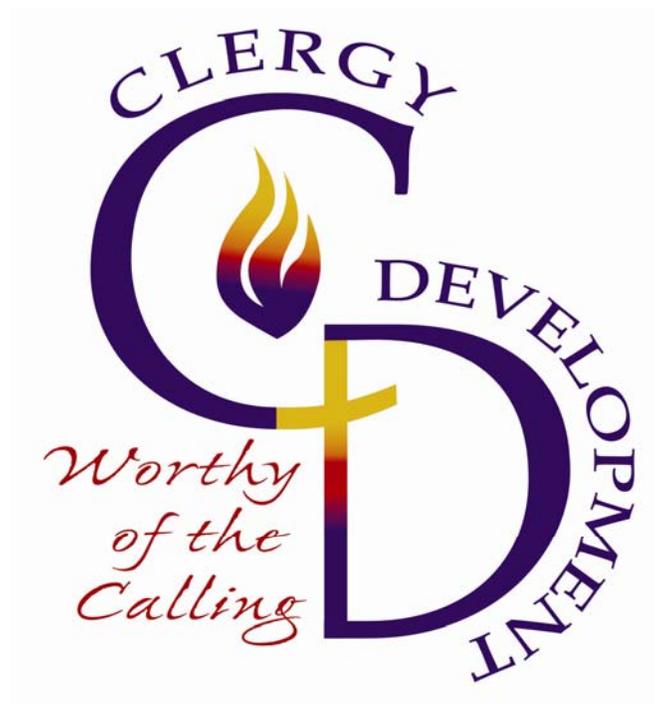

Student Guide

Exploring John Wesley's Theology



Clergy Development
Church of the Nazarene
Kansas City, Missouri
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2002

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The **Modular Course of Study** is an outcome-based curriculum designed to implement the educational paradigm defined by the Breckenridge Consultations. Clergy Development is responsible for maintaining and distributing the Modular Course of Study for the Church of the Nazarene.

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Series Foreword

A Vision for Christian Ministry: Clergy Education in the Church of the Nazarene

The chief purpose of all persons—indeed, all of the creation—is to worship, love, and serve God. God has made himself known in His deeds of creation and redemption. As the Redeemer, God has called into existence a people, the Church, who embody, celebrate, and declare His name and His ways. The life of God with His people and the world constitutes the Story of God. That story is recorded principally in the Old and New Testaments, and continues to be told by the resurrected Christ who lives and reigns as Head of His Church. The Church lives to declare the whole Story of God. This it does in many ways—in the lives of its members who are even now being transformed by Christ, through preaching, the sacraments, in oral testimony, and in mission. All members of the Body of Christ are called to exercise a ministry of witness and service. No one is excluded.

In God's own wisdom He calls some persons to fulfill the ministry of proclaiming the gospel and caring for God's people in a form that is referred to as the ordained ministry. God is the initial actor in this call, not humans. In the Church of the Nazarene we believe that God calls and that persons respond. They do not elect the Christian ministry. All persons whom God calls to the ordained ministry continue to be amazed that He would call them. They should continue to be humbled and amazed by God's call. The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene states, "we recognize and hold that the Head of the Church calls some men and women to the more official and public work of the ministry." It adds, "The church, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, will recognize the Lord's call" (*Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, paragraph 400).

An ordained Christian minister has as his or her chief responsibility to declare in many ways the whole Story of God as fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. His or her charge is to "tend the flock of God . . . not under compulsion, but willingly, not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:2-3, NRSV). The minister fulfills this charge under the supervision of Christ, the chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4). Such ministry can be fulfilled only after a period of careful preparation. Indeed, given the ever-changing demands placed upon the minister, "preparation" never ceases.

A person who enters the Christian ministry becomes in a distinct sense a steward of the gospel of God (Titus 1:7). A steward is one who is entrusted to care for what belongs to another. A steward may be one who takes care of another person or who manages the property of someone else. All Christians are stewards of the grace of God. But in addition, in a peculiar sense a Christian minister is a steward of the "mystery of God," which is Christ, the Redeemer, the Messiah of God. In all faithfulness, the minister is called to "make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel" (Eph 6:19, NRSV). Like Paul, he or she must faithfully preach "the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph 3:8-10, NRSV).

In fulfilling this commission, there is plenty of room for diligence and alertness, but no room for laziness or privilege (Titus 1:5-9). Good stewards recognize that they are

stewards only, not the owners, and that they will give an account of their stewardship to the master. Faithfulness to one's charge and to the Lord who issued it is the steward's principal passion. When properly understood, the Christian ministry should never be thought of as a "job." It is ministry—uniquely Christian ministry. No higher responsibility or joy can be known than to become a steward of the Story of God in Christ's Church. The person who embraces God's call to the ordained ministry will stand in the company of the apostles, the Early Fathers of the Church, the Reformers of the Middle Ages, the Protestant Reformers, and many persons around the world today who joyfully serve as stewards of the gospel of God.

Obviously, one who does not recognize, or who understands but rejects, just how complete and inclusive a minister's stewardship must be should not start down the path that leads to ordination. In a peculiar sense, a Christian minister must in all respects model the gospel of God. He or she is to "shun" the love of money. Instead, the minister must "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness." He or she must "fight the good fight of the faith" and "take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called" (1 Tim 6:11-12, NRSV).

Hence, the Church of the Nazarene believes that "the minister of Christ is to be in all things a pattern to the flock—in punctuality, discretion, diligence, earnestness; 'in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left' (2 Cor 6:6-7)" (*Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, paragraph 401.1). The minister of Christ "must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, ⁸but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, ⁹holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching...able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict." (Titus 1:7-9, NASB).

In order to be a good steward of God's Story one must, among other things, give oneself to careful and systematic study, both before and after ordination. This will occur not because he or she is forced to do so, but out of a love for God and His people, the world that He is working to redeem, and out of an inescapable sense of responsibility. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the attitude one brings to preparation for the ministry reveals much about what he or she thinks of God, the gospel, and Christ's Church. The God who became incarnate in Jesus and who made a way of salvation for all gave His very best in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. In order to be a good steward, a Christian minister must respond in kind. Jesus told numerous parables about stewards who did not recognize the importance of what had been entrusted to them (Mt 21:33-44; 25:14-30; Mk 13:34-37; Lk 12:35-40; 19:11-27; 20:9-18).

Preparation—one's education in all its dimensions—for ministry in Christ's Church should be pursued in full light of the responsibility before God and His people that the ministry involves. This requires that one take advantage of the best educational resources at his or her disposal.

The Church of the Nazarene recognizes how large is the responsibility associated with the ordained Christian ministry and accepts it fully. Part of the way we recognize our responsibility before God is seen in the requirements we make for ordination and the practice of ministry. We believe that the call to and practice of Christian ministry is a gift, not a right or privilege. We believe that God holds a minister to the highest of religious, moral, personal, and professional standards. We are not reluctant to expect

that those standards be observed from the time of one's call until his or her death. We believe that Christian ministry should first be a form of worship. The practice of ministry is both an offering to God and a service to His Church. By the miracle of grace, the work of the ministry can become a means of grace for God's people (Rom 12: 1-3). One's education for ministry is also a form of worship.

The modules that comprise the Course of Study that may lead a person to candidacy for ordination have been carefully designed to prepare one for the kind of ministry we have described. Their common purpose is to provide a holistic preparation for entrance into the ordained Christian ministry. They reflect the Church's wisdom, experience, and responsibility before God. The modules show how highly the Church of the Nazarene regards the gospel, the people of God, the world for which Christ gave His life, and Christian ministry. Completing the modules will normally take three or four years. But no one should feel pressured to meet this schedule.

The careful study for which the modules call should show that before God and His Church one accepts the stewardly responsibility associated with ordained ministry.

Acknowledgments

Every module is the accumulation of effort by many people. Someone writes the original manuscript, others offer suggestions to strengthen the content and make the material more easily understood, and finally an editor formats the module for publication. This module is not different. Many people have contributed to this module.

Principal Contributor

The principal contributor for this module is Dr. Diane Leclerc. Dr. Leclerc is professor of Historical Theology and Homiletics at Northwest Nazarene University where she has taught since 1998. She is an ordained clergy in the Church of the Nazarene and has pastored two congregations, in Maine and in Idaho. She received the Bachelor of Arts in Religion from Eastern Nazarene College, the Master of Divinity degree from Nazarene Theological Seminary, and both her Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy degrees from Drew University.

She has published articles in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* and has contributed to two books, including *Heart Religion in the Methodist Tradition and Related Movements*. Her full-length book, *Singleness of Heart: Gender, Sin, and Holiness in Historical Perspective*, won the Wesleyan Theological Society Book of the Year Award in 2002. Leclerc is an active member of the Wesleyan Theological Society and the Wesleyan-Holiness Women Clergy Association. She resides in Nampa, ID. with her husband and son.

Responder

The responder for this module is Rev. Clair MacMillan. Clair MacMillan grew up in a Nazarene parsonage in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, the son of Rev. Kenneth and Myrtle MacMillan. A graduate of Olivet Nazarene University (B.A. in Religion 1970; M.A. in Theology, 1987), he has continued his education at Mount Allison University, pursuing a number of courses and research projects in Sociology and Social Anthropology.

Over the past two decades Clair has been actively involved in reforming the clergy preparation process in Canada. As a member of the Canadian National Board's "Gales Commission on the Ministry," he contributed several monographs, including "An Alternate Path to the Ministry," "The Guide to Ministerial Preparation in Canada," "The Nazarene Experience in Canada" and "The Differentiation of Religion and Theology." He is the primary author of the *Sourcebook for Ministerial Preparation Canada*.

Clair has been a Nazarene pastor for 32 years and currently serves as the chairman of the National Board, Church of the Nazarene Canada. He and his wife, Donna, live in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada.

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Syllabus

Exploring John Wesley's Theology

Educational Institution, Setting, or Educational Provider:

Location of the Course:

Course Dates:

Name of the Instructor:

Instructor's Address, Telephone, and E-mail Address:

Module Vision Statement:

The Church of the Nazarene is a "Wesleyan-holiness" church. By this designation, we affirm that the theology of John Wesley undergirds and informs both our theological conclusions and our theological method. While Wesley should be seen as a mentor, not "guru" (as once expressed by Mildred Bangs Wynkoop), it is crucial to our denominational identity that we teach, preach, and minister as Wesleyans. "Wesleyan-holiness" also designates that we put holiness as the hermeneutic for interpreting Wesley's life and thought, and recognize that the holiness movement of the 19th century—out of which the Church of the Nazarene was formed—was an attempt to remain faithful to Wesley's emphasis on the "way of salvation." Wesley defined salvation as more than a moment in time: it includes the lifelong process of inward and outward holiness, as well as the paramount experiences of new birth and sanctification.

Our understanding of holiness should never be divorced from Wesley's theology more broadly defined. This is crucial as we move into the 21st century, when a fundamentalist absolutism on the one hand or religious relativism on the other seem to be the only options. "Holiness of heart and life" is important to every generation. It is extremely important that those preparing for ordained ministry in the Church of the Nazarene catch, hold, and utilize the dynamism of the Wesleyan theological paradigm. This course is designed with the future denominational identity of Nazarenes firmly in mind.

To understand Wesley's theology, two major influences must be acknowledged: Wesley's life story and Wesley's theological sources. The course will examine the life of Wesley in historical context—Britain in the 18th century. It will also examine Wesley's dependence upon and creative appropriation of certain theological traditions. Wesley was greatly influenced by the Early Church (primarily Ante-Nicene and Eastern sources), by Catholic mysticism (of the middle ages), by the Protestant Reformation (James Arminius' reaction to it and the Moravian appropriation of it), and by Anglicanism (that followed the Elizabethan Settlement).

To understand Wesley's theological conclusions, it is vital to understand Wesley's theological methodology. The Wesleyan quadrilateral (as it has been termed) holds to

the primacy of Scripture. Indeed Wesley was a “man of one book.” And yet, Wesley believed that the Scriptures should be interpreted dynamically:

- Scripture has been interpreted by tradition—a history of interpretation that requires some fidelity.
- It witnesses to an experience of Christ and the Christian gospel that is dynamic and communal in character.
- It should be understood, organized, and effectively communicated through the aid of reason.

The end goal of the quadrilateral method not only is theological/doctrinal in nature but also informs directly spiritual formation—a fact that again places a response to grace at the very center of Wesley’s entire “system.” The methodology of Wesley as well as his dogma informs a Wesleyan worldview today. This worldview interprets life, ministry, and relationships through a distinctly Wesleyan lens. This lens will be contrasted to other views and other traditions, most specifically the Calvinist paradigm.

The course will address each systematic category in turn, noting both Wesley’s fidelity to tradition and his own constructive, creative thought. Special emphasis will be given to soteriological themes that have practical implications. For example, a theology of worship will lead to the question, “How do Wesleyans worship?” The doctrine of theological anthropology leads to the question, “How do we treat persons in light of the concepts of the image of God and prevenient grace?” The student will be able to display both knowledge of the content of this course, as well as personal and professional skills that arise out of the theology and spiritual formation in the Wesleyan tradition. Wesleyanism’s “warm heart” is the heart of Nazarene ministry, making this course crucial to theological education of the ministers of the Church of the Nazarene, and thus crucial to the denomination as a whole.

Educational Assumptions

1. The work of the Holy Spirit is essential to any process of Christian education at any level. We will consistently request and expect the Spirit’s presence within and among us.
2. Christian teaching and learning is best done in the context of community (people being and working together). Community is the gift of the Spirit but may be enhanced or hindered by human effort. Communities have common values, stories, practices, and goals. Explicit effort will be invested to enhance community within the class. Group work will take place in every lesson.
3. Every adult student has knowledge and experiences to contribute to the class. We learn not only from the instructor and the reading assignments, but also from each other. Each student is valued not only as a learner but also as a teacher. That is one reason that so many exercises in this course are cooperative and collaborative in nature.
4. Journaling is an ideal way to bring theory and practice together as students synthesize the principles and content of the lessons with their own experiences, preferences, and ideas.

Outcome Statements

This module contributes to the development of the following abilities as defined in the *U.S. Sourcebook for Ministerial Development*.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- CN20 Ability to reflect theologically on life and ministry
- CN21 Ability to demonstrate understanding of the sources of theological reflection, its historical development, and its contemporary expressions
- CN22 Ability to articulate the distinctive characteristics of Wesleyan theology
- CN23 Ability to identify and explain the doctrine of holiness from a Wesleyan perspective
- CN25 Ability to identify and describe the significance of the major figures, themes, and events of the Patristic, Medieval, Reformation, Puritan, Pietist, Wesleyan, and Modern periods of Church history
- CN26 Ability to describe how the church implemented its mission in the various periods of Church history
- CP10 Ability to synthesize, analyze, reason logically for discernment, assessment, and problem solving, and live with ambiguity
- CP11 Ability to analyze the validity of arguments and to identify their presuppositions and consequences
- CX5 Ability to describe and interpret the relationship between culture and individual behavior
- CX10 Ability to understand and articulate the biblical, historical, and theological bases for Christian mission

OUTCOME STATEMENTS

- To interpret John Wesley's thought and discover ways in which it can inform 21st-century theological agenda for the Church of the Nazarene
- To effectively apply the methods of Wesley for pursuing personal and social holiness
- To apply appropriate Wesleyan theological principles to cultures other than one's own
- To incorporate the Wesleyan approaches to personal spiritual formation for one's own enrichment
- To understand the life of John Wesley in historical context
- To understand Wesley's theological methodology (function of the Wesleyan quadrilateral)
- To understand and articulate a Wesleyan view of the triune God and the primacy of the doctrine of soteriology
- To apply a Wesleyan worldview to one's life, ministry, relationships, and vocation

Recommended Reading

Become familiar with the Wesley Center for Applied Theology. This is available at <http://wesley.nnu.edu>

Course Requirements

- 1. Class attendance, attention, and participation** are especially important. Students are responsible for all assignments and in-class work. Much of the work in this course is small-group work. Cooperative, small-group work cannot be made up. That makes attendance imperative. Even if one does extra reading or writing, the values of discussion, dialogue, and learning from each other are thwarted. If one lesson is missed, the learning leader will require extra work before completion

can be acknowledged. If two or more classes are missed, the student will be required to repeat the whole module.

Small-Group Work. Nothing is more important in this course than small-group work. The class members will be assigned to groups of two to four students each. The group members will serve as study partners for explorations and discussions.

2. Assignments

Journaling: The only “term assignment” is your journal. It is to be used regularly, if not daily. On at least one occasion during the term the journals will be checked by the instructor. In each lesson a journal assignment is included.

The journal should become the student’s friend and treasury of insights, devotions, and ideas. Here the integration of theory and practice occurs. The spiritual life nature of the journal helps guard against the course of study being merely academic as you are repeatedly called upon to apply the principles studied to your own heart and your own ministry situation.

This journal is not a diary, not a catchall. It is, rather, a guided journal or a focused journal in which the educational experience and its implications are selected for reflection and writing.

The framers of this curriculum are concerned about the way that students fall into learning “about” the Bible or “about” the spiritual life rather than learning—that is coming to know and internalize the Bible and spiritual principles. The journaling experience ensures that the “Be” component of “Be, Know, and Do” is present in the course of study. Be faithful with all journaling assignments.

Daily Work: This module has regular homework assignments. It is called daily work because even though the class may only meet once a week, the student should be working on the module on a “daily” basis. Sometimes the homework assignments are quite heavy. The assignments are important. Even if homework is not discussed in class every session, the work is to be handed in. This gives the instructor regular information about the student’s progress in the course. The normal time for homework to be handed in is at the beginning of each class session. **All** assignments are to be completed.

Course Outline and Schedule

The class will meet for 15 lessons of 90 minutes each for a total of 22.5 hours according to the following schedule:

Session Date	Session Time

1. Wesley’s Theological Biography—Epworth to Aldersgate
2. Wesley’s Theological Biography—Aldersgate to Wesley’s Death
3. Wesley’s Theological Sources

		4. Epistemology and Revelation
		5. The Quadrilateral—Scripture and Tradition
		6. The Quadrilateral— Experience and Reason
		7. The Creative Triune God
		8. The Person of Christ and the Person of the Spirit
		9. Humanity and Sin
		10. The Way of Salvation, Part 1
		11. The Way of Salvation, Part 2
		12. Means of Grace and Sacraments
		13. Last Things
		14. Life in the Christian Community
		15. Life in the World

Course Evaluation

The instructor, the course itself, and the student’s progress will be evaluated. These evaluations will be made in several ways.

The progress of students will be evaluated with an eye for enhancing the learning experience by:

1. Carefully observing the small-group work, noting the competence of reports, the balance of discussion, the quality of the relationships, the cooperation level, and the achievement of assigned tasks
2. Careful reading of homework assignments
3. Journal check

The evaluation of the course materials and the teacher will be evaluated by:

- Frequently asking and discussing the effectiveness and relevance of a certain method, experience, story, lecture, or other activity.

Some evaluation cannot be made during the class itself. Some objectives will not be measurable for years to come. If students encounter the transforming power of God at deeper levels than ever before, learn devotional skills and practice them with discipline, and incorporate the best of this course into their own ministries, the fruit of this educational endeavor could go on for a long time. In truth, that is what we expect.

Additional Information

A reasonable effort to assist every student will be made. Any student who has handicaps, learning disabilities, or other conditions that make the achievement of the class requirements exceedingly difficult should make an appointment with the instructor as soon as possible to see what special arrangements can be made. Any student who is having trouble understanding the assignments, lectures, or other learning activities should talk to the instructor to see what can be done to help.

Instructor's Availability

Good faith efforts to serve the students both in and beyond the classroom will be made.

Journaling: A Tool for Personal Reflection and Integration

Participating in the course of study is the heart of your preparation for ministry. To complete each course you will be required to listen to lectures, read several books, participate in discussions, write papers, and take exams. Content mastery is the goal.

An equally important part of ministerial preparation is spiritual formation. Some might choose to call spiritual formation devotions, while others might refer to it as growth in grace. Whichever title you place on the process, it is the intentional cultivation of your relationship with God. The course work will be helpful in adding to your knowledge, your skills, and your ability to do ministry. The spiritually formative work will weave all you learn into the fabric of your being, allowing your education to flow freely from your head to your heart to those you serve.

Although there are many spiritual disciplines to help you cultivate your relationship with God, journaling is the critical skill that ties them all together. Journaling simply means keeping a record of your experiences and the insights you have gained along the way. It is a discipline because it does require a good deal of work to faithfully spend time daily in your journal. Many people confess that this is a practice they tend to push aside when pressed by their many other responsibilities. Even five minutes a day spent journaling can make a major difference in your education and your spiritual development. Let me explain.

Consider journaling as time spent with your best friend. Onto the pages of a journal you will pour out your candid responses to the events of the day, the insights you gained from class, a quote gleaned from a book, an ah-ha that came to you as two ideas connected. This is not the same as keeping a diary, since a diary seems to be a chronicle of events without the personal dialogue. The journal is the repository for all of your thoughts, reactions, prayers, insights, visions, and plans. Though some people like to keep complex journals with sections for each type of reflection, others find a simple running commentary more helpful. In either case, record the date and the location at the beginning of every journal entry. It will help you when it comes time to review your thoughts.

It is important to chat briefly about the logistics of journaling. All you will need is a pen and paper to begin. Some folks prefer loose-leaf paper that can be placed in a three-ring binder, others like spiral-bound notebooks, while others enjoy using

composition books. Whichever style you choose, it is important to develop a pattern that works for you.

