of Love" (Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 1984).

63Cf. Outler, ed., *John Wesley*, pp.9 and 252. Outler contends (p.9) that in those early impressionable years, Wesley "drank deep of this Byzantine tradition of spirituality at its source and assimilated its conception of devotion as the way and perfection as the goal of the Christian life."

64The direct reading would probably have come from the 13 vol. Benedictine edition of Chrysostom's works which was readily available and widely used by scholars in the original Greek and in Latin in Wesley's day.

65John Wesley, "Address to the Clergy," *Works*, ed. Jackson, 10:484.

66Cf. Samuel Wesley [son of Charles Wesley], *ibid.*, 2:521, quotes Samuel Wesley, father of John and Charles Wesley: "Bishop Beveridge's Sermons are a library; writ in the most natural, moving, unaffected style, especially the introductions, which seem generally to be thoroughly wrought. They are perhaps as like

those of the apostolical ages as any between them and us; and I know not whether one would not as soon wish to preach like him, as like any since the Apostles; because I cannot tell whether any has done more good by his Sermons.”

67BE 1:183. Susanna Wesley writes: “If you will but read Bishop Beveridge on faith, and repentance, Vol.7th, you’ll find him a better divine than Fiddes.’

68Cf. Outler, ed., *John Wesley*, p.12.

69Samuel Wesley [son of Charles Wesley], *ibid.*, pp.509,521,527,529.

70Cf. *ibid.*, p.522.

71*Ibid.*, pp.514, 518, and 521. Samuel Wesley [father of John] says (p.521): “Bishop Pearson all the world allows to have been of almost inimitable sense, piety, and learning; his critique of Ignatius, and his tract on the Creed, must last as long as time, and ought to be in every Clergymen’s study in England

72*Ibid.*, 2:518, 521, 526.

73*Ibid.* ,2:514.

74*Ibid.*,2:514,531.

75*Ibid.*, 2:523.

76Cf. Richard Heitzenrater, *John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists*, 1725  
1735, pp.4749.

77Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, pp.225226. Meyendorff explains (p. 225) the integral relationship between theosis and anthropology: “Man, while certainly a creature and, as such, external to God, is defined, in his very nature, as being fully himself only when he is in communion with God.... This is precisely the reason why the doctrine of *theosis* i.e., the process through which, in Christ, man recovers his original relation to God and grows into God ‘from glory to glory’ is the central theme of Byzantine theology and of the Eastern Christian experience itself.”

78John Chrysostom, *Comm. in Joann.*, Hom. 10 (John 1:1113) [Eng. trans. from NPNF (1st series) 14:3637]). Emphasis by italics is mine. Notice that Chrysostom’s language of deification is spoken of in terms of adoption so that the union with God is a union of faith validated in holy living and not some mystical union.

79Cf. Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*, pp.8184. Outler claims that Wesley explicitly paired off “happy and holy” fifty-four times and remained a eudaemonist all of his life.

80John Wesley, Sermon: “The Circumcision of the Heart,” BE 1:408. Also see idem, Sermon: “The Righteousness of Faith,” BE 1:213214: “*It is wisdom to aim at the best end by the best means. Now the best end which any creature can pursue is happiness in God. And the best end a fallen creature can pursue is the*

recovery of the favor and image of God. But the best, indeed the only means under heaven given to man whereby he may regain the favor of God, which is better than life itself, or the image of God, which is the true life of the soul, is the submitting to the ‘righteousness which is of faith,’ the believing in the only begotten Son of God.” Strikingly, the same theme of “happy and holy” is equally predominant in the sermons of William Beveridge. E.g., Beveridge, *Works*, 5:121: “Consider, as there is none can be happy but he that is first holy, so none can be holy but he shall be happy too; . . . set yourselves in good earnest upon the use of all those means whereby you may become “holy as God is holy;” which if ye would also do, how happy would you be!” See also, *idem*, *ibid.*, 5:90: “Nothing being more certain than ‘without holiness no man shall see the Lord,’ nothing surely can be more necessary than to know what this holiness is, and how to attain unto it: a question which all mankind, of whatsoever estate or condition they be, are equally concerned to understand, in order to their being happy. For as it is impossible for any one to be happy that is not first holy, so it is impossible likewise for any one to be holy that doth not first know what it is to be so.” Both Wesley and Beveridge wrote sermons entitled “The One Thing Needful,” echoing the repeated theme of “happy and holy.”

81Cf. Wesley, *Response to a Tract of Mr. Rowland Hill*, *Works*, ed. Jackson, 10:450; and *idem*, “Sermon”Hypocrisy in Oxford,” BE 4:358. From the perspective of Eastern Orthodoxy, liturgy is perhaps the highest expression of theology, and from the mid-sixteenth-century, Anglicanism has considered the *Book of Common Prayer* as having equal status with the “Thirty-nine Articles” and the Homilies. Cf. J. Brian Sellick, “The Book of Common Prayer in the Theology of John Wesley,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 1983). For a continued discussion of the role of theology in Eastern Orthodoxy consult: Vladimir Lossky, *A Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*; John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*; Kallistos (Timothy) Ware, *The Orthodox Church*;

82Cf. Wesley, Sermon: “The Way to the Kingdom,” BE 1:218232 for a pronounced distinction between “inward” and “outward” holiness in the context of active love.

83John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp. Paul.Rom.*, Hom. 3 (Rom. 1:1824 [Eng. tr. from NPNF (1st series) 11:352]). Emphasis by italics is mine.

84Wesley, *Letters: A Letter to the Reverend Doctor Conyers Middleton occasioned by his late “Free Inquiry”* (January 4, 174949 , ed. Telford, 2:379. Emphasis by italics is mine.

85Wesley, Sermon: “God’s Approbation of His Works,” BE 2:379. Emphasis by italics is mine.

86John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp. Paul.Eph.*, Hom. 19 (Eph. 5:1517 [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 11:354]).

87John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp. Paul.- Rom.*, Hom. 3 (Rom. 1: 1824 [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 11:354]).

88John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp. Paul.Rom.*, Hom. 4 (Rom. 1:2627 [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 11:356]); *ibid.*, Horn. 5 (Rom. 1:282:15 [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 11:361]). Chrysostom writes of the Manichaeian threat: “Now when [Paul] was discoursing of their [the pagan philosophers’] doctrines, he put before them the world and man’s understanding, telling them that, by the judgment afforded them by God, they might through the things which are seen, have been led as by the hand to the Creator, and then, by not willing to do so, they remained inexcusable.” In *idem*, *ibid.* I Cor., Hom. 3 (I Cor. 1 [Eng. Ir; from NPNF (first series) 12:24]): “. . . so God also commanded in the beginning to trace Him by the idea which the creation gives For further discussion of the knowledge of God through creation, consult *idem*, *Hom. 21 de statuis 12* [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 9:419-425]).

89John Chrysostom. *Hom. 21 de statuis 11* [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 9:413].

90John Chrysostom, *Hom. 21 de statuis 12* [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 9:421]). Emphasis by italics is mine. Chrysostom believes that the implanting of conscience in humanity is an act of God’s providence. Cf. *idem*. *Hom. in epp. Paul.-Rom.*, Hom. 5 (Rom. 1:16 [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 11:365]): “For the conscience and reason doth suffice in the Law’s stead. By this he showed, first, that God made man independent, so as to be able to choose virtue and to avoid vice. And be not surprised that he proves this point, not once or twice, but several times. For this topic was very needful for him to prove owing to those who say, Why ever is it, that Christ came but now? And where in times before was the . . . scheme of Providence? Now it is these that he is at present beating off by the way, when he shows that even in former times, and before the Law was given the human race fully enjoyed the care of Providence.” Also cf. *idem*, *Hom. 21 de statuis 12* [Eng. Ir. in NPNF (first series) 9:423]; *idem*, *Hom. in epp. Paul;~Rom.*, Hom. 1 (Rom. 1 [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 11:342]); *idem*, *ibid.*, Hom. 12 (Rom. 6:13 [NPNF (first series) 11:423]). For continued discussions of creation and anthropology in Chrysostorn, cf *idem*, *Hom. 21 de statuis*, Hom. 7 [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 9:390395]; *idem*, *ibid.*, Horn. 10 (Eng. Ir. in NPNF (first series) 9:406 412]; *idem*, *ibid.*, Hom. 11 [Eng. Ir. NPNF (first series) 9:412418]; *idem*, *ibid.*, Hom. 12 (Eng tr. in NPNF (first series) 9:418425]; *idem*, *ibid*, Hom. 13 (Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 9:425431].

91John Wesley, Sermon: “On Working Out Your Own Salvation,” BE 3:207. Emphasis by italics is mine. Cf. the editorial comment on this sermon, *ibid.*, BE 3:199: “This must be considered as a landmark sermon, for it stands as the late Wesley’s most complete and careful exposition of the mystery of divine-human interaction, his subtlest probing of the paradox of prevenient grace and human agency.”

92John Wesley, Sermon: “On Conscience,” BE 3:481482.

93John Chrysostom, *Hom. 21 de statutis*, 13 [Eng. Ir; from NPNF (first series) 9:428429].

94John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, Romans 2:14 16. Here, Wesley explains how it is that the heathen can do by nature that which is written in the law: “That is, without an outward rule; though this also, strictly speaking, is by preventing grace. . . what the law is to the Jews, they are by the grace of God, to themselves; namely a rule of life.”

95Cf. John Wesley, Sermon: “On Conscience,” BE 3:482. N.B. the christological basis of conscience as prevenient grace.

96Cf. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp. Paul.~ Cor.*, Horn. 3 (I Cor. 1:10 [Eng. Ir; in NPNF (first series) 12:10]).

97John Chrysostom, *ibid Rom.*, Horn. 11 (Rom. 6:518 [Eng. Ir. in NPNF (first series) 11: 410.423]): “...it might be shown what a great evil sin is, namely, a listless will, an inclinableness to the worse side, the actual doing, and the perverted judgment. For this is the cause of all evils; See also [Eng. tr.] “Against Those Who Say that Demons Govern Human Affairs,” and “On the Power of Man to Resist the Devil,” Eng. Ir. in NPNF (first series) 9:172 197.

98Cf. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp. Paul Rom.*, Horn. 10 (Rom. 5:126:4 [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 11:401, 403]). Commenting specifically on Rom. 5:19 [NPNF 11:402], Chrysostom says: “. . . through the offense of one many were made sinners. For the fact that when he had sinned and become mortal, those who were of him should be also, is nothing unlikely.... What then does the word ‘sinners’ mean here? To me it seems to mean liable to punishment and condemned to death. Now that by Adam’s death we all become mortals,...” Earlier, commenting on Rom. 5:12

[Eng. tr. NPNF (first series) 11:401], Chrysostom had said; “. . . But what means, ‘for that all have sinned?’ This: he having once fallen, even they that had not eaten of the tree did from him, all of them, become mortal.”

99Cf. John Chrysostom, *ibid.*, Horn. 11 (Rom. 6:1012 [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 11:410]); *idem, ibid.*, *Hom. in Matt. 59* (Matt. 18:714 [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 10:365367]). Chrysostom often argues that the cause of evil or sin is not of our nature but of our free choice (“listless will”).

100John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp. Paul Rom. 10* (Rom. 5:19 [Eng. tr. in NPN,~ (first series) 11:404]): “. . . we are so far from taking any harm from this death and condemnation, if we be sober-minded, that we are the gainers even by having become mortal, first, because it is not an immortal body in which we sin; secondly, because we get numberless grounds for being religious . . . for if we be so minded, not death only, but even the devil himself will be unable to hurt us. And besides there is this also to be said, that immortality awaits us, and after hav-

ing been chastened a little while, we shall enjoy the blessings to come without fear, being as if in a sort of school in the present life, under instruction by means of disease, tribulation, temptations, and poverty, and the other apparent evils, with a view to our becoming fit for the reception of the blessings of the world to come. ‘We are still response-able and responsible.

101Cf. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp. Paul Rom.*, Hom. 11 (Rom. 6:518 [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 11:410]) *Hom. in Matt*; 59 (Matt. 18:7ff. [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 10:365367J]). Emphasis by italics mine. In Hom; in epp. Paul; Rom., Hom. 12 (Rom. 6:13 [Eng. Ir. from NPNF (first series) 11:423]), Chrysostom notes that sin is not something of nature but arises out of a misuse of freedom: “But when you hear me speak of sin, do not think of it as a substantial power, but evil doing, as it comes upon men and goes from them continually, and which, before it takes place, has no being, and when it has taken place, vanishes again. This then was why the Law was given. Now no law is ever given to put an end to things natural, but in order to correct a way of acting purposely wicked. And this the lawgivers that are without too are aware of, and all mankind in general. For it is the evils from viciousness alone that they are for setting right, and they do not undertake to extirpate those allotted us along with our nature; since this they cannot do. For things natural remain unalterable [Aristotle, *Nichom; ethics* b.2, c.1J, as we have told you frequently in other discourses also.”

102John Chrysostom, *ibid.*, Horn. 10 (Rom. 5:17 [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 11: 403]): “What he [Paul] says amounts to this nearly. What armed death against the world? The one man’s eating from the tree only. If then death attained so great power from one offence, when it is found that certain received a grace and righteousness out of all proportion to that sin, how shall they still be liable to death? And for this cause he does not here say ‘grace,’ but ‘superabundance of grace. For it was not as much as we must have to do away the sin only, that we received of His grace, but even far more. For we were at once freed from punishment, and put off all iniquity, and were also born again from above (Jn. 3:3) and rose again with the old man buried, and were redeemed, justified, led up to adoption, sanctified, made brothers of the Only-begotten, and joint heirs and of one Body with Him, and counted for His Flesh, and even as a Body with the Head, so were we united unto Him! All these things then Paul calls a ‘superabundance’ of grace, showing that what we received was not a medicine only to countervail the wound, but even health, and comeliness, and honor, and glory and dignities far transcending our natural state. And of these each in itself was enough to do away with death, but when all manifestly run together in one, there is not the least vestige of it left, nor can a shadow of it be seen, so entirely is it done away....” This is an example of Chrysostom’s expounding on the “superabundance of grace.”

103Cf. John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, pp.138150; and Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, pp.6468.

104In Wesley's theological understanding, original sin anticipates, as it were, prevenient grace. Hence, the doctrine of original sin is nuanced in meaning and function as it pivots around the threefold doctrine of the *imago Dei*; Wesley's sermon, "The New Birth," defines the *imago Dei* from the perspective of theosis in such a way that the *effects* of the fall are also to be understood from that perspective. This implies that the *imago Dei* must always be understood in the context of prior grace. Cf. John Wesley, *The Doctrine of Original Sin according to Scripture, Reason and Experience*, BE: 2:188: "And God,' the there-one God, 'said, "Let us make man in our image after our likeness." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him'; (Gen I.26, 27)Not barely in his *natural image*, a picture of his immortality; a spiritual being, endued with understanding, freedom of will, and various affections;nor merely in his *political image*, the governor of this lower world, having 'dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over all the earth; 'but chiefly in his *moral image*, which, according to the Apostle, is 'righteousness and true holiness.'" As grace is always antecedent to humanity, even under the conditions created by the fall, humanity lost not the natural nor the political image but the moral image. This lost moral image not only underscores the Latin accent on total depravity but also the accent on the necessity of divine-human interaction in the "renewal of the *imago Dei*." Ibid., BE 2:190: "The 'image of God,' in which Adam was created, consisted eminently in righteousness and true holiness; But that part of the 'image of God' which remained after the fall, and remains in all men to this day, is the natural image of God, namely the spiritual nature and immortality of the soul; not excluding the political image of God, or a degree of dominion over the creatures still remaining. But the moral image of God is lost and defaced, or else it could not be said to be 'renewed.' For other discussions about the effects of the fall and the notion of theosis implied in the restoration of the *imago Dei*, consult the following works of Wesley: *The Image of God, The Imperfection of Human Knowledge, On Perfection, On the Education of Children, The General Deliverance, On Living Without God, On the Fall of Man, Heavenly Treasures in Earthen Vessels, The Doctrine of Original Sin*.

105Cf., e.g., John Wesley, Sermon: "The Circumcision of the Heart," BE 1:403:... 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; that confusion, and ignorance, and error, reign over our understanding; that unreasonable, earthly sensual, devilish passions usurp authority over our will: in a word, that there is no whole part in our soul, that all the foundations of our nature are out of course. For Wesley's concurrence with Augustine on the matter of total depravity, see idem, Sermon: "Original Sin," BE 2:183184: ". . . all 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 his soul totally corrupted?.. . Allow this, and you are



so far a Christian. Deny it, and you are but a Heathen still.” Cf. also the helpful editorial note, [Albert Outler] BE 2:171: “In his [Wesley’s] mind, therefore, and in the logic of soteriology, this sermon was a major doctrinal statement in which he sought to compound the Latin tradition of total depravity with the Eastern Orthodox view of sin as a disease and of salvation as *therapeia psuches*; Thus, it still stands as a sufficient answer to all simpleminded references to Wesley as Pelagian.” For a statement framed by Wesley in coming to the end of his own struggle over theological anthropology, in his formative years, cf. “The Principles of a Methodist,” *Works*, ed. Jackson, 8:361.

106Wesley adopts Chrysostom’s idea of *preliminary grace* in creation and uses it to explain why humanity can never exist in a state apart from grace. Wesley, Sermon: “On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” BE 3:207: “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 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*. . . . Every one 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*.” Emphasis by italics is mine.

107For a more extensive discussion of the eastern distinction, consult: Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, esp. chapters “The Theology of the Image,” “Theological Notion of the Human Person,” and “Redemption and Deification”; idem, *Orthodox Theology*, pp.7094, 119137; John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, pp. 138150; idem, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, esp. pp. 131151 on Maximus the Confessor; Georgios T. Mantzaridas, *The Deification of Man*, esp. pp.1540.

108Cf. Robert Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism*: ] 790]935 (New York: Abingdon, 1965), p. 122n25.

109Cf. John Wesley, Sermon: “The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God, BE 1:440 shows the reverse side of *theosis*, as it were i.e., human reaction to the continued opportunings of grace as a person moves from being ‘born of God’ into sinning. “You see the unquestionable progress from grace to sin. Thus it goes on, from step to step. (1). The divine seed of loving, conquering faith remains in him that is ‘born of God.’ ‘He keepeth himself,’ by the grace of God, and ‘cannot commit’ sin; (2). A temptation arises, whether from the world, the flesh, or the devil, it matters not; (3). The Spirit of God gives him warning that sin is near, and bids him more abundantly watch unto prayer; (4). He gives way in some degree to the temptation, which now begins to grow pleasing to him; (5). The Holy Spirit is grieved; his faith is weakened, and his love of God grows cold; (6). The Spirit reproves him more sharply, and saith, ‘This is the way; walk thou

in it.’ (7). He turns away from the painful voice of God and listens to the pleasing voice of the tempter; (8). Evil desire begins and spreads in his soul, till faith and love vanish away; (9). He is then capable of committing outward sin, the power of the Lord being departed from him.”

110John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Joan.* 10 (John 1:11 [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 14:351]).

111John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp. Paul.~ Cor.*, Horn. 3 (I Cor. 1:10 [Eng. Ir. from NPNF (first series) 12:8]). Emphasis by italics mine.

112John Chrysostom, ~Instructions to Catechumens” 610 [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 9:167170]).

113Negatively, repentance before baptism was considered to be primarily a renunciation of Satan and anything which is unnatural to humanity. These negative aspects were understood to be cared for through the positive action of choosing the good and all that is natural to humanity in a covenantal pledge to the Master. (Cf. John Chrysostom, *ibid.* [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 9:170]).

114John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp. Paul.~I Cor.* (II Cor. [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 12:299300]).

115John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp. Paul Eph.* 10 (Eph. 2:810 [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 13:6768]). See also *idem*, *Hom. in Joan.* [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 14:162]). In *idem*, *ibid.*, [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 14:493]): “He has put Faith within us. For He said to His disciples, ‘Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you’; and Paul too says, ‘But then shall I know, even as also I have been known.’ He put the beginning into us, He will also put the End.”

116John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Joan.* 10 (John 1:12 [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 14:37]).

117John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Joan.* 10 (John 1:12 [NPNF (first series) 14:37]). Emphasis by italics mine.

118Cf. John Wesley, Sermon: “The Way to the Kingdom,” BE 1:225: “And first, repent, that is, know yourselves. This is the first repentance, previous to faith, even convictions, or self-knowledge.” See also *ibid.*, BE 1:225n55. Note as well, *idem*, Sermon: “The Witness of the Spirit I,” BE 1:278: “. . . our Church also continually places repentance before pardon or the witness of it:...” As Wesley adopts the Anglican nuancing of the idea of repentance before pardon he also points to the eastern paradigm at work in Anglicanism.

119John Wesley, Sermon: “The Original, Nature, Property and Use of the Law,” BE 2:1516.

120John Wesley makes this point clear in his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, Matt. 3:8. Repentance is of two kinds: that which is termed “legal,”

and that which is styled “evangelical.” The former (which is the repentance spoken of here) involves a thorough conviction of sin. The latter is a change of heart (and consequently of life) from all sin to all holiness.

121 Cf. John Wesley, *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, BE 11:106.

122 John Wesley, Sermon: “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” BE 2:162163.

123 Cf. Charles Wesley and John Wesley, “Minutes of Some Late Conversations between the Reverend Mr. Wesleys and Others. Conversation I,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Jackson (14 vols.; 3d ed.; reprint [London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872]; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 8:276. After defining the general nature of faith, John Wesley implies this distinction between repentance as active and faith as passive: “For faith after repentance is ease after pain, rest after toil, light after darkness.”

124 John Wesley, *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, BE 11:107108: “The Author of faith and salvation is God alone. It is he that works in us both to will and to do. He is the sole giver of every good gift, and the sole author of every good work. There is no more of power than of merit in man; but as all merit is in the Son of God, in what he has done and suffered for us, so all power is in the Spirit of God. And therefore every man, in order to believe unto salvation, must receive the Holy Ghost. . . . But however it be expressed, it is certain all true faith, and the whole work of salvation, every good thought, word, and work, is altogether by the operation of the Spirit of God.”

125 Cf. Charles and John Wesley, “Minutes of Some Late Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesleys and Others. Conversation I,” *Works*, ed. cit., 8:275. Cf. also John Wesley, Sermon: “Justification by Faith,” BE 1:196.

126 Thomas Cranmer, *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer*, ed. Parker Society (2 vols., Cambridge: University Press, 1846), 1:128. Emphasis by italics is mine. In quoting Cranmer, I have retained his punctuation.

127 *ibid.*, 1:135.

128 Cf. G. W. Bromiley, *Thomas Cranmer Theologian* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), pp.3132. Bromiley contends that for Cranmer “by faith alone” is a necessary statement because only in this way can we bring out the essential truth: by grace alone, which means, ultimately, by Christ alone.” Moreover, the function of faith “is not to act or do, but simply to take. It is important, not because it is a primary or supreme work of man, but because it is the appointed and indeed the exclusive means to receive the work of God.”