Establishing a time and a place for writing in your journal is essential. If there is no space etched out for journaling, it will not happen with the regularity needed to make it valuable. It seems natural to spend time journaling after the day is over and you can sift through all that has transpired. Yet, family commitments, evening activities, and fatigue militate against this time slot. Morning offers another possibility. Sleep filters much of the previous day's experiences, and processes deep insights, that can be recorded first thing in the morning. In conjunction with devotions, journaling enables you to begin to weave your experiences with the Word, and also with course material that has been steeping on the back burner of your mind. You will probably find that carrying your journal will allow you to jot down ideas that come to you at odd times throughout the day.

It seems that we have been suggesting that journaling is a handwritten exercise. Some may be wondering about doing their work on a computer. Traditionally, there is a special bond between hand, pen, and paper. It is more personal, direct, aesthetic. And it is flexible, portable, and available.

With regular use, your journal is the repository of your journey. As important as it is to make daily entries, it is equally important to review your work. Read over each week's record at the end of the week. Make a summary statement and note movements of the Holy Spirit or your own growth. Do a monthly review of your journal every 30 days. This might best be done on a half-day retreat where you can prayerfully focus on your thoughts in solitude and silence. As you do this, you will begin to see the accumulated value of the Word, your course work, and your experience in ministry all coming together in ways you had not considered possible. This is integration, weaving together faith development with learning. Integration moves information from your head to your heart so that ministry is a matter of being rather than doing. Journaling will help you answer the central question of education: "Why do I do what I do when I do it?"

Journaling really is the linchpin in ministerial preparation. Your journal is the chronicle of your journey into spiritual maturity as well as content mastery. These volumes will hold the rich insights that will pull your education together. A journal is the tool for integration. May you treasure the journaling process!

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These sermons by John Wesley are available in full text on the Wesley Center website at Northwest Nazarene University <<http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons/alpha.htm>>. The sermon titles are listed in alphabetical order.

- "The Catholic Spirit" (Sermon 39)
- "Christian Perfection" (Sermon 40)
- "The Duty of Constant Communion" (Sermon 101)
- "The Lord Our Righteousness" (Sermon 20)
- "On Patience" (Sermon 83)
- "On the Trinity" (Sermon 55)
- "On Visiting the Sick" (Sermon 98)
- "The Nature of Enthusiasm" (Sermon 37)
- "Imperfection of Human Knowledge" (Sermon 69)
- "The Repentance of Believers" (Sermon 14)
- "Scripture Way of Salvation" (Sermon 43)
- "Salvation by Faith" (Sermon 1)
- "Spiritual Worship" (Sermon 77)
- "The Unity of Divine Being" (Sermon 114)

These works by John Wesley may be found on the Wesley Center website at Northwest Nazarene University, refer to <<http://wesley.nnu.edu/>>:

- "The Imperfection of Human Knowledge"

- "Plain Account of Christian Perfection"
- "A Plain Account of the People Called Methodist"

Lesson 1: Wesley's Theological Biography—Epworth to Aldersgate

Due This Lesson

None

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will

- describe the religious and political culture of the Church of England
- articulate the influences of family, education, and ordination on the spiritual formation of John Wesley
- understand the impact of the writings of Thomas à Kempis, William Law, and Jeremy Taylor on Wesley
- discuss the hopes and failures of Wesley's missionary work in Georgia
- identify the role of the Moravians on Wesley
- describe the significance of Aldersgate on Wesley's spiritual development

Homework Assignments

Write a three-page biographical essay, entitled "How my biography has influenced my theology and worldview."

Read Resource 1-6, "Salvation by Faith."

Write in your journal. This assignment is ongoing. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights on the material presented in class. Read a portion of John Wesley's journal and reflect on your reading. His journal can be found at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu>

Wesley Quotes

John Wesley was born, raised, and ordained an Anglican. Yet he can still say, "I went to America to convert the Indians, but, oh, who shall convert me?"
Journal, Tuesday 24 January, 1738

With Aldersgate approaching, Wesley's heart honestly confessed, "I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it."
Journal, Sunday 29 January, 1738

Wesley's Theology

He did not write a "systematic theology" in the same way John Calvin did. He never sat down and wrote out what he believed about all the Christian doctrines in one place.

Scholars must look at Wesley's more practical works—such as his sermons, journals, and letters—in order to weave together what Wesley believed about each traditional "systematic" doctrine. Wesley has therefore been called a "practical theologian."

He is also known as a rather "eclectic" theologian—he takes the best he can find from a variety of sources and synthesizes it all into a creative theological vision.

A key way of interpreting Wesley is to see this *via media* (middle way) in much of this thought.

Historical Context

King Henry VIII separated the church from Roman Catholicism in 1532.

The first official statement of English theology came in the "Ten Articles of Religion."

Important for the development of the English faith were two works: *The Book of Homilies* (1546) and *The Book of Common Prayer* (1549).

"The Act of Uniformity" (1559) helped bring a middle position. . . . Her (Queen Elizabeth I) resolution became known as the "Elizabethan Settlement."

Significant Influences

Three authors that influenced Wesley

- Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471), a German mystic, wrote the famous *The Imitation of Christ*.
- Jeremy Taylor (1613-67) wrote *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying*.
- William Law (1686-1761), a contemporary of Wesley, wrote two significant works: *Christian Perfection* and *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*.

Holiness involves:

- A purity of intentions
- The imitation of Christ as the model for holy living
- Love for God and neighbor as definitive and normative of Christian perfection

A Plain Account of Christian Perfection

In one view, it is purity of intention, dedicating all the life to God. It is the giving God all our heart; it is one desire and design ruling all our tempers. It is the devoting, not a part, but all our soul, body, and substance to God. In another view, it is all the mind which was in Christ, enabling us to walk as Christ walked. It is the circumcision of the heart from all filthiness, all inward as well as outward pollution. It is a renewal of the heart in the whole image of God, the full likeness of Him that created it. In yet another, it is the loving God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves.

John Wesley

Moravian Influence

Wesley first encountered the Moravians in 1735 on his trip to Georgia, America.

He was impressed with their assurance of their own salvation.

They strongly supported the Lutheran doctrine of *sola fide*: salvation by faith alone.

Peter Bohler, a Moravian who counseled Wesley on several occasions, challenged Wesley to “preach faith till you have it, and then because you have it, you will preach faith.”

JOHN WESLEY

SERMON ONE

SALVATION BY FAITH

PREACHED AT ST. MARY'S OXFORD, BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY, ON JUNE 18, 1738
"By Grace are ye saved through faith." Ephesians 2.8

1. All the blessings which God hath bestowed upon man are of his mere grace, bounty, or favour; his free, undeserved favour; favour altogether undeserved; man having no claim to the least of his mercies. It was free grace that "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into him a living soul," and stamped on that soul the image of God, and "put all things under his feet." The same free grace continues to us, at this day, life, and breath, and all things. For there is nothing we are, or have, or do, which can deserve the least thing at God's hand. "All our works, Thou, O God, hast wrought in us." These, therefore, are so many more instances of free mercy: and whatever righteousness may be found in man, this is also the gift of God.

2. Wherewithal then shall a sinful man atone for any the least of his sins? With his own works? No. Were they ever so many or holy, they are not his own, but God's. But indeed they are all unholy and sinful themselves, so that every one of them needs a fresh atonement. Only corrupt fruit grows on a corrupt tree. And his heart is altogether corrupt and abominable; being "come short of the glory of God," the glorious righteousness at first impressed on his soul, after the image of his great Creator. Therefore, having nothing, neither righteousness nor works, to plead, his mouth is utterly stopped before God.

3. If then sinful men find favour with God, it is "grace upon grace!" If God vouchsafe still to pour fresh blessings upon us, yea, the greatest of all blessings, salvation; what can we say to these things, but, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!" And thus it is. herein "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died" to save us "By grace" then "are ye saved through faith." Grace is the source, faith the condition, of salvation.

Now, that we fall not short of the grace of God, it concerns us carefully to inquire,

- I. What faith it is through which we are saved.
- II. What is the salvation which is through faith.
- III. How we may answer some objections.

I. What faith it is through which we are saved.

1. And, first, it is not barely the faith of a heathen. Now, God requireth of a heathen to believe, "that God is; that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" and that he is to be sought by glorifying him as God, by giving him thanks for all things, and by a careful practice of moral virtue, of justice, mercy, and truth, toward their fellow creatures. A Greek or Roman, therefore, yea, a Scythian or Indian, was without excuse if he did not believe thus much: the being and attributes of God, a future state of reward and punishment, and the obligatory nature of moral virtue. For this is barely the faith of a heathen.

2. Nor, secondly, is it the faith of a devil, though this goes much farther than that of a heathen. For the devil believes, not only that there is a wise and powerful God, gracious to reward, and just to punish; but also, that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ, the Saviour of the world. So we find him declaring, in express terms, "I know Thee who Thou art; the Holy One of God" (Luke 4:34). Nor can we doubt but that unhappy spirit believes all those words which came out of the mouth of the Holy One, yea, and whatsoever else was written by those holy men of old, of two of whom he was compelled to give that glorious testimony, "These men are the servants of the most high God, who show unto you the way of salvation." Thus much, then, the great enemy of God and man believes, and trembles in believing, - that God was made manifest in the flesh; that he will "tread all enemies under his feet;" and that "all Scripture was given by inspiration of God." Thus far goeth the faith of a devil.
 3. Thirdly. The faith through which we are saved, in that sense of the word which will hereafter be explained, is not barely that which the Apostles themselves had while Christ was yet upon earth; though they so believed on him as to "leave all and follow him;" although they had then power to work miracles, to "heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease;" yea, they had then "power and authority over all devils;" and, which is beyond all this, were sent by their Master to "preach the kingdom of God."
 4. What faith is it then through which we are saved? It may be answered, first, in general, it is a faith in Christ: Christ, and God through Christ, are the proper objects of it. herein, therefore, it is sufficiently, absolutely distinguished from the faith either of ancient or modern heathens. And from the faith of a devil it is fully distinguished by this: it is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head; but also a disposition of the heart. For thus saith the Scripture, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" and, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."
 5. And herein does it differ from that faith which the Apostles themselves had while our Lord was on earth, that it acknowledges the necessity and merit of his death, and the power of his resurrection. It acknowledges his death as the only sufficient means of redeeming man from death eternal, and his resurrection as the restoration of us all to life and immortality; inasmuch as he "was delivered for our sins, and rose again for our justification." Christian faith is then, not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life, as given for us, and living in us; and, in consequence hereof, a closing with him, and cleaving to him, as our "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," or, in one word, our salvation.
- II. What salvation it is, which is through this faith, is the Second thing to be considered.
1. And, First, whatsoever else it imply, it is a present salvation. It is something attainable, yea, actually attained, on earth, by those who are partakers of this faith. For thus saith the Apostle to the believers at Ephesus, and in them to the believers of all ages, not, Ye shall be (though that also is true), but, "Ye are saved through faith."

2. Ye are saved (to comprise all in one word) from sin. This is the salvation which is through faith. This is that great salvation foretold by the angel, before God brought his First-begotten into the world: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." And neither here, nor in other parts of holy writ, is there any limitation or restriction. All his people, or, as it is elsewhere expressed, "all that believe in him," he will save from all their sins; from original and actual, past and present sin, "of the flesh and of the spirit." Through faith that is in him, they are saved both from the guilt and from the power of it.

3. First. From the guilt of all past sin: for, whereas all the world is guilty before God, insomuch that should he "be extreme to mark what is done amiss, there is none that could abide it;" and whereas, "by the law is" only "the knowledge of sin," but no deliverance from it, so that, "by" fulfilling "the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified in his sight": now, "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is manifested unto all that believe." Now, "they are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." "Him God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for (or by) the remission of the sins that are past." Now hath Christ taken away "the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." he hath "blotted out the handwriting that was against us, taking it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." "There is therefore no condemnation now to them which" believe "in Christ Jesus."

4. And being saved from guilt, they are saved from fear. Not indeed from a filial fear of offending; but from all servile fear; from that fear which hath torment; from fear of punishment; from fear of the wrath of God, whom they now no longer regard as a severe Master, but as an indulgent Father. "They have not received again the spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father: the Spirit itself also bearing witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God." They are also saved from the fear, though not from the possibility, of falling away from the grace of God, and coming short of the great and precious promises. Thus have they "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. They rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, through the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them." And hereby they are persuaded (though perhaps not at all times, nor with the same fullness of persuasion), that "neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

5. Again: through this faith they are saved from the power of sin, as well as from the guilt of it. So the Apostle declares, "Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not" (1 John 3:5ff.). Again, "Little children, let no man deceive you. he that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever believeth is born of God. And whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Once more: "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18).

6. He that is, by faith, born of God sinneth not (1.) by any habitual sin; for all habitual sin is sin reigning: But sin cannot reign in any that believeth. Nor (2.) by any wilful sin: for his will, while he abideth in the faith, is utterly set against all sin, and abhorreth it as deadly poison. Nor (3.) By any sinful desire; for he continually

desireth the holy and perfect will of God. and any tendency to an unholy desire, he by the grace of God, stiflenth in the birth. Nor (4.) Doth he sin by infirmities, whether in act, word, or thought; for his infirmities have no concurrence of his will; and without this they are not properly sins. Thus, "he that is born of God doth not commit sin": and though he cannot say he hath not sinned, yet now "he sinneth not."

7. This then is the salvation which is through faith, even in the present world: a salvation from sin, and the consequences of sin, both often expressed in the word justification; which, taken in the largest sense, implies a deliverance from guilt and punishment, by the atonement of Christ actually applied to the soul of the sinner now believing on him, and a deliverance from the power of sin, through Christ formed in his heart. So that he who is thus justified, or saved by faith, is indeed born again. he is born again of the Spirit unto a new life, which "is hid with Christ in God." And as a new-born babe he gladly receives the adolon, "sincere milk of the word, and grows thereby;" going on in the might of the Lord his God, from faith to faith, from grace to grace, until at length, he come unto "a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

III. The first usual objection to this is,

1. That to preach salvation or justification, by faith only, is to preach against holiness and good works. To which a short answer might be given: "It would be so, if we spake, as some do, of a faith which was separate from these; but we speak of a faith which is not so, but productive of all good works, and all holiness."
2. But it may be of use to consider it more at large; especially since it is no new objection, but as old as St. Paul's time. For even then it was asked, "Do we not make void the law through faith?" We answer, First, all who preach not faith do manifestly make void the law; either directly and grossly, by limitations and comments that eat out all the spirit of the text; or indirectly, by not pointing out the only means whereby it is possible to perform it. Whereas, Secondly, "we establish the law," both by showing its full extent and spiritual meaning; and by calling all to that living way, whereby "the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in them." These, while they trust in the blood of Christ alone, use all the ordinances which he hath appointed, do all the "good works which he had before prepared that they should walk therein," and enjoy and manifest all holy and heavenly tempers, even the same mind that was in Christ Jesus.
3. But does not preaching this faith lead men into pride? We answer, Accidentally it may: therefore ought every believer to be earnestly cautioned, in the words of the great Apostle "Because of unbelief," the first branches "were broken off: and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God! On them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." And while he continues therein, he will remember those words of St. Paul, foreseeing and answering this very objection (Rom. 3:27), "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." If a man were justified by his works, he would have whereof to glory. But there is no glorying for him "that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly" (Rom. 4:5). To the same effect are the words both preceding and following the text (Eph. 2:4ff.): "God, who is rich in mercy, even when we were dead in sins, hath

quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), that he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves." Of yourselves cometh neither your faith nor your salvation: "it is the gift of God;" the free, undeserved gift; the faith through which ye are saved, as well as the salvation which he of his own good pleasure, his mere favour, annexes thereto. That ye believe, is one instance of his grace; that believing ye are saved, another. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." For all our works, all our righteousness, which were before our believing, merited nothing of God but condemnation; so far were they from deserving faith, which therefore, whenever given, is not of works. Neither is salvation of the works we do when we believe, for it is then God that worketh in us: and, therefore, that he giveth us a reward for what he himself worketh, only commendeth the riches of his mercy, but leaveth us nothing whereof to glory.

4. "However, may not the speaking thus of the mercy of God, as saving or justifying freely by faith only, encourage men in sin?" Indeed, it may and will: Many will "continue in sin that grace may abound:" But their blood is upon their own head. The goodness of God ought to lead them to repentance; and so it will those who are sincere of heart. When they know there is yet forgiveness with him, they will cry aloud that he would blot out their sins also, through faith which is in Jesus. And if they earnestly cry, and faint not, it they seek him in all the means he hath appointed; if they refuse to be comforted till he come; "he will come, and will not tarry." And he can do much work in a short time. Many are the examples, in the Acts of the Apostles, of God's working this faith in men's hearts, even like lightning falling from heaven. So in the same hour that Paul and Silas began to preach, the jailer repented, believed, and was baptized; as were three thousand, by St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, who all repented and believed at his first preaching And, blessed be God, there are now many living proofs that he is still "mighty to save."
5. Yet to the same truth, placed in another view, a quite contrary objection is made: "If a man cannot be saved by all that he can do, this will drive men to despair." True, to despair of being saved by their own works, their own merits, or righteousness. And so it ought; for none can trust in the merits of Christ, till he has utterly renounced his own. he that "goeth about to stablish his own righteousness" cannot receive the righteousness of God. The righteousness which is of faith cannot be given him while he trusteth in that which is of the law.
6. But this, it is said, is an uncomfortable doctrine. The devil spoke like himself, that is, without either truth or shame, when he dared to suggest to men that it is such. It is the only comfortable one, it is "very full of comfort," to all self-destroyed, self-condemned sinners. That "whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed that the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him": here is comfort, high as heaven, stronger than death! What! Mercy for all? For Zacchaeus, a public robber? For Mary Magdalene, a common harlot? Methinks I hear one say "Then I, even I, may hope for mercy!" And so thou mayest, thou afflicted one, whom none hath comforted! God will not cast out thy prayer. Nay, perhaps he may say the next hour, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" so forgiven, that they shall reign over thee no more; yea, and that "the Holy Spirit shall bear witness with thy spirit that thou art a child of God." O glad tidings! tidings of great joy, which are sent unto all people! "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: Come ye, and buy, without money and without price." Whatsoever your sins be, "though red like crimson," though more than the hairs of your head, "return ye unto the

Lord, and he will have mercy upon you, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

7. When no more objections occur, then we are simply told that salvation by faith only ought not to be preached as the first doctrine, or, at least, not to be preached at all. But what saith the Holy Ghost? "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ." So then, that "whosoever believeth on him shall be saved," is, and must be, the foundation of all our preaching; that is, must be preached first. "Well, but not to all." To whom, then are we not to preach it? Whom shall we except? The poor? Nay; they have a peculiar right to have the gospel preached unto them. The unlearned? No. God hath revealed these things unto unlearned and ignorant men from the beginning. The young? By no means. "Suffer these," in any wise, "to come unto Christ, and forbid them not." The sinners? Least of all. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Why then, if any, we are to except the rich, the learned, the reputable, the moral men. And, it is true, they too often except themselves from hearing; yet we must speak the words of our Lord. For thus the tenor of our commission runs, "Go and preach the gospel to every creature." If any man wrest it, or any part of it, to his destruction, he must bear his own burden. But still, "as the Lord liveth, whatsoever the Lord saith unto us, that we will speak."
8. At this time, more especially, will we speak, that "by grace are ye saved through faith": because, never was the maintaining this doctrine more seasonable than it is at this day. Nothing but this can effectually prevent the increase of the Romish delusion among us. It is endless to attack, one by one, all the errors of that Church. But salvation by faith strikes at the root, and all fall at once where this is established. It was this doctrine, which our Church justly calls the strong rock and foundation of the Christian religion, that first drove Popery out of these kingdoms; and it is this alone can keep it out. Nothing but this can give a check to that immorality which hath "overspread the land as a flood." Can you empty the great deep, drop by drop? Then you may reform us by dissuasives from particular vices. But let the "righteousness which is of God by faith be brought in, and so shall its proud waves be stayed. Nothing but this can stop the mouths of those who "glory in their shame, and openly deny the Lord that bought them." They can talk as sublimely of the law, as he that hath it written by God in his heart To hear them speak on this head might incline one to think they were not far from the kingdom of God: but take them out of the law into the gospel; begin with the righteousness of faith; with Christ, "the end of the law to every one that believeth;" and those who but now appeared almost, if not altogether, Christians, stand confessed the sons of perdition; as far from life and salvation (God be merciful unto them!) as the depth of hell from the height of heaven.
9. For this reason the adversary so rages whenever "salvation by faith" is declared to the world: for this reason did he stir up earth and hell, to destroy those who first preached it. And for the same reason, knowing that faith alone could overturn the foundations of his kingdom, did he call forth all his forces, and employ all his arts of lies and calumny, to affright Martin Luther from reviving it. Nor can we wonder thereat; for, as that man of God observes, "How would it enrage a proud, strong man armed, to be stopped and set at nought by a little child coming against him with a reed in his hand!" especially when he knew that little child would surely overthrow him, and tread him under foot. Even so, Lord Jesus! Thus hath Thy strength been ever "made perfect in weakness!" Go forth then, thou little child that believest in him, and his "right hand shall teach thee terrible things!" Though thou

art helpless and weak as an infant of days, the strong man shall not be able to stand before thee. Thou shalt prevail over him, and subdue him, and overthrow him and trample him under thy feet. Thou shalt march on, under the great Captain of thy salvation, "conquering and to conquer," until all thine enemies are destroyed, and "death is swallowed up in victory."