129 See Cranmer, *ibid.*, 2:137.

130 *ibid.*, 2:142143: “*And yet most plainly to this purpose writeth St. John Chrysostom in this wise: ‘You shall find many which have not the true faith, and*

be not of the flock of Christ, and yet (as it appeareth) they flourish in good works of mercy; you shall find them full of pity, compassion, and given to justice; and yet for that they have no fruit of their works, because the chief work lacketh. For when the Jews asked of Christ what they should do to work good works, he answered: ‘This is the work of God, to believe in him whom he sent:’ *so that he called faith the work of God. And as soon as a man hath faith, anon he shall flourish in good works; for faith of itself is full of good works, and nothing is good without faith.* And for a similitude, he saith, that ‘they which glister and shine in good works without faith in God, be like dead men, which have goodly and precious tombs, and yet it availeth them nothing.’ Faith may not be naked without works, for then it is no true faith; and when it is adjoined to works, yet it is above the works. For as faith in Christ go before, and after be nourished with good works. And life may be without ;nourishment, but nourishment cannot be without life. A man must needs be nourished by good works, but first he must have faith. He that doeth good deeds, yet without faith, he hath no life. I can show a man that by faith without works lived, and came to heaven; but without faith never man had life. The thief that was hanged when Christ suffered, did believe only, and before the most merciful God he lacked time to do good works, for else he would have done them; truth is, and I will contend therein: but this I will surely affirm, that faith only saved him. If he had lived, and not regarded faith and the works thereof, he should have lost his salvation again. But this is the effect that I say, that faith by itself saved him, but works by themselves never justified any man.’ *Here ye have heard the mind of St; Chrysostom, whereby you may perceive, that neither faith is without works, (having no opportunity thereto),nor works can avail to eternal life without faith.*” Emphasis by italics is mine.

131Outler, ed., *John Wesley*, p.123.

132Cf. John Wesley, Sermon: “The Marks of the New Birth,” BE 1:418419. Wesley explains the two movements of faith as the condition of justification from his Anglican position while always accenting the passive function of faith as *fiducia*.

133Chrysostom explicitly credits God’s condescending love as the “cause” of salvation in a number of passages, e.g., *Hom; in epp; Paul.~ Cor.*, Hom. 1 (I Cor. 1 [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 12:3]); *ibid.*, Horn. 4 (I Cor. 2 [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 12:12]); *ibid II Cor.*, Horn. 4( (II Cor. 1:7 [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 12:273]); *ibid Eph.*, Hom. 1 (Eph. 1:12 [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 13:52), etc.

134John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp; Paul Phil*; 8 (Phil. 2:1216 [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 13:219)).

135John Chrysostom, *Hom; 21 de statuis 10* [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series), 9:409)]. Emphasis by italics is mine. Also see, *idem.*, *Hom; in Joan*; [Eng. Ir. in

NPNF (first series) 14:164172]); and *Hom. in epp. Paul.-Gal.* [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 13:42]): “. . . good works require not only our diligence but God’s loving-kindness....”

136John Wesley, Sermon: “Working Out Our Own Salvation,” BE 3:203. Emphasis by italics is mine.

137Ibid., BE 3:206.

138Ibid., BE 3:206209.

139John Wesley, Sermon: “The Catholic Spirit,” BE 2:88. Also see idem, Sermon: “The Almost Christian,” BE 1:131141.

140John Wesley, Sermons: “The Original, Nature, Property, and Use of the Law,” “The Law Established Through Faith, Discourse I,” and “The Law Established Through Faith, Discourse II,” BE 2:143. Wesley asks, “How may we establish the law in our own hearts so that it may have its full influence an our lives?” His response is perhaps one of the most insightful in the history of the faith and love dialectic (pp. 4143). “And this can only be done by faith. Faith alone it is which effectually answers this end, as we learn from daily experience. For so long as we walk by faith, not by sight, we go swiftly on in the way of holiness. While we steadily look, not at the things which are seen, but at those which are not seen, we are more and more crucified to the world and the world crucified to us. Let but the eye of the soul be constantly fixed, not on the things which are temporal, but on those which are eternal, and our affections are more and more loosened from earth and fixed on things above. So that faith in general is the most direct and effectual means of promoting all righteousness and true holiness; of establishing the holy and spiritual law in the hearts of them that believe. And by faith, taken in its more particular meaning for a confidence in a pardoning God, we establish his law in our own hearts in a still more effectual manner. For there is no motive which so powerfully inclines us to love God as the sense of the love of God in Christ. Nothing enables us like a piercing conviction of this to give our hearts to him who was given for us. And from this principle of grateful love to God arises love to our brother also. Neither can we avoid loving our neighbor, if we truly believe the love wherewith God hath loved us. Now this love to man, grounded in faith and love to God ‘worketh no ill to our neighbor.’ Consequently it is, as the Apostle observes, ‘the fulfilling of the whole’ negative ‘law.’ ‘For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ Neither is love content with barely working no evil to our neighbor. It continually incites us to do good; as we have time and opportunity, to do good in every possible kind and in every possible degree to all men. It is therefore the fulfilling of the positive, likewise, as well as of the negative law of God. Nor does faith fulfill either the negative or positive law as to the external part

only; but it works inwardly by love to the purifying of the heart, the cleansing it from all vile affections. ‘Everyone that hath this’ faith ‘in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure ‘purifieth himself from every earthly, sensual desire, from all vile and inordinate affections; yea, from the whole of that carnal mind which is enmity against God. At the same time, if it have its perfect work, it fills him with all goodness, righteousness, and truth. It brings all heaven into his soul, and causes him to walk in the light, even as God is in the light. Let us thus endeavor to establish the law in ourselves; not sinning ‘because we are under grace’; but rather using all the power we receive thereby ‘to fulfill all righteousness.’ Calling to mind what light we have received from God while his Spirit was convincing us of sin, let us beware we do not put out that light. What we had then attained let us hold fast. Let nothing induce us to build again what we have destroyed; to resume anything, small or great, which we then clearly saw was not for the glory of God or the profit of our own soul; or to neglect anything, small or great, which we could not then neglect without a check from our own conscience. To increase and perfect the light which we had before, let us now add the light of faith. Confirm we the former gift of God by a deeper sense of whatever he had then shown us, by a greater tenderness of conscience, and a more exquisite sensibility of sin. Walking now with joy and not fear, in a clear, steady sight of things eternal, we shall look on pleasure, wealth, praise, all things of earth, as on bubbles upon the water; counting nothing important, nothing desirable, nothing worth a deliberate thought, but only what is ‘within the veil,’ where ‘Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God.’ . . . Now, therefore, labor that it may be fulfilled, both in you, by you, and upon you. Now, then, do all diligence to walk in every respect according to the light you have received. Now be zealous to receive more light daily, more of the knowledge and love of God, more of the Spirit of Christ, more of his life, and of the power of his resurrection. Now use all the knowledge and love and life and power you have already attained. So shall you continually go on from faith to faith. So shall you daily increase in holy love, till faith is swallowed up in sight, and the law of love established to all eternity.”

141John Wesley, Sermon: “The Almost Christian,” BE 1:131141; idem, Sermon: “God’s Love to Fallen Man,” BE 2:236250; idem, Sermon: “The End of Christ’s Coming,” BE 2:471484. Also see Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, pp.212215.

142Cf. John Wesley, Sermon: “On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel Near the City-Road, London, “ BE 3:585586. Wesley’s definition of Methodism affords the best place to see his treatment of faith and love as they give the substance of Methodism’s “grand depositum.” “*What is Methodism?* ... What does this new word mean? Is it not a new religion? This is a very common, nay, almost an universal supposition. But nothing can be more remote from the truth. It is a mistake all over. *Methodism, so called, is the old religion, the religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive Church, the religion of the Church of England;* This ‘old religion’ (as I observed in the *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and*

*Religion*,) is no other than love: the love of God and of all mankind; the loving God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, as having first loved us, as the fountain of all the good we have received, and of all we ever hope to enjoy; and the loving every soul which God hath made, every man on earth, as our own soul. This love is the great medicine of life, the never-failing remedy for all the evils of a disordered world, for all the miseries and vices of men. Wherever this is, there are virtue and happiness, going hand in hand. There is humbleness of mind, gentleness, longsuffering, the whole image of God, and at the same time a peace that passeth all understanding, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. This religion of love, and joy, and peace, has its seat in the inmost soul, but is ever showing itself by its fruits, continually springing up, not only in all innocence, for love worketh no ill to his neighbor, but likewise in every kind of beneficence, spreading virtue and happiness to all around it.

“2. *This is the religion of the Bible*, as no one can deny who reads it with any attention. It is the religion which is continually inculcated therein, which runs through both the Old and New Testament. Moses and the Prophets, our blessed Lord and his Apostles, proclaim with one voice, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and thy neighbor as thyself.’ The Bible declares, ‘Love is the fulfilling of the law,’ ‘the end of the commandment,’ of all the commandments which are contained in the oracles of God. The inward and outward fruits of this love are also largely described by the inspired writers. So that whoever allows the Scripture to be the Word of God must allow this to be the true religion.

“3. *This is the religion of the primitive Church*, of the whole Church in the purest ages. It is clearly expressed even in the small remains of Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, and Polycarp. It is seen more at large in the writings of Tertullian, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Cyprian. And even in the fourth century it was found in the works of Chrysostom, Basil, Ephrem Syrus, and Macarius. It would be easy to produce a cloud of witnesses testifying the same thing, were not thus a point which no one will contest who has the least acquaintance with Christian antiquity.

“4; *And this is the religion of the Church of England*, as appears from all her authentic records, from the uniform tenor of her Liturgy, and from numberless passages in her Homilies. The scriptural primitive religion of love, which is now reviving throughout the three kingdoms, is to be found in her morning and evening service, and in her daily, as well as occasional prayers; and the whole of it is beautifully summed up in that one, comprehensive petition, ‘Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name.’ “Emphasis by italics mine.

143Cf. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp. PaulRom.*, Horn. 10 (Rom. 5:12 [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 11: 401407]); idem, *ibid.*, Horn. 11 (Rom. 6:5 [Eng. Ir. in *ibid.*, 11:408416]); idem, *ibid.*, Horn. 12 (Rom. 6:19 [Eng. tr. in *ibid.*, 11:416427]); idem, *ibid.*, Horn. 13 (Rom. 7:14 [Eng. Ir. in *ibid.*, 11:427439]); idem, *ibid.*, Horn 14 (Rom. 8:12, 13 [Eng. tr. in *ibid.*, 11:439-452]).

144John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp; Paul;Eph;*, Horn. 1 (Eph. 1:12 [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 13:5152]). Emphasis by italics is mine.

145Ibid. Emphasis by italics is mine. Also see John Chrysostom, *Hom; in epp. Paul.~Cor;*, Hom. 1(1 Cor. 1:10 [Eng. tr. is from NPNF (first series) 12:12]): “For the loving-kindness of God towards men is shown ... in nothing, however, so much as by the condescension through the Cross.”

146Cf. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp; Paul.~I Cor;*, Horn. 1(2 Cor. 1.1 [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 12:273. Chrysostom ascribes the cause of salvation to God’s mercy: “And thus to have mercy is the peculiar and excellent attribute of God, and the most inherent in His nature; whence he [Paul] called Him the ‘God of mercies.’”

147Thus, according to Chrysostom, the incarnation is the objective “cause” of salvation. This idea from Chrysostom is easily traced in Cranmer’s appropriation of his work. As we previously noted, Cranmer’s understanding of the formal cause of justification reflects Chrysostom’s idea that God’s mercy is the “cause” of salvation. Cranmer then moves beyond the employment of this rationale in the debate over formal cause to show the necessity of divine human participation in the salvific process. It is well to recall here Cranmer’s threefold requirement for redemption, Thomas Cranmer, *ibid.*, p.129: “. . . upon God’s part, his great mercy and grace, upon Christ’s part, justice, . . . the offering of his body and shedding of his blood, . . . upon our part, true and lively faith in the merits of Jesus Christ, which yet is not ours, but by God’s working in us.”

148John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 10:335]). For Chrysostom, the incarnation and the cross serve to point to the objective reality of our salvation while baptism refers to the subjective (“in us”) Transformation of that reality. For a full treatment of the meaning of the cross, cf. *idem*, “Against the Marcionists and Manichaeans” (Eng. tr. in NPNF [first series] 9:201207).

149See John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp. Paul.-Gal.*, Horn. 9 (Gal. 4:17 [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 13:30]): “Here he [Paul] states two objects and effects of the Incarnation, deliverance from evil and supply of good, things which none could compass but Christ. They are these; deliverance from the curse of the Law, and promotion to sonship.”

150Cf. John Chrysostom, “Instructions to Catechumens” (Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 9:159171. See also Paul W. Harkins, *St. John Chrysostom: Baptismal Instructions* (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1963). Chrysostom’s “Baptismal Instructions” state explicitly the necessity of theosis. His grand scheme of the Christian life is carefully laid out in his instructions to the catechumens awaiting the “laver of grace.” The outline found in these instructions is repeatedly inserted into the scores of homilies preached in Antioch and Constantinople.



151John Chrysostom, *Instructions to Catechumens* 3 (Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 9:161162). Emphasis by italics is mine.

152John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Joan*, 10 (John 1:13 [Eng. tr. from NPNF (first series) 14:36: “Such is the power of faith in Him, such the excess of his grace. And as the element of fire, when it meets with ore from the mine, straightway of earth makes it gold, even so much more baptism makes those who are washed to be of gold instead of clay, *the Spirit at that time falling like fire into our souls, burning up the ‘image of the earthy’ and producing ‘the image of the heavenly,’ fresh coined, bright and glittering as from the furnace mold;*” Emphasis by italics mine.

153Cf. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp. PaulPhil.*, Hom. 8 (Phil. 2:1216 [Eng. tr. in NPNF (first series) 13:219]). The phrase “energy of the Spirit” is found in this sermon. Wesley’s sermon, “On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” bears some striking similarities to Chrysostom’s homily on the same passage.

154Cf. John Chrysostom, *Instructions to Catechumens* 34 (Eng. tr. in NPNF [first series] 9:162).

155John Chrysostom, *Hom. in epp; PaulRom.*, Horn. 10 (Rom. 6:3 [Eng. Ir. from NPNF (first series) 11:405]): “What does being ‘baptized into his death’ mean? That is with a view to our dying as He did. For baptism is the cross. What the cross then, and burial, is to Christ that baptism hath been to us, even if not in the same respects. For He died himself and was buried in the flesh, but we have done both to sin. Wherefore, he does not say, planted together in his death, but in the likeness of his death. For both the one and the other is a death, but not of the same subject; since the one is our own. As then that is real, so is this. But if it be real, then what is of our part again must be contributed.” Also see item, *ibid.* (Rom. 6:4 [Eng. tr. from NPNF 11:408]): “there are two mortifyings, and two deaths, and that one is done by Christ in baptism, and the other it is our duty to effect by earnestness afterwards. For that our former sins were buried, came of his gift. But the remaining dead to sin after baptism must be the work of our own earnestness, however much we find God here also giving us large help. For this is not the only thing baptism has the power to do, to obliterate our former transgressions; for it also secures against subsequent ones.”

156Cf. John Wesley, Sermon: “Working Out Our Own Salvation,” BE 302: “Afterwards, we experience the proper Christian salvation, whereby ‘through grace’ we ‘are saved by faith,’ consisting of those two grand branches, justification and sanctification. By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favor of God: by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God.”

157Cf. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, Vols. 26, 27 of Luther’s Works, ed. Pelikan, et al., (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964). See esp. Luther’s work on Galatians 5 in vol.27.

158Cf. Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology* (Durham, N.C.: Labyrinth Press, 1983); and idem, *Forerunners of the Reformation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966). This paper has relied heavily on some of Oberman's insights concerning the distinctions made in medieval thought which have some times been passed along as Protestant/Catholic distinctions, to the detriment of the understanding of either tradition.

159John Wesley, Sermon: "The Scripture Way of Salvation," BE 2:157158. Emphasis by italics mine. Cf. also idem, Sermon: "The Great Privilege of Those That are Born of God," BE 1:431432; idem, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, Rom. 4:36; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:89.

160Cf. John Wesley, *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, BE 11:106: "By salvation, I mean, not barely (according to the vulgar notion) deliverance from sin, [but] a restoration of the soul to its primitive health, its original purity; a recovery of the divine nature; the renewal of our souls after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, in justice, mercy, and truth." Note that here salvation is considered from an eastern perspective, with the therapeutic metaphors controlling the forensic ones. Also see Outler, "The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition," *ibid.*, pp.25, 2932; and idem, "John Wesley's Interest in the Early Fathers of the Church," *ibid.*, p.10.

# **JOHN WESLEY'S EXEGETICAL ORIENTATION: EAST OR WEST?**

by Troy W. Martin

The question posed by the title of this paper presupposes three separate areas of study. In order to assess Wesley's exegetical orientation, both the Eastern and western exegetical traditions must be investigated as well as the exegetical method of John Wesley himself. Probing into the complex exegetical traditions of Eastern and western Christianity is no small task. Fortunately, however, several sound studies have exposed the essential characteristics of these traditions, and utilization of these studies simplifies the task of this paper. Given the meticulous attention which Wesley scholarship has visited upon other aspects of Wesleyan, including studies of Wesley's relationship to his horse, one would have expected that it certainly had produced a definitive work upon Wesley's exegetical method.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, such is not the case.<sup>2</sup> Although a few studies describe some of Wesley's exegetical principles and procedures, no one has yet organized these principles into a coherent system that details the questions and issues to which Wesley was responding and by which he integrated these principles.<sup>3</sup> Drawing upon three separate areas of study, this paper accepts the dual task of describing Wesley's exegetical method and assessing the relationship of Wesley's exegesis to the interpretive traditions of Eastern and western Christianity.

## **The Western Milieu of Wesley's Exegesis**

Several obvious facts dictate where one should begin assessing Wesley's exegetical orientation. John Wesley spent his entire life in the ethos of western Christianity. As a member of the Church of England and founder of Methodism, Wesley's Biblical canon is neither that of the Catholic West nor that of the Orthodox East. Rather, his canon is decidedly Protestant.<sup>4</sup> These prominent facts direct us to the Protestant exegetical tradition of western Christianity as the place to begin to understand Wesley's exegetical method.<sup>5</sup>

Two separate dialogues spanning the previous two centuries dramatically influenced Protestant exegesis in the eighteenth century. The first dialogue, initiated by the Reformation itself, involved an interchange among the various confessions: Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican. This interconfessional dialogue focused on theological issues. The second dialogue, necessitated by the Enlightenment, frequently saw the various confessions united in their opposition to the increasingly popular perspective propagated by the proponents of Reason. This dialogue, not exclusively theological, pitted theological disciplines against philosophical ones and *vice versa*. Both of these dialogues established the issues and problems to which the western Biblical exegetes sought to respond in the early modern period.

Martin Luther opened the first dialogue by his rejection of church authority in favor of Biblical authority. In his famous defense at the Diet of Worms in 1521, Luther articulated his position:

Since then your serene majesty and your lordships seek a simple answer, I will give it in this manner, neither horned nor toothed: Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me. Amen.<sup>6</sup>

Later, in the Smalcald Articles, published in 1538, Luther stated himself even more explicitly:

. . . Scripture alone is the true overlord and master of all writings and doctrines on earth. if not, what are the Scriptures good for? Let us reject then and be satisfied with the books of men and human teachers.<sup>7</sup>

Luther's principle of *sola scriptura*, the exclusive authority of the Bible, became the basis not only for his rejection of church authority but also (in conjunction with the principle of *sola gratia*) for Protestantism's response to Roman Catholicism as a whole.

Luther's principle of *sola scriptura* introduced the issue of doctrinal certainty into the dialogue between Roman Catholics and Protestants. His inquisitor at the Diet of Worms stated, "But if it were granted that whoever contradicts the councils and the common understanding of the church must be overcome by Scripture passages, we have nothing in Christianity that is certain or decided."<sup>8</sup> Roman Catholics maintained that certainty resided in the hierarchical and conciliar decisions and authority of the Church. According to Luther, *certainty* in theological matters could only be attained by Spirit-guided reliance upon the Bible. In order to maintain his position regarding certainty, Luther introduced

two additional issues into the debate, namely, the sufficiency and transparency of Scripture. For him, the Bible alone was *sufficient* to establish Christian faith and practice. In his opinion, the meaning of Scripture was transparent to the interpreter. As early as 1519, Luther had stated his basic position in regard to these three issues:

Furthermore, since we believe that the Holy Catholic Church has the same Spirit of faith that it received at its beginning, why should it not be permitted today to study the Holy Scripture, either alone or above all else, as the early church was permitted so to do? For early Christians had not read Augustine or Thomas. Or tell me, if you can, what judge can decide the question, whether the statements of the church fathers have contradicted themselves. As a matter of fact, a judgment must be pronounced by making Scripture the judge, something that is impossible if we do not accord primacy to Scripture in all questions that are referred to the church fathers. This means that [Scripture] itself by itself is the most unequivocal, the most accessible, the most comprehensible authority, itself its own interpreter, attesting, judging, and illuminating all things.... Here the Spirit clearly grants illumination and teaches that insight is given only by the Word of God.... You see that here also truth is imparted only ... if in the first instance you learn the words of God and use them as the point of departure in pronouncing judgment on all words.<sup>9</sup>

Luther contended that only Scripture could bring certainty in theological matters. He strengthened his contention by asserting that Scripture needs no other authority (sufficiency) and that its meaning was straightforward and self-evident (transparency).

Regarding the issue of transparency, Luther rejected the fourfold scriptural hermeneutic of ancient and medieval exegesis. He accepted only the literal sense unless it was nonsensical or contradictory to another clearer passage of Scripture. He states his exegetical principle as follows:

The Holy Spirit is the simplest writer and adviser in heaven and on earth. That is why his words could have no more than the one simplest meaning which we call the written one, or the literal meaning of the tongue. But [written] words and [spoken] language cease to have meaning when the things which have a simple meaning through interpretation by a simple word are given further meanings and thus become different things [through a different interpretation] so that one thing takes on the meaning of another.... The fact that a painted picture signifies a living man without any words or writing should not cause you to say that the little word “picture” has two meanings, a literal one, signifying the picture, and a spiritual one, signifying the living man. Likewise, even though the things described in Scripture mean something further, Scripture should not therefore have a twofold meaning. Instead, it should retain the one meaning to which

the words refer.... It is much more certain and much safer to stay with the words and the simple meaning.... 10

Luther's preference for the literal sense became foundational for Protestant exegetes.

11

The essential outlines of the Roman Catholic-Protestant dialogue are clearly illustrated by the debate between Johannes Major and Jacob Martini on the Protestant side and Valerius Magnus on the Roman Catholic.<sup>12</sup> Almost a century after Luther's death, Magnus wrote a serious response to the Protestant position entitled, *De acatholicorum credendi regula iudicium*.<sup>13</sup> Here, Magnus responded to the certainty claimed for the Protestant position by disproving sufficiency and transparency. He began by asserting that both Roman Catholics and *Biblistae* (Protestants) affirm that "no one can with certainty understand the true sense of Holy Scripture unless he is illuminated within and led by the Holy Spirit."<sup>14</sup> He then identified the point of contention:

The question is therefore whether the Holy Spirit infallibly distinguishes true from false teaching in scripture through the pastors of the church assembled for a general council or through individual Christians who each call on the Holy Spirit for themselves and ask his counsel from the Holy Scriptures.

Magnus argued that the Protestant individual concept of illumination had not established the sufficiency or clarity of Scripture because contradictions exist in Protestant exegesis. In fact, said he, differences in Biblical interpretation had splintered Protestantism into several different confessional groups. Thinking that he had refuted the Protestant propositions of sufficiency and transparency, he stated, "Take from them (*the Biblistae*) the clarity and transparency of the sacred text, and the giant edifice of their doctrines collapses of its own accord."<sup>16</sup> He concluded, "We must either return to the church or cut ourselves off from Christ."<sup>17</sup>

Magnus' Protestant respondents maintained the sufficiency and transparency of Scripture. Martini stated, "Holy Scripture is clear and transparent enough; the reason many people do not see this clarity and transparent truth is that they approach the reading of scripture with false presuppositions."<sup>18</sup> For Martini, "False presuppositions" are removed by the Holy Spirit who clearly reveals the principle of justification by faith in the Scriptures. Major concurred: "So the blemish of obscurity is not in the divinely inspired scriptures but in the minds of men, who walk in the vanity of their senses, having an intellect obscured with darkness, alienated from the life of God by the ignorance that is in them...."<sup>19</sup> Thus, the Protestant respondents to Magnus continued to propose the sufficiency and transparency of Scripture by relying upon the doctrines of Spirit, illumination and justification by faith. Because the latter doctrine can provide a more objective standard of interpretation, Protestant exegesis came to rely upon it increasingly as the dialogue between Roman Catholics and Protestants developed. Essentially, in

place of the church, Protestant exegesis substituted a theological principle as the final authority for Scriptural interpretation. This particular view of salvation lent certainty and cohesion to the Protestant confessions and enabled them to maintain the sufficiency and transparency of Scripture.

The Catholic-Protestant dialogue spanned the two centuries before Wesley focused upon the issue of certainty in matters of faith. Roman Catholics continued to argue that certainty resided in the church while Protestants continued to counter by locating certainty in the Scripture. And, the dialogue continued to center upon the sufficiency and transparency of Scripture, the terms of argument first proposed by Luther. The issues and problems established by this dialogue are central in understanding Wesley's exegetical method; but before turning to Wesley, we must examine another dialogue, one which was occasioned by the Enlightenment.

While the majority of Roman Catholic thinkers sought certainty in the church and Protestants in the Bible, a smaller group, composed of persons from across the confessional spectrum and of some persons indifferent to confessional camps, sought certainty in human reason. Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, among others, had applied mathematical reason to the observation of the movement of heavenly bodies and had arrived at a new picture of the physical universe, a picture that contradicted the older, supposedly Bible-based, understanding. At the same time, discoveries in the New World led to questions concerning the received understandings of Biblical geography and chronology. Reasonable persons could not maintain that Jerusalem was the center of the world, nor could they subscribe to traditional chronological schemes based upon particular readings of the Bible. Isaac de La Peyrere's book, *Man Before Adam*,<sup>20</sup> illustrates developments in geography and chronology by the mid-seventeenth century. De La Peyrere argued that newly discovered facts necessitated belief in the existence of humans before Adam. Klaus Scholder summarizes the reaction to this book:

In fact a storm of indignation arose immediately after the book appeared. In 1656 it was publicly burnt in Paris by the hangman. Again, as early in the question of Copernicus, the three great confessions were at one here. Roman, Lutheran and Reformed theologians competed in their refutation of the "pre-Adamite fable."<sup>21</sup>

In spite of the Roman Catholic and Protestant response, these new thinkers did not consider themselves to be impious or godless. On the contrary, they strove to integrate the new information about the world into the Biblical perspective. Initially they achieved this integration by considering the results of their reasoning to be hypothetical, thus allowing the Biblical position its reality.<sup>22</sup> As evidence mounted, however, these thinkers were less willing to articulate their results as hypothetical. They sought other means to reconcile the new "facts" with the Bible. Kepler advocated the two most important methods: accommodation and limitation of scope. He describes his theory of accommodation as follows:

But the Holy Scriptures already speak with man of ordinary things (about which it is not their intention to teach them) in a human way so that they may be understood by men; they use what is indubitable among them in order to communicate higher and divine things.<sup>23</sup>

Using this theory, Kepler explained why Joshua 10 could describe the sun as standing still, an event absurd to the new astronomy but quite conceivable under the terms of the old. In addition to accommodation, Kepler argued that the scope of the Bible is limited, that the Bible is a theological document, not a scientific one, and should be interpreted as such. He explains: “. . . in theology the authorities have decisive importance, but in philosophy the decisive importance attaches to calculations.”<sup>24</sup> Arguing that the scope of the Bible is strictly limited to theological issues and arguing for accommodation allowed Kepler to integrate the two authorities, scripture and reason. Although Kepler’s attempts at integration were not well received by the various confessions, his work did warn Biblical exegetes that they could no longer ignore the relationship of the Bible to reason and the new world view.

These exegetical issues raised in this Enlightenment dialogue as well as those raised in the Reformation dialogue dramatically influenced Protestant exegesis in the eighteenth century. And only as we retain awareness of this background can we understand John Wesley’s method of Biblical interpretation.

### **John Wesley’s Exegetical Method**

Two centuries following Luther, Wesley could hardly dismiss the Enlightenment dialogue as Luther had done. The intervening centuries had progressively confirmed the “reasonable” world view advocated by Enlightenment astronomers, geographers, and chronologists. Wesley had to come to terms with this view of the world and could not simply rely upon the world view produced by traditional Biblical exegesis. Consequently, reason plays a more decisive role in Wesley’s exegetical method than it did in the works of earlier Protestant exegetes.<sup>25</sup>

In his sermon, “The Case of Reason Impartially Considered,” Wesley sets out to define the term *reason* and to establish its legitimate and illegitimate uses. He defines the term as follows:

. . . reason is much the same with *understanding*. It means a faculty of the human soul; that faculty which exerts itself in three ways; by simple apprehension, by judgment, and by discourse. *Simple apprehension* is barely conceiving a thing in the mind: the first and most simple act of the understanding. *Judgment* is the determining that the things before conceived either agree with or differ from each other. *Discourse*, strictly speaking, is the motion or progress of the mind from one judgment to another. The faculty of the soul which includes these three operations I here mean by the term *reason*.<sup>26</sup>



Laurence Wood correctly asserts that Wesley defines reason “as an intellectual activity rather than a faculty of innate ideas.” Reason is the mental activity that enables humans to comprehend reality. Wood explains how reason functions for Wesley: “It can be seen, then, that Wesley’s idea of experience is objective in that reality (whether the world or God) is intelligible to the mind because God as Creator has so constituted man that he can know the truth of what is.”<sup>28</sup>

This intellectual activity applies itself to the ideas supplied by the external and internal organs of sense perception. The external sense organs derive ideas of the physical world while the internal organs derive ideas of the spiritual world.<sup>29</sup> Wesley explains this distinction in the following manner:

Now, faith (supposing the Scripture to be of God) is . . . “the demonstrative evidence of things unseen,” the supernatural evidence of things invisible, not perceivable by eyes of flesh, or by any of our natural senses or faculties. Faith is that divine evidence whereby the spiritual man discerneth God, and the things of God. It is with regard to the spiritual world, what sense is with regard to the natural. It is the spiritual sensation of every soul that is born of God.<sup>30</sup>

He proceeds to describe faith as the eye, ear, palate, and feeling of the soul that perceives the spiritual world.

In contrast to physical sense perception, which naturally exists in all humans, internal sense perception or faith is only given by God to those who seek it.<sup>31</sup> Wesley comments as follows:

So you cannot reason concerning spiritual things, if you have no spiritual sight; because all your ideas received by your outward senses are of a different kind; yea, far more different from those received by faith or internal sensation.... The ideas of faith differ *toto genere* from those of external sensation. So that it is not conceivable, that external sensation should supply the want of internal senses; or furnish your reason in this respect with matter to work upon.... This cannot be until the Almighty come in to your succor and give you that faith you have hitherto despised. Then . . . your enlightened reason shall explore even “the deep things of God;” God himself “revealing them to you by his Spirit.”<sup>32</sup>

Thus, for Wesley, external sensation is a natural possession of all while internal sensation is a gift of God.

This concept of reason establishes the legitimate and illegitimate uses of reason. Apart from God’s revelation, reason can give direction to common life and can teach whatever human skill or industry has invented in the way of the arts and sciences.<sup>33</sup> God created the human mind with the faculty of reason in order that it might comprehend and understand the world He created. In regard to revelation, reason provides the faculty necessary to comprehending what God has revealed, but this comprehension rests squarely upon God’s initiative. Wesley explains his position:

The foundation of true religion stands upon the oracles of God. It is built upon the Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. Now, of what excellent use is reason, if we would either understand ourselves, or explain to others, those living oracles! And how is it possible without it to understand the essential truths contained therein? a beautiful summary of which we have in the Apostles' Creed. Is it not reason (assisted by the Holy Ghost) which enables us to understand what the Scriptures declare concerning the being and attributes of God? concerning his eternity and immensity; his power, wisdom, and holiness? . . . It is by this we understand (his Spirit opening and enlightening the eyes of our understanding) what that repentance is . . .; what is that faith whereby we are saved; what is the nature and the condition of justification; what are the immediate and what the subsequent fruits of it. By reason we learn what is that new birth, without which we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; and what that holiness is without which no man shall see the Lord. By the due use of reason we come to know what are the tempers implied in inward holiness; and what it is to be outwardly holy, holy in all manner of conversation: In other words, what is the mind that was in Christ; and what it is to walk as Christ walked.<sup>34</sup>

Wesley's position is that God created Scripture as well as the world. Just as God created a person's mind with the faculty of reason in order to comprehend the created world, so also He gave humanity reason in order to comprehend His revelation in the Bible.<sup>35</sup> Hence, for Wesley, the legitimate use of reason is to understand the ideas and perceptions provided by the outward and inward senses.

The illegitimate use of reason involves an attempt either to establish or to disprove the data of revelation.<sup>36</sup> In responding to a "reasonable man," Wesley states, "It is true, your judgment does not fall in with ours. We believe the Scripture to be of God. This you do not believe."<sup>37</sup> He continues his response:

And till you have these internal senses, till the eyes of your understanding are opened, you can have no apprehension of divine things, no idea of them at all. Nor, consequently, till then, can you either judge truly, or reason justly, concerning them; seeing your reason has no ground whereon to stand, no materials to work upon.<sup>38</sup>

For Wesley, reason cannot produce faith although faith is not inconsistent with reason.<sup>39</sup> The essential truths of faith are revealed and cannot be established or disproven by intellectual activity. The attempt to establish or disprove the truths of faith by reason is an illegitimate use of reason.<sup>40</sup>

This concept of reason enables Wesley to establish a tenable position for his exegetical method in the Enlightenment dialogue. He has affirmed the legitimacy of the primary Enlightenment objective of understanding the physical world by reason alone. At the same time, he has rescued the Bible as the primary instrument of God's revelation.<sup>41</sup> Postulating two separate worlds, a physical and a

spiritual, both created according to reason, Wesley contends that God instilled reason into the human mind so that it might comprehend both worlds.<sup>42</sup> Because the physical world is always present and accessible, all may apply their reason and come to an understanding of it. Because the spiritual world is only revealed by God to those who seek it, only those who have had their spiritual eyes opened can apply their reason and come to an understanding of it. Since the Bible is God's primary instrument of revelation to humanity, its scope is directed to this latter spiritual world, not the former physical world. Thus, the objectives and goals of Wesley's exegesis are to derive the essential truths of faith from the Bible. His exegetical method does not attempt to derive either astronomical, geographical, or chronological truths about the physical world.<sup>43</sup> In accord with the Enlightenment, he leaves these truths to be ascertained by the application of reason to the natural world, not to the Bible.

The Enlightenment dialogue more than the Reformation dialogue inclines Wesley to understand and to exegete the Bible as an essentially soteriological book.<sup>44</sup> Given Wesley's supposition that God created both the physical world and the Bible in conformity with reason, one would think that the Bible could be used to supply information about the physical world and vice versa. However, as Larry Shelton points out, such is not the case:

Wesley's understanding of Scripture is most clearly seen in this use of it. For him, it has a saving purpose. That is its reason for being. The primary purpose for Scripture is to function as a means of bearing the message of redemption. His famous "man of one book" statement clearly presents what he sees the Bible's purpose to be.... The intent of Scripture is to provide information for salvation and Christian living. With his fascination with science and natural philosophy . . . it might seem reasonable to expect him to use the Bible as a textbook to learn science if he felt that to be its purpose. Yet, he does not seem to believe Scripture to have that function.<sup>45</sup>

Aware of the problems engendered by the Enlightenment for the world view which had been produced by traditional Biblical exegesis, Wesley avoids them by confining his own Biblical studies to a soteriological perspective.<sup>46</sup> Wesley describes these soteriological concerns as the essential truths of Scripture: "It is easily discerned, that these two little words, I mean faith and salvation, include the substance of all the Bible, the marrow, as it were, of the whole Scripture."<sup>47</sup>

The Enlightenment dialogue, therefore, induced Wesley to give primary consideration to reason in his exegetical method. His development of the nature and role of reason inclined him to view the Bible exclusively as a document of revelation which harmoniously reveals the mind and will of God in all matters pertaining to salvation. This emphasis upon the role of reason and this drastic limitation of the scope of exegesis in Wesley's exegetical method is best understood in the context of the Enlightenment dialogue.

However, not only the Enlightenment dialogue but also the Reformation dialogue affected Wesley's exegetical method. He entered this later dialogue staunchly on the side of the Protestants who claimed that the Bible was the sole authority in matters of faith and practice. This assessment of Wesley's position, so widely accepted by Wesley scholars, hardly needs demonstration. However, a few illustrative passages might be helpful.

In response to the question of what is the fundamental doctrine of Methodism, Wesley answers "that the Bible is the whole and sole rule both of Christian faith and practice."<sup>48</sup> Wesley proclaims confidently:

The Holy Bible, or Book, is so called by way of eminency, as it is the best book that ever was written. The great things of God's law and gospel are here written, that they might be reduced to a greater certainty, might spread farther, remain longer, and be transmitted to distant places and ages, more pure and entire than possibly they could be by tradition.<sup>49</sup>

Wesley's rejection of tradition as a reliable means to certainty and his reliance upon the Bible is evident in the following:

Antiquity is a venerable word, but ill used, when made a cloak for error .... We dispute not by years, but by reasons drawn from Scripture. That which is now called an ancient opinion, if it be not a true opinion, was once but a new error. When you can tell us how many years are required to turn an error into truth, then we will give more heed to antiquity, when pressed by error, than we now think due it. If antiquity will not do, reason shall be pressed to serve error's turn at a dead lift.... But because men are bound to submit human authority and reason to divine revelation, both must give way and strike sail to the written word.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, Franz Hildebrandt correctly concludes, "*Sola Scriptura* holds good for him no less than for the Reformers."<sup>51</sup> For Wesley, the Scripture is the final authority in matters of faith and practice.<sup>52</sup> It is the Scripture that critiques the church and tradition, not *vice versa*.<sup>53</sup>

Larry Shelton argues that for Wesley this certainty did not inhere in the autographs or in the text itself but in the spiritual content of the Scripture.<sup>54</sup> Shelton has observed an important distinction between essentials and nonessentials in Wesley's exegetical method. The Bible only provides absolute certainty in the essentials, not the nonessentials. By essentials, Wesley understands all things necessary to salvation. His treatment of the Synoptic genealogies is instructive. He responds to the discrepancies between Matthew and Luke as follows:

If there were any difficulties in this genealogy, or that given by St. Luke, which could not easily be removed, they would rather affect the Jewish Tables, than the credit of the Evangelists: for they act only as historians, setting down these genealogies, as they stood in

those public and hallowed records. Therefore they were to take them as they found them. Nor was it needful they should correct the mistakes, if there were any. For these accounts sufficiently answer the end for which they are recited. They unquestionably prove the grand point in view, that Jesus was of the family from which the promised Seed was to come. And they had more weight with the Jews for this purpose, than if alterations had been made by inspiration itself. For such alterations would have occasioned endless disputes between them and the disciples of our Lord.<sup>55</sup>

Wesley reluctantly admits possible uncertainty in these genealogical lists but confidently affirms absolute certainty with regard to the soteriological truth expressed by these texts.

Wesley's position in regard to essentials and nonessentials is also exposed by his approval of John A. Bengel's textual studies, which brought a degree of uncertainty to the Biblical text. Wesley can approve of Bengel's textual criticism and even participate in the enterprise himself because of Bengel's caveat that the uncertainty does not extend to the essentials of the faith. Bengel states, "By far the greatest part of the Sacred Text (Thank God) labors under no important variety of reading. This part contains the whole scheme of salvation, fully established."<sup>56</sup> With the "whole scheme of salvation" fully intact, Wesley was not troubled by the uncertainty in the nonessentials occasioned by Bengel's approach.

Wesley's distinction between essentials and nonessentials explains an oft quoted statement of his: "Nay, if there be any mistakes in the Bible there may as well be a thousand. If there is one falsehood in that book it did not come from the God of Truth."<sup>57</sup> He was not primarily referring to nonessentials in this statement but to the essentials of the faith. If one falsehood existed in the essentials, then the certainty of the Scriptures was lost. By the way he phrases this statement, Wesley indicates that he does not think there are any incorrect statements in the Bible regarding the essentials of the faith. In the essentials of the faith, therefore, the Bible is able to provide certainty.

Entering the Reformation dialogue on the side of Protestants, who argue for certainty based solely upon Scripture, Wesley was also obliged to argue for the sufficiency and transparency of Scripture. He says in regard to sufficiency:

The Scripture, therefore, being delivered by men divinely inspired, is a rule sufficient of itself: So it neither needs, nor is capable of, any farther addition. Yet the Papists add tradition to Scripture, and require it to be received with equal veneration. By traditions, they mean, "such points of faith and practice as have been delivered down in the Church from hand to hand without writing." And for many of these, they have no more Scripture to show, than the Pharisees had for their traditions.<sup>58</sup>

As this statement clearly indicates, Wesley firmly believed in the sufficiency of Scripture.<sup>59</sup>

For Wesley, Scripture is sufficient only in its entirety.<sup>60</sup> His position is reflected in a work he extracted in his *Christian Library*:

And though it is true that some important doctrines, as that of justification by faith, are methodically disposed, and thoroughly cleared and settled in one and the same context; yet it is as true, that many other points of faith and duty are not so digested, but are delivered here a little, and there a little. You must not think to find all that belongs to one head or point of faith or duty, laid together in a system, or commonplace in Scripture; but scattered abroad in several places, some in the Old Testament, and some in the New, at a great distance from one another. Now in our searches and inquiries after the full and satisfying knowledge of the will of God in such points, it is necessary that the whole Word of God be thoroughly searched, and all those parcels brought together to an interview. As for example, If a man would see the entire discovery that was made of Christ, to the Father, under the Old Testament, he shall not find it laid together in any one Prophet; but shall find that one speaks to one part of it, and another to another.<sup>61</sup>

Wayne McCown interprets Wesley's position: "Because of his understanding of revelation, Wesley approached the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) as a whole, the various texts being a part of a 'consonant theological construct.'"<sup>62</sup> Wesley advocates that Scripture when taken as a whole is the sufficient authority to establish Christian faith and practice.<sup>63</sup>

For Wesley, the sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture needs no other authority to establish doctrine or duty, but other authorities, such as reason, tradition, or experience, can be used to ascertain and confirm the Scriptural position. Thus, he states, experience is not sufficient to prove a doctrine unsupported by Scripture; ". . . Experience is sufficient to confirm a doctrine which is grounded on Scripture."<sup>64</sup> Wesley admits that reason may also be necessary to ascertain and confirm the Scriptural position.<sup>65</sup> An extract in his *Christian Library* parallels his position:

But of all knowledge none is like that divine and supernatural knowledge of saving truths revealed by Christ in the Scriptures.... These truths lie enfolded either in the plain words, or evident and necessary consequences from the words of the Holy Scriptures; Scripture consequences are of great use for the refutation of errors; it was by Scripture consequence that Christ successfully proved the resurrection against the Sadducees (Matt. xii.).<sup>66</sup>

These reasonable inferences enable the Scripture to be a sufficient medium to establish doctrine. Just as experience and reason should not be ignored, neither should tradition.<sup>67</sup> In his recent book, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, Donald A. D.

Thorsen argues that Wesley always affirms the primacy of Scripture, viewing the other three authorities as necessary and complementary to its interpretation and application.<sup>68</sup> Since God is rational and created all things according to reason, Wesley does not hold these authorities to be mutually exclusive or contradictory.<sup>69</sup> However, only Scripture is sufficient to establish a tenet of doctrine or duty.<sup>70</sup> The other authorities serve only to confirm or illuminate the Scriptural position.<sup>71</sup>

As with earlier Protestant exegetes, Wesley's doctrine of sufficiency ultimately rests upon the issue of the transparency of Scripture. Is the meaning of Scripture transparent, or does Scripture require an interpretive authority, such as the Church or tradition? Wesley vigorously responds to this question in favor of transparency.