Now, thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, for ever and ever. Amen

Edited anonymously at the Memorial University of Newfoundland with corrections and other modifications by Ryan Danker and George Lyons of Northwest Nazarene University.

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Lesson 2: Wesley's Theological Biography—Aldersgate to Wesley's Death

Due This Lesson

Personal biography
Sermon reading
Journaling

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will

- describe the rise and development of Methodism
- comprehend Wesley's controversy with the London society over the meaning of holiness
- analyze Wesley's controversy with Calvinism and George Whitefield
- explore Wesley's reasons for allowing American ordinations
- discuss John Wesley's controversy with Charles Wesley over succession

Homework Assignments

Create a time line of Wesley's life and theological development.

Read Resource 2-5, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation."

Write in your journal. This assignment is ongoing. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights on the material presented in class. Read a portion of John Wesley's journal and reflect on your reading. His journal can be found at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu>

Wesley Quotes

In a letter to a friend, Wesley shows the heart of his movement in his own heart:

*O grant that nothing in my soul
May dwell, but Thy pure love alone!
O may Thy love possess me whole
My joy, my treasure, and my crown.
Strange flames far from my heart remove!
My every act, word, thought, be love.*
Wesley, 1765

John Wesley's last words:

"The best of all is, God is with us. Farewell."

Biographical Concerns

First of all, Wesley was a legend in his own time.

Second, Wesley was a controversial figure during his own lifetime.

Third, Wesley's own writings can be interpreted as revealing a distinctly "public" and a distinctly "private" Wesley.

And finally, the historian must deal with the often paradoxical aspects of Wesley's life and thought.

Wesley's theology developed over time.

The late Wesley integrated his early and middle years into mature theological positions.

The Middle Wesley 1739-60

The middle phase of Wesley's life was consumed by the rise and organization of the Methodist Revival in England and his need to clarify Methodist theology.

Wesley saw that an overemphasis on the doctrine of grace could lead to a type of antinomianism—the belief that since grace is all, works are not only not necessary but harmful to the Christian's dependence on God only for salvation.

Wesley provided his converts with a disciplined program of spiritual formation, in the context of fellowship with other Christians and focused pastoral care.

Annual conferences, first initiated in 1744, were also crucial in developing the distinctives of Methodism.

"Holiness of heart and life" had always been one of Wesley's cherished phrases.

The Late Wesley 1760-91

During these decades, Wesley faced major theological issues that would help define Methodism.

The “perfectionist controversy” began in the early 1760s.

Some followers downplayed the gradual process that Wesley had *always* emphasized as equally important to the crisis experience.

Wesley called a conference to settle the issue, and he clarified his own positions in such publications as “On Perfection” (1761), “Sin in Believers” (1763), and perhaps most comprehensively in “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection” (first issued in 1766, and again in 1777).

George Whitefield was closely associated with Wesley for many years. They disagreed over the doctrine of predestination.

In response to the controversy, Wesley published several works: “On Predestination” (1773), “Thoughts Upon Necessity” (1774), and “On Working Out Our Own Salvation” (1785). Wesley never wavered from his strongly anti-election position.

Also during the late period of Wesley’s life, the issue of Methodism’s separation from the Church of England reached a climax.

Holy Communion was so important to Wesley that he decided to approve a Methodist ordination of Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke and he commissioned them as “general superintendents” of the Methodist Church in 1784 at a conference in Baltimore.

Small Groups

In your group, work together to find/develop answers for the following, from the Wesley sermon that was read for homework:

Sermon Title:

Text:

Thesis Statement:

Key Points:

Relevance for Today:

Call for Response:

JOHN WESLEY

SERMON EIGHTY-FIVE

ON WORKING OUT OUR OWN SALVATION

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil. 2: 12-13.

1. Some great truths, as the being and attributes of God, and the difference between moral good and evil, were known, in some measure, to the heathen world. The traces of them are to be found in all nations; So that, in some sense, it may be said to every child of man, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; even to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." With this truth he has, in some measure, "enlightened every one that cometh into the world." And hereby they that "have not the law," that have no written law, "are a law unto themselves." They show "the work of the law," -- the substance of it, though not the letter, -- "written in their hearts," by the same hand which wrote the commandments on the tables of stone; "Their conscience also bearing them witness," whether they act suitably thereto or not.
2. But there are two grand heads of doctrine, which contain many truths of the most important nature, of which the most enlightened Heathens in the ancient world were totally ignorant; as are also the most intelligent Heathens that are now on the face of the earth; I mean those which relate to the eternal Son of God, and the Spirit of God: To the Son, giving himself to be "a propitiation for the sins of the world;" and to the Spirit of God, renewing men in that image of God wherein they were created. For after all the pains which ingenious and learned men have taken (that great man, the Chevalier Ramsay, in particular) to find some resemblance of these truths in the immense rubbish of heathen authors, the resemblance is so exceeding faint, as not to be discerned but by a very lively imagination. Beside that, even this resemblance, faint as it was, is only to be found in the discourses of a very few; and those were the most improved and deeply-thinking men, in their several generations; while the innumerable multitudes that surrounded them were little better for the knowledge of the philosophers, but remained as totally ignorant even of these capital truths as were the beasts that perish.
3. Certain it is, that these truths were never known to the vulgar, the bulk of mankind, to the generality of men in any nation, till they were brought to light by the gospel. Notwithstanding a spark of knowledge glimmering here and there, the whole earth was covered with darkness, till the Sun of Righteousness arose and scattered the shades of night. Since this day-spring from on high has appeared, a great light hath shined unto those who, till then, sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. And thousands of them in every age have known, "that God so loved the world, as to give his only Son, to the end that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And being entrusted with the oracles of God, they have known that God hath also given us his Holy Spirit, who "worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure."
4. How remarkable are those words of the Apostle, which precede these! "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God," -- the incommunicable nature of God from eternity -- "counted it no act of robbery," -- (that is the precise meaning of the word,) no invasion of any other's prerogative, but his own unquestionable right, -- "to be equal with God." The word implies both the *fullness* and the supreme *height* of the Godhead; to which are opposed the two words,

he *emptied* and he *humbled himself*. He "emptied himself" of that divine fullness, veiled his fullness from the eyes of men and angels; "taking," and by that very act emptying himself, "the form of a servant; being made in the likeness of man," a real man, like other men. "And being found in fashion as a man," -- a common man, without any peculiar beauty or excellency, -- "he humbled himself" to a still greater degree, "becoming obedient" to God, though equal with him, "even unto death; yea, the death of the cross:" The greatest instance both of humiliation and obedience. [Phil. 2:5-11]

Having proposed the example of Christ, the Apostle exhorts them to secure the salvation which Christ hath purchased for them: "Wherefore, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

In these comprehensive words we may observe,

- I. That grand truth, which ought never to be out of our of remembrance, "It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."
- II. The improvement we ought to make of it: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."
- III. The connexion between them: "It is God that worketh in you;" therefore "work out your own salvation."

I. That grand truth, which ought never to be out of our of remembrance, "It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

1. First. We are to observe that great and important truth which ought never to be out of our remembrance: "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." The meaning of these words may be made more plain by a small transposition of them: "It is God that of his good pleasure worketh in you both to will and to do." This position of the words, connecting the phrase, *of his good pleasure*, with the word *worketh*, removes all imagination of merit from man, and gives God the whole glory of his own work. Otherwise, we might have had some room for boasting, as if it were our own desert, some goodness in us, or some good thing done by us, which first moved God to work. But this expression cuts off all such vain conceits, and clearly shows his motive to work lay wholly in himself-in his, own mere grace, in his unmerited mercy.
2. It is by this alone he is impelled to work in man both to will and to do. The expression is capable of two interpretations; both of which are unquestionably true. First, *to will*, may include the whole of inward, *to do*, the whole of outward, religion. And if it be thus understood, it implies, that it is God that worketh both inward and outward holiness. Secondly, *to will*, may imply every good desire; *to do*, whatever results therefrom. And then the sentence means, God breathes into us every good desire, and brings every good desire to good effect.
3. The original words, *το θελειν* and *το ενεργειν*, seem to favor the latter construction: *το θελειν*, which we render *to will*, plainly including every good desire, whether relating to our tempers, words, or actions; to inward or outward holiness. And *το ενεργειν*, which we render *to do*, manifestly implies all that power from on high, all that energy which works in us every right disposition, and then furnishes us for every good word and work.
4. Nothing can so directly tend to hide pride from man as a deep, lasting conviction of this. For if we are thoroughly sensible that we have nothing which we have not received, how can we glory as if we had not received it? If we know and feel that the very first motion of good is from above, as well as the power which conducts it to the end; if it is God that not only infuses every good desire, but that

accompanies and follows it, else it vanishes away; then it evidently follows, that "he who glorieth" must "glory in the Lord."

II. The improvement we ought to make of it: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

1. Proceed we now to the Second point: If God worketh in you, then work out your own salvation. The original word rendered, *work out*, implies the doing a thing thoroughly. *Your own*; for you yourselves must do this, or it will be left undone forever. *Your own salvation*: 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 favour 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, shows 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."
2. But how are we to *work out* this salvation? The Apostle answers, "With fear and trembling." There is another passage of St. Paul wherein the same expression occurs, which may give light to this: "Servants, obey your masters according to the flesh," -- according to the present state of things, although sensible that in a little time the servant will be free from his master, -- "with fear and trembling." This is a proverbial expression, which cannot be understood literally. For what master could bear, much less require, his servant to stand trembling and quaking before him? And the following words utterly exclude this meaning: "In singleness of heart;" with a single eye to the will and providence of God; "not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;" doing whatever they do as the will of God, and, therefore, with their might. (Eph. 6:5, &c.) It is easy to see that these strong expressions of the Apostle clearly imply two things: First, that everything be done with the utmost earnestness of spirit, and with all care and caution: (Perhaps more directly referring to the former word, meta jobou, *with fear*.) Secondly, that it be done with the utmost diligence, speed, punctuality, and exactness; not improbably referring to the latter word, μετα τρομου, *with trembling*.
3. How easily may we transfer this to the business of life, the working out our own salvation! With the same temper, and in the same manner, that Christian servants serve their masters that are upon earth, let other Christians labour to serve their Master that is in heaven: that is, First, with the utmost earnestness of spirit, with all possible care and caution; and, secondly, with the utmost diligence, speed, punctuality, and exactness.

4. But what are the steps which the Scripture directs us to take, in the working out of our own salvation? The Prophet Isaiah gives us a general answer, touching the first steps which we are to take: "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." If ever you desire that God should work in you that faith whereof cometh both present and eternal salvation, by the grace already given, fly from all sin as from the face of a serpent; carefully avoid every evil word and work; yea, abstain from all appearance of evil. And "learn to do well:" Be zealous of good works, of works of piety, as well as works of mercy; family prayer, and crying to God in secret. Fast in secret, and "your Father which seeth in secret, he will reward you openly." "Search the Scriptures:" Hear them in public, read them in private, and meditate therein. At every opportunity, be a partaker of the Lord's Supper. "Do this in remembrance of him: and he will meet you at his own table. Let your conversation be with the children of God; and see that it "be in grace, seasoned with salt." As ye have time, do good unto all men; to their souls and to their bodies. And herein "be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." It then only remains that ye deny yourselves and take up your cross daily. Deny yourselves every pleasure which does not prepare you for taking pleasure in God, and willingly embrace every means of drawing near to God, though it be a cross, though it be grievous to flesh and blood. Thus when you have redemption in the blood of Christ, you will "go on to perfection;" till "walking in the light as he is in the light," you are enabled to testify, that "he is faithful and just," not only to "forgive" your "sins," but to "cleanse" you from all unrighteousness." [1 John 1:9]

III. The connexion between them: "It is God that worketh in you;" therefore "work out your own salvation."

1. "But," say some, "what connexion is there between the former and the latter clause of this sentence? Is there not rather a flat opposition between the one and the other? If it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do, what need is there of our working? Does not his working thus supersede the necessity of our working at all? Nay, does it not render our working impracticable, as well as unnecessary? For if we allow that God does all, what is there left for us to do?"
2. Such is the reasoning of flesh and blood. And, at first hearing, it is exceeding plausible. But it is not solid; as will evidently appear, if we consider the matter more deeply. We shall then see there is no opposition between these, "God works; therefore, do we work;" but, on the contrary, the closest connexion; and that in two respects. For, First, God works; therefore you *can* work. Secondly, God works, therefore you *must* work.
3. 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 own salvation. "With man this is impossible," saith our Lord, "for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." Yea, it is impossible for any man, for any that is born of a woman, unless God work in him. 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. It was impossible for Lazarus to come forth, till the Lord had given him life. And it is equally impossible for us to *come* out of our sins, yea, or to make the least motion toward it, till He who hath all power in heaven and earth calls our dead souls into life.
4. 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 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. Every one has, sooner or later, good desires; although the generality of men stifle them before they can strike deep root, or produce any considerable fruit. Everyone has some measure of that light, some faint glimmering ray, which, sooner or later, more or less, enlightens every man that cometh into the world. And 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.

5. Therefore inasmuch as God works in you, you are now able to work out your own salvation. Since he worketh in you of his own good pleasure, without any merit of yours, both to will and to do, it is possible for you to fulfil all righteousness. 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. We know, indeed, that word of his to be absolutely true: "Without me ye can do nothing." But on the other hand, we know, every believer can say "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."
6. Meantime let us remember that God has joined these together in the experience of every believer; and therefore we must take care, not to imagine they are ever to be put asunder. We must beware of that mock humility which teacheth us to say, in excuse for our wilful disobedience, "O, I can do nothing!" and stops there, without once naming the grace of God. Pray, think twice. Consider what you say. I hope you wrong yourself; for if it be really true that you can do nothing, then you have no faith. And if you have not faith, you are in a wretched condition: You are not in a state of salvation. Surely it is not so. You can do something, through Christ strengthening you. Stir up the spark of grace which is now in you, and he will give you more grace.
7. Secondly, God worketh in you; therefore you *must* work: You must be "workers together with him," (they are the very words of the Apostle,) otherwise he will cease working. The general rule on which his gracious dispensations invariably proceed is this: "Unto him that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not," -- that does not improve the grace already given, -- "shall be taken away what he assuredly hath." (So the words ought to be rendered.) Even St. Augustine, who is generally supposed to favour the contrary doctrine, makes that just remark, *Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis*: "He that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves." He will not save us unless we "save ourselves from this untoward generation;" unless we ourselves "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life; "unless we "agonize to enter in at the strait gate," "deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily," and labour by every possible means to "make our own calling and election sure."
8. "Labour" then, brethren, "not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life." Say with our blessed Lord, though in a somewhat different sense, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." In consideration that he still worketh in you, be never "weary of well-doing." Go on, in virtue of the grace of God, preventing, accompanying, and following you, in "the work of faith, in the patience of hope, and in the labour of love." "Be ye steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." And "the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep," (Jesus,) "make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you what is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever!"

Edited by Timothy Bryant with corrections by Ryan Danker and George Lyons for the Wesley Center for Applied Theology at Northwest Nazarene University.

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Lesson 3: Wesley's Theological Sources

Due This Lesson

Time line
Sermon reading
Journaling

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will

- articulate the reasons for Wesley's preference for Pre-Nicene and Eastern theology
- explore the impact of some of the Patristics on the thought and life of Wesley
- discuss Wesley's "practical mysticism"—rejection of quietism but appropriation of the value of experiencing God
- explore the influence of Luther and the Moravian's *sola fide* on Wesley
- understand the influence of Puritanism on Wesley
- understand the influence of Arminius on Methodism
- explain Anglicanism's theological influence on Wesley

Homework Assignments

Write a two-page essay on your own understanding of this question: How do we know what we know, particularly "religious truth"?

Paraphrase the Key Points from Resource 2-4 **or** 3-4. Keep in mind your contemporary/cultural audience. Give a contemporary/cultural illustration for one of the points.

Write in your journal. This assignment is ongoing. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights on the material presented in class. Read a portion of John Wesley's journal and reflect on your reading. His journal can be found at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu>

Wesley Quotes

Wesley was influenced by many different traditions, including mystics:

I grew acquainted with the mystic writers, whose noble descriptions of union with God and internal religion make everything else appear mean, flat, and insipid . . . These gave me an entire new view of religion—nothing like any I had before.

Journal, Tuesday 24 January, 1738

Wesley found in Anglicanism itself the seeds for the Methodist revival. Faith 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."

The Book of Homilies

Eastern and Western Theology

Eastern theology tended to be liturgically and practically focused. It had a higher estimation of the human condition and human potential for change than did Western sources. Thus its understanding of salvation and “sanctification” focused on real character transformation through the grace of God and was thoroughly optimistic about spiritual growth in this life.

It also focused on the dynamic cooperation between God’s grace and our appropriation of that grace, also known as “synergism.” Some of the Eastern sources that most influenced Wesley were Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Macarius, John Chrysostom, and Ephraem Syrus. Each of these, as well as many others Wesley appropriated, focused on the experience of God and the life of holiness.

Mysticism and the Reformation

Wesley's interest in the practical aspects of one's relationship with God took him from the Early Church to the Catholic mysticism of the Middle Ages and to the emphasis on grace in the Protestant Reformation.

Wesley deeply appreciated the mystical tradition . . . However, he ultimately concluded that they went too far.

First, he rejected the goal of the Christian experience as being "unification" with God.

Second, Wesley wanted to refute the "quietism" of some mystics.

Wesley affirmed the Protestant Reformation.

Wesley was clearly an Arminian.

Arminius's theology focuses on

- Free will
- Rejection of predestination
- Affirmation that Christ died for all

Puritanism and Anglicanism

Wesley quotes Puritan writers, affirms many Puritan doctrines—the doctrines of original sin, justification by faith, assurance, and final justification. He used Puritan methods of evangelism, and he emphasized self-examination. And yet, on the more political side, Wesley rejected the Puritans' separationist tendencies.

There is no question that much of Wesley's whole theological vision was influenced greatly by Anglican thought. Directly from the Anglican theology of the 18th century, Wesley embraced certain theological understandings.

Anglicanism focuses on:

- The goodness of God
- A rejection of a satisfaction theory of the atonement
- Conditional election
- Imparted righteousness
- Christ as central to all theological conclusions
- The Bible as the sole rule of faith
- An inclination toward the *via media*
- The use of Early Church sources
- Holiness of heart and life

Small Groups

In your group, work together to find/develop answers for the following, from the Wesley sermon that was read for homework:

Sermon Title:

Text:

Thesis Statement:

Key Points:

Relevance for Today:

Call for Response:

Lesson 4: Epistemology and Revelation

Due This Lesson

Two-page essay
Paraphrase of Key Points
Journaling

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will

- explain the differences and similarities of general and special revelation
- define “rationalism” and “empiricism”
- articulate Wesley’s concept of “spiritual senses”

Homework Assignments

Write a two-page essay on this question: Why is the Bible authoritative?

Read Resource 4-4, “The Catholic Spirit.”

Write in your journal. This assignment is ongoing. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights on the material presented in class. Read a portion of John Wesley’s journal and reflect on your reading. His journal can be found at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu>

Wesley Quotes

Wesley agreed with the one philosophical camp: “Nothing is in the mind that is not first in the senses.”

An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Works 11:56

John’s brother Charles wrote, “Whate’er his Spirit speaks in me, must with the written Word agree.”

Scripture Hymns, The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley, 9:380

Epistemology

The philosophical study of how we know what we know is called epistemology.

Rationalism

Plato believed that before we experience anything, innate ideas have already been implanted in our minds by “the divine.”

Empiricism

Aristotle believed that we only know what we have experienced.

Wesley synthesized the two traditions as seen in his development of a concept of “spiritual senses.”

“Spiritual senses” is a type of empiricism in that this sense allows us to directly *experience* God. It is a type of rationalism in that this *sense*—but not knowledge—has been implanted in us by the divine, God himself.

Revelation

Traditionally, revelation has been broken into two categories:

- General, or natural revelation
- Special revelation

Natural revelation has been seen as the knowledge we receive about God by considering God's effects. In other words, a certain amount of knowledge about a God comes by looking at creation and the complexity of the human person.

Special revelation is needed to answer the question of what God is like. The ultimate special revelation is the person of Jesus Christ.

Special revelation alone has been traditionally viewed as an expression of God's gracious activity. Wesley wanted to maintain that natural revelation itself is also an expression of grace. Special revelation, then, fulfills what is started in natural revelation, and that all knowledge of God comes through God's initiative.

Prevenient Grace

In Wesley's mature thought, he believed that prevenient grace gives a certain amount of light to every human being that awakens the spiritual senses, regardless of his or her cultural, historical, or religious context.

Wesley also affirmed special revelation as crucial to our understanding of God. The witness to Christ, as revealed to us in Scripture, is definitive and normative. But is Scripture a mediator of revelation, or immediate and directly from God? Again, Wesley affirms both. As Randy Maddox states, "The definitive revelation of God may come to us through Scripture but still be immediate because the Spirit who originally addressed the spiritual senses of the writers will also open our spiritual senses to perceive and attest to the truth they expressed."

JOHN WESLEY

SERMON THIRTY-NINE

CATHOLIC SPIRIT

"And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him, and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered: It is. If it be, give me thine hand."
2 Kings 10: 15.