The activity of the Holy Spirit is essential to Wesley's case for transparency.<sup>72</sup> For him, the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary for the interpretation of Scripture. He expounds this truth in the following extract:

Unto the attainment of Divine Knowledge out of the Scriptures, some things are naturally, yet less principally requisite; and something absolutely and principally necessary. The natural qualifications desirable in the mind, are clearness of apprehension, solidity of judgment, and fidelity of retention. These are desirable requisites to make the understanding susceptible of knowledge; but the irradiation of the mind by the Spirit of God is principally necessary.<sup>73</sup>

This extract observes that persons strong in the first three qualifications have fallen into error without the Spirit, but persons weak in those qualifications have been kept from error by the Spirit. In Wesley's opinion, "Scripture can only be understood thro' the same Spirit whereby it was given."<sup>74</sup> Turner comments, The Spirit-inspired writer and the Spirit-guided student met in the pages of the Book. . . . The student, renewed by the Spirit of God, was regarded as being in rapport with the author of the Bible and hence able to understand its message better."<sup>75</sup> In Wesley's view, the Spirit of God renders the meaning of the Bible transparent to the reader.<sup>76</sup>

Wesley believed that the activity of the Holy Spirit, who renders the Scriptures transparent, could be hindered if the interpreter did not apply the revealed truths to life.<sup>77</sup> Wesley's note on John 7:17 reads, "This is a universal rule, with regard to all persons and doctrines. He that is thoroughly willing to do it, shall certainly know what the will of God is."<sup>78</sup> Turner comments in this regard:

With Wesley obedience was the condition of spiritual knowledge. The condition for spiritual insight was more moral than intellectual . . . . The early Methodists acted upon John 7:17 "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine ...." He was one with Bengel and the Pietists in stressing the importance of the spiritual approach to the Scriptures.<sup>79</sup>

McCown also comments upon this issue, “Application for Wesley was an essential aspect of the very process of reading the Bible. He regarded it, in one sense, as a facet of the preparation necessary to hear the Word of God with understanding.”<sup>80</sup> Wesley’s concern for application in the interpretive process is consistent with his emphasis upon the Holy Spirit as the agent of transparency. He believed that the Holy Spirit’s activity would be “quenched” by disobedience.<sup>81</sup>

Wesley’s opinion that the Bible is *authored* by the Holy Spirit, who makes it transparent, causes him to view the Bible as a single, harmonious composition.<sup>82</sup> He conceives of the Scripture as a unified whole with each of the Biblical passages belonging to a “consonant theological construct.”<sup>83</sup> On the basis of this theological construct, Wesley adopts the principle of the analogy of faith. He retains this statement in one of his extracts, “The analogy or proportion of faith is what is taught plainly and uniformly in the whole Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as the rule of our faith and obedience.”<sup>84</sup> Wesley’s analogy of faith principle is a development of the Protestant principle which calls for the interpretation of Scripture by Scripture.<sup>85</sup> McCown comments, “By ‘analogy of faith,’ Wesley means the interpretation of Scripture by Scripture, with special reference to its doctrinal teachings.”<sup>86</sup> Thus, Wesley’s view of the Bible enables him, like other Protestants, to argue for transparency using the principle that Scripture is its own interpreter.<sup>87</sup>

For Wesley, this analogy of faith is the clue to guide the interpreter through the whole of Scripture. He asks, “Have I a full and clear view of the analogy of faith, which is the clue to guide me through the whole?”<sup>88</sup> He advises Biblical interpreters, “In order to know his will, you should have a constant eye to the analogy of faith: the connection and harmony there is between those grand, fundamental doctrines, Original Sin, Justification by Faith, the New Birth, Inward and Outward Holiness.”<sup>89</sup> For Wesley, the Scripture is transparent to the interpreter who has an eye to the analogy of faith because the Holy Spirit has composed Scripture according to the analogy of faith.

This principle of the analogy of faith raises an important issue in Wesley’s exegetical method. Is his exegesis determined by his theology or is his theology determined by his exegesis? Obviously, theology and exegesis are in dialectical tension, but which one takes precedence over the other? Tumer discusses this issue and answers that “his exegesis determined his theology rather than *vice versa*.”<sup>90</sup> However, Tumer’s discussion is in conflict with his answer. He states in his discussion:

The treatise on *Original Sin* affords an excellent opportunity to see Wesley at work as an interpreter of Scripture. He follows a strict historical-literal sense less in degree than the Presbyterian clergyman whose ideas he is combating. There is in Wesley a greater tendency to look at the question theologically than exegetically. In other words, Wesley tended to interpret a disputed passage by the Scripture as a whole without strictly limiting himself to a literal-historical



interpretation. He was as apt to explain an Old Testament passage by an appeal to Paul as to consider it in the light of its own context.... While he often slighted the immediate context, he was careful to interpret a particular verse by the general tenor of Scripture as a whole.<sup>91</sup>

As Tumer correctly notes in his discussion, Wesley's exegesis is determined more by his theology than *vice versa*. This feature of his exegesis is demonstrated by the determining role that the analogy of faith plays in Wesley's exegetical method.<sup>92</sup>

Although he vigorously favors transparency, Wesley recognizes limitations in the transparency of Scripture. He agrees with the following statement, "We acknowledge there are in the Scriptures some things hard to be understood, (2 Pet. iii.16,) the sublime and mysterious nature of the matter rendering it so. . . ." <sup>93</sup> He even admits that he does not understand everything in Scripture. He explains his hesitancy in writing his *Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament*:

Over and above the deep conviction I had, of my insufficiency for such a work, of my want of learning, of understanding, of spiritual experience, for an undertaking more difficult by many degrees, than even writing of the New Testament, I objected, that there were many passages in the Old, which I did not understand myself, and consequently could not explain to others, either to their satisfaction, or my own.<sup>94</sup>

In recognizing limitations in the transparency of Scripture, Wesley faces a serious problem in his exegetical method. Without transparency, he can maintain neither sufficiency nor certainty.

As in other aspects of his exegetical method, Wesley resolves this problem by limiting transparency to the essentials of the faith. He extracts a comment on the work of the Spirit in the heart of a believer:

A sanctified heart is a sovereign defensive against erroneous doctrines; it furnishes the soul with spiritual eyes, judicious ears, and a distinguishing taste, by which it may discern both good and evil, truth and error; yea, it puts the soul at once under the conduct of the Spirit, and protection of the promise; (John xvi. 13;) and though this doth not secure a man from all lesser mistakes, yet it effectually secures him from those greater ones, which are inconsistent with salvation.<sup>95</sup>

Thus, the transparency effected by the Spirit relates only to the essentials of the faith, not the nonessentials, and Wesley concurs with the statement, "But, notwithstanding all this [obscure Scriptures], the great and necessary things are so plainly revealed in the Scriptures that even babes in Christ do apprehend and understand them. (Matt. xi. 25; 1 Cor. I. 27, 28, 29)." <sup>96</sup> By limiting transparency to the essentials of the faith, Wesley can recognize obscurity and difficulty in certain passages of Scripture.

Although he recognizes that some passages of Scripture seem obscure, Wesley points out that the obscurity of Scripture does not inhere in the Scripture itself but in the minds of persons corrupted by the Fall. One of his extracts responds to the Roman Catholic argument which capitalizes upon the obscurity of Scripture:

The Romish party snatch at this occasion, and make it the proper cause, when indeed it is but a picked occasion of the errors and mistakes among men. They tell us, the Scriptures are so difficult, obscure, and perplexed, that if private men will trust to them, as their only guide, they will inevitably run into errors, and their only relief is to give up their souls to the conduct of their church; whereas indeed the true cause of error is not so much in the obscurity of the Word, as in the corruption of the mind.<sup>97</sup>

This perception that obscurity is caused by the mind of persons rather than the Scriptures themselves lends coherence to several exegetical principles that Wesley develops to militate against this defect in the mind.<sup>98</sup>

First, since Scripture is its own best interpreter, Wesley proposes the analogy of faith as the best protection against erroneous interpretations of obscure passages.<sup>99</sup> He accepts the following position:

Let all obscure and difficult texts of Scripture be constantly examined and expounded according to the analogy or proportion of faith, which is St. Paul's own rule. "Let him that prophesieth, [that is, expoundeth the Scripture in the Church,] do it according to the proportion of faith." (Rom. xii.6)... Whilst we carefully and sincerely attend hereunto, we are secured from sinful corrupting the Word of God. Admit of no sense which interfereth with this proportion of faith. If men have no regard to this, but take liberty to rend off a single text from the body of truth to which it belong, and put a peculiar interpretation upon it which is discordant to other Scriptures, what work will they quickly make! <sup>100</sup>

Thus, Wesley thinks that if an interpreter adheres to the analogy of faith in his interpretation, he will avoid errors arising from a corrupt mind.

Second, he calls for an impartial reading of Scripture void of presuppositions. Presuppositions can be the cause of mental errors, as explained in the following extract:

Hence it comes to pass, that the great patrons and factors for error, do above all things labor to gain countenance from the written word; and to this end, they manifestly wrest the Scriptures to make them subservient to their opinions; not impartially studying the Scripture first, and forming their opinions according to them; but they bring their erroneous opinions to the Scriptures, and then, with all imaginable art and sophistry, wiredraw and force the Scriptures to countenance and legitimate their opinions.<sup>101</sup>

In order to counteract this mental defect, Wesley calls for “sedate, impartial, and diligent inquiries after the will of God revealed in His word.”<sup>102</sup>

Third, Wesley calls for preference to be given to the literal or plain sense of Scripture as a remedy to errors occasioned by a person’s fallen mind.<sup>103</sup> Shelton explains this literal sense:

Wesley’s literal interpretation is not “literalism,” but the same kind of literal approach championed by Theodore and the School of Antioch. It deplores allegorism, while maintaining the validity of the spiritual or devotional sense of the Word. It is the same method followed by Luther and the reformers who refuse to base doctrine on the allegorical sense, and emphasizes that the plain rules of grammar and syntax give the meaning of any statement without recourse to any esoteric spiritualizations.<sup>104</sup>

Wesley means by the literal sense to take the words and phrases in their common and obvious meaning and thereby not to place an unnatural interpretation upon scripture. <sup>105</sup>

James Clemons correctly observes that this literal sense serves to protect corrupted minds from fanciful interpretations:

He [Wesley] emphasized the literal, with all its rigorous academic demands, in part because the allegorical interpretation seemed to come from the same source as the extreme but rampant antirational, anti-intellectual “enthusiasm” or “inspirationalism” that plagued his days as it had Luther’s. The literal method of interpretation, as he understood it, was the best way to avoid any wild eisegesis and any unwarranted doctrinal interpretation. .<sup>106</sup>

In Wesley’s opinion, the exegetical principle of literal interpretations guards against errors occasioned by a person’s faulty intellect.<sup>107</sup>

Fourth, Wesley proposes that understanding the context of a passage will help a person’s mind to perceive the correct meaning of the passage. He suggests how to treat an obscure passage of Scripture:

Any passage is easily perverted, by being recited singly, without any of the preceding or following verses. By this means it may often seem to have one sense, when it will be plain, by observing what goes before and what follows after, that it really has the direct contrary. . <sup>108</sup>

Thus, context is an important deterrent to incorrect interpretations occasioned by a person’s corrupt mind.

Fifth and finally, Wesley holds that learned expositors should be consulted when obscure passages are encountered.<sup>109</sup> An extract in his *Christian Library* advises his readers, “Have a due regard to that sense given of obscure places of Scripture, which hath . . . the current sense of learned expositors.”<sup>110</sup> Wesley himself followed this advice relying heavily upon Matthew Henry, Matthew Poole, and John A. Bengel. Bengel describes the role of the expositor:

Every book, when first published by a prophet or an apostle, bore in itself its own interpretation, as it referred to the existing state of things.... The purposes which can be attained by commentaries are chiefly the following: to preserve, restore, or defend the purity of the text; to exhibit the exact force of the language employed by any sacred writer; to explain the circumstances to which any passage refers; to remove errors or abuses which have arisen in later times. The first hearers needed none of these. Now however, it is the office of commentaries to effect and supply them in some measure, so that the hearer of today, with their aid, may be like the hearer in those times who had no such assistance.<sup>111</sup>

Wesley apparently agrees with Bengel that an expositor can enlighten the mind of the interpreter so that obscure passages can be understood.

Wesley admits that some Scriptures are obscure, but he refuses to locate this obscurity in Scripture itself. Instead, he locates this obscurity in the corrupt mind of fallen humanity. He develops these five principles in order to enable the fallen mind to comprehend correctly the meaning of Scripture. By developing these five principles to lessen or militate against this obscurity, Wesley is able to maintain the doctrine of the transparency of Scripture. By maintaining the transparency of Scripture, Wesley remains on the Protestant side of the Reformation dialogue.

As this discussion of Wesley's exegetical method has demonstrated, the Enlightenment and Reformation dialogues of western Christianity provide the issues and problems that determine the development of Wesley's exegetical method. These dialogues also suggest the resolutions of these issues and the solutions of these problems that Wesley adopts and advocates. This discussion leads to the conclusion that the western exegetical tradition provides the background and context for understanding the issues posed and the resolutions offered in Wesley's exegetical method. Wesley is a Protestant exegete in the western exegetical tradition of Christianity.<sup>112</sup>

### **The Eastern Influences upon Wesley's Exegesis**

Having concluded that Wesley's exegetical method is essentially that of the western tradition, what role, if any, does the eastern exegetical tradition play in Wesley's exegesis?<sup>113</sup> The eastern tradition is not determinative in suggesting or posing or creating the issues or problems that Wesley addresses. However, it does indirectly exert some influence upon the solutions advanced by Wesley. It also directly influences some of Wesley's exegetical conclusions. Both the indirect and direct influences of the eastern tradition upon Wesley must now be examined. <sup>114</sup>

To a large degree, the eastern exegetical tradition influences Wesley indirectly through the Reformation's appropriation of eastern exegetical ideas and perspectives. As Larry Shelton correctly recognizes, Wesley's preference for the literal sense follows Luther and the reformers, who themselves followed Theodore and the School of Antioch.<sup>115</sup> J. Barton Payne identifies several exeget-

ical perspectives in Irenaeus that are present in the reformers.<sup>116</sup> Among these perspectives are the plan of salvation as the theme of the Bible, the harmony of Scripture, the analogy of Scripture, and transparency.<sup>117</sup> Payne states in regard to the latter:

His doctrine of perspicuity (transparency) of Scripture is that of the Reformers, namely, that insofar as essentials of faith are concerned, “the entire Scripture . . . can be clearly, unambiguously, and harmoniously understood by all, although all do not believe them.<sup>118</sup>

In regard to the analogy of Scripture which Irenaeus sometimes refers to as the analogy of faith, Payne observes, “In respect to the analogy of Scripture, Irenaeus’ view was that of the Westminster divines.”<sup>119</sup> As Shelton and Payne correctly realize, many eastern exegetical ideas and perspectives are adopted by Protestants. These perspectives become part of Wesley’s exegetical method in as much as his method reflects the Protestant position. Thus, they come to Wesley indirectly transmitted by the Protestant Reformation.

In order to assess the influence and role of Eastern exegetical ideas and perspectives on Wesley, then, we would have to work with these indirect influences. This, in turn, requires that the eastern orientation of the Protestant tradition to eastern thought as a whole be assessed.<sup>120</sup> The continuing effort to make this assessment renders a final conclusion impossible at this time. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this paper, it is sufficient to note that Wesley was oriented to the eastern tradition in the same way as the Protestant tradition which he represents.

Still, in addition to these indirect influences, Wesley’s exegetical conclusions are sometimes directly influenced by the eastern tradition. Since Wesley’s exegetical principle of the analogy of faith determines his exegetical results, the influence of eastern thought upon his theology directly affects his exegetical conclusions. Because Wesleyan scholars are still investigating the eastern influences upon Wesley’s theology, a definitive assessment of the direct eastern influences upon Wesley’s exegesis is still forthcoming.<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, some direct influences may be observed by comparing the results of his exegesis with recognized theological differences between East and West. As an example, recognizing the limitations of the present study, we present an analysis of Wesley’s exegesis relating to the doctrines of original guilt and prevenient grace.

Broadly speaking, eastern and western Christianity differ in their assessments of original guilt. The western tradition following Augustine has generally declared that all inherit the guilt of the original sin of Adam and Eve. Guilt is a fundamental characteristic or condition of humankind, in its natural state. George Cronk articulates the contrasting eastern position:

We are born into a world conditioned by Adam’s sin and by the accumulated sins of others; we are involved in and influenced by that world; and our lives are often shaped by the ongoing consequences of human sinfulness. But we are guilty of, and therefore morally

and spiritually responsible for our own actual sins, and not the sins of others. The human tendency to sin is “original” (or “congenital”) in that it is a natural consequence of being born into a fallen world. In this restricted sense, we may be “born sinful,” but we are not “born guilty.” The Orthodox Church has always repudiated the doctrine of “original guilt” that is, the view that all men share not only the consequences of but also the guilt for the sin of Adam and Eve.<sup>122</sup>

Cronk’s statement concisely articulates the Eastern tradition in general in contrast to the western tradition. The western tradition generally adheres to the doctrine of original guilt while the Eastern tradition generally does not.

Wesley’s theological position in regard to the doctrine of original guilt is essentially that of the western tradition, but Albert Outler states that Wesley derived his “most distinctive ideas about prevenient grace and human freedom” from Eastern spirituality.<sup>123</sup> McCormick explains Wesley’s position:

As Wesley links prevenient grace to original sin he departs from Chrysostom’s anthropological optimism. Furthermore, although he continually adopts the Latin accent on total depravity, he does not do so at the expense of the Eastern notion of theosis. Wesley’s doctrine of original sin linked to prevenient grace, however, serves only to accentuate the necessity of grace in his anthropology, thereby nuancing the meaning and function of original sin. Original sin now functions to accent the necessity of prior grace. This resultant “third alternative” avoided an ontic degradation of humanity without disavowing an optimistic view of grace. Now that grace is antecedent to human choice, the divine-human capacity remains even after the Fall. <sup>124</sup>

Randy Maddox agrees with McCormick’s understanding of Wesley’s position, stating:

Wesley adopted the western proclivity to term the guilty, powerless condition of fallen humanity our “natural” state. And yet, he was quick to add that no one actually exists in a state of “mere nature,” unless they have quenched the Spirit. At issue here is Wesley’s affirmation of a gift of prevenient grace to all fallen humanity. This grace removes the guilt inherited from Adam and re-empowers the human capacity to respond freely to God’s offer of forgiving and transforming grace. Importantly, Wesley’s actual sources for this idea lay more in early Greek theology (especially Macarius) than in Arminius. This distinctive wedding of the doctrines of original sin and prevenient grace allowed Wesley to emphasize the former as strongly as anyone in the West, yet hold an overall estimation of the human condition much like that of Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>125</sup>

As Maddox observes, Wesley accepts the western doctrine that humanity inherits guilt from Adam's sin.<sup>126</sup> However, similar to the Eastern tradition, his doctrine of prevenient grace prevents him from concluding that as a result of this guilt a person is in a state of powerlessness and consequently is unable to do any thing in regard to salvation.<sup>127</sup> Thus, Wesley's theological position is a modification of the western understanding of original guilt as a result of Eastern influences.

McCormick notes that Knox refers to this synthesis as the "principle of Methodism" and that Outler coins the phrase "third alternative." He explains as follows:

Knox viewed this "principle of Methodism" as a synthesis of Augustine's efficient grace and Chrysostom's perfection or holiness. Albert Outler's label "evangelical catholicism" has repeatedly made use of Knox's synthesis. Outler frequently speaks of this synthesis as a "third alternative" which is perhaps one of the best paradigms in understanding the place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition.<sup>128</sup>

Regardless of the terminology, all these scholars recognize that Eastern influences are present in Wesley's theological position regarding original sin.

Wesley's exegetical conclusions reflect his theological position. Describing his use of Matthew Henry in the composition of his *Notes upon the Old Testament*, Wesley states, "But what he wrote in favor of Particular Redemption is totally left out. And of this I here give express notice to the reader once for all."<sup>129</sup> Wesley's exegesis reflects his theological presupposition that prevenient grace mitigates the depravity occasioned by original guilt so that total depravity does not necessitate the doctrine of "Particular Redemption." In a similar manner, Wesley writes to Richard Tompson:

Some days since, I received your favor of the 22nd instant, which came exceedingly seasonably; for I was just revising my *Notes* on the 5th chapter to the Romans; one of which I found, upon a closer inspection, seemed to assert such an imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity as might make way for the "horrible decree." I therefore struck it out immediately; as I would willingly do whatsoever should appear to be any way inconsistent with that grand principle, "The Lord is loving to every man; and His mercy is over all His works. 130

This response to Mr. Tompson as well as Wesley's use of Matthew Henry indicates that Wesley's theological position regarding prevenient grace influences his interpretation of those scriptural passages where original guilt and depravity could imply the need for individual predestination. McCormick observes this influence upon Wesley's exegesis of Romans 2:14-16, stating:

Wesley's exegesis of Romans 2:14-16 speaks of the capacity of humanity to do the things of the law without having the law. This is because of the conscience, properly called "preventing grace." And

yet, it is “natural” to all of creation because everyone seems to have some previous knowledge of good and evil without the written law. It is “natural” because it is universal.<sup>131</sup>

Thus, the doctrine of prevenient grace militates against the doctrine of total depravity inherent in the western understanding of the fall. If, as McCormick, Maddox, and others propose, Wesley derived his doctrine of prevenient grace from the Eastern tradition, then this tradition is exerting a direct influence upon Wesley’s exegetical conclusions.<sup>132</sup>

Although examples of the direct influence of the Eastern tradition upon Wesley’s exegetical conclusions may be multiplied, this example is sufficient to indicate that Wesley interprets Scripture according to his understanding of Christian theology or the analogy of faith. His exegetical conclusions are influenced by the Eastern tradition to the same degree that his theology is influenced by the Eastern tradition. <sup>133</sup>

### **Conclusion**

John Wesley’s exegesis is essentially oriented toward the western exegetical tradition. This tradition determines the issues and problems within which he develops his exegetical method. It also suggests the possible solutions to these issues that are available to him. However, this basic western orientation does not exclude influences from the Eastern exegetical tradition. Eastern influences are mediated indirectly to Wesley through the Reformation and directly from Wesley’s reading of Eastern authors. The extent of the Eastern influence upon Wesley’s exegesis cannot be assessed until the extent of the Eastern influence upon the Reformation and Wesley’s theology has been determined. As these studies progress, Eastern influences upon Wesley’s exegesis should become more apparent. Nevertheless, as the preceding discussion demonstrates, Wesley’s essential exegetical orientation is toward the western exegetical tradition.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Ferrier Hulme, *John Wesley and His Horse* (London: Epworth Press, 1933).

<sup>2</sup>George A. Turner, “John Wesley as an Interpreter of Scripture,” in *Inspiration and Interpretation*, ed. John F. Walvoord (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 156, laments, “Little, however, has been written on the specific subject of Wesley as an interpreter of the Bible.”

<sup>3</sup>In addition to Turner, the following studies are pertinent: William M. Amett, “John Wesley: Man of One Book” (Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 1954); James T. Clemons, “John Wesley: Biblical Literalist,” *Religion in Life* 46 (1977), 332-342; Thorvald Kallstad, *John Wesley and the Bible: A Psychological Study* (Stockholm: Bjamum, 1974); R. Larry Shelton, “John Wesley’s Approach



to Scripture in Historical Perspective,” Wesleyan Theological Journal 16.1 (1981), 2350; Wayne McCown, “Toward a Wesleyan Hermeneutic,” in *Interpreting God’s Word for Today*, ed. idem and James Earl Massey, Wesleyan Theological Perspectives 2 (Anderson, Indiana: Warner Press, 1982), Outler, “Preface,” in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed. Frank Baker (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 1:66100.

4Wesley does not accept the Deuterocanonical books of these traditions.

5Turner, “Wesley as Interpreter,” 158, states, “In his attitude toward the Scripture, as in so many other respects, Wesley was in the ‘middle of the road,’ within the broad stream of Protestantism “

6Martin Luther, “Luther at the Diet of Worms,” trans. Roger A. Homsby, in *Luther’s Works*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), 32: 112113.

7Martin Luther, “An Argument in Defense of All the Articles of Dr. Martin Luther Wrongly Condemned in the Roman Bull,” trans. C. M. Jacobs, in *The Works of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman, 1930), 3: 16.

8Luther, “Diet of Worms,” Luther’s *Works*, 32: 113.

9Martin Luther, “*Assertio omnium articulorum M. Lutheri per Bullam Leonis X. novissimam damnatorum*,” in *D. Martin Luther’s Works* (Weimar: Herman Bohlaus, 1897), 7:97. Translation in Werner G. Kummel. *The New Testament: The history of the Investigations of its Problems*, trans. S. Maclean Gilmour and Howard Clark Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 2122.

10Martin Luther, “Answer to the Hyperchristian, Hyperspiritual Book by Goat Emser in Leipzig,” trans. Eric W. and Ruth C. Gritsch, in *Luther’s Works*, 39: 178.

11Luther, *ibid.*, 181, defines “literal meaning” as follows, “Thus ‘literal meaning’ is not a good term, because Paul interprets the letter quite differently than they do. Those who call it ‘grammatical historical meaning’ do better. It would be appropriate to call it the ‘meaning of the tongue or of language’ as St. Paul does in 1 Corinthians 14 [:219], because, according to the sound of the tongue or speech, it is understood in this way by everyone.”

12The following discussion of the Reformation and Enlightenment dialogues is a summary of the excellent treatment by Klaus Scholder, *The Birth of Modern Critical Theology*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990). Bowden provides English translations of the primary source material.

13Valerianus Magnus, *De acatholicorum credendi regula iudicium* (Prague: n.p., 1628; reprint in part 2 of *Valeriani Magni iudicium de acatholicorum et acatholicorum regula credi*, Vienna: Cosmerovius, 1641; English edition; *A Censure about the Rule of Belief Practised by the Protestants* (Doway: 11. Kellam, 1634). Magnus is also referred to as Valerio and Valeriano Magni.

14Magnus, op. cit., page numbers are to 1641 edition). Scholder, op. cit., 15.

15Magnus, *ibid.*, p. 8; Scholder, p. 15.

16Magnus, *ibid.*, p. 145; Scholder, *ibid.*, p. 20.

17Magnus, *ibid.*, p. 42; Scholder, *ibid.*, p. 18.

18Jacob Martini, *Vindiciae ecclesiae Lutheranae dei gratia absurda superstitionis pontificiae sententiam eius de regula credendi* (Wittenberg: J. Helwigius, 1631). Scholder, *ibid.*, p. 20.

19Johannes Major, *ludicium de acatholicorum credendi regula castigatum et confutatum* (Jena: n.p., 1631), Scholder, *ibid.*, p. 148n38.

20Isaac de La Peyrere, *Praeadamitae. Sive exercitatio super versibus duodecimo, decimotertio, & decimoquarto, capituli quinti epistolae d. Pauli ad Romanos. Quibus induentur primi homines ante Adamum conditi* (n.p., 1655); English edition, *Man Before Adam, or, A Discourse upon the Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Verses of the Fifth Chapter of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans. By which are prov'd, that the first men were created before Adam* (London: n.p., 1656).

21Scholder, *ibid.*, pp. 8687.

22An example of this method of relating the Bible and scientific fact is Andreas Osiander's preface to Copernicus' *De revolutionibus orbium caelestium* (Nuremberg: J. Petreius, 1543). In this preface he states that the true cause of the movement of the heavenly bodies is in principle unknowable. Hence, he concludes that any explanation, including that of Copernicus, is only hypothetical. For a detailed discussion, see Scholder, *ibid.*, pp. 4953.

23J. Kepler, "Astronomia nova" in *Opera omnia*, ed. C. Frisch (Frankfurt: Heyder, 1854), 3:153. Scholder, *ibid.*, pp. 5556.

24Scholder, *ibid.*, p. 57.

25Franz Hildebrandt, *From Luther to Wesley* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1951), 30, observes, "It is evident that, as a son of the eighteenth century, he 'reasons' in a style very different from Luther's, addressing his generation in 'an earnest appeal to men of reason and religion....'"

26John Wesley, "The Case of Reason Impartially Considered," in *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872; reprint, Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1978), 6:353 (page numbers are to reprint edition). This is the Jackson edition. Hereinafter this work is abbreviated as "Reason Considered."

27Laurence Willard Wood, "Wesley's Epistemology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 10 (1975), 51.

28Wood, *ibid.*, 56.

29John Wesley, “The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption,” in *Works*, 5:108, interprets Romans 8:15 as distinguishing between the natural, legal, and evangelical man as follows, “To sum up all: the natural man neither fears nor loves God; one under the law, fears, one under grace, loves Him. The first has no light in the things of God, but walks in utter darkness; the second sees the painful light of hell; the third, the joyous light of heaven “

30John Wesley, “An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,” in *Works*, 8:4. Hereinafter abbreviated as “Appeal.”

31Hildebrandt states, *ibid.*, p.27, “Yet the Word is not accessible to the unregenerate mind.... There is a veil which must be taken from Israel (2 Cor. 3:15f.), the seal which must be broken (Rev. 5:2ff.), the key which must be found (Rev. 3:7).”

32Wesley, “Appeal,” in *Works*, 8:1314.

33Wesley, “Reason Considered,” in *Works*, 6:353-354, says, “. . . let us now impartially consider, First, What is it that reason can do? And who can deny that it can do much, very much, in the affairs of common life? . . . To ascend higher still: It is certain reason can assist us in going through the whole circle of arts and sciences; of grammar, rhetoric, logic, natural and moral philosophy, mathematics, algebra, metaphysics. It can teach whatever the skill or industry of man has invented for some thousand years.”

34Wesley, “Reason Considered,” in *Works*, 6:354355.

35Reason applied to outward sense data does not depend upon God’s revelation because the physical world is always present and accessible. However, reason applied to the internal sense data does depend upon God’s revelation because this data is not always accessible. Wesley admits that the Bible as an entity of the physical world is accessible to all men and some information may be derived from it. However, faith cannot be derived from it by the natural man apart from the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Turner, “Wesley as Interpreter,” 175, states, “Wesley assumed that, since God is rational, interpretation of Scripture, if true, should be reasonable; it must cohere with other phases of revelation.”

36John Wesley, “Extract of a Discourse of the Causes and Cures of Mental Errors,” in *A Christian Library*, ed. idem (London: J. Kershaw, 1825), 27:324, apparently agrees with the statements, “To take down the arrogance, and prevent the mischief of carnal reasonings, let us be convinced, That it is the will of God, that reason in all believers should resign to faith, and all ratiocination submit to revelation. Reason is no better than an usurper, when it presumes to arbitrate matters belonging to faith and revelation. Reason’s proper place is to sit at the feet of faith, and instead of searching the secret grounds and reasons, to adore and admire the great and unsearchable mysteries of the Gospel. None of God’s works are unreasonable, but many of them are above reason.... It is not reason, but

faith that must save us.” The Christian Library, of course, presents Wesley-edited extracts from various authors. For the purposes of this paper, I am assuming that Wesley himself concurs with the given quotation or citation.

37Wesley, “Appeal,” in *Works*, 8:6.

38Wesley, “Appeal,” in *Works*, 8:13.

39Wesley, “Reason Considered,” in *Works*, 6:355.

40Wesley, “Mental Errors,” in *Christian Library*, 27:323, extracts the following, “Reason is our guide by the institution and law of nature, in civil and natural affairs: It is the standard at which we weigh them: It is an home-born judge and king in the soul. Faith comes in as a stranger to nature, and so it is dealt with as an intruder into reason’s province, just as the Sodomites dealt with Lot. It refuseth to be an underling to faith. Out of this arrogancy of carnal reason, as from Pandora’s box, swarms of errors are flown abroad into the world.”

41It is instructive to compare Wesley’s solution of the problem of relating revelation and reason to the solution proposed by the Cartesian Center Party. See Scholder, *ibid.*, p. 124.

42Wesley did not hold that reason was an infallible guide to truth, however. He ascribes the defects in the human faculty of reason to the Fall. In “Mental Errors,” in *Christian Library*, 285-286, his position is exposed, “The understanding of man was at first perspicacious and clear, all truths lay obvious in their comely and ravishing beauty before it: ‘God made man upright.’ . . . No sooner was man created, but by the exercise of knowledge he soon discovered God’s image in him; and by his ambition after more, lost what he had. So that now there is an haziness or cloud spread over truth by ignorance and error.” Because reason is marred in man, conclusions reached exclusively by reason must be held as hypothetical while conclusions based upon revelation are not. Page 295 continues, “The former, namely, matters of mere opinion, we are so to hold, as upon clear light to be ready to part with them. The other, namely, matters of faith, we are to hold with resolutions to live and die by them.”

43Wayne McCown, “Toward a Wesleyan Hermeneutic,” in *Interpreting God’s Word for Today*, ed. idem, Wesleyan Theological Perspectives 2 (Anderson, Indiana: Warner Press, 1982), 6, says “Wesley was not content with merely describing literary and historical data. In fact, he evidences a decided disinterest in such details as matters of importance in and of themselves. He always pressed on to explicate the truth contained in any and every text.”

44George Lyons, “Hermeneutical Bases for Theology: Higher Criticism and the Wesleyan Interpreter,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 18 (1983), 67, states, “I would suggest still another characterization Wesley’s hermeneutic is soteriocentric. He studied the Bible with one overriding question in mind: What is the way to heaven.” This soteriological focus was bequeathed to Wesley by the early

reformers, but they did not limit the Bible to strictly soteriological concerns as Wesley did.

45Shelton, *ibid.*, pp. 3839.

46Wesley utilized the method of limitation of scope so radically that he hardly feels compelled to resort to the accommodation theory that was so important to Kepler. For instance, Joshua 10 is ignored in Wesley's writings. When he is forced to contend with this chapter in his *Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament*, he does not discuss the contradictory world view implied there, but he focuses upon the issue of God's aid to his people in time of need. See John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament* (Bristol: William Fine, 1765), I :739740. Hereinafter this work will be abbreviated as *Old Testament Notes*.

47John Wesley, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," in *Works*, 6:44. Wesley, "Reason Considered," in *Works*, 6:354, says, "The foundation of true religion stands upon the oracles of God..And how is it possible ..to ascertain the essential truths contained therein? a beautiful summary of which we have in that which is called the Apostles' Creed." He then proceeds to summarize the elements of saving faith.

48John Wesley, "Thoughts upon Methodism," in *Works*, 13:258. See also his sermon, "The Witness of Our Own Spirit," in *Works*, 5:136, where he says, "But what is the rule whereby men are to judge of right and wrong? . . . But the Christian rule of right and wrong is the word of God, the writings of the Old and the New Testament; all that the Prophets and 'holy men of old' wrote 'as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;' all that Scripture which was given by inspiration of God, and which is indeed profitable for doctrine, or teaching the whole will of God; for reproof of what is contrary thereto; for correction of error; and for instruction, or training us up, in righteousness (2 Tim. iii.16)."

49John Wesley, *Old Testament Notes*, 1: 1.

50John Wesley, "Extract of Mental Errors," in *Christian Library*, 27:293.

51Hildebrandt, *ibid.*, p. 30.

52Hildebrandt, *ibid.*, p. 28, states, "Sermons, letters, journals show on every page the man who speaks in Biblical terms, argues in Biblical ways and thinks in Biblical categories; at no point is he nearer to Luther and further remote from contemporary English theology." Cited with approval by Shelton, 37, and by Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), 37. See also William Arnett, "John Wesley and the Bible," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 3.1 (1968), 58, for a similar assessment.

53John Wesley, "Popery Calmly Considered," in *Works*, 10:142, states, "In all cases, the church is to be judged by the Scripture, not the Scripture by the Church."

54Shelton, *ibid.*, pp. 3840.

55John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1986), 1:note on Matthew 1:1.

56John Albert Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament*, trans. Charlton T. Lewis and Marvin R. Vincent (Philadelphia: Perkinpine and Higgins, 1862), 1 :xvi.

57John Wesley, “Journal” in *Works*, 4:82. Wesley is responding to Mr. Jenyn’s tract, “Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion.” Jenyn had stated, “. . . all Scripture is not given by inspiration of God; but the writers were some times left to themselves, and consequently made some mistakes.” For a discussion of this quotation see Turner, “Wesley As Interpreter,” 162.

58Wesley, “Popery,” 10:141.

59John Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, ed. John Telford (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 4:247, writes to Margaret Lewen, “You want to know God, in order to enjoy Him in time and in eternity. All that you want to know of Him is contained in one book, the Bible.”

60Outler, “Preface,” *ibid.*, 58, observes, “And it was from this basic doctrine of Biblical inspiration that his main principles of interpretation were derived.... The first was that believers should accustom themselves to the Biblical language and thus to the ‘general sense’ of Scripture as a whole. This general sense is omnipresent throughout the canon even if not equally so in every text; there is a ‘message’ in every part of Holy Writ, and it is always the same, in essence.”

61Wesley, “Extract of Mental Errors,” in *Christian Library*, 27: 307308.

62McCown, 5. John N. Oswalt, “Wesley’s Use of the Old Testament in His Doctrinal Teachings,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 12 (1977), 41, states, “Any one sermon or a subject would cover the whole range of the relevant Biblical teaching.”

63Turner, “Wesley as Interpreter,” 170, says, “There is in Wesley a greater tendency to look at the question theologically than exegetically. In other words, Wesley tended to interpret a disputed passage by the Scripture as a whole without strictly limiting himself to a literal-historical interpretation. He was as apt to explain an Old Testament passage by an appeal to Paul, as to consider it in the light of its own context.”

64John Wesley, “The Witness of the Spirit,” in *Works*, 5:132133. Turner, *Wesley as Interpreter*, 176, says, “To Wesley experience provided another criterion that served to assure him whether or not a given interpretation was in accord with the Spirit of truth.”

65Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 8, suggests that Wesley’s parents, as good Anglicans, taught

him that reason was necessary to supplement the Bible in ascertaining God's will.

66Wesley, "Extract of Mental Errors," in *Christian Library*, 27:286. On pages 308-310, this extract uses Scriptural inferences to establish the Christian Sabbath and the first day of the week as well as infant baptism.

67Baker, *ibid.*, p. 11, states, "One major problem remained. Granted that the law of God must be obeyed, how was it to be discovered? . . . The answer usually given by Anglican theologians was: 'The Bible, interpreted by reason and the ancient church.' Wesley seems to have reached this conclusion by a process similar to osmosis, absorbing the Anglican spirit into his bloodstream without specific teaching or reading." Baker *op. cit.*, 138139, proposes that Wesley added experience to this classical Anglican approach the influence of the German pietists.

68Donald A. D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1990). Tumer, "Wesley as Interpreter," 174175, explains the rationale behind Wesley's integration of these different authorities, saying, "Wesley believed that the path to spiritual truth was threefold: Scripture, reason, and experience. Sometimes he varied the trilogy to "Scripture, Reason, and Christian Antiquity." Always the Bible was first but he recognized that reason was needed in its interpretation, and also that one's individual interpretation needed to be checked with that of other earnest Christians. By "experience" he meant primarily the operation of God with the soul, both individual and corporately. By "Christian Antiquity" he meant the same Christian consciousness as expressed by earlier generations of Christians, the difference was temporal.... Wesley assumed that, since God is rational, interpretation of scripture, if true, should be reasonable; it must cohere with other phases of revelation." Also see Outler, "Preface," *ibid.*, 6061.

69In a paper presented to the Conference of 1755, Wesley says, "But is the Bible the only rule of Christian worship? Yes, the only supreme rule. But there may be a thousand rules subordinate to this, without any violation of it at all." See Baker, *ibid.*, 330. At one point, Wesley argues that contradiction would overthrow the whole Christian revelation. See John Wesley, "Free Grace," in *Works*, 7:381.

70Baker, *ibid.*, p. 33, cites a passage from Wesley's Journal in which he confesses that he erred in "making antiquity a coordinate rather than a subordinate rule with Scripture."

71Baker, *ibid.*, p. 13, identifies the origin of Wesley's position in regard to these various authorities as the Church of England which sought a mediating position between Catholics and Protestants. He states, "In this was reflected the compromising spirit of English Protestantism, which . . . provided a series of checks and balances designed to preserve what was seen to be good both in Roman Catholicism and in the continental Reformation, and at the same time to guard against what was feared: to maintain alike the primacy of Scripture and a sense of continuity with the rites and government of the apostolic church...."

72Shelton, *ibid.*, p. 42, says, “Finally, his emphasis that Scripture must be interpreted in the context of prayer is noteworthy. This awareness of the illumination of the Word through the Spirit is basic to Wesley’s hermeneutic, as it was for the Fathers and Reformers.”

73Wesley, “Extract of Mental Errors,” in *Christian Library*, 27:287.

74Wesley, *Old Testament Notes*, 1:ix. Hildebrandt, *ibid.*, 27, comments, “No other guide will open the Word but He Himself who gave it (Psalm 68:11) and who remains His own interpreter.” On pages 2729, Hildebrandt cites several Wesley hymns that affirm this role of the Holy Spirit in interpretation.

75Turner, “Wesley as Interpreter,” 174. Wesley, *New Testament Notes*, 2: note on 2 Timothy 3:16, says, “The Spirit of God not only once inspired those who wrote it, but continually inspires, supernaturally assists, those that read it with earnest prayer.”

76Hildebrandt, *ibid.*, p. 28, observes, “Likewise the Lutheran Fathers declared *scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpres* and insisted upon the inseparable connection between the living Spirit and the written Word.”

77 Lyons, *ibid.*, p. 71, points to the phrase “spiritual meaning” in Wesley and says, “By ‘spiritual meaning’ Wesley does not suggest that he adheres to a twofold meaning of Scripture, an abbreviation of the medieval fourfold meaning. He refers rather to the practical edifying corollaries to be deduced from Scripture an insistence upon the necessity of moving beyond what it once meant to what it now means.” Clemons, *ibid.*, p. 342, note 9, says, “The literal meaning could be grasped with painstaking effort, involving all of the methods and tools available, but the spiritual came through the work of the Spirit, once the literal meaning had been established.” See the literature cited by Lyons, *ibid.*, p. 77, note 70. Carl Michalson, “The Hermeneutics of Holiness in Wesley,” in *Interpreting God’s Word for Today*, ed. Wayne McCown and James Earl Massey, *Wesleyan Theological Perspectives 2* (Anderson, Indiana: Warner Press, 1982), 32-33, discusses the view of application among the Pietists that interpretation is not complete until the truth is applied. He interprets Wesley as being in basic agreement.

78Wesley, *New Testament Notes*, 1:note on John 7:17.

79Turner, “Wesley as Interpreter,” 174.

80McCown, *ibid.*, p. 7.

81Wesley, *Old Testament Notes*, 1:ix, advises after giving instruction upon how to interpret the Bible: “And whatever light you thus receive, should be used to the uttermost, and that immediately. Let there be no delay. Whatever you resolve, begin to execute the first moment you can. So shall you find this word to be indeed the power of God unto present and eternal salvation.”



82Wesley, "Extract of Mental Errors," in *Christian Library*, 27:312, agrees with the statement, "The sweet consent and beautiful harmony of all the parts of the written word, is a great argument of its divinity; and this you will clearly discern when by a due search you shall find that things that lie at the remotest distance, to conspire and consist in one, and one part casting light. as well as adding strength to another." See also Outler, "Preface," 58.

83McCown, *ibid.*, p. 5.

84Wesley, "Extract of Mental Errors," in *Christian Library*, 27:302.

85Outler, "Preface," *ibid.*, p. 58, says that this principle also comes from the Greek fathers. He says, "This leads to a second rule, adapted from the ancient Fathers. and from the Reformers as well: that the Scriptures are to be read as a whole, with the expectation that the clearer texts may be relied upon to illuminate the obscurer ones."

86McCown, *ibid.*, p. 6

87Lyons, *ibid.*, p. 71, says, "Wesley accepts the Reformation hermeneutical rule known as 'the analogy of faith,' by which Scripture is understood as its own interpreter."

88John Wesley, "An Address to the Clergy," in *Works*, 10:490.

89Wesley, *Old Testament Notes*, 1 :ix.

90Turner, "Wesley as Interpreter," 172.

91Turner, "Wesley as Interpreter," 169170.

92Clemons, *ibid.*, p. 342, note 10, concurs saying, "The phrase 'analogy of faith' appears several times in Wesley's writings. one indication of what he meant appears in his Preface to *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*: 'Have a constant eye to the analogy of faith, the connection and harmony there is between those grand fundamental doctrines, original sin, justification by faith, the new birth, inward and outward holiness.' While all of these doctrines were for Wesley based on Scripture, they had been shaped by the traditions of the church. It seems then that no valid interpretation would depart from those 'grand doctrines.' " See Wesley, *Old Testament Notes*, 1:ix.

93Wesley, "Extract of Mental Errors," in *Christian Library*, 27:301.

94Wesley, *Old Testament Notes*, 1:iii.

95Wesley, "Extract of Mental Errors," in *Christian Library*, 27:331.

96Wesley, "Extract of Mental Errors," in *Christian Library*, 27:294. Wesley, *Letters*, 2:325, writes to Dr. Conyers Middleton, "The Scriptures are a complete rule of faith and practice; and they are clear in all necessary points. "

97Wesley, "Extract of Mental Errors," in *Christian Library*, 27:301.

98See Outler, "Preface," *ibid.*, pp. 5859, for a discussion of Wesley's five interpretive principles.

99John Wesley, "Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions," in *Works*, 5:3, states in regard to the interpretation of obscure passages, "I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, 'comparing spiritual things with spiritual.' "

100Wesley, "Extract of Mental Errors," in *Christian Library*, 27:302303.

101Wesley, "Extract of Mental Errors," in *Christian Library*, 27:293.

102 Wesley, "Extract of Mental Errors," in *Christian Library*, 27:310.

103Wesley, *Old Testament Notes*, 1:ix, states that his design is "to give the direct, literal meaning, of every verse, of every sentence, and as far as I am able, of every word in the oracles of God. I design only . . . to point every man to keep his eye fixt upon the naked Bible, that he may read and hear it with understanding." Wesley, "Letter to Samuel Furley, May 10, 1755," in *Letters*, 3:129, advises, "The general rule of interpreting Scripture is this: the literal sense of every text is to be taken, if it be not contrary to some other texts; but in that case the obscure text is to be interpreted by those which speak more plainly."

104Shelton, *ibid.*, p. 42.

105John Wesley, "On Corrupting the Word of God," in *Works*, 7:473, says, ". . . we have spoken the Word of God . . . if we have put no unnatural interpretation upon it, but taken the known phrases in their common obvious sense." However, Wesley demonstrates great latitude in his understanding of the literal interpretation. Michalson, *ibid.*, 4142, points out, "In the sermon *The Signs of the Times*, the customary messianic signs are listed: the deaf hear, the lame walk, and lepers are cleansed.... The deaf who hear are those who were deaf to the outward and inward call of God. The lame who walk are now running the race that is set before them. The lepers who are healed are those inflicted with 'the deadly leprosy, of sin.'" Clemons, *ibid.*, 335, correctly observes, "The term literal, then, is far too complex to be limited to a simplistic understanding...." See also Baker, *ibid.*, 20.