1. It is allowed even by those who do not pay this great debt, that love is due to all mankind, the royal law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," carrying its own evidence to all that hear it: and that, not according to the miserable construction put upon it by the zealots of old times, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," thy relation, acquaintance, friend, "and hate thine enemy;" not so; "I say unto you," said our Lord, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children," may appear so to all mankind, "of your Father which is in heaven; who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

2. But it is sure, there is a peculiar love which we owe to those that love God. So David: "All my delight is upon the saints that are in the earth, and upon such as excel in virtue." And so a greater than he: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13: 34, 35). This is that love on which the Apostle John so frequently and strongly insists: "This," saith he, "is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (1 John 3: 11). "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought," if love should call us thereto, "to lay down our lives for the brethren" (verse 16). And again: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love" (4: 7, 8). "Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another (verses 10, 11).

3. All men approve of this; but do all men practise it? Daily experience shows the contrary. Where are even the Christians who "love one another as he hath given us commandment?" how many hindrances lie in the way! The two grand, general hindrances are, first, that they cannot all think alike and, in consequence of this, secondly, they cannot all walk alike; but in several smaller points their practice must differ in proportion to the difference of their sentiments.

4. But although a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another in love and in good works.

5. Surely in this respect the example of Jehu himself, as mixed a character as he was of, is well worthy both the attention and imitation of every serious Christian. "And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him; and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand."

The text naturally divides itself into two parts: --First, a question proposed by Jehu to Jehonadab: "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" Secondly, an offer made on Jehonadab's answering, "It is:" "If it be, give me thine hand."

I.

1. And, first, let us consider the question proposed by Jehu to Jehonadab, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?"

The very first thing we may observe in these words, is, that here is no inquiry concerning Jehonadab's opinions. And yet it is certain, he held some which were very uncommon, indeed quite peculiar to himself; and some which had a close influence upon his practice; on which, likewise, he laid so great a stress, as to entail them upon his children's children, to their latest posterity. This is evident from the account given by Jeremiah many years after his death: "I took Jaazaniah and his brethren and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites, . . . and set before them pots full of wine, and cups, and said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab," or Jehonadab, "the son of Rechab, our father" (it would be less ambiguous, if the words were placed thus: "Jehonadab *our father, the son of Rechab,*" out of love and reverence to whom, he probably desired his descendants might be called by his name), "commanded us, saying, ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever. Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed; nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents.... And we have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us" (Jer. 35:3-10).

2. And yet Jehu (although it seems to have been his manner both in things secular and religious, to *drive furiously*) does not concern himself at all with any of these things, but lets Jehonadab abound in his own sense. And neither of them appears to have given the other the least disturbance touching the opinions which he maintained.
3. It is very possible, that many good men now also may entertain peculiar opinions; and some of them may be as singular herein as even Jehonadab was. And it is certain, so long as we know but *in part*, that all men will not see all things alike. It is an unavoidable consequence of the present weakness and shortness of human understanding, that several men will be of several minds in religion as well as in common life. So it has been from the beginning of the world, and so it will be "till the restitution of all things."
4. Nay, farther: although every man necessarily believes that every particular opinion which he holds is true (for to believe any opinion is not true, is the same thing as not to hold it); yet can no man be assured that all his own opinions, taken together, are true. Nay, every thinking man is assured they are not, seeing humanum est errare et nescire: "To be ignorant of many things, and to mistake in some, is the necessary condition of humanity." This, therefore, he is sensible, is his own case. He knows, in the general, that he himself is mistaken; although in what particulars he mistakes, he does not, perhaps he cannot, know.
5. I say "perhaps he cannot know;" for who can tell how far invincible ignorance may extend? or (that comes to the same thing) invincible prejudice? --which is often so fixed in tender minds, that it is afterwards impossible to tear up what has taken so deep a root. And who can say, unless he knew every circumstance attending it, how far any mistake is culpable? seeing all guilt must suppose some concurrence of the will; of which he only can judge who searcheth the heart.
6. Every wise man, therefore, will allow others the same liberty of thinking which he desires they should allow him; and will no more insist on their embracing his opinions, than he would have them to insist on his embracing theirs. He bears with

- those who differ from him, and only asks him with whom he desires to unite in love that single question, "Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?"
7. We may, secondly, observe, that here is no inquiry made concerning Jehonadab's mode of worship; although it is highly probable there was, in this respect also, a very wide difference between them. For we may well believe Jehonadab, as well as all his posterity, worshipped God at Jerusalem! whereas Jehu did not: he had more regard to state-policy than religion. And, therefore, although he slew the worshippers of Baal, and "destroyed Baal out of Israel," yet from the convenient sin of Jeroboam, the worship of the "golden calves," he "departed not" (2 Kings 10:29).
 8. But even among men of an upright heart, men who desire to "have a conscience void of offence," it must needs be, that, as long as there are various opinions, there will be various ways of worshipping God; seeing a variety of opinion necessarily implies a variety of practice. And as, in all ages, men have differed in nothing more than in their opinions concerning the Supreme Being, so in nothing have they more differed from each other, than in the manner of worshipping him. Had this been only in the heathen world, it would not have been at all surprising: for we know, these "by" their "wisdom knew not God;" nor, therefore, could they know how to worship him. But is it not strange, that even in the Christian world, although they all agree in the general, "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;" yet the particular modes of worshipping God are almost as various as among the heathens?
 9. And how shall we choose among so much variety? No man can choose for, or prescribe to, another. But every one must follow the dictates of his own conscience, in simplicity and godly sincerity. He must be fully persuaded in his own mind and then act according to the best light he has. Nor has any creature power to constrain another to walk by his own rule. God has given no right to any of the children of men thus to lord it over the conscience of his brethren; but every man must judge for himself, as every man must give an account of himself to God.
 10. Although, therefore, every follower of Christ is obliged, by the very nature of the Christian institution, to be a member of some particular congregation or other, some Church, as it is usually termed (which implies a particular manner of worshipping God; for "two cannot walk together unless they be agreed"); yet none can be obliged by any power on earth but that of his own conscience, to prefer this or that congregation to another, this or that particular manner of worship. I know it is commonly supposed, that the place of our birth fixes the Church to which we ought to belong; that one, for instance, who is born in England, ought to be a member of that which is styled the Church of England, and consequently, to worship God in the particular manner which is prescribed by that Church. I was once a zealous maintainer of this; but I find many reasons to abate of this zeal. I fear it is attended with such difficulties as no reasonable man can get over. Not the least of which is, that if this rule had took place, there could have been no Reformation from Popery; seeing it entirely destroys the right of private judgement, on which that whole Reformation stands.
 11. I dare not, therefore, presume to impose my mode of worship on any other. I believe it is truly primitive and apostolical: but my belief is no rule for another. I ask not, therefore, of him with whom I would unite in love, Are you of my church, of my congregation? Do you receive the same form of church government, and allow the same church officers, with me? Do you join in the same form of prayer wherein I worship God? I inquire not, Do you receive the supper of the Lord in the same posture and manner that I do? nor whether, in the administration of baptism, you agree with me in admitting sureties for the baptized, in the manner of administering it; or the age of those to whom it should be administered. Nay, I

ask not of you (as clear as I am in my own mind), whether you allow baptism and the Lord's supper at all. Let all these things stand by: we will talk of them, if need be, at a more convenient season, my only question at present is this, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?"

12. But what is properly implied in the question? I do not mean, What did Jehu imply therein? But, What should a follower of Christ understand thereby, when he proposes it to any of his brethren?

The first thing implied is this: Is thy heart right with God? Dost thou believe his being and his perfections? his eternity, immensity, wisdom, power? his justice, mercy, and truth? Dost thou believe that he now "upholdeth all things by the word of his power?" and that he governs even the most minute, even the most noxious, to his own glory, and the good of them that love him? hast thou a divine evidence, a supernatural conviction, of the things of God? Dost thou "walk by faith not by sight?" looking not at temporal things, but things eternal?

13. Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, "God over all, blessed for ever?" Is he revealed in thy soul? Dost thou know Jesus Christ and him crucified? Does he dwell in thee, and thou in him? Is he formed in thy heart by faith? having absolutely disclaimed all thy own works, thy own righteousness, hast thou "submitted thyself unto the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Christ Jesus? Art thou "found in him, not having thy own righteousness, but the righteousness which is by faith?" And art thou, through him, "fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life?"
14. Is thy faith *ενεργουμενη δι αγαπης*, -- *filled with the energy of love*? Dost thou love God (I do not say "above all things," for it is both an unscriptural and an ambiguous expression, but) "with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength?" Dost thou seek all thy happiness in him alone? And dost thou find what thou seekest? Does thy soul continually "magnify the Lord, and thy spirit rejoice in God thy Saviour?" having learned "in everything to give thanks, dost thou find "it is a joyful and a pleasant thing to be thankful?" Is God the centre of thy soul, the sum of all thy desires? Art thou accordingly laying up thy treasure in heaven, and counting all things else dung and dross? hath the love of God cast the love of the world out of thy soul? Then thou art "crucified to the world;" thou art dead to all below; and thy "life is hid with Christ in God."
15. Art thou employed in doing, "not thy own will, but the will of him that sent thee" -- of him that sent thee down to sojourn here awhile, to spend a few days in a strange land, till, having finished the work he hath given thee to do, thou return to thy Father's house? Is it thy meat and drink "to do the will of thy Father which is in heaven?" Is thine eye single in all things? always fixed on him? always looking unto Jesus? Dost thou point at him in whatsoever thou doest? in all thy labour, thy business, thy conversation? aiming only at the glory of God in all, "whatsoever thou doest, either in word or deed, doing it all in the name of the Lord Jesus; giving thanks unto God, even the Father, through him?"
16. Does the love of God constrain thee to serve him with fear, to "rejoice unto him with reverence?" Art thou more afraid of displeasing God, than either of death or hell? Is nothing so terrible to thee as the thought of offending the eyes of his glory? Upon this ground, dost thou "hate all evil ways," every transgression of his holy and perfect law; and herein "exercise thyself, to have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man?"
17. Is thy heart right toward thy neighbour? Dost thou love as thyself, all mankind, without exception? "If you love those only that love you, what thank have ye?" Do you "love your enemies?" Is your soul full of good-will, of tender affection, toward them? Do you love even the enemies of God, the unthankful and unholy? Do you

bowels yearn over them? Could you "wish yourself" temporally "accursed" for their sake? And do you show this by "blessing them that curse you, and praying for those that despitefully use you, and persecute you?"

18. Do you show your love by your works? While you have time as you have opportunity, do you in fact "do good to all men," neighbours or strangers, friends or enemies, good or bad? Do you do them all the good you can; endeavouring to supply all their wants; assisting them both in body and soul, to the uttermost of your power? --If thou art thus minded, may every Christian say, yea, if thou art but sincerely desirous of it, and following on till thou attain, then "thy heart is right, as my heart is with thy heart."

II.

1. "If it be, give me thy hand." I do not mean, "Be of my opinion." You need not: I do not expect or desire it. Neither do I mean, "I will be of your opinion." I cannot, it does not depend on my choice: I can no more think, than I can see or hear, as I will. Keep you your opinion; I mine; and that as steadily as ever. You need not even endeavour to come over to me, or bring me over to you. I do not desire you to dispute those points, or to hear or speak one word concerning them. Let all opinions alone on one side and the other: only "give me thine hand."
2. I do not mean, "Embrace my modes of worship," or, "I will embrace yours." This also is a thing which does not depend either on your choice or mine. We must both act as each is fully persuaded in his own mind. Hold you fast that which you believe is most acceptable to God, and I will do the same. I believe the Episcopal form of church government to be scriptural and apostolical. If you think the Presbyterian or Independent is better, think so still, and act accordingly. I believe infants ought to be baptized; and that this may be done either by dipping or sprinkling. If you are otherwise persuaded, be so still, and follow your own persuasion. It appears to me, that forms of prayer are of excellent use, particularly in the great congregation. If you judge extemporary prayer to be of more use, act suitable to your own judgement. My sentiment is, that I ought not to forbid water, wherein persons may be baptized; and that I ought to eat bread and drink wine, as a memorial of my dying Master: however, if you are not convinced of this act according to the light you have. I have no desire to dispute with you one moment upon any of the preceding heads. Let all these smaller points stand aside. Let them never come into sight "If thine heart is as my heart," if thou lovest God and all mankind, I ask no more: "give me thine hand."
3. I mean, first, love me: and that not only as thou lovest all mankind; not only as thou lovest thine enemies, or the enemies of God, those that hate thee, that "despitefully use thee, and persecute thee;" not only as a stranger, as one of whom thou knowest neither good nor evil, --I am not satisfied with this, --no; "if thine heart be right, as mine with thy heart," then love me with a very tender affection, as a friend that is closer than a brother; as a brother in Christ, a fellow citizen of the New Jerusalem, a fellow soldier engaged in the same warfare, under the same Captain of our salvation. Love me as a companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus, and a joint heir of his glory.
4. Love me (but in a higher degree than thou dost the bulk of mankind) with the love that is *long-suffering and kind*; that is patient, --if I am ignorant or out of the way, bearing and not increasing my burden; and is tender, soft, and compassionate still; that *envieth not*, if at any time it please God to prosper me in his work even more than thee. Love me with the love that *is not provoked*, either at my follies or infirmities; or even at my acting (if it should sometimes so appear to thee) not according to the will of God. Love me so as to *think no evil* of me; to put away all jealousy and evil-surmising. Love me with the love that *covereth all things*; that

never reveals either my faults or infirmities, --that *believeth all things*; is always willing to think the best, to put the fairest construction on all my words and actions, --that *hopeth all things*; either that the thing related was never done; or not done with such circumstances as are related; or, at least, that it was done with a good-intention, or in a sudden stress of temptation. And hope to the end, that whatever is amiss will, by the grace of God, be corrected; and whatever is wanting, supplied, through the riches of his mercy in Christ Jesus.

5. I mean, Secondly, commend me to God in all thy prayers; wrestle with him in my behalf, that he would speedily correct what he sees amiss, and supply what is wanting in me. In thy nearest access to the throne of grace, beg of him who is then very present with thee, that my heart may be more as thy heart, more right both toward God and toward man; that I may have a fuller conviction of things not seen, and a stronger view of the love of God in Christ Jesus; may more steadily walk by faith, not by sight; and more earnestly grasp eternal life. Pray that the love of God and of all mankind may be more largely poured into my heart; that I may be more fervent and active in doing the will of my Father which is in heaven, more zealous of good works, and more careful to abstain from all appearance of evil.
6. I mean, Thirdly, provoke me to love and to good works. Second thy prayer, as thou hast opportunity, by speaking to me, in love, whatsoever thou believest to be for my soul's health. Quicken me in the work which God has given me to do, and instruct me how to do it more perfectly. Yea, "smite me friendly, and reprove me," whereinsoever I appear to thee to be doing rather my own will, than the will of him that sent me. O speak and spare not, whatever thou believest may conduce, either to the amending my faults, the strengthening my weakness, the building me up in love, or the making me more fit, in any kind, for the Master's use.
7. I mean, Lastly, love me not in word only, but in deed and in truth. So far as in conscience thou canst (retaining still thy own opinions, and thy own manner of worshipping God), join with me in the work of God; and let us go on hand in hand. And thus far, it is certain, thou mayest go. Speak honourably wherever thou art, of the work of God, by whomsoever he works, and kindly of his messengers. And, if it be in thy power, not only sympathize with them when they are in any difficulty or distress, but give them a cheerful and effectual assistance, that they may glorify God on thy behalf.
8. Two things should be observed with regard to what has been spoken under this last head: the one, that whatsoever love, whatsoever offices of love, whatsoever spiritual or temporal assistance, I claim from him whose heart is right, as my heart is with his, the same I am ready, by the grace of God, according to my measure, to give him: the other, that I have not made this claim in behalf of myself only, but of all whose heart is right toward God and man, that we may all love one another as Christ hath loved us.

III.

1. One inference we may make from what has been said. We may learn from hence, what is a catholic spirit.

There is scarce any expression which has been more grossly misunderstood, and more dangerously misapplied, than this: but it will be easy for any who calmly consider the preceding observations, to correct any such misapprehensions of it, and to prevent any such misapplication.

For, from hence we may learn, first, that a catholic spirit is not *speculative* latitudinarianism. It is not an indifference to all opinions: this is the spawn of hell,

not the offspring of heaven. This unsettledness of thought, this being "driven to and fro, and tossed about with every wind of doctrine," is a great curse, not a blessing, an irreconcilable enemy, not a friend, to true catholicism. A man of a truly catholic spirit has not now his religion to seek. He is fixed as the sun in his judgement concerning the main branches of Christian doctrine. It is true, he is always ready to hear and weigh whatsoever can be offered against his principles; but as this does not show any wavering in his own mind, so neither does it occasion any. He does not halt between two opinions, nor vainly endeavour to blend them into one. Observe this, you who know not what spirit ye are of: who call yourselves men of a catholic spirit, only because you are of a muddy understanding; because your mind is all in a mist; because you have no settled, consistent principles, but are for jumbling all opinions together. Be convinced, that you have quite missed your way; you know not where you are. You think you are got into the very spirit of Christ; when, in truth, you are nearer the spirit of Antichrist. Go, first, and learn the first elements of the gospel of Christ, and then shall you learn to be of a truly catholic spirit.

2. From what has been said, we may learn, secondly, that a catholic spirit is not any kind of *practical* latitudinarianism. It is not indifference as to public worship, or as to the outward manner of performing it. This, likewise, would not be a blessing but a curse. Far from being an help thereto, it would, so long as it remained, be an unspeakable hindrance to the worshipping of God in spirit and in truth. But the man of a truly catholic spirit, having weighed all things in the balance of the sanctuary, has no doubt, no scruple at all, concerning that particular mode of worship wherein he joins. He is clearly convinced, that *this* manner of worshipping God is both scriptural and rational. He knows none in the world which is more scriptural, none which is more rational. Therefore, without rambling hither and thither, he cleaves close thereto, and praises God for the opportunity of so doing.
3. Hence we may, thirdly, learn, that a catholic spirit is not indifference to all congregations. This is another sort of latitudinarianism, no less absurd and unscriptural than the former. But it is far from a man of a truly catholic spirit. He is fixed in his congregation as well as his principles. He is united to one, not only in spirit, but by all the outward ties of Christian fellowship. There he partakes of all the ordinances of God. There he receives the supper of the Lord. There he pours out his soul in public prayer, and joins in public praise and thanksgiving. There he rejoices to hear the word of reconciliation, the gospel of the grace of God. With these his nearest, his best-beloved brethren, on solemn occasions, he seeks God by fasting. These particularly he watches over in love, as they do over his soul; admonishing, exhorting, comforting, reproofing, and every way building up each other in the faith. These he regards as his own household; and therefore, according to the ability God has given him, naturally cares for them, and provides that they may have all the things that are needful for life and godliness.
4. But while he is steadily fixed in his religious principles in what he believes to be the truth as it is in Jesus; while he firmly adheres to that worship of God which he judges to be most acceptable in his sight; and while he is united by the tenderest and closest ties to one particular congregation, --his heart is enlarged toward all mankind, those he knows and those he does not; he embraces with strong and cordial affection neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies. This is catholic or universal love. And he that has this is of a catholic spirit. For love alone gives the title to this character: catholic love is a catholic spirit.
5. If, then, we take this word in the strictest sense, a man of a catholic spirit is one who, in the manner above-mentioned, gives his hand to all whose hearts are right with his heart: one who knows how to value, and praise God for, all the advantages he enjoys, with regard to the knowledge of the things of God, the true

scriptural manner of worshipping him, and, above all, his union with a congregation fearing God and working righteousness: one who, retaining these blessings with the strictest care, keeping them as the apple of his eye, at the same time loves--as friends, as brethren in the Lord, as members of Christ and children of God, as joint partakers now of the present kingdom of God, and fellow heirs of his eternal kingdom--all, of whatever opinion or worship, or congregation, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; who love God and man; who, rejoicing to please, and fearing to offend God, are careful to abstain from evil, and zealous of good works. He is the man of a truly catholic spirit, who bears all these continually upon his heart; who having an unspeakable tenderness for their persons, and longing for their welfare, does not cease to commend them to God in prayer, as well as to plead their cause before men; who speaks comfortably to them, and labours, by all his words, to strengthen their hands in God. He assists them to the uttermost of his power in all things, spiritual and temporal. He is ready "to spend and be spent for them;" yea, to lay down his life for their sake.

6. Thou, O man of God, think on these things! If thou art already in this way, go on. If thou hast heretofore mistook the path, bless God who hath brought thee back! And now run the race which is set before thee, in the royal way of universal love. Take heed, lest thou be either wavering in thy judgement, or straitened in thy bowels: but keep an even pace, rooted in the faith once delivered to the saints, and grounded in love, in true catholic love, till thou art swallowed up in love for ever and ever! [Charles Wesley's hymn, CATHOLIC LOVE, added in some editions:

Weary of all this wordy strife,
 These notions, forms, and modes, and names,
 To Thee, the way, the Truth, the Life,
 Whose love my simple heart inflames,
 Divinely taught, at last I fly,
 With Thee and Thine to live and die.

Forth from the midst of Babel brought,
 Parties and sects I cast behind;
 Enlarged my heart, and free my thought,
 Where'er the latent truth I find
 The latent truth with joy to own,
 And bow to Jesus' name alone.