106 Clemons, *ibid.*, p. 335.

107See Outler, "Preface," *ibid.*, p. 58.

108Wesley, "Corrupting the Word," in *Works*, 7:470. Wesley, "Extract of Mental Errors," in *Christian Library*, 27:303, contains the following advice, "Whenever you meet with an obscure place of Scripture, let the context of that Scripture be thoroughly searched; for it is usual with God to set up light there to guide us through the obscurity of a particular text."

109Wesley, "Preface to Sermons," in *Works*, 5:3, says, "If any doubt still remains. I consult those who are experienced in the things of God.

110Wesley, "Extract of Mental Errors," in *Christian Library*, 27:304.

111Bengel, *ibid.*, p. xiii.

112Turner, "Wesley as Interpreter," 158, says, "Wesley therefore differed little in his view of the Bible from other Protestant groups."

113The recent attempt to relate John Wesley to Eastern orthodoxy labors under some serious methodological problems. This attempt arises from Albert Outler's suggestions in his book *John Wesley in "A Library of Protestant Thought"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), viii.ix, 9, note 26, 31; in his article, "John Wesley's Interests in the Early Fathers of the Church," *Bulletin of the United Church of Canada Committee on Archives and History* 29 (1980 82), 517; and in his "Preface" to Wesley's sermons, ed. cit., 7476. Outler's suggestions may be correct, but careful methods must be developed in order to establish this relationship. The comparison is complicated because Wesley is not being compared to Eighteenth Century Orthodoxy, but to the Greek fathers of the first four or five centuries. The reference to these fathers as Eastern Orthodox is anachronistic as well as misleading since they are also recognized by the Roman Catholic Church. A careful study of the method used to relate Wesley to the eastern traditions should be made, but the task is too involved for this present paper. Although recognizing methodological problems, this paper tentatively accepts the results of the recent comparisons of Wesley with the Eastern tradition.

114K. Steve McCormick, "Faith Filled with the Energy of Love: A Forgotten Strand of Theosis in Chrysostom, Recovered by Wesley," (Unpublished paper presented to the Wesleyan Studies Group at the American Academy of Religion Meeting; Anaheim, California, November 18, 1989), 78, note 21, discusses the problems in distinguishing between indirect and direct Eastern influences upon Wesley. He states, "The real problem in ascertaining the influence of a particular early church father or any other source for that matter, in Wesley, lies in the fact that patristics and the early church fathers were such a vital part of Anglican reading that it is difficult to determine whether Wesley was directly recalling or quoting from these men, or merely remembering a line or two that was itself an echo of the early church fathers. By revealing a few of these "direct" and "indirect" sources in Wesley's Anglican heritage one can pinpoint the actual places of exposure. The problem therefore, must be explored contextually; i.e., with reference to the patristic revival in the seventeenth century, the place of patristics in Anglican theology along with its theological method.... It must be explored contextually because of the obvious questions; i.e., How much of Wesley's exposure to Chrysostom is simply due to his Anglican heritage, and how much is due to direct reading and use by Wesley? In other words, is Wesley's use of Chrysostom simply his own heritage speaking or is his use of Chrysostom his own explicit borrowing from Chrysostom?, or a little of both? This investigation must also be explored textually.... This textual examination, will lift out primarily by means of inferences drawn from the varied quotations or allusions to Chrysostom in

Wesley....” Even after recognizing the problem in distinguishing between direct and indirect influences, McCormick still maintains the distinction in his contextual (indirect influences) and textual (direct influences) approach. The same distinction is maintained in the following discussion.

115Shelton, *ibid.*, p. 42. Shelton’s statement is quoted in footnote 66 above.

116Does Irenaeus belong to the Eastern or western tradition? He was born in the East and reared in Smyrna in Asia Minor, but he served as a missionary in southern France. He became Bishop of Lyons in A.D. 177 and served until his death in the early nineties. Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant all recognize him as a church father. Thus, he belongs to all the traditions. The reason he is cited as a representative of the eastern tradition by some scholars is that he wrote in Greek, not Latin.

117J. Barton Payne, “The Biblical Interpretation of Irenaeus,” in *Inspiration and Interpretation*, ed. John F. Walvoord (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 29-46.

118Payne, *ibid.*, p. 46

119Payne, *ibid.*, p. 33.

120An investigation that compares and contrasts the extent of Eastern influences upon Anglicanism as distinct from the Continental Reformation would be particularly useful in assessing the direct and indirect Eastern influences upon Wesley.

121See Outler, “Preface,” *ibid.*, pp. 74-76, for a discussion of several Eastern influences upon Wesley’s theology.

122George Cronk, *The Message of the Bible: An Orthodox Christian Perspective* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Press, 1982), 45.

123Wesley, *Old Testament Notes*, 1:26, comments upon Genesis 5:3 and notes that Adam’s son was “sinful and defiled, frail and mortal, and miserable like himself; not only a man like himself, consisting of body and soul; but a sinner like himself, guilty, and obnoxious, degenerate and corrupt.”

124McCormick, *ibid.*, pp. 40-42. Also see Outler, “Preface,” *ibid.*, p. 74.

125Randy Maddox, “John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy: Influences, Convergences, and Differences,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 45.2 (1990), 35.

126In response to Dr. Taylor, who held that Adam’s guilt did not pass to his posterity, Wesley, *The Doctrine of Original Sin* (London: J. Kershaw, 1825), 65, states, “Now since we suffer the same penal evil, which God threatened to, and inflicted on, Adam for his sin; and since it is allowed, we suffer this for Adam’s sin, and that by the sentence of God, appointing all men to die, because Adam sinned; is not the consequence evident? Therefore we are all some way guilty of Adam’s sin.” Later, on pages 91-92, Wesley quotes Taylor as saying, “But we

cannot gather from Rom. v. or 1 Cor. xv. ‘That all mankind sinned in Adam, if we understand sin as distinguished from suffering.’“ Wesley then responds to this statement, “It has been largely proved, that we can; and that sinning must necessarily be understood there, as distinguished from suffering.” Wesley, *New Testament Notes*, note on Romans 5:12, clearly articulates his position, “In that [εφ ψ]So the word is used also, 2 Cor. v.4. All sinned in Adam. These words assign the reason why death came upon all men; infants themselves not excepted, in that all sinned.”

127McCormick, *ibid.*, p. 36, states, “Conscience in Chrysostom seems to function in the same way as prevenient grace functions in Wesley.”

128McCormick, *ibid.*, pp. 23

129Wesley, *Old Testament Notes*, 1:v.

130Wesley, *Letters*, 3:134.

131McCormick, *ibid.*, p. 38. See Robert D. Smith, “John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards: Theologians, Theology, and Theological Method,” (Unpublished paper presented to the American Academy of Religion Meeting; Anaheim, California, November 18, 1989), 89. Comparing Wesley to Jonathan Edwards, Smith comments, “In ‘Original Sin’ he [Wesley] affirmed that persons by nature were void of original righteousness. He explained this to mean the loss of both the knowledge and love of God. Both Edwards and Wesley believed that the loss of God’s presence meant that in their own nature persons could not please God. Indeed they inclined toward evil. Only the grace of God enabled one to respond favorably to God. Wesley asserted grace came to all persons, while Edwards indicated only to the elect.”

132Maddox, *ibid.*, p. 46, note 58, cites several studies that support his contention that Wesley’s notion of prevenient grace originates from the eastern tradition.

133See Maddox, *ibid.*, *passim*, for a discussion of several areas in which Wesley’s theology is influenced by Eastern tradition.

## **CHRISTIAN VIRTUE: JOHN WESLEY AND THE ALEXANDRIAN TRADITION**

by David Bundy

Christian virtue, that structure of desirable behavioral patterns developed to be congruent with the professed religious values, was important to both John Wesley and to the Alexandrian theologians.<sup>1</sup> For both, it was a central concern in the Christian life; virtue is not contributory to, but is reflective of human divinisation (the process of becoming like God in total experience) or sanctification (the process of becoming conformed to God in this life). The possible relationship between Wesley and the Alexandrian theologians was suggested by Wesley himself. In an oft cited letter to the editor of Lloyd's Evening Post, preserved in Wesley's journal, it is suggested that John Wesley used a text of Clement of Alexandria as the model for his tract, *The Character of a Methodist*.<sup>2</sup> Both Clement of Alexandria and Origen are cited (at least five and twenty-five times respectively) by Wesley.<sup>3</sup> Other writers used by Wesley, including Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil the Great, and Macarius, were heavily influenced by Clement and especially by Origen. Indeed, the Cappadocian theologians, Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil the Great, whom Wesley read, and Gregory of Nyssa, who was perhaps not read or at least not cited, self-consciously adapted the spirituality of Origen to their fourth-century context.<sup>4</sup> Another writer, of uncertain provenance, used by Wesley, Macarius, has been read, inappropriately, in light of Gregory of Nyssa by Werner Jaeger.<sup>5</sup> However, Macarius, whom Gregory of Nyssa (probably) used<sup>6</sup> can also be read in the light of Origen and Clement who represent a tradition in the understanding of the relationship between *gnosis* and *praxis* which had been evolving at Alexandria since the days of Philo.<sup>7</sup>

The numerous citations in Wesley's works and the avowals of the importance of early Christian writers, especially the precise reference to Clement of Alexandria, have led Wesley scholars to affirm Alexandrian influence on Wesley.

Harald Lindstrom observed, as early as 1946, that Clement's seventh Stromata, "On Perfection," was important for understanding Wesley.<sup>8</sup> Outler stated, in 1964: "The 'Christian Gnostic' of Clement of Alexandria became Wesley's model of the ideal Christian."<sup>9</sup> McIntosh argued that there are similarities between Wesley's and Clement's concepts of "perfect love."<sup>10</sup> Outler, discussing Wesley's interest in early Christian writers, affirmed, "Clement of Alexandria was a favorite; Origen is cited seven times with sensitivity."<sup>11</sup>

Despite these things, methodological problems posed by the comparison of the complex, eclectic Wesley and the perhaps more complex Alexandrian tradition dissuaded scholars until the mid 1980's. In 1985, A. C. Meyer defended what may go down in history as one of the worst of doctoral dissertations. His efforts to examine "John Wesley and the Church Fathers" devolved into long citations from patristic handbooks and unreflective assembling of quotations from John Wesley.<sup>12</sup> Fortunately for Wesleyan and patristic studies, the dissertation of Ted Campbell had become available the year before. Campbell's dissertation noted the methodological problems of a direct comparison of patristic writers and Wesley and carefully developed a precise analysis of Wesley's use of "Christian antiquity." It provides an essential first stop in the analysis of Wesley's use of early Christian sources, and, in spite of the observation that he did not "focus on the Greek fathers," his is the most reliable analysis of Wesley's use of the eastern writers available. Campbell provides the basis from which all future work on Wesley's appropriation of models from the early church must begin.<sup>13</sup>

This essay will build on the earlier suggestions and works. The method is, first, to discuss briefly methodological issues; second, to explore Wesley's dependence on Clement and Origen as claimed by him; third, to explore convergences and divergences between Wesley and the Alexandrian tradition with respect to virtue; and fourth, to suggest the implications of that analysis for reading Wesley.

## **METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES**

Wesley was not the sole Anglican theologian to use the early Christian writers as authorities, models and sources for theological, ecclesiological and ethical reflection. He was the beneficiary of a revival in patristic scholarship in 17th and 18th century England which had provided editions and translations of many important patristic texts.<sup>14</sup> Nor was England the only source of editions. On the European continent, humanists, reformers and counter-reformers had produced texts, translations and analyses of early documents. It was not merely an academic issue. Each group was attempting to rediscover and claim early Christian writers as support for its understanding of Christianity. Because of the primitivist impulse of many Reformation ideals, the preoccupation was with the writers antecedent to the Council of Nicea (325 C.E.) although later writers, especially through the fourth century, received significant attention.<sup>15</sup>

In England, enthusiasm for the patristic writers was particularly keen among the Anglican Caroline divines. Richard Hooker (1554-1600) is, in many senses

the founder of Anglican theology. In his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1594-1597), Hooker proposed a quadrilateral of authority in ecclesiastical decision-making which included Scripture, reason, the tradition of the church and the perspective of the contemporary church, arguing that the consensus of the tradition be sought rather than to confer authority on any given writer.<sup>16</sup> Favorites of Wesley and his period, such as Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626) and Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), emphasized, even more than Hooker, these sources.<sup>17</sup> Following this lead, Caroline writers edited and translated significant quantities of early Christian texts. They also proposed parameters for the use of early materials in settling disputes about Christian theology, spirituality and polity. William Wake (1657-1737) and William Cave (1637-1713) were especially productive, and Wesley would use their materials.<sup>18</sup> Continental scholars Jean Daille, Claude Fleury and Johann Lorenz von Mosheim (1694-1755) contributed programmatic works which circulated in England and were used (in the cases of Fleury and Mosheim, edited and republished in translation without crediting the authors or the translators!) by Wesley.<sup>19</sup> Wesley also edited a volume on ascetic spirituality by Anthony Horneck which appears to draw heavily upon Clement and other Alexandrians and includes Horneck's "Letter to a Person of Quality, Concerning the Lives of the Primitive Christians."<sup>20</sup> Wesley concludes his first edition of Horneck's work with a recommendation of Clement of Alexandria and Origen, among other Ante-Nicene writers.<sup>21</sup> Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705), the German Pietist, provided extensive patristic quotations in his *Pia Desidera* seeking to demonstrate the high moral values of the early Church.<sup>22</sup> Johann Arndt (1555-1621), a principal progenitor of German Pietism, earlier contributed a volume which sought to ascertain the nature of primitive, "true" Christianity. Wesley also abstracted it for inclusion in his *Christian Library*.<sup>23</sup> Arndt's work reflects a developmental spirituality and he is obviously aware of the Alexandrian tradition.

Other key texts from the Caroline period which are related to the patristic materials and which Wesley appropriated include John Williams (1636? 1709), *A Catechism Truly Representing the Doctrines and Practices of the Church of Rome, with an Answer Thereto* (London: Richard Chriswell, 1686). Wesley plagiarized this work for his "A Roman Catechism...With a Reply Thereto."<sup>24</sup> The work of another Caroline writer, William Beveridge, *Sunodikon, sive Pandectae Canonum 55. Apostolorum et Conciliorum Ecclesia Graeca Receptorum*, provided grist for Wesley's liturgical experimentation in Georgia.<sup>25</sup> Wesley knew and positively appreciated the work of the Caroline divines sufficiently to follow them as models in the use of early Christian literature, as Campbell has demonstrated.<sup>26</sup> The Caroline writers themselves had used early Christian writers as resources in every aspect of their theological inquiry and reflection, especially in their considerations of Christian virtue. For example, Jeremy Taylor and William Law, who influenced Wesley early in his quest, were apparently endeavoring to present patristic primitivist syntheses of the virtuous Christian life, viewing it developmentally.<sup>27</sup>



The importance of these precedents to the purposes of this essay lies in the fact that the transmission of the writings of early Christian writers was not simply a matter of direct reading and literal translation of otherwise unknown texts. The continental Pietist and Caroline writers had in mind purposes other than mere transmission of texts and traditions. These other purposes conditioned Wesley's reading of those texts and his publication of them in his *Christian Library*. In fact, he virtually excluded the actual early sources themselves from it.

The second methodological issue involved in discussing Wesley's use of patristic materials, the works of the Alexandrians and their disciples in particular, is the assumption that before the Renaissance, Western Christianity had come to be isolated from the neoplatonic structures of Alexandrian spirituality. In fact, those structures had been transmitted to the West along several active avenues. Most effective in its pervasion, perhaps, was the tradition of John Cassian (c.360-435). Cassian came back to the West from sojourns in Bethlehem, the desert outside Alexandria, and Asia Minor with a keen appreciation for the spirituality he had found in the east. In the desert, he had learned from Evagrius, who had himself been deeply influenced by the tradition of Origen and Clement; in Asia Minor, he had learned from the Cappadocian theologians. And he had physically brought back with him Basil's *Institutes*, a work which would serve as a model for western monastic rules, including Benedict's. Cassian's work had wide effect throughout the Middle Ages, most importantly for the case presented here in the development of the Brethren of the Common Life, and most especially on Brother Thomas a' Kempis, whom Wesley cites, in turn, as a major influence on his understanding of Christian perfection.<sup>28</sup> Cassian also influenced the Jansenists and Port-Royalists, their Augustinian orientation notwithstanding.

The second source was, perhaps, more important. Most in Wesley's day considered the works now attributed to a fifth-century Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite to be authentic first-century documents<sup>29</sup> This corpus articulates a neoplatonic conceptualization of Christian theology, spirituality and ecclesiology. Translated into Latin by John Scotus Erigena, the Pseudo-Dionysius became a central pillar of western medieval theology, influencing scholastics as diverse as Joachim of Fiore and Thomas Aquinas; mystics such as Meister Eckhart and John Tauler; and probably Miguel de Molinos, Fenelon, Madame Guyon and the *Theologia Germanica*.<sup>30</sup> Wesley's eventual aspersions on the "Mystics" were an aspect of his break with the Moravians, expressed in terms reflecting popular, stereotypical, unnuanced definitions and reactions; the positive influence of the mystics on his own understanding of the Christian life is patent.<sup>31</sup>

A third source of Alexandrian influence on Wesley in his considerations of virtue was the Cambridge Platonists. Of special note are John Norris, who was a friend of Samuel Wesley, and Richard Lucas.<sup>32</sup> Wesley also abstracted a proportionately impressive number of Cambridge Platonists in his *Christian Library*, including such writers as Ralph Cudworth, Nathaniel Culverwel, Henry More, Simon Patrick, John Smith, and John Worthington.<sup>33</sup>

So it is that we can see that influences from Alexandria were present in various parts of Wesley's world.

However, what we can also see is the fact that the effort to isolate the influence of the Alexandrian tradition on John Wesley is problematic. Problematic on three levels: (1) the source of the influence may not have been direct but, rather, mediated by quotations, summaries or other appropriations in secondary works; (2) the parameters within which Wesley read and interpreted the texts were conditioned by more than a century of Caroline, and later, discussions of the early Christian texts; (3) Wesley was also preconditioned to read the ancient texts in the light of his encounters with mystical writers, pietists, and importantly, Pseudo-Dionysius, who, in turn, had been influenced by the Alexandrian tradition. And, again, with regard to Wesley's positive appreciation of the patristic writers, only the first volume of the Christian Library actually transmits works of early Christian writers; and even then, the selection is limited to the so-called Apostolic Fathers and Macarius. Wesley preferred to edit and present the works of the Caroline and continental interpreters of the ancient texts rather than to edit and present the ancient texts themselves!

Given the force of these caveats, how does one responsibly approach the question of Wesley's appropriation of an individual ancient writer or tradition? The only certain foundation is Wesley's own claims to being influenced by given writers. These claims can be examined in the light of Wesley's texts and of the patristic texts as appropriated by the Caroline tradition. Beyond that, convergences or divergences of Wesley and the early writers can legitimately be suggested and evaluated so long as it be realized that the mediation of convergences may involve a variety of sources, Wesley's own linguistic skills and academic expertise notwithstanding.

### **MODELS OF VIRTUE: WESLEY'S REFERENCES TO THE ALEXANDRIANS**

Wesley cites, appeals to or alludes to Clement of Alexandria and Origen in a number of texts. We examine them here in chronological order.

#### *(1) On Clemens Alexandrinus's Description of a Perfect Christian (1739)*

John and Charles Wesley published this seven stanza poem in 1739, in *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, and George Osborne reprinted it, with minor variations, in his 1868 collection of "the poetical works" of the Wesley brothers.<sup>34</sup> This poem is probably not from the pens of the Wesleys but from that of a friend, John Gambold (1711-1771), an attribution first suggested by Osborn on the basis of its placement "in the 'Collection of Moral and Sacred Poems' among other poems of Gambold and apart from those which are afterwards claimed for J. and C. Wesley."<sup>35</sup> However, the fact that John Wesley published the text in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* suggests a degree of approbation for its content and probably reflects positive appreciation for Clement of Alexandria. The contents of the poem reflect an awareness of Clement's *Stromata* 4, as well as of *Stromata* 7

“On Perfection.”<sup>36</sup> Desert tracts filled with struggle separate us from the goal (holiness) to which we aspire. To overcome the world, one is to develop the virtue of impassibility (with resultant resistance to temptation), the surety of God’s sustaining grace, and an entrance into a state of “Peace,” wherein

‘Tis in that peace we see and act  
By instincts from above;  
With finer taste of wisdom fraught,  
And mystic powers of love.<sup>37</sup>

There are, as one might anticipate, given the genre, no direct quotations from Clement of Alexandria. But there is here a reasonable likeness of the portrayal of the quest of perfection described in *Stromata* 4 and *Stromata* 7, albeit without any indication of an awareness of the larger context of Clement’s work. Here, gnosis and praxis do not balance goal and apathy, passionlessness.

(2) *The Character of a Methodist* (1742)<sup>38</sup>

In an entry in the *Journal*, dated Thursday, 5 March 1767, Wesley includes a letter, “To the Editor of Lloyd’s *Evening Post*.”<sup>39</sup> In this letter he defends himself against charges that in his tract, *The Character of a Methodist*, he claims sinless perfection. After noting that the model for the essay was a text by Clement of Alexandria, Wesley explains that he makes no such claim for either himself or the Methodists.

Five or six and thirty years ago, I much admired the character of a perfect Christian drawn up by Clemens Alexandrinus. Five or six and twenty years ago, a thought came to my mind, of drawing such a character myself, only in a more scriptural manner, and mostly in the very words of Scripture: This I entitled, *The Character of a Methodist*,” . . . But that none might imagine I intended a panegyric either on myself or my friends, I guarded against this in the very title page, saying, . . .” Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” To the same effect I speak in the conclusion, “These are the principles and practices of our sect; these are the marks of a true Methodist;” i.e., a true Christian By these marks do we labor to distinguish ourselves from those whose minds or lives are not according to the Gospel of Christ.<sup>40</sup>

But Clement of Alexandria would not have been an obvious model for this catalogue of Christian virtues. Wesley does not once quote Clement directly. The technical language is different from that of Clement. And, the sequences followed by the two writers, and the frameworks into which they place their respective treatments of virtues, are quite different. Had Wesley not noted that Clement was his source, we might not have guessed it to be the case.

Clement presents his vision for the “gnostic Christian” within a cosmic framework. After arguing that the “gnostic Christians” are not atheistic or irreverent, he asserts that they are humans who, by freedom of the will, under the guidance of the Divine, choose to reorient their lives into congruency with the will of God, aspiring to union with God in response to the “song of salvation,” which has been emanating through the universe since the beginning, calling the entire creation back to God. Response to this “song of salvation” leads to the “true worship” of God, which takes the form of liturgical participation, fasting, prayer, praise, study, instruction and self-discipline, honesty, meekness, self-mortification, sympathy for others, forgiveness, courage, temperance, and justice. These are not goals in themselves, but results of “perfection” and contributory to it. It will be sustained and perhaps limited by a valid reading of the Scriptures, unlike the reading of sectarians and heretics.

Wesley’s *Character of a Methodist* also has both a positive and a negative thrust. Negatively, he argues, with dubious relevance, that a Methodist does not hold the opinions of “Jews,” “Turks,” “Infidels,” “the Romish Church, Socinians and Arians.” But, he goes on to insist, “as to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think.”<sup>41</sup> Of course, much depends upon his own definition of Christianity, but Wesley avers that Methodists do not interpret the Scriptures in peculiar ways, nor does being a Methodist require negation of or nonparticipation in cultural structures so long as they be not forbidden by “the word of God.”<sup>42</sup> Nor do Methodists emphasize any particular aspect of religion. Rather, they focus on the central tenet: “Salvation ... means holiness of heart and life. And this he [the Methodist] affirms to spring from true faith alone”<sup>43</sup> True religion, Wesley asserts, lies not in merely keeping the laws, customs and statutes any more than it lies in a denial of these.

Positively, Wesley asserts that a Methodist is one who is infused by the love of God, by the gift of the Spirit, and who loves God. The entire being seeks God and God’s will with an intense desire, and, having “found ‘redemption,’” it rejoices and delights in the witness of God’s Spirit as well as in the hope of immortality.<sup>44</sup> In this new state, there is an ability to ignore the undesirable aspects of life and to remain undistracted by its positive aspects. The new state involves a life of prayer, love of neighbor and enemies, purity of heart, mercifulness, kindness, humility, meekness, freedom from worldly desires and evil, social justice/ministry/hospitality. It depends upon conformity to the will of God; keeping the commandments and disciplined, purposeful living; and it is typified by consistent inward and outward holiness.

There are more similarities between Clement and John Wesley than these summaries would suggest. In general, they may be found under the rubrics doctrinal flexibility, the character of true gnosis and Christian perfection, conformity to the will of God, contemplation of God; apathy, prayer, hope of immortality, love of neighbor; moral consistency and obedience to God’s commandments. The technical vocabularies of the two men are often different, but these emphases are shared, so we turn to a brief examination of the parallels.

(a) *Doctrinal Flexibility*. In one of his rare miscues, Campbell identifies Clement's gnosis with doctrinal structures and suggests that Clement is doctrinally more rigid than Wesley.<sup>45</sup> For Clement, gnosis is to be understood in the context of the Alexandrian philosophical tradition, which adapted the Platonic and Aristotelian definitions of praktikos, theoretikos and gnoetikos, mediated through Philo, who insisted that praktikos (religious and moral activity) was specifically ordained for the search for God. Clement, and Origen, established a three-stage process which is perhaps best articulated by Origen in his commentary on the Mary, Martha and Lazarus narrative in the Gospel of John: praktikos, theoretikos and gnosis.<sup>46</sup> Praxis leads to contemplation which makes gnosis possible. Gnosis is the knowledge of God (including basic doctrinal elements) understood in terms of intimacy and identity of purpose. In *Stromata* 7, Clement asserts, as he does elsewhere, that Greek and other philosophies were also given by God and could lead one to a knowledge of God, though not as clearly and efficiently as the example of Christ could. This goes beyond what Wesley would later say, though Wesley implicitly accepts Clement's Tendency. Clement could happily and forthrightly use Greek philosophy to provide a theoretical framework for the teaching of Christian ideals. For both Clement and Wesley, particular formulations of doctrine are secondary to the knowledge of God; they are dependent upon traditionally normative readings of Scripture and they are of no value apart from the practice of Christian virtues.<sup>47</sup>

(b) *The Character of True Gnosis and Christian Perfection*. The "gnostic Christian," says Clement, is one who has conformed his/her will to the will of God; one who has developed patterns of praxis (not simply right actions, but right actions done on principle, rather than as requirements of God or law or for reward, present or future) congruent with the divine will; one who has developed a life characterized by contemplation, and one who is striving toward union with God. Throughout his or her lifetime on earth, the "gnostic Christian" progresses continuously toward the image of God, progressively developing patterns of service to humanity and freeing himself or herself from the yokes of passion and desire for the world.<sup>48</sup> Perfect (passionless) love of God and of humanity and the world is the summit of spirituality.<sup>49</sup>

For Wesley also the "perfect Christian" is one who is transformed by love to love God, humans and the world, including enemies,<sup>50</sup> with a "pure love," a love which becomes oblivious to all temptations;<sup>51</sup> and, one whose love is "renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and in all true holiness. And, having the mind that was in Christ, he so walks as Christ also walks.<sup>52</sup> The dissimilarities between Clement and Wesley are primarily in the philosophical and linguistic structures used to express the vision (of which more will be said below) and the extent of the development of the paradigm.

(c) *Conformity to the will of God*. Clement (*Stromata* 7) developed a more extensive analysis of the role of the will in the Christian life than Wesley did in the

Character of a Methodist. Clement's perspective is cosmic; Wesley limits himself to the role of the will in the life of the Methodist. Both assert that the "gnostic" or "perfect" Christian has a will which is conformed to the will of God. Every element of willing is identical with God's will. Every thought and act which arises from the will is to be obedient to God and the "law of Christ." It is the will which enables the Christian to maintain the praxis, the exercise of virtue, until it becomes natural.<sup>53</sup>

(d) *Contemplation of God.* Campbell suggests that "such characteristically Clementine notes as . . . contemplation of the divine find no place in Wesley's work."<sup>54</sup> This opinion is based, I suspect, on a misunderstanding of Clement's view of contemplation. For Clement, contemplation is not an inactive, passive, engrossment in God, removed from the world, its structures and temptations, an understanding that would develop later among Christians in both East and West. Contemplation, for Clement, is actually maintaining in love the vision of God gnosis by exercising helpful structures of spirituality and the virtues. The end in view is a state of apatheia, apathy toward the values and things of the world.<sup>55</sup> Wesley's description of a Methodist is remarkably similar to Clement's description of a true gnostic, given their different philosophical frameworks. The Methodist is one who continuously loves God; one whose soul constantly cries out for more of God; one who has a constant prayer-relationship with God, "never hindered, less interrupted, by any person or thing"; one for whom "God is in all his thoughts" and one who is "pure in heart," not detracted by cultural structures.<sup>56</sup>

(e) *Apathy or Passionlessness.* While Wesley does not use the language of apathes, apathy or passionlessness, perhaps because of the semantic ranges of terms in his day, his understanding of the Christian's relationship to the "world" and to God is similar to Clement's. This is seen in his insistence that the Christian must be single-minded in his or her desire for God and godliness; in his understanding of the patterns of virtues prohibited to a Christian; his conviction that a Christian "thinks, speaks and lives, according to the method laid down in the revelation of Jesus Christ"; and in his demand that one "walk with God continually, having the loving eye of his mind still fixed upon him, and everywhere 'seeing him that is invisible.'"<sup>57</sup> Phoebe Palmer and other holiness advocates would, on the basis of Wesley and John Fletcher develop a theory of apathes, often maladroitly expressed, which passed over into their doctrine of "eradication." Of course, as might be expected in the 19th century, perfectionists believed that God confers "eradication" (the ersatz apathes) instantly, by grace, rather than making it attainable by way of developmental and educational means. Wesley and Clement tended to think of apathy in processive ways."

(f) *Prayer.* Paragraph 8 of Wesley's Character of a Methodist has perhaps the most consistent and non-problematic relationships with Clement's Stromata, especially with its chapter 7. Clement suggests that the prayer of the "gnostic

Christian” is not confined by the liturgical structures of prayer which are (were) given to teach neophytes. Rather, it is constant and unhindered by social or material circumstances. Such prayer, possible only to the “gnostic Christian,” is true prayer. Such prayer is efficacious: it provides control over the passions and it is instrumental in achieving union with the Divine. In the latter case, it aids in achieving union through its central character, which is contemplation.<sup>59</sup>

Wesley says, “The Christian is not always in the house of prayer; nor always crying aloud, . . . for many times ‘the Spirit maketh intercession for him with groans that cannot be uttered.’ . . . ‘my heart, though without a voice, and my silence speaketh unto thee.”<sup>60</sup> This, affirms Wesley, “is true prayer, and this alone.” It is unhindered by persons, things, occupations or position. It is continuous communion with God by one who has “the loving eye of his mind still fixed upon him.”<sup>60</sup> Wesley’s view of prayer is quite congruent with that of Clement of Alexandria although the language employed to articulate the theory is different, and Clement’s philosophical structures would seem to allow for a more intimate prayer relationship with the Divine than would Wesley’s.

(g) *Hope of Immortality*. Campbell believes that Wesley’s statement with regard to “hope, thus full of immortality”<sup>61</sup> has a parallel in Clement. <sup>62</sup> However, here the relationship is philosophically problematic: for Wesley it was a “hope,” for Clement and others influenced by neoplatonism it was an expectation. Even when they use the same words regarding “immortality,” it would appear that there is little similarity of understanding. Both affirm that the “gnostic” or “perfect” Christian will be united with God (Clement would say reunited!). However the conceptions of the nature of immortality, as well as the cosmic content of that immortality, are different. And they differ regarding the nature of the “fall” (the Augustinian tradition seems to influence Wesley more on this matter), regarding the nature of the process of salvation, regarding the role of Christ and of the Holy Spirit in that process, and regarding the structures of post-death experience. They agree that the practice of Christian virtues is essential to salvation and that a “good death,” to use Wesley’s term, indicates that a “gnostic” is bound toward the divine.

(h) *Love of Neighbor*. Wesley states that a Methodist is to do good to all persons, “unto neighbors and strangers friends and enemies: And that in every possible kind.”<sup>64</sup> This includes care for physical distress as well as evangelism “to awake those that sleep in death.”<sup>65</sup> Clement insists on the same as a characteristic of the “gnostic Christian,” although it is clear that the radical bifurcation of spiritual from physical needs was alien to his thought. Charity includes the giving of material goods and services of hospitality. This use of material resources is a result of being “gnostic.”<sup>66</sup> He takes it further to insist that the Christian is responsible both to forgive the neighbor and to avoid causing the neighbor to sin. Thus, the “gnostic” is responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of the neighbor.<sup>67</sup>

(i) *Moral Consistency*. Both Clement and Wesley insist that consistency between the internal and the external life and through the days of one’s life is

essential to the “gnostic” or “perfect” Christian. Wesley discusses the matter in terms of singleness of intention, identity with the mind of God and keeping the commandments. Summarizing his views, Wesley observes, “And whosoever is what I preach, . . . he is a Christian, not in name only, but in heart and life.”<sup>68</sup> For Clement, this consistency of life and faith is characteristic of the “gnostic Christian.” Consistency is required for growth toward union with God. To be inconsistent is to succumb to temptations or to adopt values which are not Christian and consequently, by such inappropriate exercises of free will, to fall away from the prospect of divinisation.<sup>69</sup>

(J) *Obedience to God’s Commandments.* The shared emphasis of both Clement and Wesley on obedience to the commandments of God is an important aspect of their understandings of the Christian virtues. In *The Character of a Methodist*, Wesley states that a Methodist keeps “all the commandments of God,” an obedience which grows out of the Methodist’s love for God and is in proportion to it. Clement would agree with this but would go on to insist that “the law from the beginning . . . [is] that he who would have virtue must choose it.”<sup>70</sup> In the early stages of spiritual development, commandments and laws serve as guides and warnings.<sup>71</sup> The “gnostic Christian,” however, keeps the commandments neither because they are commandments nor because of expected rewards, but, rather, because that is the way the “gnostic Christian” chooses to live.<sup>72</sup>

With this impressive list of parallels, *The Character of a Methodist* would appear to be a clear-cut case of Wesley’s appropriating Clement of Alexandria, an appropriation perhaps in ways unique to post-Nicene Christianity. The reality, however, is not so simple.

To understand that reality, let us begin with an example: Anthony Horneck, *The Happy Ascetic: or the Best Exercise* (1699), a work which Wesley excerpted for *The Christian Library*.<sup>73</sup> Horneck, who knew intimately the writings of the early Christian writers, including those of Clement of Alexandria, argues that every Christian should be a “happy ascetic” on the models proposed by early Christian spirituality, especially, it would appear, that of Clement.

He discusses “Christian Perfection” in terms of love of God,<sup>74</sup> love which is sustained by intense prayer irrespective of situation and context, love which provides strength to fight off temptations.<sup>75</sup> This perfection gives hope for immortality.<sup>76</sup> It will be a communion with “those spirits of man made perfect.”<sup>77</sup> The task of the “happy ascetic,” put personally and in the form of a prayer, is to “curb my passion, and break through my sinful inclination,” and thereby “submit my will to thy will.”<sup>78</sup> In eternity, “I shall love thee perfectly . . . [and] shall be eternally united to thee.”<sup>79</sup> To achieve this state of “Christian perfection,” one must develop attitudes and virtues conducive to contemplation, and do so in the context of community.<sup>80</sup> Charity, or love of neighbor, is an essential virtue.<sup>81</sup> Christians must continue to develop in the exercise of the virtues and in communion with God.<sup>82</sup>

One can easily argue that there are more correspondences between Clement and Horneck than between Clement and Wesley; and, one could argue that Wes-



ley appears to depend on Horneck's sequence of virtues and other emphases rather than on those of Clement. Horneck appears to have understood the integral theological and philosophical structures of the Alexandrian position better than Wesley did, Wesley being concerned about the Alexandrian appropriation of platonism and stoicism. Thus, Horneck reflects more accurately than Wesley does both the developmental spirituality of Clement and the metaphysical structures of neoplatonism.

It may be said, then, that in spite of the fact that they shared concerns, and in spite of the fact that Wesley added a footnote about Clement more than a quarter-century after he wrote his original edition of *The Character of a Methodist*, we cannot say that Clement exclusively influenced Wesley's list of Christian virtues. And, it is significant that seven years after writing *The Character of a Methodist*, Wesley included Horneck's work in *The Christian Library*.

(3) *A Letter to Dr. Conyers Middleton occasioned by his late "Free Inquiry's"* (1748~1749)<sup>83</sup>

The reference to Clement of Alexandria in this letter<sup>(84)</sup> deals merely with incorrect inferences drawn by Middleton from Clement's quotation of a "heathen" text. The citations from Origen seek to demonstrate that in Origen's time the church still maintained its apostolic vision.<sup>85</sup>

(4) *An Address to the Clergy* (1756)<sup>86</sup>

In this text, Wesley suggests "acquired endowments" for the clergy. He begins this discussion by declaring his conviction that the clergy should know Scripture, Greek, and Hebrew, and what it is "to be an Ambassador of Christ, an envoy from the King of Heaven;" profane history, the sciences (logic, metaphysics, natural philosophy). Then, before he passes on to speak of the necessity of "knowledge of the world," he suggests that the clergyman should ask himself, "Am I acquainted with the Fathers ...?" He names as among those worth "one reading, at least," Origen and Clement of Alexandria.<sup>87</sup>

(5) *Letter to a Member of the Society*, 30 November 1774<sup>(88)</sup>

In this letter, Wesley suggests reasons for his cautious approach to Clement of Alexandria and his eventual disenchantment with him. For Wesley, the central issue is "apathy." Earlier, Wesley had admired the Stoic qualities of the "gnostic" Christian achievement of the ability to stand beyond temptation and to be unfazed by the surrounding circumstances. "And just such a Christian," says Wesley, "one of the Fathers, Clemens Alexandrinus, describes."<sup>89</sup> But Wesley had come to understand the difference between a Stoic and a Christian and he warned his followers away from being apathetic: "... at some times I have been a good deal disgusted at Miss J's apathy."<sup>90</sup> Rather than being apathetic, says Wesley, citing an example, one should rejoice at the restoration of a friend. He also counsels against the "littleness of understanding" which impassiveness can

produce, especially when it leads to the avoidance of all books but the Bible. Wesley does not reject the virtue of apathes as Clement describes it. Rather, he warns against a misunderstanding of it which differences in semantic range, philosophical structures and culture have created. It is worth noting that certain ascetic and monastic traditions which drew on Clement and other Alexandrians, from the fourth century onward, would come to the same conclusions!

(6) *Journal*, Thursday, March 5, 1767 91

In this entry, Wesley includes the letter to the editor of Lloyd's Evening Post in which he suggests that he constructed *The Character of a Methodist* on the model provided by Clement of Alexandria.<sup>92</sup>

### **VIRTUE IN WESLEY AND THE ALEXANDRIANS: CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE**

As we demonstrated above, it is impossible to ascertain whether John Wesley received a given emphasis directly from his reading of the Alexandrian theologians or through the mediation of western mystical, ascetical traditions or by way of the primitivizing efforts of the Caroline writers. But even given this fact, it is still possible to suggest points of convergence and divergence between Wesley and the early Christian writers.

#### *Points of Convergence*

Wesley, the Caroline divines and many western ascetic, mystical writers shared understandings of the Christian virtues, and the context of their exercise, which have parallels with the Alexandrian theologians. From the beginning (variously understood, as we shall see), God has sought union (or reunion) with the human creation. Clement's "song of salvation" and Wesley's "prevenient grace" depict the divine in search of humanity. In both instances it is the gracious love of God which is reaching out to the entire creation. Wesley's understanding that evangelism is intended "to awaken those that sleep in death"<sup>93</sup> does not make sense in Augustinian understandings of the fall and original sin. It does make sense when one understands the entire creation as having a divine element within it which "yearns for union with God," and which has the capability for achieving that union. Once the God in us responds to this love of God, it progressively changes the orientation of the individual from willing against God to willing with God. It results in love of self and neighbor. It is upon this base of divine love, human response and human aspiration to divinity that the entire system of virtues is built. Love of God is expressed in prayer, worship, contemplation, participation in the liturgies, conformity to the will of God.

Identification of the individual's will with the will of God results in a consistent Christian life, a life which is typified by its "fruits," ability to resist temptation and exercise of personal and social Christian virtues. Because of love, which becomes progressively more natural for the "gnostic" or "perfect" Christian, the

individual lives a life in which acts of charity and evangelism directed toward the neighbor and acts of love, including all aspects of aid and accountability, toward fellow believers is normal and normative. The laws and commandments are given as guides toward “perfection” as the Christian progressively moves toward divinization. The Alexandrians did not deny, nor did they emphasize, crises (turning points, moments of awareness). Rather, like Wesley, they emphasized continuing growth and development in the quality of the Christian life, in contemplation and in union with God. The Christian community is to provide an arena for worship of God, it is to define an ethic by which the Biblical virtues are practiced praxis, it is to develop structures of personal piety and contemplation theoria, it is to encourage personal growth in virtue, it is to hold individuals accountable for growth, it is to watch for signs of willing against the will of God, and it is to minister corporately in its context, thereby enabling the believer to strive toward Christian perfection. (Gnosis).

In *The Character of a Methodist, The Principles of a Methodist, The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained, A Plain Account of the People Called Methodist, A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* and the sermon, “On Christian Perfection” Wesley describes the life of “Christian perfection” as a life lived expressing the classical Christian virtues in conformity with the ideals set forth by “primitive Christianity.” And, as was the case for the early writers, Wesley was never able to achieve a clear articulation of the extent to which one can become “perfected” in this life. This can be seen in the evolving definitions and expectations in the texts gathered in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. The ancient writers and Wesley agreed that death is a mere point of passage for the “gnostic” or “perfect” Christian. Clement, and, especially, Origen, however, worked with philosophical structures which allowed for continued sanctification after death. Wesley, as a child of the enlightenment, could only make observations about the quality of a given death as evidenced by the “groans” of the dying and talk of the “hope of immortality.”

### *Points of Divergence*

Wesley and the Alexandrian theologians diverge at a number of points regarding the exercise of Christian virtue. These differences lie not so much in the definitions of specific virtues or in the manner in which each is to be exercised as in the philosophical structures which sustain the vision, in the language acceptable for articulating the vision, and in the cultural contexts into which the vision was interjected.

The philosophical structures differed greatly. Clement of Alexandria contentedly adapted developing neoplatonic philosophy. This philosophical system, which is both implicit and explicit in Clement’s treatments of the Biblical narratives, provided a way in which the entire creative order, its fall and redemption, could be understood. It provided a multidimensional universe populated with individuals, angels and demons, “principalities and powers,” at various stages of

“perfection,” stages of willing toward or away from the Divine Unity. It allowed for stages of development in this life and the next as individuals sought reunion with the Divine Unity against which they had rebelled through the exercise of the free will.

John Wesley was an appreciative heir of the enlightenment and of Copernicus and Newton. His philosophical tradition had ascertained, again, that the world is round, but had made reality flat; they had discovered the structures of the universe but found it empty. The Deists were the realists. As did the Caroline divines, pietists and European mystics, Wesley perceived contemporary human life to be devoid of goals and cosmic structures for spirituality.

As the others, he turned to the early Christian writers as mentors and for models. His problem, which was a problem for the Caroline divines as well, was the fact that the early Christian articulations of spirituality were dependent upon the philosophical structures of their own day, and those neoplatonic structures were alien to seventeenth and eighteenth-century European thought. Wesley solved the problem (as did Arndt, Horneck, Taylor, Law, and others) by following Alexandrian understandings of the nature of the earthly course of Christian life and dispensing with more speculative Alexandrian concepts, and by accepting and developing certain institutionalized doctrinal tenets. So, he (and the Carolines) accepted the Alexandrian lists of virtues, the Alexandrian definitions of sin in this life, the Alexandrian developmental model for spirituality in this life, the radical piety of the Alexandrians, (with some hesitation) their understanding of the goal of the Christian life (divinization), and their doctrine of prevenient grace. Wesley (and the Caroline divines) dispensed with the Alexandrians’ understandings of original sin, christology, eschatology, Judgment, and progression and reversion in previous and future lives. And Wesley (and the Carolines) “institutionalized” Christ, Satan, hell, Judgment, and original sin according to western patristic and medieval models.

Eventually, although Wesley discretely resisted the trend himself, many would progressively qualify and then eradicate belief in angels, demons and “principalities and powers” in conformity with the intellectual expectations of the enlightenment. Wesley, with typical inconsistency, does not explore post-Nicene Alexandrian theology, but accepts most of western theology, as mediated through the Caroline divines.