Redeem'd by Thine almighty grace,
 I taste my glorious liberty,
 With open arms the world embrace,
 But cleave to those who cleave to Thee;
 But only in Thy saints delight,
 Who walk with God in purest white.

One with the little flock I rest,
 The members sound who hold the head.
 The chosen few, with pardon blest
 And by th' anointing Spirit led
 Into the mind that was in Thee
 Into the depths of Deity.

My brethren, friends, and kinsmen these
 Who do my heavenly Father's will;
 Who aim at perfect holiness,

And all Thy counsels to fulfil,
Athirst to be whate'er Thou art,
And love their God with all their heart.

For these, howe'er in flesh disjoin'd,
Where'er dispersed o'er earth abroad,
Unfeign'd, unbounded love I find
And constant as the life of God
Fountain of life, from thence it sprung,
As pure, as even, and as strong.

Join'd to the hidden church unknown
In this sure bond of perfectness
Obscurely safe, I dwell alone
And glory in th' uniting grace,
To me, to each believer given,
To all Thy saints in earth and heaven.

Charles Wesley]

Edited anonymously at the Memorial University of Newfoundland with minor corrections by George Lyons of Northwest Nazarene University (Nampa, Idaho) for the Wesley Center for Applied Theology.

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Lesson 5: The Quadrilateral: Scripture and Tradition

Due This Lesson

Two-page essay
Sermon reading
Journaling

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will

- appreciate the meaning and function of Wesley's quadrilateral
- understand the doctrine of inspiration
- define Wesley's "analogy of faith" as a hermeneutical principle
- explore Wesley's preference for Early Church and Anglicanism as "the" tradition

Homework Assignments

Write a two-page essay on this question: Are reason and faith compatible?

Read Resource 5-6, "The Almost Christian."

Write in your journal. This assignment is ongoing. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights on the material presented in class. Read a portion of John Wesley's journal and reflect on your reading. His journal can be found at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu>

Wesley Quotes

What is the nature of Wesley's famous quote, in light of the fact that Wesley valued thousands of books?

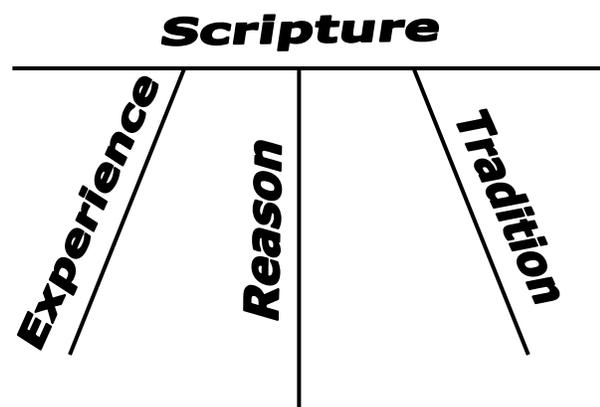
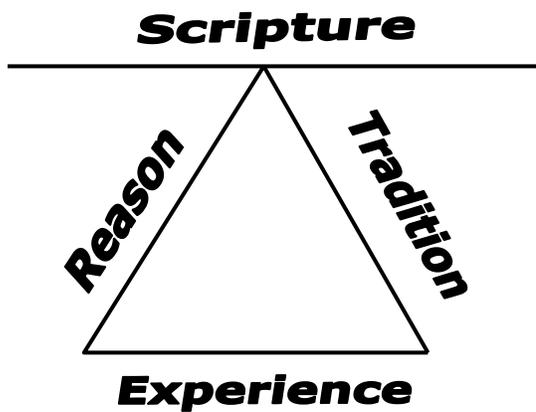
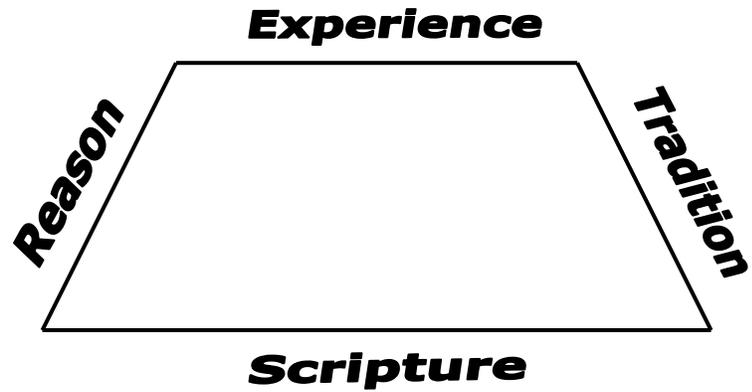
God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius* [a man of one book].

Preface to "Sermons on Several Occasions," Outler p. 88

On tradition, Wesley writes, "The Scriptures are a complete rule of faith and practice; and they are clear in all necessary points. And yet their clearness does not prove that they need not be explained; nor their completeness, that they need not be enforced . . . The esteeming the writings of the first three centuries, not equally with, but next to the Scriptures, never carried any man yet into dangerous errors, nor probably ever will."

Quoted in Oden, p. 67

Wesleyan Quadrilateral



Scripture, then, is rightly interpreted in dialogue with the other sources, just as Scripture serves as the ultimate check of the other three. Again, Wesley never laid this out directly, but it was his “theological method”; it was his way of doing theology and biblical interpretation.

The Bible

While more conservative traditions would argue that the Bible is inerrant in all things, those following Wesley qualify such a statement: the Bible inerrant in all things *pertaining to our salvation*.*

In the middle, in the *via media*, is the doctrine of “plenary” inspiration. God inspired the authors of Scripture in such a way that their human, historical, cultural situation is not set aside, but utilized. Not just their hands—as in a dictation theory—but also each writer’s mind and experiences are used by God in order to convey God’s love, purposes, and plan of redemption for humankind.

* “We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, by which we understand the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation, so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith” (*Manual 2001-2005*. Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2001. 27.)

Analogy of Faith

Wesley developed what is called the “analogy of faith.” This phrase refers to a connection of biblical doctrines that arise out of the “whole tenor of Scripture.” We should ask of every passage in the Bible: what does it add to our understanding of human sin, justification by faith, new birth, and present inward and outward holiness?

Issues that do not address the essential doctrines of sin, salvation, and sanctification should be seen as nonessentials. Wesley’s concern was for Christian unity.

Christians often disagree, and even argue over nonessentials, dividing the Body of Christ. He believed that we should “think and let think”—we should humbly allow other Christians to hold other opinions—on issues that are not essential to our salvation. This principle should inform our Wesleyan-holiness, Nazarene worldview.

The Bible finds its authority in its faithful witness of Christ, and in the fact that its truth of salvation through Christ has been experienced and verified by believers through the centuries.

Tradition

Wesley held two points on the time line of Christian history as most significant.

First, he held the Early Church writers in very high esteem.

Second, Wesley saw Anglicanism itself as a new embodiment of the Early Church ethos.

Tradition was not a static entity for Wesley, but rather the truth of the gospel in the hands of people.

Small Groups

In your group, work together to find/develop answers for the following, from the Wesley sermon that was read for homework:

Sermon Title:

Text:

Thesis Statement:

Key Points:

Relevance for Today:

Call for Response:

JOHN WESLEY

SERMON TWO

THE ALMOST CHRISTIAN

PREACHED AT ST. MARY'S, OXFORD, BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY, ON JULY 25, 1741.
"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Acts 26.28.

AND many there are who go thus far: ever since the Christian religion was in the world, there have been many in every age and nation who were almost persuaded to be Christians. But seeing it avails nothing before God to go *only thus far*, it highly imports us to consider,

First. What is implied in being *almost*,

Secondly. What in being *altogether, a Christian*.

I. What is implied in being *almost*

A.

1. Now, in the being *almost a Christian* is implied, First, heathen honesty. No one, I suppose, will make any question of this; especially, since by heathen honesty here, I mean, not that which is recommended in the writings of their philosophers only, but such as the common heathens expected one of another, and many of them actually practised. By the rules of this they were taught that they ought not to be unjust; not to take away their neighbour's goods, either by robbery or theft; not to oppress the poor, neither to use extortion toward any; not to cheat or overreach either the poor or rich, in whatsoever commerce they had with them; to defraud no man of his right; and, if it were possible, to owe no man anything.
2. Again: the common heathens allowed, that some regard was to be paid to truth, as well as to justice. And, accordingly, they not only held him in abomination who was forsworn, who called God to witness to a lie; but him also who was known to be a slanderer of his neighbour, who falsely accused any man. And indeed, little better did they esteem wilful liars of any sort, accounting them the disgrace of human kind, and the pests of society.
3. Yet again: there was a sort of love and assistance which they expected one from another. They expected whatever assistance any one could give another, without prejudice to himself. And this they extended not only to those little offices of humanity which are performed without any expense or labour, but likewise to the feeding the hungry, if they had food to spare; the clothing the naked with their own superfluous raiment; and, in general. the giving, to any that needed, such things as they needed not themselves. Thus far, in the lowest account of it, heathen honesty went; the first thing implied in the being *almost a Christian*.

B.

4. A second thing implied in the being *almost a Christian*, is, the having a form of godliness; of that godliness which is prescribed in the gospel of Christ; the having the *outside of a real Christian*. Accordingly, the almost Christian does nothing which the gospel forbids. he taketh not the name of God in vain; he blesseth, and curseth not; he sweareth not at all, but his communication is, yea, yea; nay, nay. he profanes not the day of the Lord, nor suffers it to be profaned, even by the stranger that is within his gates. he not only avoids all actual adultery, fornication, and uncleanness, but every word or look that either directly or indirectly tends thereto; nay, and

all idle words, abstaining both from detraction, backbiting, talebearing, evil speaking, and from "all foolish talking and jesting"-- εὐτραπελία, a kind of virtue in the heathen moralist's account; --briefly, from all conversation that is not "good to the use of edifying," and that, consequently, "grieves the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.'

5. He abstains from "wine wherein is excess"; from revellings and gluttony. he avoids, as much as in him lies, all strife and contention, continually endeavouring to live peaceably with all men. And, if he suffer wrong, he avengeth not himself, neither returns evil for evil. he is no railer, no brawler, no scoffer, either at the faults or infirmities of his neighbour. he does not willingly wrong, hurt, or grieve any man; but in all things act and speaks by that plain rule, "Whatsoever thou wouldest not he should do unto thee, that do not thou to another."
6. And in doing good, he does not confine himself to cheap and easy offices of kindness, but labours and suffers for the profit of many, that by all means he may help some. In spite of toil or pain, "whatsoever his hand findeth to do, he doeth it with his might;" whether it be for his friends, or for his enemies; for the evil, or for the good. For being "not slothful" in this, or in any "business," as he "hath opportunity" he doeth "good," all manner of good, "to all men;" and to their souls as well as their bodies. he reproveth the wicked, instructs the ignorant, confirms the wavering, quickens the good, and comforts the afflicted. he labours to awaken those that sleep; to lead those whom God hath already awakened to the "Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," that they may wash therein and be clean; and to stir up those who are saved through faith, to adorn the gospel of Christ in all things.
7. He that hath the form of godliness uses also the means of grace; yea, all of them, and at all opportunities. he constantly frequents the house of God; and that, not as the manner of some is, who come into the presence of the Most High, either loaded with gold and costly apparel, or in all the gaudy vanity of dress, and either by their unseasonable civilities to each other, or the impertinent gaiety of their behaviour, disclaim all pretensions to the form as well as to the power of godliness. Would to God there were none even among ourselves who fall under the same condemnation! who come into this house, it may be, gazing about, or with all the signs of the most listless, careless indifference, though sometimes they may *seem* to use a prayer to God for his blessing on what they are entering upon; who, during that awful service, are either asleep, or reclined in the most convenient posture for it; or, as though they supposed God was asleep, talking with one another, or looking round, as utterly void of employment. Neither let these be accused of the form of godliness. No; he who has even this, behaves with seriousness and attention, in every part of that solemn service. More especially, when he approaches the table of the Lord, it is not with a light or careless behaviour, but with an air, gesture, and deportment which speaks nothing else but "God be merciful to me a sinner!"
8. To this, if we add the constant use of family prayer, by those who are masters of families, and the setting times apart for private addresses to God, with a daily seriousness of behaviour; he who uniformly practises this outward religion, has the form of godliness. There needs but one thing more in order to his being *almost a Christian*, and that is, sincerity.

C.

9. By sincerity I mean, a real, inward principle of religion, from whence these outward actions flow. And, indeed if we have not this, we have not heathen

honesty; no, not so much of it as will answer the demand of a heathen Epicurean poet. Even this poor wretch, in his sober intervals, is able to testify,

Oderunt peccare boni, virtutis amore;
Oderunt peccare mali, formidine poenae.

[Good men avoid sin from the love of virtue; Wicked men avoid sin from a fear of punishment.]

So that, if a man only abstains from doing evil in order to avoid punishment, Non pasces in cruce corvos, [Thou shalt not be hanged.], saith the Pagan; there, "thou hast thy reward." But even he will not allow such a harmless man as this to be so much as a *good heathen*. If, then, any man, from the same motive, viz., to avoid punishment, to avoid the loss of his friends, or his gain, or his reputation, should not only abstain from doing evil, but also do ever so much good; yea, and use all the means of grace; yet we could not with any propriety say, this man is even *almost a Christian*. If he has no better principle in his heart, he is only a hypocrite altogether.

10. Sincerity, therefore, is necessarily implied in the being *almost a Christian*; a real design to serve God, a hearty desire to do his will. It is necessarily implied, that a man have a sincere view of pleasing God in all things; in all his conversation; in all his actions; in all he does or leaves undone. This design, if any man be *almost a Christian*, runs through the whole tenor of his life. This is the moving principle, both in his doing good, his abstaining from evil, and his using the ordinances of God.
 11. But here it will probably be inquired, "Is it possible that any man living should go so far as this, and, nevertheless, be *only almost a Christian*? What more than this, can be implied in the being *a Christian altogether*? I answer, First, that it is possible to go thus far, and yet be but *almost a Christian*, I learn, not only from the oracles of God, but also from the sure testimony of experience.
 12. Brethren, great is "my boldness towards you in this behalf." And "forgive me this wrong," if I declare my own folly upon the house-top, for yours and the gospel's sake. --Suffer me, then, to speak freely of myself, even as of another man. I am content to be abased, so ye may be exalted, and to be yet more vile for the glory of my Lord.
 13. I did go thus far for many years, as many of this place can testify; using diligence to eschew all evil, and to have a conscience void of offence; redeeming the time; buying up every opportunity of doing all good to all men; constantly and carefully using all the public and all the private means of grace; endeavouring after a steady seriousness of behaviour, at all times, and in all places; and, God is my record, before whom I stand, doing all this in sincerity; having a real design to serve God; a hearty desire to do his will in all things; to please him who had called me to "fight the good fight," and to "lay hold of eternal life." Yet my own conscience beareth me witness in the Holy Ghost, that all this time I was but *almost a Christian*.
- II. If it be inquired, "What more than this is implied in the being *altogether a Christian*?" I answer,
- A.
1. First. The love of God. For thus saith his word, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Such a love is this, as engrosses the whole heart, as rakes up all the affections, as fills the entire capacity of the soul and employs the utmost extent of all its faculties. he that thus loves the Lord his God, his

spirit continually "rejoiceth in God his Saviour." his delight is in the Lord, his Lord and his All, to whom "in everything he giveth thanks. All his desire is unto God, and to the remembrance of his name." his heart is ever crying out, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Indeed, what can he desire beside God? Not the world, or the things of the world: for he is "crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him." he is crucified to "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life." Yea, he is dead to pride of every kind: for "love is not puffed up" but "he that dwelling in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him," is less than nothing in his own eyes.

B.

2. The Second thing implied in the being *altogether a Christian* is, the love of our neighbour. For thus said our Lord in the following words, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" If any man ask, "Who is my neighbour?" we reply, Every man in the world; every child of his who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh. Nor may we in any wise except our enemies or the enemies of God and their own souls. But every Christian loveth these also as himself, yea, "as Christ loved us." he that would more fully understand what manner of love this is, may consider St. Paul's description of it. It is "long-suffering and kind." It "envieth not." It is not rash or hasty in judging. It "is not puffed up;" but maketh him that loves, the least, the servant of all. Love "doth not behave itself unseemly," but becometh "all things to all men." She "seeketh not her own;" but only the good of others, that they may be saved. "Love is not provoked." It casteth out wrath, which he who hath is wanting in love. "It thinketh no evil. It rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. It covereth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

C.

3. There is yet one thing more that may be separately considered, though it cannot actually be separate from the preceding, which is implied in the being *altogether a Christian*; and that is the ground of all, even faith. Very excellent things are spoken of this throughout the oracles of God. "Every one, saith the beloved disciple, "that believeth is born of God." "To as many as received him, gave he power to become the sons of God. even to them that believe on his name." And "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Yea, our Lord himself declares, "He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life; and cometh not into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."
4. But here let no man deceive his own soul. "It is diligently to be noted, the faith which bringeth not forth repentance, and love, and all good works, is not that right living faith, but a dead and devilish one. For, even the devils believe that Christ was born of a virgin: that he wrought all kinds of miracles, declaring himself very God: that, for our sakes, he suffered a most painful death, to redeem us from death everlasting; that he rose again the third day: that he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father and at the end of the world shall come again to judge both the quick and dead. These articles of our faith the devils believe, and so they believe all that is written in the Old and New Testament. And yet for all this faith, they be but devils. They remain still in their damnable estate lacking the very true Christian faith." [Homily on the Salvation of Man.]
5. "The right and true Christian faith is (to go on m the words of our own Church), "not only to believe that Holy Scripture and the Articles of our Faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence to be saved

from everlasting damnation by Christ. It is a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that, by the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God; whereof doth follow a loving heart, to obey his commandments."

6. Now, whosoever has this faith, which "purifies the heart" (by the power of God, who dwelleth therein) from "pride, anger, desire, from all unrighteousness" from "all filthiness of flesh and spirit;" which fills it with love stronger than death, both to God and to all mankind; love that doeth the works of God, glorying to spend and to be spent for all men, and that endureth with joy, not only the reproach of Christ, the being mocked, despised, and hated of all men, but whatsoever the wisdom of God permits the malice of men or devils to inflict, --whosoever has this faith thus working by love is not almost only, but altogether, a Christian.
7. But who are the living witnesses of these things? I beseech you, brethren, as in the presence of that God before whom "hell and destruction are without a covering--how much more the hearts of the children of men?" -- that each of you would ask his own heart, "Am I of that number? Do I so far practise justice, mercy, and truth, as even the rules of heathen honesty require? If so, have I the very *outside* of a Christian? the form of godliness? Do I abstain from evil, --from whatsoever is forbidden in the written Word of God? Do I, whatever good my hand findeth to do, do it with my might? Do I seriously use all the ordinances of God at all opportunities? And is all this done with a sincere design and desire to please God in all things?"
8. Are not many of you conscious, that you never came thus far; that you have not been even *almost a Christian*; that you have not come up to the standard of heathen honesty; at least, not to the form of Christian godliness? --much less hath God seen sincerity in you, a real design of pleasing him in all things. You never so much as intended to devote all your words and works. your business, studies, diversions, to his glory. You never even designed or desired, that whatsoever you did should be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus, and as such should be "a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Christ.
9. But, supposing you had, do good designs and good desires make a Christian? By no means, unless they are brought to good effect. "Hell is paved," saith one, "with good intentions." The great question of all, then, still remains. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Can you cry out, "My God, and my All"? Do you desire nothing but him? Are you happy in God? Is he your glory, your delight, your crown of rejoicing? And is this commandment written in your heart, "That he who loveth God love his brother also"? Do you then love your neighbour as yourself? Do you love every man, even your enemies, even the enemies of God, as your own soul? as Christ loved you? Yea, dost thou believe that Christ loved thee, and gave himself for thee? Hast thou faith in his blood? Believest thou the Lamb of God hath taken away thy sins, and cast them as a stone into the depth of the sea? that he hath blotted out the handwriting that was against thee, taking it out of the way, nailing it to his cross? Hast thou indeed redemption through his blood, even the remission of thy sins? And doth his Spirit bear witness with thy spirit, that thou art a child of God?
10. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who now standeth in the midst of us, knoweth, that if any man die without this faith and this love, good it were for him that he had never been born. Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and call upon thy God: call in the day when he may be found. Let him not rest, till he make his "goodness to pass before thee;" till he

proclaim unto thee the name of the Lord, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." Let no man persuade thee, by vain words, to rest short of this prize of thy high calling. But cry unto him day and night, who, "while we were without strength, died for the ungodly," until thou knowest in whom thou hast believed, and canst say, "My Lord, and my God!" Remember, "always to pray, and not to faint," till thou also canst lift up thy hand unto heaven, and declare to him that liveth for ever and ever, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

11. May we all thus experience what it is to be, not almost only; but altogether Christians; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus; knowing we have peace with God through Jesus Christ; rejoicing in hope of the glory of God; and having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us!

Edited anonymously at the Memorial University of Newfoundland with corrections and other modifications by Ryan Danker and George Lyons of Northwest Nazarene University.

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Lesson 6: The Quadrilateral: Experience and Reason

Due This Lesson

Two-page essay
Sermon reading
Journaling

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will

- recognize the use of reason as a tool, not a source
- discuss Wesley's view of experience as communal not individualistic

Homework Assignments

Write a one-page response to the question: What is God's most important attribute? Defend your decision.

Paraphrase the Key Points from Resource 5-5 **or** 6-4. Keep in mind your contemporary/cultural audience. Give a contemporary/cultural illustration for one of the points.

Write in your journal. This assignment is ongoing. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights on the material presented in class. Read a portion of John Wesley's journal and reflect on your reading. His journal can be found at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu>

Wesley Quotes

Charles Wesley wrote a hymn that shows the relationship between knowledge and spirituality.

Unite the pair so long disjoined,
Knowledge and vital piety;
Learning and holiness combined,
And truth and love, let all see
In those whom up to thee we give,
Thine, wholly thine, to die and live.

Father, accept us through thy Son,
And ever by thy Spirit guide!
Thy wisdom in our lives be shown,
Thy name confessed and glorified
Thy power and love diffused abroad,
Till all the earth is filled with God.

"A Prayer"

Experience

Wesley believed strongly in “heart religion.” Christians can experience the *assurance* of God’s saving love in their lives. The doctrine of assurance—also known as the “witness of the Spirit”—is taken by Wesley from Romans 8: 16.

Wesley believed that a person might affirm all the creeds, and believe all the right doctrines, but still be dead spiritually. The grace of God must be appropriated individually, resulting in assurance and a changed heart and life.

Impact of Experience on Wesley's Sanctification Position

Wesley developed his understanding of sanctification over time. The question of whether sanctification is instantaneous or a progressive process arose as Methodism developed through the decades. Wesley believed that the Bible was silent on the specific issue; it had much to say about sanctification and the life of holiness, but not about how or when it is achieved.

His mature position, according to Nazarene interpretation, is that sanctification is both progressive growth and an instantaneous experience.

Scripture should not be reinterpreted on the basis on individualistic "feelings" but rather on the basis of a whole community of faith testifying to a reality that has had lasting impact.

Reason

Wesley was skeptical of a faith that had too much “enthusiasm” and not enough rationale. A true Christian is reasonable. Reason is essential.

Wesley believed that experiences, gained through sense perception, are the primary source for human knowledge. What reason does is help us process those experiences—to make sense of them, to organize them, and finally to communicate them to others.

Small Groups

In your group, work together to find/develop answers for the following, from the Wesley sermon that was read for homework:

Sermon Title:

Text:

Thesis Statement:

Key Points:

Relevance for Today:

Call for Response:

Lesson 7: The Creative Triune God

Due This Lesson

One-page essay
Paraphrasing of Key Points
Journaling

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will

- explain Wesley's doctrine of God
- define Wesley's view of creation and its relevance for ecology
- understand Wesley's view of the Trinity

Homework Assignments

For half the class members: List what Scripture passages you would use to defend a doctrine of Jesus Christ.

For the other half of the class members: List what Scripture passages you would use to defend a doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Read Resource 7-2, "The Lord Our Righteousness."

Write in your journal. This assignment is ongoing. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights on the material presented in class. Read a portion of John Wesley's journal and reflect on your reading. His journal can be found at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu>

Wesley Quotes

All other doctrines start with the doctrine of God: "Ye know that the great end of religion is to renew our hearts in the image of God."

Sermon, "Original Sin," *Works* 2: 185

Wesley had a very strong sense of the necessity of stewardship of creation. "We are now God's stewards. We are indebted to him for all we have . . . A steward is not at liberty to use what is lodged in his hands as he pleases, but as his master pleases . . . He is not the owner of any of these things but barely entrusted with them by another . . . Now this is exactly the case of everyone with relation to God. We are not at liberty to use what God has lodged in our hands as we please, but as God pleases, who alone is the possessor of heaven and earth and the Lord of every creature."

Sermon, "The Good Steward," *Works* 2: 283-84.

The Creative Triune God

Attributes are usually denoted as “natural” and “moral” attributes.

Natural attributes are those attributes of God that cannot be removed; without them God would cease to be God.

The **moral attributes** are those qualities that give us more insight into the goodness of God.

Wesley came to believe that a person’s understanding of who God is, is crucial to that person’s Christian life. If people misunderstand God, they will misunderstand faith and Christian practice.

The fact that God is love is the overarching principle of Wesley’s theology. He will maintain God’s love at any cost.

God is Creator and Sustainer, in Wesley’s thought. This implies that all things originate from God (*creatio ex nihilo*, creation out of nothing), but also that the world only continues to exist and function because God presently sustains the world.

Wesley gave emphasis to the distinctiveness of the Three Persons, and gave the Spirit a great deal of attention in his thought. He is thoroughly Trinitarian.

JOHN WESLEY

SERMON TWENTY

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Preached at the Chapel in West-Street, Seven Dials, on Sunday, November 24, 1765
"This is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness." Jer. 23:6.

1. How dreadful and how innumerable are the contests which have arisen about religion! And not only among the children of this world, among those who knew not what true religion was, but even among the children of God; those who had experienced "the kingdom of God within them;" who had tasted of "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." How many of these, in all ages, instead of joining together against the common enemy, have turned their weapons against each other, and so not only wasted their precious time, but hurt one another's spirits, weakened each other's hands, and so hindered the great work of their common Master! How many of the weak have hereby been offended! -- How many of the lame turned out of the way! How many sinners confirmed in their disregard of all religion, and their contempt of those that profess it! And how many of "the excellent ones upon earth" have been constrained to "weep in secret places!"
2. What would not every lover of God and his neighbour do, what would he not suffer, to remedy this sore evil; to remove contention from the children of God; to restore or preserve peace among them? What but a good conscience would he think too dear to part with, in order to promote this valuable end? And suppose we cannot "make" these "wars to cease in all the world," suppose we cannot reconcile all the children of God to each other, however, let each do what he can, let him contribute, if it be but two mites, toward it. Happy are they who are able, in any degree, to promote "peace and good-will among men" especially among good men; among those that are all listed under the banner of "the Prince of Peace;" and are, therefore, peculiarly engaged, "as much as lies in them," to "live peaceably with all men."
3. It would be a considerable step toward this glorious end, if we could bring good men to understand one another. Abundance of disputes arise purely from the want of this; from mere misapprehension. Frequently neither of the contending parties understands what his opponent means; whence it follows, that each violently attacks the other, while there is no real difference between them. And yet it is not always an easy matter to convince them of this; particularly when their passions are moved: It is then attended with the utmost difficulty. However, it is not impossible; especially when we attempt it, not trusting in ourselves, but having all our dependence upon Him with whom all things are possible. How soon is he able to disperse the cloud, to shine upon their hearts, and to enable them both to understand each other, and "the truth as it is in Jesus!"
4. One very considerable article of this truth is contained in the words above recited, "This is his name whereby he shall be called, the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS;" a truth this, which enters deep into the nature of Christianity, and, in a manner, supports the whole frame of it. Of this, undoubtedly, may be affirmed, what Luther affirms of a truth closely connected with it: it is *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae*: The Christian church stands or falls with it. It is certainly the pillar and ground of that faith, of which alone cometh salvation; of that Catholic or universal faith which is found in all the children of God, and which "unless a man keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly."

5. Might not one, therefore, reasonably expect, that, however they differed in others, all those who name the name of Christ should agree in this point? But how far is this from being the case! There is scarce any wherein they are so little agreed; wherein those who all profess to follow Christ, seem so widely and irreconcilably to differ. I say seem; because I am thoroughly convinced, that many of them only seem to differ. The disagreement is more in words than in sentiments: They are much nearer in judgment than in language. And a wide difference in language there certainly is, not only between Protestants and Papists, but between Protestant and Protestant; yea, even between those who all believe justification by faith; who agree, as well in this, as every other fundamental doctrine of the gospel

6. But if the difference be more in opinion, than real experience, and more in expression than in opinion, how can it be, that even the children of God should so vehemently contend with each other on the point? Several reasons may be assigned for this: The chief is, their not understanding one another; joined with too keen an attachment to their opinions, and particular modes of expression.

In order to remove this, at least in some measure; in order to our understanding one another on this head; I shall, by the help of God, endeavour to show,

- I. What is the righteousness of Christ:
 - II. When, and in what sense, it is imputed to us:
- And conclude with a short and plain application.

And, I. What is the righteousness of Christ? It is twofold, either his divine or his human righteousness.

1. His divine righteousness belongs to his divine nature, as he is $\alpha\omega\upsilon$, He that existeth; "over all, God blessed for ever;" the Supreme; the Eternal; "equal with the Father, as touching his Godhead, though inferior to the Father as touching his manhood." Now this is his eternal, essential, immutable holiness; his infinite justice, mercy, and truth; in all which, he and the Father are One. But I do not apprehend that the divine righteousness of Christ is immediately concerned in the present question. I believe few, if any, do now contend for the imputation of this righteousness to us. Whoever believes the doctrine of imputation, understands it chiefly, if not solely, of his human righteousness.
2. The human righteousness of Christ belongs to him in his human nature; as he is the "Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." This is either internal or external. His internal righteousness is the image of God, stamped on every power and faculty of his soul. It is a copy of his divine righteousness, as far as it can be imparted to a human spirit. It is a transcript of the divine purity, the divine justice, mercy, and truth. It includes love, reverence, resignation to his Father; humility, meekness, gentleness; love to lost mankind, and every other holy and heavenly temper; and all these in the highest degree, without any defect, or mixture of unholiness.
3. It was the least part of his external righteousness, that he did nothing amiss; that he knew no outward sin of any kind, neither was "guile found in his mouth;" that he never spoke one improper word, nor did one improper action. Thus far it is only a negative righteousness, though such an one as never did, nor ever can, belong to anyone that is born of a woman, save himself alone. But even his outward righteousness was positive too: He did all things well: In every word of his tongue, in every work of his hands, he did precisely the "will of Him that sent him." In the whole course of his life, he did the will of God on earth, as the angels do it in heaven. All he acted and spoke was exactly right in every circumstance. The whole and every part of his obedience was complete. "He fulfilled all righteousness."

4. But his obedience implied more than all this: It implied not only doing, but suffering; suffering the whole will of God, from the time he came into the world, till "he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree;" yea, till having made a full atonement for them, "he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." This is usually termed the passive righteousness of Christ; the former, his active righteousness. But as the active and passive righteousness of Christ were never, in fact, separated from each other, so we never need separate them at all, either in speaking or even in thinking. And it is with regard to both these conjointly that Jesus is called "the Lord our righteousness."

II. But when is it that any of us may truly say, "the Lord our righteousness?" In other words, when is it that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, and in what sense is it imputed?

1. Look through all the world, and all the men therein are either believers or unbelievers. The first thing, then, which admits of no dispute among reasonable men is this: To all believers the righteousness of Christ is imputed; to unbelievers it is not.

But when is it imputed? When they believe. In that very hour the righteousness of Christ is theirs. It is imputed to every one that believes, as soon as he believes: Faith and the righteousness of Christ are inseparable. For if he believes according to Scripture, he believes in the righteousness of Christ. There is no true faith, that is, justifying faith, which hath not the righteousness of Christ for its object.

2. It is true believers may not all speak alike; they may not all use the same language. It is not to be expected that they should: we cannot reasonably require it of them. A thousand circumstances may cause them to vary from each other, in the manner of expressing themselves: But a difference of expression does not necessarily imply a difference of sentiment. Different persons may use different expressions, and yet mean the same thing. Nothing is more common than this, although we seldom make sufficient allowance for it. Nay, it is not easy for the same persons, when they speak of the same thing at a considerable distance of time, to use exactly the same expressions, even though they retain the same sentiments: How then can we be rigorous in requiring others to use just the same expressions with us?
3. We may go a step farther yet: Men may differ from us in their opinions, as well as their expressions, and nevertheless be partakers with us of the same precious faith. It is possible they may not have a distinct apprehension of the very blessing which they enjoy: Their ideas may not be so clear, and yet their experience may be as sound, as ours. There is a wide difference between the natural faculties of men, their understandings in particular; And that difference is exceedingly increased by the manner of their education. Indeed, this alone may occasion an inconceivable difference in their opinions of various kinds; and why not upon this head, as well as on any other? But still, though their opinions, as well as expressions, may be confused and inaccurate, their hearts may cleave to God through the Son of his love, and be truly interested in his righteousness.
4. Let us then make all that allowance to others, which, were we in their place, we would desire for ourselves. Who is ignorant (to touch again on that circumstance only) of the amazing power of education? And who that knows it, can expect, suppose, a member of the Church of Rome, either to think or speak clearly on this subject? And yet, if we had heard even dying Bellarmine cry out, -- when he was asked, "Unto which of the saints wilt thou turn?" -- *Fidere meritis Christi tutissimum*; "It is safest to trust in the merits of Christ;" would we have affirmed that, notwithstanding his wrong opinions, he had no share in his righteousness?

5. But in what sense is this righteousness imputed to believers? In this: all believers are forgiven and accepted, not for the sake of anything in them, or of anything that ever was, that is, or ever can be done by them, but wholly and solely for the sake of what Christ hath done and suffered for them. I say again, not for the sake of anything in them, or done by them, of their own righteousness or works: "Not for works of righteousness which we have done, but of his own mercy he saved us." "By grace ye are saved through faith, -- not of works, lest any man should boast;" but wholly and solely for the sake of what Christ hath done and suffered for us. We are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." And this is not only the means of our obtaining the favour of God, but of our continuing therein. It is thus we come to God at first; it is by the same we come unto him ever after. We walk in one and the same new and living way, till our spirit returns to God.
6. And this is the doctrine which I have constantly believed and taught, for near eight and twenty years. This I published to all the world in the year 1738, and ten or twelve times since, in those words, and many others to the same effect, extracted from the Homilies of our Church: -- "These things must necessarily go together in our justification; upon God's part, his great mercy and grace; upon Christ's part, the satisfaction of God's justice; and on our part, faith in the merits of Christ. So that the grace of God doth not shut out the righteousness of God in our justification, but only shutteth out the righteousness of man, as to *deserving* our justification." "That we are justified by faith alone, is spoken to take away clearly all merit of our works, and wholly to ascribe the *merit* and *deserving* of our justification to Christ only. Our justification comes freely of the mere mercy of God. For whereas all the world was not able to pay any part toward our ransom, it pleased Him, without any of our deserving, to prepare for us Christ's body and blood, whereby our ransom might be paid, and his justice satisfied. Christ, therefore, is now the righteousness of all them that truly believe in him."
7. The Hymns published a year or two after this, and since republished several times, (a clear testimony that my judgment was still the same,) speak full to the same purpose. To cite all the passages to this effect, would be to transcribe a great part of the volumes. Take one for all, which was reprinted seven years ago, five years ago, two years ago, and some months since: --

Jesu, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress:
'Midst flaming worlds in these array'd,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

The whole hymn expresses the same sentiment, from the beginning to the end.

8. In the Sermon on Justification, published nineteen, and again seven or eight, years ago, I express the same thing in these words: (P. 55) "In consideration of this, -- that the Son of God hath `tasted death for every man,' God hath now `reconciled the world unto himself, not imputing to them their' former `trespasses.' So that for the sake of his well-beloved Son, of what he hath done and suffered for us, God now vouchsafes, on one only condition, (which himself also enables us to perform,) both to remit the punishment due to our sins, to re-instate us in his favour, and to restore our dead souls to spiritual life, as the earnest of life eternal."
9. This is more largely and particularly expressed in the Treatise on Justification, which I published last year: "If we take the phrase of imputing Christ's righteousness, for the bestowing (as it were) the righteousness of Christ, including his obedience, as well passive as active, in the return of it, that is, in the privileges, blessings, and benefits purchased it; so a believer may be said to be justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed. The meaning is, God justifies the

believer for the sake of Christ's righteousness, and not for any righteousness of his own. So Calvin: (Institut. 1.2, c.17) `Christ by his obedience, procured and merited for us grace or favour with God the Father.' Again: `Christ, by his obedience, procured or purchased righteousness for us.' And yet again: `All such expressions as these, -- that we are justified by the grace of God, that Christ is our righteousness, that righteousness was procured for us by the death and resurrection of Christ, import the same thing; namely, that the righteousness of Christ, both his active and passive righteousness, is the meritorious cause of our justification, and has procured for us at God's hand, that, upon our believing, we should be accounted righteous by him.'" Page 5.

10. But perhaps some will object, "Nay, but you affirm that faith is imputed to us for righteousness. St. Paul affirms this over and over; therefore I affirm it too. Faith is imputed for righteousness to every believer; namely, faith in the righteousness of Christ; but this is exactly the same thing which has been said before; For by that expression I mean neither more nor less, than that we are justified by faith, not by works; or that every believer is forgiven and accepted, merely for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered.

11. But is not a believer invested or clothed with the righteousness of Christ? Undoubtedly he is. And accordingly the words above-recited are the language of every believing heart:

Jesu, thy blood and righteousness

My beauty are, my glorious dress. That is, "For the sake of thy active and passive righteousness, I am forgiven and accepted of God."

But must not we put off the filthy rags of our own righteousness, before we can put on the spotless righteousness of Christ? Certainly we must; that is, in plain terms, we must repent, before we can believe the gospel. We must be cut off from dependence upon ourselves, before we can truly depend upon Christ. We must cast away all confidence in our own righteousness, or we cannot have a true confidence in his. Till we are delivered from trusting in anything that we do, we cannot thoroughly trust in what he has done and suffered. First, we receive the sentence of death in ourselves: Then, we trust in Him that lived and died for us.

12. But do not you believe inherent righteousness? Yes, in its proper place; not as the ground of our acceptance with God, but as the fruit of it; not in the place of imputed righteousness, but as consequent upon it. That is, I believe God implants righteousness in every one to whom he has imputed it. I believe "Jesus Christ is made of God unto us sanctification," as well as "righteousness;" or, that God sanctifies, as well as justifies, all them that believe in him. They to whom the righteousness of Christ is imputed, are made righteous by the spirit of Christ, are renewed in the image of God, "after the likeness wherein they were created, in righteousness and true holiness."

13. But do not you put faith in the room of Christ, or of his righteousness? By no means: I take particular care to put each of these in its proper place. The righteousness of Christ is the whole and sole foundation of all our hope. It is by faith that the Holy Ghost enables us to build upon this foundation. God gives this faith; in that moment we are accepted of God; and yet, not for the sake of that faith, but of what Christ has done and suffered for us. You see, each of these has its proper place, and neither clashes with the other: we believe, we love, we endeavour to walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless; yet,--

While thus we bestow
Our moments below,

Ourselves we forsake,

And refuge in Jesus's righteousness take.

His passion alone,
The foundation we own;
And pardon we claim,
And eternal redemption in Jesus's name.

14. I therefore no more deny the righteousness of Christ, than I deny the Godhead of Christ; and a man may full as justly charge me with denying the one as the other. Neither do I deny imputed righteousness: This is another unkind and unjust accusation. I always did, and do still continually affirm, that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to every believer. But who deny it? Why, all Infidels, whether baptized or unbaptized; all who affirm the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to be a cunningly devised fable; all Socinians and Arians; all who deny the supreme Godhead of the Lord that bought them; they, of consequence, deny his divine righteousness, as they suppose him to be a mere creature; and they deny his human righteousness, as imputed to any man, seeing they believe everyone is accepted for his own righteousness.
15. The human righteousness of Christ, at least the imputation of it, as the whole and sole meritorious cause of the justification of a sinner before God, is likewise denied by the members of the Church of Rome; by all of them who are true to the principles of their own church. But undoubtedly there are many among them whose experience goes beyond their principles; who, though they are far from expressing themselves justly, yet feel what they know not how to express. Yea, although their conceptions of this great truth be as crude as their expressions, yet with their heart they do believe: They rest on Christ alone, both unto present and eternal salvation
16. With these we may rank those even in the Reformed Churches, who are usually termed Mystics. One of the chief of these, in the present century, (at least in England,) was Mr. Law. It is well known that he absolutely and zealously denied the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, as zealously as Robert Barclay, who scruples not to say, "Imputed righteousness! -- imputed nonsense!" The body of the people known by the name of Quakers espouse the same sentiment. Nay, the generality of those who profess themselves members of the Church of England are either totally ignorant of the matter, and know nothing about imputed righteousness, or deny this and justification by faith together, as destructive of good works. To these we may add a considerable number of the people vulgarly styled Anabaptists, together with thousands of Presbyterians and Independents, lately enlightened by the writings of Dr. Taylor. On the last I am not called to pass any sentence: I leave them to Him that made them. But will anyone dare to affirm that all Mystics, (such as was Mr. Law in particular,) all Quakers, all Presbyterians or Independents, and all members of the Church of England who are not clear in their opinions or expressions, are void of all Christian experience? -- that, consequently, they are all in a state of damnation, "without hope, without God in the world?" However confused their ideas may be, however improper their language, may there not be many of them whose heart is right toward God, and who effectually know "the Lord our righteousness?"
17. But, blessed be God, we are not among those who are so dark in their conceptions and expressions. We no more deny the phrase than the thing; but we are unwilling to obtrude it on other men. Let them use either this or such other expressions as they judge to be more exactly scriptural, provided their heart rests only on what Christ hath done and suffered, for pardon, grace, and glory. I cannot express this

better than in Mr. Hervey's words, worthy to be wrote in letters of gold: "We are not solicitous as to any particular set of phrases. Only let men be humbled as repenting criminals at Christ's feet, let them rely as devoted pensioners on his merits and they are undoubtedly in the way to a blessed immortality."