Because of the philosophical and cultural differences, the language of “gnosis” and “perfection” was problematic for Wesley and his predecessors. “Gnosis” had been made unacceptable by the discovery of scathing attacks on the “gnostics” in early Christian apologists. Wesley’s free use of the language of perfection, which appears to have been less precise than the use of it made by the Caroline writers, led to numerous misunderstandings of his intent and to the attacks on his position recorded in his Works. These engendered rather undignified discussions which can be summarized thus: “When I say perfect, I don’t mean perfect.” They also fueled Wesley’s efforts to define “Christian perfection.” In this, he fol-

lowed the lead of the Caroline writers who had obviously encountered the same problem. For the Carolines, the result was a series of catalogues of virtues which did not require Christian structures. The theoretical framework required for the practice of their virtues was not radically different from that of many humanists, who had advocated similar positions.

The Alexandrians and Wesley attempted to speak to two very different cultural contexts. The most telling difference related to the Christian virtues was at the point of the stance taken vis-a-vis the larger society. Clement and Origen lived before anyone envisaged a Constantinian Christian Empire. The virtues, and their exercise, were therefore moralistic and understood in light of their impact on individual spirituality and on the community, anticipating that both would have salutary effects on the context. There is nothing of Wesley's vision to "reform the nation" by calling it back to its avowed Christian state.

## CONCLUSION

This essay argues that while the avenues by which the Alexandrian understanding of Christian virtue was mediated to Wesley cannot be described with precision and that claims to direct influence may be misleading, it is still certain that he does ground his theory of virtue (sanctification) in this tradition. While there are no textual warrants for claiming direct appropriation, Wesley's adaptations of various expressions of this tradition are evident in his own writings, with their parallels to earlier writers, as well as in the Tendenzen of the writings of the pietists and Caroline primitivists which he chooses to include in the Christian Library.

It can also be argued that only by a reading of Wesley in light of these sources can we adjudicate conflicting understandings and claims about the virtues and the nature of sanctification, in the context of which virtues are practiced. One example will suffice to demonstrate this point. Wesley and the Alexandrians believed that virtues were exercised as results of the process of growing in grace after conversion (turning the will of the individual to conformity with God's will). Sanctification (divinisation) described both the process and goal of the Christian life. It was that toward which, in its fullness, one was to strive in this life (and, according to the Alexandrians, thereafter). Its great end would be assimilation into the Unity of God. For Wesley, too, sanctification was an eschatological goal, a goal spoken of in terms often tempered by acknowledgement of enlightenment and scientific "realities." If one reads the Wesley/Fletcher/Palmer development of this analysis" in light of the Alexandrians, one can still argue that Fletcher is on the same trajectory, but if and only if, his identification of the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" with sanctification is understood in the context of a reading of the Pentecost narrative in the Acts of the Apostles as an idealized model, and if there is understood to be no qualitative or quantitative difference in the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer before and after the event. In this case, the only difference in the believer pre-Pentecost and post-Pen-

tecost would be in an enhanced intentionality in the individual's practice of heavenly, personal and social virtues, with a concomitant reaffirmation of the eschatological goal of union with God. But it would appear that Fletcher's analysis does not meet these criteria.

It is clear that the interpretations of Lorenzo Dow, Phoebe Palmer, Daniel Steele and other nineteenth-century American (and British) perfectionist writers are adaptations of an understanding of virtue and its Christian framework which are not congruent with the Alexandrian tradition, the western mystics, the pietists or the Caroline writers.<sup>97</sup> In the perfectionist model, sanctification (divinisation is frequently intended) becomes a present reality from which the virtues necessarily follow; they are done "not for the right reasons," as Clement of Alexandria expressed it, but as ends in themselves; they are designed to achieve present and future recognition of the sanctified state. This interpretation would suggest that among the major writers who have shaped the American Wesleyan/Holiness Movement, Charles Finney and B. T. Roberts, because of their connections to the Puritan tradition; and Mildred Wynkoop and H. Ray Dunning, are most congruent with the vision of the Alexandrians... and Wesley.<sup>98</sup>

There are two other implications of this study which are worth noting. One is theological, the other ecumenical. First, Wesley's theological structures must be interpreted in light of his sources, including, most importantly, the Caroline divines. The primitivist vision of early Christianity promulgated in those circles, especially, and their use of the early Christian writers; and the various trajectories of the Alexandrian tradition in their work all influenced Wesley's perspective. In other words, Wesley must not be viewed as the theological genius who discovered and used early Christian sources, but as one who took much of the Caroline synthesis out of the academy, church and cloister and brought it to the people; who adapted that synthesis in structures of discipline and accountability for laity; and who modeled what he preached.<sup>99</sup>

Ecumenically, Wesleyans cannot approach the Orthodox traditions assuming that Wesleyans are direct heirs of the Patristic tradition. One should learn from the experiences, some of them disappointing, of the sixteenth-century Lutherans who went to Constantinople with a similar misconception. <sup>100</sup> What Wesleyans can do is to engage in dialogue with Orthodox and Roman Catholic groups as Christians who have also developed understandings of virtue and sanctification qua divinization which are built on the base the Alexandrian and Cappadocian tradition, but as mediated through differed intellectual and cultural structures.<sup>101</sup>

## Notes

### 1 Abbreviations:

BE The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley, Frank Baker, ed-in-chief, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984 ). Volumes 7, 11, 25 and originally published as the Oxford Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975-1983).

*Strom* Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata* Buch I VI, hrsg. Otto Stählin; neu hrsg. von Ludwig Frlchte; 4. Auflage mit Nachtra~gen von Ursula Treu (Clemens Alexandrinus, 2; Die Griechischen christlichen Schrijtsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, 162 [Berlin: Akademie Verlag 1985]); *Stromata* Buch VII und VIII. Excerpts ex Theodoto, *Eclogae propheticae*, *Quisdiues saluetur*, *Fragmenta* (Clemens Alexandrinus, 3; Die Griechischen christlichen Schrifsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, 17 [Berlin: Akadamie Verlag, 1970]). For citations to *Stromata* VII in this paper, where it will be noted as *Stromata* 7, cf. F. J. A. Hurt and J. B. Mayor, *Clement of Alexandria. Miscellanies's Book VII; the Greek Text with Introduction, Translation. Notes and Indices* (London: MacMillan, 1902). This edition is more accessible in American libraries. Clement called his work of *Stromateis* (sing., o *Stromateus*, *Stramata*). It was transmitted in the textual tradition as *Stroma*, *Stromata* and the latter title has become a convention.

*Works*, Jackson John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, Thomas Jackson, ed. (14 vols.; 3d ed.; London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872; reprinted Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978).

2J. Wesley, *Journal*, Thursday, 5 March 1767 (*Works*, Jackson, 3:273).

3Ted Allen Campbell, *John Wesley's Conceptions and Use of Christian Antiquity* (Ph.D. diss. Southern Methodist University, 1984), 328, 335336.

4 S. Krawczynski and U. Riedinger, "Zur Uberlieferungsgeschichte des Havius Josephus und Klemens von Alexandria in 4.6. Jahrhundert," *Byzantinisches Zeitschrift* 57(1964), 625.

5Werner Jaeger, *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macanus* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974). Cf. Albert Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (Library of Protestant Thought; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.9n26.

6Reinhart Staats, *Gregor von Nyssa und die Messalianer* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968) and idem, *Macarios-Symeon Epistola Magna: Eine messalianische Monchsregel und ihre Umschrift in Gregors von Nyssa. "De institutio cristiano"* (Go~ttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1984). See also Thomas E. Brig-

den, "Wesley and the Homilies of Macarius," *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 8(1911), 67; David C. Ford, "Saint Makarios of Egypt and John Wesley: Variations on the Theme of Sanctification," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 33(1988), 285-312; Howard Snyder, "John Wesley and Macanus the Egyptian," *Asbury Theological Journal* 45, 2(1990), 5560.

7S. Lilla, "Middle Platonism, Neoplatonism and Jewish-Alexandrine Philosophy in the Terminology of Clement of Alexandria's Ethics," *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà's* 3(1962), 136. See also André Mehat, *Etude sur les ((Stromates)) de Clement d'Alexandrie (Patristica Sorbonensie, 7*[Paris: Seuil, 1966]); D. J. M. Bradley, "The Transformation of the Stoic Ethic in Clement," *Augustinian Review* 14 (1974), 4166; S. R. C. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria.. A Study of Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford, London: Oxford University Press, 1976); Elizabeth Clark, *Clement's Use of Aristotle: The Aristotelian Contribution of Clement of Alexandria's Refutation of Gnosticism (Texts and Studies in Religion* [Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1977]); and Dietmar Wyrwa, *Die christliche Platonaneignung in den Stromateis des Clemens von Alexandrien (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, 53* [New York, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1983]).

8Harald Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Stockholm: Nya Bokforlags Aktieförlaget, 1946), p.195.

9Outler, *ibid.*, 10.

10Lawrence D. McIntosh, *The Nature and Design of Christianity in John Wesley's Early Theology: A Study in the Relationships of Love and Faith* (Ph. D. diss. Drew University, 1966), 8595 et passim.

11Albert Outler, "John Wesley's Interests in the Early Fathers of the Church," *Bulletin: Committee on Archives and History of the United Church of Canada* 29(1980)12.

12Arthur Christian Meyers, *John Wesley and the Church Fathers* (Ph. D. diss. St. Louis University, 1985).

13Campbell, *ibid.* Cf . Randy Maddox, "John Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy," *Asbury Theological Journal* 45, 2(1990), 43n3.

14Cf. S. L. Greenslade, *The English Reformation and the Fathers of the Church* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960); William P. Haugaard, "Renaissance Patristic Scholarship and Theology in Sixteenth-Century England," *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 10(1979), 3760.

15Cf. P. Meinhold, *Geschichte de kirchlichen Historiographie* (Munchen: Verlag Karl Albert Freiburg, 1967).

16Cf. John K. Louma, "Who Owns the Fathers? Hooker and Cartwright on the Authority of the Primitive Church," *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 8(1977), 4853.



17E.g., Lancelot Andrewes, *Opuscula quaedam postuma* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1629); and Jeremy Taylor, *The Rules and Exercises of Holy Living. In Which are described the Means and Instruments of Obtaining Every Vertue, and the Remedies against every Vice, and Considerations serving to the resisting all temptations...* (London: Richard Royson, 1651).

18Cf. William Wake, trans., *The Genuine Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers* (London: Richard Sare, 1693); William Cave, *Primitive Christianity; or the Religion of the Primitive Christians in the First Ages of the Gospel* (London: R. Chiswell, 1673), Vol.31, in John Wesley, ed., *The Christian Library* (Bristol: Farley, 1753), pp.148298 (in 2d ed., Vol.19, pp.1121 [London: T. Cordeux, 1830]). See Campbell, *ibid.*, 126129; and William Cave, *Scriptorum ecclesiasticorum historia literaria* (London: Richard Chiswell, 1688/1699).

19Cf. Jean Daille', *A Treatise Concerning the Right Use of the Fathers*, trans. Thomas Smith (London: John Martin, 1651). The preface of this work (pp. ixx) includes notes of approval from, among others, Jeremy Taylor, author of *The Rules and Exercises of Holy Living*, cited by Wesley in his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Works, Jackinan, 11:366) under the title *Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying*. Also see [Claude Fleury], *An Historical Account of the Manners and Behavior of the Christians* (London: Thomas Leigh, 1698), ed. by John Wesley as *Manners of the Ancient Christians* (Bristol: Felix Farley, 1749); and J. L. von Mosheim. *An Ecclesiastical History, ancient and modern from the Birth of Christ, to the beginning of the Present Century: in which the rise, progress and variations of Church Power are considered in connection with the state of learning and philosophy and the political history of Europe during that period*, trans. Archibald MacLame (2d ed.; London: A. Miller, 1765), ed. by John Wesley as *A Concise Ecclesiastical History* (4 vols.; London: J. Paramore, 1781).

20Anthony Horneck, *The Happy Ascetick: or, the Best Exercise* (London: Henry Mortlock, 1699) in John Wesley, ed., *A Christian Library* Vol.29 (1st ed.) and Vol.16 (2d ed.).

21Cf. Wesley, *ibid.* (1st ed.), 138 = Horneck, *ibid.*, 602.

22Cf. Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desidefla: oder hertzlickes Verlangen nach gottgefälliger Besserung der wahren Evangelischen Kirchen ...* (Fraakfort am Mayn: Johann David Zunners, 1676).

23Probably the most comprehensive translation of Johann Amdt, *Vier Bticher vom Wahren Christentum* (Braunschweig, 1609), available to John Wesley was that of Anthony William Boehm under the title *True Christianity; wherein is contained the whole economy of God toward man and the whole duty of Man toward God* (London: J. Downing, 1720), which Wesley abstracted as volume 1 of his *Christian Library*.

24Cf. John Wesley, *A Roman Catechism, . . . With a Reply Thereto* (Works, Jackson, 10:86128). Also see Campbell, *ibid.*, 130131.

25(Oxford: William Wells and Robert Scott, 1672). It is Albert Outler's opinion that this work affected Wesley as noted. Cf. Outler, *John Wesley*, 1 2n4 1.

26Cf. Campbell, *ibid.*

27Cf. Jeremy Taylor, *ibid.*; William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life; Adapted to the State and Condition of All Christians* (London: William Innys, 1729); and *idem*, *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection* (London: William and John Innys, 1726). Wesley, without mention of Law, abstracted the latter work as *A Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection: Extracted from a Late Author* (Newcastle upon Tyne: J. Gooding, 1743). See Wesley's suggestion of the importance of Taylor and Law to his own understanding of Christian Perfection: Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection 2, 4* (Works, Jackson, 4 11:366367).

28Cf. Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection 3* (Works, Jackson, 11:366367).

29Cf. Jean Daille', *De Scripturis quae sub Dionysii Areopagitae et Egnatii Antiocheni nominibus circumferuntur* (Geneva: I. A. et Samuelis de Tournes, 1666).

30Cf. Jean Orcibel, "Les Spirituels Français et Espagnols chez John Wesley et ses contemporaines," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 139(1951), 50109.

31Cf. Outler, *ibid.*, 375376 *et passim*; and R. A. Knox, *Enthusiasm* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), *passim*.

32Cf. Albert Outler, "Introduction," BE 1:35, 59.

33The best discussion of this influence on Wesley, together with a list of items included in the first edition of *A Christian Library*, is that of John C. English, "The Cambridge Platonists in Wesley's Christian Library," *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 38(1968), 161-168.

34John Wesley and Charles Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (London: William Strahan, 1739), 3738; [G. Osborn, ed.,] *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley: Reprinted from the Originals with the Last Corrections of the Authors; together with The Poems of Charles Wesley not before Published. Collected and Arranged by G. Osborn* (13 vol.; London: Wesleyan Methodist Conference office, 1868), 1:3435.

35*Ibid.*, note. For further discussion on the possibility of Gambold's authorship, see Campbell, *ibid.*, 99100.

36Cf. *Strom.* 4.2126 (ed. cit., 305325); *Strom.* 7 (ed. cit).

37Osborn, ed., *ibid.* 1:35.

38Wesley, *The Character of a Methodist* (Works, Jackson, 8:339347).

39Wesley, *Journal*, March 5, 1767 (Works, Jackson, 3:272274).

40Ibid.

41Wesley, *The Character of a Methodist* 1 (Works, Jackson, 8:340).

42Wesley, *ibid.*, 23 (Works, Jackson, 8:340341).

43Ibid., 4 (Works, Jackson, 8:341).

44Ibid., 6 (Works, Jackson, 8:342).

45Campbell, *ibid.*, 101; also 139140, n20.

46Cf. Origen, *Der Johanneskommentar*, hrsg. E. Preuschen (*Origenes Werke, 4; Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte*, 10 [Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1903]), Johannes 12:111. See Clement's distinctions between *praxis*, faith and love (Strom. 7.46, 55) as well as the distinctions between *gnosis* and *sophia* (Strom. 7.55).

47Cf. Wesley, *The Character of a Methodist* (Works, Jackson, 8:340 *et passim*); Clement of Alexandria, Strom. 7.1, 89110 *et passim*.

48Cf. Clement of Alexandria, Strom. 7.3,13. Cf. K. Schmole, "Gnosis und Metanoia: Die anthropologische Sicht der Busse bei Klemens von Alexandrien," *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 82(1974), 304-312.

49Clement of Alexandria, Strom. 7.55 *et passim*.

50Wesley, *ibid.* 56, 9, 16 (Works, Jackson, 8:341342, 343, 346).

51Wesley, *ibid.* 15 (Works, Jackson, 8:345).

52Wesley, *ibid.* 17 (Works, Jackson, 8:346).

53Cf. Clement of Alexandria, Strom. 7.3, 42, 45, 59, 7481; Wesley, *The Character of a Methodist* 11 (Works, Jackson, 8:344).

54Campbell, *ibid.*, 101.

55Clement of Alexandria, Strom. 7.11,41,73 *et passim*.

56Wesley, *The Character of a Methodist* 5, 811, 14 (Works, Jackson, 8:341 345)

57Wesley, *ibid.* 5,14, 8 (Works, Jackson, 8:341, 345, 343).

58Cf. Clement of Alexandria, Strom. 7.55, 5963 *et passim*. Also see, for example, John Wesley, *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*, (Works, Jackson, 8:248268); and idem, *The Principles of a Methodist* (Works, Jackson, 8:361-374).

59Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.3845. The reference in Campbell, *ibid.*, 139n20 (to *Strom.* 7.12) is not helpful since Clement's passage affirms that all things help the "gnostic Christian" to achieve virtue, and does not discuss prayer.

60Wesley, *ibid.* 11 (*Works*, Jackson, 8:343).

61Wesley, *ibid.*, 7 (*Works*, Jackson, 8:342).

62Campbell, *ibid.*, 139n20.

63Cf. Klaus Schblz, *Lauterung nach dem Tode und pneumatische Auferstehung bei Klemens von Alexandrien (Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie, 38 [Münster: Aschendorff, 1974])*.

64Wesley, *ibid.* 16 (*Works*, Jackson, 8:346).

65Ibid.

66Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.80.

67Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.8182.

68Wesley, *ibid.* 17 (*Works*, Jackson, 8:346).

69Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7 *passim*.

70Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.9.

71Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.9, 7476.

72Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.59.

73Horneck's title has been modernized here. Citations to Horneck in this paper are to *The Christian Library* (2d ed.; London: T. Cordeux, 1830)16:290 432.

74Ibid., 294-295. 75Ibid., 296-300.

76Ibid., 306. Horneck's phraseology is much more akin to Wesley's than Wesley's is to Clement's. Cf. Wesley, *The Character of a Methodist* 7 (*Works*, Jackson, 8:342)

77Horneck, *ibid.*, 307.

78Ibid., 308.

79Ibid., 309.

80Ibid., 331-358.

81Ibid., 360-379.

82Ibid., 393-394.

83Wesley, *A Letter to Dr. Conyers Middletom Occasioned by his late "Free Inquiry"s* (*Works*, Jackson, 10:180).

84Wesley, *ibid.* 111.7 (*Works*, Jackson, 10:3132).

85Wesley, *ibid.* 13, 1.13, 11.68 (where the reference is to the *Contra Celsum* but does not name Origen), 11.9 (*Works*, Jackson, 10:13, 22, 2526; 27).

86Wesley, “An Address to the Clergy” (*Works*, Jackson, 10:480500).

87Wesley, *ibid.* 11.1. (1)(7) (*Works*, Jackson, 10:490492). Also see *idem* 1.12 (*Works*, Jackson, 10:481486).

88Wesley, *Letter CCLXVI*, November 30, 1774 (*Works*, Jackson, 12:297-298).

89*ibid.*

90*ibid.* (*Works*, Jackson, 12:298).

91Wesley, *Journal*, March 5, 1767 (*Works*, Jackson, 3:272273).

92 See the earlier discussion in this paper.

93Wesley, *The Character of a Methodist* 16 (*Works*, Jackson, 8:346).

94Wesley, *The Character of a Methodist* (*Works*, Jackson, 8:340347); *idem*, *The Principles of a Methodist* (*Works*, Jackson, 8:359374); *idem*, *The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained* (*Works*, Jackson, 8:414480); *idem*, *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists* (*Works*, 8:248268); *idem*, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (*Works*, Jackson, 11:366446); *idem*, *Sermon XL: Christian Perfection* (*Works*, Jackson, 6:119).

95The comparison of Macarius and Wesley proffered by Howard Snyder, “John Wesley and Macarius the Egyptian,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 45,2(1990), 5560, is further evidence. Macarius, in Wesley’s abridgement, as described by Snyder, is an heir to the Alexandrians. Indeed, Wesley’s abridgement minimalizes the differences between Macarius and Clement of Alexandria! A detailed textbased analysis of the differences between Wesley’s version, the earlier anonymous translation and the Greek *Vorlage* of these translations is urgently needed: *Primitive Morality: Or, The Spiritual Homilies of St. Macanus the Egyptian* (London: W. Taylor, W. and I. Jump, and I. Osborn, 1721); John Wesley, ed., *The Spiritual Homilies of Macanus the Egyptian* (Vol.1 of *The Christian Library* [1st ed.]; Bristol: Felix Farley, 1749), 79154; *idem* (2d ed.; London: T: Cordeux, 1819), 69-131. This would provide critical data for understanding the relationship between the two periods. For example, in his edition of Macarius’ work, Wesley suppressed Macarius’ use of the term *divinisation*” and used instead the term “*sanctification*.”

96Cf. Herbert McGonigle, “Pneumatological Nomenclature in Early Methodism,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 8(1973), 6172; David Bundy, “Wesleyan Perspectives on the Holy Spirit,” *Asbury Seminarian* 30,2(1975), 3141; John A. Knight, “John Fletcher’s Influence on the Development of Wesleyan Theology in

America,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13(1978), 1333; Timothy Smith, “How John Fletcher Became the Theologian of Wesleyan Perfectionism,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 15(1980), 6887; Donald Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan / Francis Asbury Press, 1987), 1118. Also see the helpful article by Allen Coppedge, “Entire Sanctification in Early American Methodism: 1812-1835,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13(1978), 5164.

97For a discussion of these developments, see John Leland Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956).

98 On Finney, see Timothy Smith, “The Doctrine of the Sanctifying Spirit: Charles G. Finney’s Synthesis of Wesleyan and Covenant Theology,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 13(1978), 92113; B. T. Roberts, *Holiness Teachings*, Benson Howard Roberts, compiler (reprint; Salem, Ohio: H. E. Schinul, 1972); Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1972); H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press, 1988).

99The study of Wesley’s use of early Christian texts for these ideas has been begun by Campbell in *John Wesley’s Conceptions*, but the trajectories of influence, especially via the Caroline writers, deserve additional attention.

100For an extended discussion of the complex literature, see John J. Zoppi, “The Correspondence of 1573-1581 Between the Lutheran Theologians at Tübingen and the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchate at Constantinople and the Dispute Concerning Sacred Tradition,” *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 4(1985), 175195; 5(1986), 518, 139146, 207221. Also see, L. Petit, “Jeremie II Trance,” *Dictionnaire de theologie catholique* 8,1(1924), cols. 886894.

101It is important to note that neither the Orthodox nor the Roman Catholic Church acknowledges Clement of Alexandria, Origen, or Macarius as “teachers.” But both traditions have named the Cappadocians and Cassian as such.