18. Is there any need, is there any possibility, of saying more? Let us only abide by this declaration, and all the contention about this or that "particular phrase" is torn up by the roots. Keep to this, -- "All who are humbled as repenting criminals at Christ's feet, and rely as devoted pensioners on his merits, are in the way to a blessed immortality;" And what room for dispute? Who denies this? Do we not all meet on this ground? What then shall we wrangle about? A man of peace here proposes terms of accommodation to all the contending parties. We desire no better: We accept of the terms: We subscribe to them with heart and hand. Whoever refuses so to do, set a mark upon that man! He is an enemy of peace, and a troubler of Israel, a disturber of the Church of God.
19. In the meantime what we are afraid of is this: -- lest any should use the phrase, "The righteousness of Christ," or, "The righteousness of Christ is imputed to me," as a cover for his unrighteousness. We have known this done a thousand times. A man has been reprov'd, suppose for drunkenness: "O", said he, "I pretend to no righteousness of *my own*; Christ is *my righteousness*." Another has been told, that "the extortioner, the unjust, shall not inherit the kingdom of God:" He replies, with all assurance, "I am unjust in myself, but I have a spotless righteousness in Christ." And thus, though a man be as far from the practice as from the tempers of a Christian; though he neither has the mind which was in Christ, nor in any respect walks as he walked; yet he has armour of proof against all conviction, in what he calls the "righteousness of Christ."
20. It is the seeing so many deplorable instances of this kind, which makes us sparing in the use of these expressions. And I cannot but call upon all of you who use them frequently, and beseech you in the name of God, our Saviour, whose you are, and whom you serve, earnestly to guard all that hear you against this accursed abuse of them. O warn them (it may be they will hear *your* voice) against "continuing in sin that grace may abound!" Warn them against making "Christ the minister of sin;" against making void that solemn decree of God, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," by a vain imagination of being *holy in Christ!* O warn them that if they remain unrighteous, the righteousness of Christ will profit them nothing! Cry aloud, (is there not a cause?) that for this very end the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, that "the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us;" and that we may "live soberly, religiously, and godly, in this present world."

It remains only to make a short and plain application. And, First, I would address myself to you who violently oppose these expressions, and are ready to condemn all that use them as Antinomians. But is not this bending the bow too much the other way? Why should you condemn all who do not speak just as you do? Why should you quarrel with them, for using the phrases they like, any more than they with you for taking the same liberty? Or, if they do quarrel with you upon that account, do not imitate the bigotry which you blame. At least, allow them the liberty which they ought to allow you. And why should you be angry at an expression? "O, it has been abused!" And what expression has not? However, the abuse may be removed, and, at the same time, the use remain. Above all, be sure to retain the important sense which is couched under that expression: "All the blessings I enjoy, all I hope for in time and in eternity, are given wholly and solely for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered for me."

I would, Secondly, add a few words to you who are fond of these expressions. And permit me to ask, Do not I allow enough? What can any reasonable man desire more? I allow the whole sense which you contend for; that we have every blessing through the righteousness of God our Saviour. I allow *you* to use whatever expressions you choose, and that a thousand times over; only guarding them against that dreadful abuse, which you are as deeply concerned to prevent as I am. I myself frequently use the expression in question, -- imputed righteousness; and often put this and the like expressions into the mouth of a whole congregation. But allow me liberty of conscience herein: Allow me the right of private judgment. Allow me to use it just as often as I judge it preferable to any other expression; and be not angry with me if I cannot judge it proper to use any one expression every two minutes. You may, if you please; but do not condemn me because I do not. Do not, for this, represent me as a Papist, or "an enemy to the righteousness of Christ." Bear with me, as I do with you; else how shall we "fulfil the law of Christ?" Do not make tragical outcries, as though I were "subverting the very foundations of Christianity." Whoever does this, does me much wrong: the Lord lay it not to his charge! I lay, and have done for many years, the very same foundation with you. And, indeed, "other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ." I build inward and outward holiness thereon, as you do, even by faith. Do not, therefore, suffer any distaste, or unkindness, no, nor any shyness or coldness in your heart. If there were a difference of opinion, where is our religion, if we cannot think and let think? What hinders but you may forgive me as easily as I may forgive you? How much more, when there is only a difference of expression? Nay, hardly so much as that? all the dispute being only, whether a particular mode of expression shall be used more or less frequently? Surely we must earnestly desire to contend with one another, before we can make this a bone of contention! O let us not any more, for such very trifles as these, give our common enemies room to blaspheme! Rather let us at length cut off occasion for them that seek occasion! Let us at length (O why was it not done before?) join hearts and hands in the service of our great Master. As we have "one Lord, one faith, one hope of our calling," let us all strengthen each other's hands in God, and with one heart and one mouth declare to all mankind, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Edited by David A. Higle (Theological Editor, The Wesleyan Church) with additional formatting by Ryan Danker for the Wesley Center for Applied Theology at Northwest Nazarene University.

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Lesson 8: The Person of Christ and the Person of the Spirit

Due This Lesson

Scripture support for Christology or pneumatology
Sermon reading
Journaling

Learner Objectives

- At the end of this lesson, participants will
- explain Wesley's view of Christology
 - define practical monophysitism
 - recognize the Spirit as a personal entity

Homework Assignments

Write a two-page essay: What is sin?

Read Resource 8-4, "Original Sin."

Write in your journal. This assignment is ongoing. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights on the material presented in class. Read a portion of John Wesley's journal and reflect on your reading. His journal can be found at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu>

Wesley Quotes

Wesley advises his ministers to:

"Declare in every sermon (and the more explicitly the better) that the first and great command to a Christian is 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ': that Christ is all in all, our 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption'; that all life, love, strength are from him alone, and all freely given to us through faith."
Of Preaching Christ, quoted in Outler, pp. 234-35

"I believe the infinite and eternal Spirit of God, equal with the Father and the Son, to be not only perfectly holy himself, but the immediate cause of all holiness in us."

Letter to a Roman Catholic

Christ's Person

Wesley followed the Christology of the early ecumenical councils, the first four of which developed the orthodox belief in the nature of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is fully God, sharing the same essence or substance as the Father, and He who revealed the nature of God fully and finally.

Wesley states that Jesus is "real God, as real man," "perfect, as God and as man," and thus worthy of our true worship.

Wesley's emphasis lay in the *work* of Christ, also known as the doctrine of soteriology.

As with all of Wesley's theology, his Christology has practical relevance. He is much more interested in Christ's work than His nature. And yet, even when talking about His nature, the *practical* implications always accompany his considerations.

The Spirit's Person

The Spirit is the presence of God in the Christian life. It is key for Wesley that not only did Christ make provision for our redemption, but also that such redemption is applied by the work of the Spirit.

Persons standing in the Wesleyan-holiness tradition have a broader and deeper doctrine of the Spirit than those from the Reformed tradition. The Spirit is a "person" of the Godhead, with personal characteristics, and his own "beingness," not just a subordinated, functional part of God, or a present expression of Christ on earth.

As way of summary, Wesley wrote:

I believe the infinite and eternal Spirit of God, equal with the Father and the Son, to be not only perfectly holy himself, but the immediate cause of all holiness in us: enlightening our understanding, rectifying our wills and affections, renewing our natures, uniting our persons to Christ, assuring us of the adoption of sons, leading us in our actions, purifying and sanctifying our souls and bodies to a full and eternal enjoyment of God.

Letter to a Roman Catholic

Small Groups

In your group, work together to find/develop answers for the following, from the Wesley sermon that was read for homework:

Sermon Title:

Text:

Thesis Statement:

Key Points:

Relevance for Today:

Call for Response:

JOHN WESLEY **SERMON FORTY-FOUR** **ORIGINAL SIN**

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Gen. 6:5.

1. How widely different is this from the fair pictures of human nature which men have drawn in all ages! The writings of many of the ancients abound with gay descriptions of the dignity of man; whom some of them paint as having all virtue and happiness in his composition, or, at least, entirely in his power, without being beholden to any other being; yea, as self-sufficient, able to live on his own stock, and little inferior to God himself.
2. Nor have Heathens alone, men who are guided in their researches by little more than the dim light of reason, but many likewise of them that bear the name of Christ, and to whom are entrusted the oracles of God, spoken as magnificently concerning the nature of man, as if it were all innocence and perfection. Accounts of this kind have particularly abounded in the present century; and perhaps in no part of the world more than in our own country. Here not a few persons of strong understanding, as well as extensive learning, have employed their utmost abilities to show, what they termed, "the fair side of human nature." And it must be acknowledged, that, if their accounts of him be just, man is still but "a little lower than the angels;" or, as the words may be more literally rendered, "a little less than God."
3. Is it any wonder, that these accounts are very readily received by the generality of men? For who is not easily persuaded to think favourably of himself? Accordingly, writers of this kind are most universally read, admired, applauded. And innumerable are the converts they have made, not only in the gay, but the learned world. So that it is now quite unfashionable to talk otherwise, to say any thing to the disparagement of human nature; which is generally allowed, notwithstanding a few infirmities, to be very innocent, and wise, and virtuous!
4. But, in the mean time, what must we do with our Bibles? -- for they will never agree with this. These accounts, however pleasing to flesh and blood, are utterly irreconcilable with the scriptural. The Scripture avers, that "by one man's disobedience all men were constituted sinners;" that "in Adam all died," spiritually died, lost the life and the image of God; that fallen, sinful Adam then "begat a son in his own likeness;" -- nor was it possible he should beget him in any other; for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" -- that consequently we, as well as other men, were by nature "dead in trespasses and sins," "without hope, without God in the world," and therefore "children of wrath;" that every man may say, "I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me;" that "there is no difference," in that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," of that glorious image of God wherein man was originally created. And hence, when "the Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, he saw they were all gone out of the way; they were altogether become abominable, there was none righteous, no, not one," none that truly sought after God: Just agreeable this, to what is declared by the Holy Ghost in the words above recited, "God saw," when he looked down from heaven before, "that the wickedness of man was great

in the earth;" so great, that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

This is God's account of man: From which I shall take occasion, First, to show what men were before the flood: Secondly, to inquire, whether they are not the same now: And, Thirdly, to add some inferences.

I.

1. I am, First, by opening the words of the text, to show what men were before the flood. And we may fully depend on the account here given: For God saw it, and he cannot be deceived. He "saw that the wickedness of man was great:" -- Not of this or that man; not of a few men only; not barely of the greater part, but of man in general; of men universally. The word includes the whole human race, every partaker of human nature. And it is not easy for us to compute their numbers, to tell how many thousands and millions they were. The earth then retained much of its primeval beauty and original fruitfulness. The face of the globe was not rent and torn as it is now; and spring and summer went hand in hand. It is therefore probable, it afforded sustenance for far more inhabitants than it is now capable of sustaining; and these must be immensely multiplied, while men begat sons and daughters for seven or eight hundred years together. Yet, among all this inconceivable number, only "Noah found favour with God." He alone (perhaps including part of his household) was an exception from the universal wickedness, which, by the just judgment of God, in a short time after brought on universal destruction. All the rest were partakers in the same guilt, as they were in the same punishment.
2. "God saw all the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart;" -- of his soul, his inward man, the spirit within him, the principle of all his inward and outward motions. He "saw all the imaginations:" It is not possible to find a word of a more extensive signification. It includes whatever is formed, made, fabricated within; all that is or passes in the soul; every inclination, affection, passion, appetite; every temper, design, thought. It must of consequence include every word and action, as naturally flowing from these fountains, and being either good or evil according to the fountain from which they severally flow.
3. Now God saw that all this, the whole thereof, was evil; -- contrary to moral rectitude; contrary to the nature of God, which necessarily includes all good; contrary to the divine will, the eternal standard of good and evil; contrary to the pure, holy image of God, wherein man was originally created, and wherein he stood when God, surveying the works of his hands, saw them all to be very good; contrary to justice, mercy, and truth, and to the essential relations which each man bore to his Creator and his fellow-creatures.
4. But was there not good mingled with the evil? Was there not light intermixed with the darkness? No; none at all: "God saw that the whole imagination of the heart of man was only evil." It cannot indeed be denied, but many of them, perhaps all, had good motions put into their hearts; for the Spirit of God did then also "strive with man," if haply he might repent, more especially during that gracious reprieve, the hundred and twenty years, while the ark was preparing. But still "in his flesh dwelt no good thing;" all his nature was purely evil: It was wholly consistent with itself, and unmixed with anything of an opposite nature.
5. However, it may still be matter of inquiry, "Was there no intermission of this evil? Were there no lucid intervals, wherein something good might be found in the heart of man?" We are not here to consider, what the grace of God might occasionally work in his soul; and, abstracted from this, we have no reason to believe, there was any intermission of that evil. For God, who "saw the whole

imagination of the thoughts of his heart to be *only* evil," saw likewise, that it was always the same, that it "was only evil *continually*;" every year, every day, every hour, every moment. He never deviated into good.

- II. Such is the authentic account of the whole race of mankind which He who knoweth what is in man, who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins, hath left upon record for our instruction. Such were all men before God brought the flood upon the earth. We are, Secondly, to inquire, whether they are the same now.
1. And this is certain, the Scripture gives us no reason to think any otherwise of them. On the contrary, all the above cited passages of Scripture refer to those who lived after the flood. It was above a thousand years after, that God declared by David concerning the children of men, "They are all gone out of the way, of truth and holiness; "there is none righteous, no, not one." And to this bear all the Prophets witness, in their several generations. So Isaiah, concerning God's peculiar people, (and certainly the Heathens were in no better condition,) "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." The same account is given by all the Apostles, yea, by the whole tenor of the oracles of God. From all these we learn, concerning man in his natural state, unassisted by the grace of God, that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is" still "evil, only evil," and that "continually."
 2. And this account of the present state of man is confirmed by daily experience. It is true, the natural man discerns it not: And this is not to be wondered at. So long as a man born blind continues so, he is scarce sensible of his want: Much less, could we suppose a place where all were born without sight, would they be sensible of the want of it. In like manner, so long as men remain in their natural blindness of understanding, they are not sensible of their spiritual wants, and of this in particular. But as soon as God opens the eyes of their understanding, they see the state they were in before; they are then deeply convinced, that "every man living," themselves especially, are, by nature, "altogether vanity;" that is, folly and ignorance, sin and wickedness.
 3. We see, when God opens our eyes, that we were before *αθεοι εν τω κοσμω* -- without God, or, rather, *Atheists, in the world*. We had, by nature, no knowledge of God, no acquaintance with him. It is true, as soon as we came to the use of reason, we learned "the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, from the things that are made." From the things that are seen we inferred the existence of an eternal, powerful Being, that is not seen. But still, although we acknowledged his being we had no acquaintance with him. As we know there is an Emperor of China, whom yet we do not know; so we knew there was a King of all the earth, yet we knew him not. Indeed we could not by any of our natural faculties. By none of these could we attain the knowledge of God. We could no more perceive him by our natural understanding, than we could see him with our eyes. For "no one knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal him. And no one knoweth the Son but the Father, and he to whom the Father revealeth him."
 4. We read of an ancient king, who, being desirous to know what was the *natural language* of men, in order to bring the matter to a certain issue, made the following experiment: He ordered two infants, as soon as they were born, to be conveyed to a place prepared for them, where they were brought up without any instruction at all, and without ever hearing a human voice. And what was the event? Why that when they were at length brought out of their confinement, they spoke no language at all; they uttered only inarticulate sounds, like those of other animals. Were two infants in like manner to be

brought up from the womb without being instructed in any religion, there is little room to doubt but (unless the grace of God interposed) the event would be just the same. They would have no religion at all: They would have no more knowledge of God than the beasts of the field, than the wild ass's colt. Such is natural religion, abstracted from traditional, and from the influences of God's Spirit!

5. And having no knowledge, we can have no love of God: We cannot love him we know not. Most men *talk* indeed of loving God, and perhaps imagine they do; at least, few will acknowledge they do not love him: But the fact is too plain to be denied. No man loves God by nature, any more than he does a stone, or the earth he treads upon. What we love we delight in: But no man has naturally any delight in God. In our natural state we cannot conceive how any one should delight in him. We take no pleasure in him at all; he is utterly tasteless to us. To love God! it is far above, out of our sight. We cannot, naturally, attain unto it.
6. We have by nature, not only no love, but no fear of God. It is allowed, indeed, that most men have, sooner or later, a kind of senseless, irrational fear, properly called superstition; though the blundering Epicureans gave it the name of religion. Yet even this is not natural, but acquired; chiefly by conversation or from example. By nature "God is not in all our thoughts:" We leave him to manage his own affairs, to sit quietly, as we imagine, in heaven, and leave us on earth to manage ours; so that we have no more of the fear of God before our eyes, than of the love of God in our hearts.
7. Thus are all men "Atheists in the world." But Atheism itself does not screen us from idolatry. In his natural state, every man born into the world is a rank idolater. Perhaps, indeed, we may not be such in the vulgar sense of the word. We do not, like the idolatrous Heathens, worship molten or graven images. We do not bow down to the stock of a tree, to the work of our own hands. We do not pray to the angels or saints in heaven, any more than to the saints that are upon the earth. But what then? We have set up our idols in our hearts; and to these we bow down and worship them: We worship ourselves, when we pay that honour to ourselves which is due to God only. Therefore all pride is idolatry; it is ascribing to ourselves what is due to God alone. And although pride was not made for man, yet where is the man that is born without it? But hereby we rob god of his unalienable right, and idolatrously usurp his glory.
8. But pride is not the only sort of idolatry which we are all by nature guilty of. Satan has stamped his own image on our heart in self-will also. "I will," said he, before he was cast out of heaven, "I will sit upon the sides of the north;" I will do my own will and pleasure, independently on that of my Creator. the same does every man born into the world say, and that in a thousand instances; nay, and avow it too, without ever blushing upon the account, without either fear or shame. Ask the man, "Why did you do this?" He answers, "Because I had a mind to it." What is this but, "Because it was my will;" that is, in effect, because the devil and I agreed; because Satan and I govern our actions by one and the same principle. The will of God, mean time, is not in his thoughts, is not considered in the least degree; although it be the supreme rule of every intelligent creature, whether in heaven or earth, resulting from the essential, unalterable relation which all creature bear to their Creator.
9. So far we bear the image of the devil, and tread in his steps. But at the next step we leave Satan behind; we run into an idolatry whereof he is not guilty: I mean love of the world; which is now as natural to every man, as to love his own will. What is more natural to us than to seek happiness in the creature, instead of the Creator? -- to seek that satisfaction in the works of his hands,

which can be found in God only? What more natural than "the desire of the flesh?" that is, of the pleasure of sense in every kind? Men indeed talk magnificently of despising these low pleasures, particularly men of learning and education. They affect to sit loose to the gratification of these appetites wherein they stand on a level with the beasts that perish. But it is mere affectation; for every man is conscious to himself, that in this respect he is, by nature, a very beast. Sensual appetites, even those of the lowest kind, have, more or less, the dominion over him. They lead him captive; they drag him to and fro, in spite of his boasted reason. The man, with all his good breeding, and other accomplishments, has no pre-eminence over the goat: Nay, it is much to be doubted, whether the beast has not the pre-eminence over him. Certainly he has, if we may hearken to one of their modern oracles, who very decently tells us,

Once in a season beasts too taste of love;
Only the beast of reason is its slave,
And in that folly drudges all the year.

A considerable difference indeed, it must be allowed, there is between man and man, arising (beside that wrought by preventing grace) from difference of constitution and of education. But, notwithstanding this, who, that is not utterly ignorant of himself, can here cast the first stone at another? Who can abide the test of our blessed Lord's comment on the Seventh Commandment: "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart?" So that one knows not which to wonder at most, the ignorance or the insolence of those men who speak with such disdain of them that are overcome by desires which every man has felt in his own breast; the desire of every pleasure of sense, innocent or not, being natural to every child of man.

10. And so is "the desire of the eye;" the desire of the pleasures of the imagination. These arise either from great, or beautiful, or uncommon objects; -- if the two former do not coincide with the latter; for perhaps it would appear, upon a diligent inquiry, that neither grand nor beautiful objects please any longer than they are new; that when the novelty of them is over, the greatest part, at least, of the pleasure they give is over; and in the same proportion as they become familiar, they become flat and insipid. But let us experience this ever so often, the same desire will remain still. The inbred thirst continues fixed in the soul; nay, the more it is indulged, the more it increases, and incites us to follow after another, and yet another object; although we leave every one with an abortive hope, and a deluded expectation. Yea,

The hoary fool, who many days
Has struggled with continued sorrow,
Renews his hope, and fondly lays
The desperate bet upon tomorrow!

To-morrow comes! 'Tis noon! 'Tis night!
This day, like all the former, flies:
Yet on he goes, to seek delight
To-morrow, till to-night he dies!

11. A third symptom of this fatal disease, the love of the world, which is so deeply rooted in our nature, is "the pride of life;" the desire of praise, of the honour that cometh of men. This the greatest admirers of human nature allow to be strictly natural; as natural as the sight, or hearing, or any other of the external senses. And are they ashamed of it, even men of letters, men of refined and

improved understanding? So far from it that they glory therein! They applaud themselves for their love of applause! Yea, eminent Christians, so called, make no difficulty of adopting the saying of the old, vain Heathen, *Animi dissoluti est et nequam negligere quid de se homines sentiant*: "Not to regard what men think of us is the mark of a wicked and abandoned mind." So that to go calm and unmoved through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report, is with them a sign of one that is, indeed, not fit to live: "Away with such a flow from the earth!" But would one imagine that these men had ever heard of Jesus Christ or his Apostles; or that they knew who it was that said, "How can ye believe who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh of God only?" But if this is really so, if it be impossible to believe, and consequently to please God, so long as we receive or seek honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh of God only; then in what a condition are all mankind! the Christians as well as Heathens! since they all seek honour one of another! since it is as natural for them so to do, themselves being the judges, as it is to see the light which strikes upon their eye, or to hear the sound which enters their ear; yea, since they account it a sign of a virtuous mind, to seek the praise of men, and of a vicious one, to be content with the honour that cometh of God only!

III.

1. I proceed to draw a few inferences from what has been said. And, First, from hence we may learn one grand fundamental difference between Christianity, considered as a system of doctrines, and the most refined Heathenism. Many of the ancient Heathens have largely described the vices of particular men. They have spoken much against their covetousness, or cruelty; their luxury, or prodigality. Some have dared to say that "no man is born without vices of one kind or another." But still as none of them were apprized of the fall of man, so none of them knew of his total corruption. They knew not that all men were empty of all good, and filled with all manner of evil. They were wholly ignorant of the entire depravation of the whole human nature, of every man born into the world, in every faculty of his soul, not so much by those particular vices which reign in particular persons, as by the general flood of Atheism and idolatry, of pride, self-will, and love of the world. This, therefore, is the first grand distinguishing point between Heathenism and Christianity. The one acknowledges that many men are infected with many vices, and even born with a proneness to them; but supposes withal, that in some the natural good much over-balances the evil: The other declares that all men are conceived in sin," and "shapen in wickedness;" -- that hence there is in every man a "carnal mind, which is enmity against God, which is not, cannot be, subject to" his "law;" and which so infects the whole soul, that "there dwelleth in" him, "in his flesh," in his natural state, "no good thing;" but "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is evil," only evil, and that "continually."
2. Hence we may, Secondly, learn, that all who deny this, call it original sin, or by any other title, are put Heathens still, in the fundamental point which differences Heathenism from Christianity. They may, indeed, allow, that men have many vices; that some are born with us; and that, consequently, we are not born altogether so wise or so virtuous as we should be; there being few that will roundly affirm, "We are born with as much propensity to good as to evil, and that every man is, by nature, as virtuous and wise as Adam was at his creation." But here is the *shibboleth*: Is man by nature filled with all manner of evil? Is he void of all good? Is he wholly fallen? Is his soul totally corrupted? Or, to come back to the text, is "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart

only evil continually?" Allow this, and you are so far a Christian. Deny it, and you are but an Heathen still.

3. We may learn from hence, in the Third place, what is the proper nature of religion, of the religion of Jesus Christ. It is *θεραπεια ψυχης*, God's method of *healing a soul* which is thus diseased. Hereby the great Physician of souls applies medicines to heal this sickness; to restore human nature, totally corrupted in all its faculties. God heals all our Atheism by the knowledge of Himself, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; by giving us faith, a divine evidence and conviction of God, and of the things of God, -- in particular, of this important truth, "Christ loved *me*" -- and gave himself for *me*." By repentance and lowliness of heart, the deadly disease of pride is healed; that of self-will by resignation, a meek and thankful submission to the will of God; and for the love of the world in all its branches, the love of God is the sovereign remedy. Now, this is properly religion, "faith" thus "working by love;" working the genuine meek humility, entire deadness to the world, with a loving, thankful acquiescence in, and conformity to, the whole will and word of God.
4. Indeed, if man were not thus fallen, there would be no need of all this. There would be no occasion for this work in the heart, this renewal in the spirit of our mind. The superfluity of godliness would then be a more proper expression than the "superfluity of naughtiness." For an outside religion, without any godliness at all, would suffice to all rational intents and purposes. It does, accordingly, suffice, in the judgment of those who deny this corruption of our nature. They make very little more of religion than the famous Mr. Hobbes did of reason. According to him, reason is only "a well-ordered train of words:" According to them, religion is only a well-ordered train of words and actions. And they speak consistently with themselves; for if the inside be not full of wickedness, if this be clean already, what remains, but to "cleanse the outside of the cup?" Outward reformation, if their supposition be just, is indeed the one thing needful.
5. But ye have not so learned the oracles of God. Ye know, that He who seeth what is in man gives a far different account both of nature and grace, of our fall and our recovery. Ye know that the great end of religion is, to renew our hearts in the image of God, to repair that total loss of righteousness and true holiness which we sustained by the sin of our first parent. Ye know that all religion which does not answer this end, all that stops short of this, the renewal of our soul in the image of God, after the likeness of Him that created it, is no other than a poor farce, and a mere mockery of God, to the destruction of our own soul. O beware of all those teachers of lies, who would palm this upon you for Christianity! Regard them not, although they should come unto you with all the deceivableness of unrighteousness; with all smoothness of language, all decency, yea, beauty and elegance of expression, all professions of earnest good will to you, and reverence for the Holy Scriptures. Keep to the plain, old faith, "once delivered to the saints," and delivered by the Spirit of God to our hearts. Know your disease! Know your cure! Ye were born in sin: Therefore, "ye must be born again," born of God. By nature ye are wholly corrupted. By grace ye shall be wholly renewed. In Adam ye all died: In the second Adam, in Christ, ye all are made alive. "You that were dead in sins hath he quickened:" He hath already given you a principle of life, even faith in him who loved you and gave himself for you! Now, "go on from faith to faith," until your whole sickness be healed; and all that "mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus!"

Edited by George Lyons with corrections by Ryan Danker for the Wesley Center for Applied Theology of Northwest Nazarene University (Nampa, ID).

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Lesson 9: Humanity and Sin

Due This Lesson

One-page essay
Sermon reading
Journaling

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will

- understand the doctrines of the image of God
- discuss Wesley's view of the "fall"
- explain Wesley's doctrine of sin as idolatry and as relational

Homework Assignments

Write a one-page essay: What does it mean to be saved?

Paraphrase the Key Points from Resource 8-3 **or** 9-8. Keep in mind your contemporary/cultural audience. Give a contemporary/cultural illustration for one of the points.

Write in your journal. This assignment is ongoing. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights on the material presented in class. Read a portion of John Wesley's journal and reflect on your reading. His journal can be found at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu>

Wesley Quotes

"[A human being] is not mere matter, a clod of earth, a lump of clay, without sense or understanding, but a spirit like his Creator, a being endued not only with sense and understanding but also with a will exerting itself in various affections. To crown all the rest, he was endued with liberty, a power of directing his own affections and actions, a capacity of determining himself, of choosing good or evil."

Sermon, "On the Fall of Man," *Works* 2: 400-401

Of original sin, Wesley writes, "If therefore, we take away this foundation, that [humanity] is by nature foolish and sinful . . . the Christian system falls apart at once."

The Doctrine of Original Sin, Works 9: 194

Humanity

Foundational to Wesley's understanding of humankind—also known as the doctrine of theological anthropology—is that human beings are relational. They were created for relationship. They were created for love, created to love.

Mildred Bangs Wynkoop . . . the image of God—*imago Dei*—is this capacity to love.

H. Ray Dunning . . . we were created to love God, love others, and have an appropriate love for self and for the world.

“That is, the natural Image of God in humanity referred to those characteristics or faculties definitive of being human, while the moral Image of God referred to the ‘character’ of holiness and love that God intended for humanity.”

Randy Maddox

Deprivity vs. Depravity

Key to understanding Wesley's view of humanity and salvation, is the fact that after the Fall, the image remains. It is distorted, but not obliterated. And, therefore, salvation for Wesley—broadly defined to include sanctification—is the process of the restoration and renewal of the image of God in us.

Deprivity—Wesley

Through the Fall, we are *deprived* of our primary relationship with God, and our other relationships are therefore distorted, but the capacity for love, and the hope of renewal remains. And prevenient grace is immediately offered to compensate for the effects of the Fall.

Depravity—Calvin

Through the Fall, we are totally depraved, without God in the world, and corrupted beyond repair in this life.

Human States

Natural

The natural state is only a hypothetical state since the Fall. It was the state in which God created Adam and Eve.

Legal

By the legal state Wesley means our position before God prior to an experience of new birth. We live under the law, and if we allow the law to do its work, it will drive us to the place of recognizing our need for salvation.

Evangelical

The evangelical state, then, is subsequent to new birth in Christ; we are not under the law, but now under grace. This new birth begins the process of the renewal of the image of God in us.

Sin

While Wesley used the word *pride* often, it is never used as the overarching paradigm of original sin.

Wesley's most direct sermon on the topic—"Original Sin" (1854)—shows this lack of dominance of the word *pride*. Here, *idolatry* is unmistakably classified as the primary definition of original sin.

Wesley says, "All pride is idolatry."

Spiritual Idolatry

Undoubtedly it is the will of God that we should all love one another. It is his will that we should love our relations and our Christian brethren with a peculiar love; and those in particular, whom he has made particularly profitable to our souls. These we are commanded to "love fervently;" yet still "with a pure heart." But is not this "impossible with man?" to retain the strength and tenderness of affection, and yet, without any stain to the soul, with unspotted purity? I do not mean only unspotted by lust. I know this is possible. I know a person may have an unutterable affection for another without any desire of this kind. But is it without idolatry? Is it not loving the creature more than the Creator? Is it not putting a man or woman in the place of God? giving them your heart? Let this be carefully considered, even by those whom God has joined together; by husbands and wives, parents and children. It cannot be denied, that these ought to love one another tenderly: they are commanded so to do. But they are neither commanded nor permitted to love one another idolatrously. Yet how common is this! How frequently is a husband, a wife, a child, put in the place of God. How many that are accounted good Christians fix their affections on each other, so as to leave no place for God! They seek their happiness in the creature, not in the Creator. One may truly say to the other, I view thee, lord and end of my desires. That is, "I desire nothing more but thee! Thou art the thing that I long for! All my desire is unto thee, and unto the remembrance of thy name." Now, if this is not flat idolatry, I cannot tell what is.

John Wesley

Original Sin

Western theology states that the state of original sin, the corruption of humanity into which we are born, makes us guilty before God, even though we did nothing individually and volitionally to deserve it. The *guilt* as well as the *corruption* are inherited. Wesley maintained, however, that original sin does not bring guilt but only a predisposition toward sin. We are guilty for the sins that we voluntarily commit. Wesley is clear to distinguish between “inbeing sin” and actual sins. Thus the classical definition of sin often quoted by Wesleyans: “Sin is a willful transgression of a known law of God.”

Augustine vs. Pelagius

Pelagius

Pelagius held that not only did human beings *not* inherit guilt from Adam, but they also *did not* inherit any corruption. And therefore each person has the same choice that Adam and Eve had in the garden. He affirmed that we are born with *natural freedom*.

Augustine

Augustine, on the other hand, pushed hard for a very strong doctrine of original sin, total depravity, and inherited guilt.

Wesley

The *via media* comes through Wesley's doctrine of prevenient grace. The grace that God gives to every human being born into the world gives that person *graced freedom*.

Although a bent toward sin is in fact inherited, grace is given so that sinning—actual sin—is maintained as a choice for which we can rightly be held accountable.

Small Groups

In your group, work together to find/develop answers for the following, from the Wesley sermon that was read for homework:

Sermon Title:

Text:

Thesis Statement:

Key Points:

Relevance for Today:

Call for Response:

Lesson 10: The Way of Salvation, Part 1

Due This Lesson

- One-page essay
- Paraphrase of Key Points
- Journaling

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will

- differentiate between the “way” of salvation versus the “order” of salvation
- identify the various theories of atonement
- understand the roles of “awakening,” “faith,” and “repentance” in salvation
- understand Wesley’s doctrine of assurance
- describe the seven concomitants of salvation

Homework Assignments

Write your testimony of salvation and sanctification.

Choose one of the three Wesley sermons where you paraphrased the Key Points. Using the information and ideas gathered in discussion from your small groups, write a new introduction for the sermon using contemporary/cultural language, text, and presentation.

Write in your journal. This assignment is ongoing. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights on the material presented in class. Read a portion of John Wesley’s journal and reflect on your reading. His journal can be found at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu>

Wesley Quotes

“And, first, let us inquire what is *salvation*? The salvation which is here spoken of is not what is frequently understood by that word: the going to heaven, eternal happiness. It is not the soul’s going to paradise . . . It is not a blessing which lies on the other side of death . . . The very words of the text itself put this beyond all question, ‘Ye *are* saved.’ It is not something at a distance. It is a present thing, a blessing which through the free mercy of God ye are now in possession of. Nay, the words may be rendered, and that with equal propriety, ‘Ye *have been* saved.’ So that the salvation which is here spoken of might be extended to the entire work of God, from the first dawning of grace in the soul till it is consummated in glory.”

Sermon, “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” quoted in Outler, p. 273

On the witness of the Spirit, Wesley writes:

“None who believes the Scriptures to be the Word of God can doubt the importance of such a truth as this; a truth revealed therein not once only, not obscurely, not incidentally; but frequently and that in express terms—but solemnly and of set purpose as denoting one of the peculiar privileges of the children of God: ‘The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God’ (Rom 8: 16).”

Sermon, “The Witness of the Spirit, Discourse II” quoted in Outler, pg 209

Atonement Theories

The Ransom Theory

This theory envisions humanity being held captive by Satan.

The Satisfaction Theory

This theory is concerned that sin has been an affront to God's sense of honor.

The Penal Satisfaction Theory

This is very similar to the satisfaction theory, but it is not God's honor that needs vindication, but God's justice.

The *Christus Victor*

This theory . . . affirms simply that Christ has been victorious over sin, by taking sin upon himself.

The Recapitulation Theory

This theory focuses on Jesus Christ as the Second Adam. This theory focuses on more than the Cross; it envelops all of Christ's life, lived obediently for God.

The Governmental Theory

This theory is most often associated with Arminianism . . . Christ's death allowed God to offer forgiveness to all who repented while at the same time retain governmental control.

The Moral Influence Theory

For this theory the atonement is found in the Incarnation instead of in the Crucifixion and Resurrection.

Atonement theories primarily speak to what Christ accomplished for us. But the doctrine of soteriology goes much deeper. It asks the question: "How is Christ's atonement applied to us personally?"

It is appropriate to talk about Wesley as having a *via salutis*. Rather than envisioning the Christian life as a series of steps, an "order of salvation," it should be conceptualized as a "way of salvation," as a moment-by-moment process that involves God's action and our response.

Prevenient Grace

Salvation begins with God's free gift of prevenient grace, given from the moment we are born. Prevenient grace is the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. It is prevenient grace that draws or "woos" us to God, awakening our souls for the need of God.

This is the place where we are convicted and convinced of our own sinfulness and helplessness apart from God.

There are three other functions of prevenient grace.

- **First** of all, the Holy Spirit is so active in the world that we can say "all truth is God's truth."
- **Second**, prevenient grace, which is given to every human being, will provide saving grace in situations where full acceptance of Jesus Christ is not possible.
- **Third**, prevenient grace makes us accountable before God for our sin.

Repentance-Faith-Assurance

Repentance

Awakening is closely connected to repentance in Wesley's scheme. . . . It can be equated with "godly sorrow"—that sense that because of our sin, we are not in right relationship with God and yet deeply wish to be . . . repentance is the actual relinquishing of sin and amending our ways. It is key for Wesley that this second aspect of repentance is only possible *after* faith.

It is only grace, through faith, that enables us to repent in this second sense.

Faith

Wesley developed his thought over time. His initial encounter with the Moravians changed Wesley's understanding of salvation.

We are justified by faith alone, *sola fide*. We do not make ourselves righteous in order to make ourselves worthy of God's justification. Justification is a free gift of God, as is faith itself.

Faith *is* the cooperative relationship we have with God. This is known as *synergism*—as opposed to *monergism*—and is foundational to all of Wesleyan theology.

Assurance

Wesley's doctrine of assurance developed over time.

Wesley's contact with the Moravians moved his understanding on the doctrine of assurance to a place where Wesley expected that all Christians could perceive the work and presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

The mature Wesley came to believe that while we should expect the assurance found in Romans, it is possible to have saving faith without it. It is also possible to lose one's assurance without in fact losing one's salvation.

Concomitants of Salvation

Justification

To be justified by God implies that our sins are forgiven.

Regeneration

Wesley's favorite term for salvation was "new birth." This concept implies that we are regenerated, "born again," and are new creations in Christ.

Adoption

This aspect of salvation also implies that we are born into a family, a community of brothers and sisters in Christ.

Redemption

Redemption implies liberation from sin . . . implies receiving a new purpose.

Reconciliation

We are reconciled to God. This is the sense that the alienation and estrangement from God implicit in sin is overcome when we come into a new relationship with God.

Initial Sanctification

The moment of salvation begins the process of being made righteous.

Lesson 11: The Way of Salvation, Part 2

Due This Lesson

Testimonies
Sermon introduction
Journaling

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will

- define Christian perfection
- define sanctification—initial, entire, and gradual toward glorification
- identify summary statements regarding Wesley’s understanding of holiness

Homework Assignments

Write a one-page essay: How do you typically conduct (or participate in) a service where Communion is served? What makes a “good” Communion service?

Continue with the Wesley sermon that you chose for rewriting the introduction. Using the information and ideas gathered in discussion from your small groups, write a new closing/call for response for the sermon using contemporary/cultural language and presentation.

Read Resource 11-5, “The Duty of Constant Communion.”

Write in your journal. This assignment is ongoing. Include your reflections, reactions and insights on the material presented in class. Read a portion of John Wesley’s journal and reflect on your reading. His journal can be found at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu>

Wesley Quotes

Wesley distinguishes two aspects of salvation: “This is sanctification, which is, indeed, in some degree, the immediate fruit of justification but nevertheless is a distinct gift of God and of a totally different nature. The one [justification] implies what God does for us through his Son; the other [sanctification] what he works in us by his Spirit.”

~ Sermon, “Justification by Faith,” quoted in Outler, p. 201

The Holiness Movement’s interpretation of sanctification would emphasize Wesley’s words here: “It is of importance to observe that there is an inseparable connection between these three points—except it *by faith*, expect it *as you are*; and expect it *now!* To deny one of them is to deny them all. To allow one is to allow them all. Do *you* believe we are sanctified by faith? Be

true then to your principle and look for this blessing just as you are, neither better nor worse; as a poor sinner that has still nothing to pay, nothing to plead but 'Christ *died.*' And if you look for it as you are, then expect it *now.* Stay for nothing! Why should you? Christ is ready and he is all you want. He is waiting for you! He is at the door! Let your inmost soul cry out,

 Come in, come in, thou heavenly Guest!

 Nor hence again remove;

 But sup with me and let the feast

 Be everlasting love."

Sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," quoted in Outler, p. 282

Wesley's Sources

Wesley believed in Christian perfection because it was biblical, but also, in no small part, because he believed it was rooted in the Christian tradition.

Wesley was extremely familiar with

- Ignatius of Antioch
- The Shepherd of Hermas
- Irenaeus
- Clement of Alexandria
- Origen
- Gregory of Nyssa
- Macarius
- John Chrysostom
- Ephraem Syrus

From these writers Wesley gained great insight into the potential of God's grace to empower and enable a holy life . . . Overall, these writers provided Wesley with an intense optimism about the possibility of human transformation through a cooperation of grace and human response.

"In one view, [Christian perfection] is purity of intentions, dedicating all the life to God. It is the giving God all our heart; it is one desire and design ruling all our tempers. It is the devoting, not a part, but all our soul, body, and substance to God. In another view, it is all the mind which was in Christ, enabling us to walk as Christ walked. It is the circumcision of the heart from all filthiness, all inward as well as outward pollution. It is a renewal of the heart in the whole image of God, the full likeness of Him that created it. In yet another, is the loving of God with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves."

John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*

Definition

In the sermon "Christian Perfection," Wesley attempted to define what Christian perfection is by first examining what it is *not*. However mature Christians might become in this life, they do not approach the absolute perfections of omniscience, infallibility, or omnipotence. Their understanding remains limited, their judgments are subject to error, and their actions are sometimes limited by "infirmities" of the present human condition.

Christian perfection does not at all imply that a Christian is free from ongoing temptation in this life. . . . Christians are never made *incapable* of sin, but that sin no longer need *rule* in the heart of the believer.

In 1761, Wesley wrote "On Perfection," in which he stated that Christian perfection is

- having the mind of Christ
- the renewal of the image of God in us
- perfect love
- inward and outward holiness

Holiness is not an absence, but a presence, the presence of love.

How Does It Happen?

When Wesley uses the word “sanctification” he is referring to the whole Christian life and the “therapeutic” or spiritual healing that occurs throughout the spiritual journey.

Initial sanctification—the imparted righteousness of Christ begins to take effect in the new believer. Here God begins the process of actually making us righteous or holy.

Growth in grace is the “progressive” or “gradual sanctification” that occurs between new birth and “entire sanctification,” *and* between “entire sanctification” and “final sanctification.”

Entire sanctification—a deeper experience of God’s grace. . . . He stresses that the gradual work must both *precede and follow* the experience. . . . He also tackles the question of “instantaneousness” by making his classical metaphorical statement that a person may be dying for some time, but that inevitably a moment of death does occur.

Final sanctification—also known as glorification.

Maddox's Summary Statements

1. Wesley holds to love for God and neighbor as descriptive and normative of the Christian life. Love is not only present but “ruling” in the heart of Wesley’s mature Christian.
2. Wesley came to equate entire sanctification with a level of Christian maturity and was cautious about claiming it too soon in the Christian pilgrimage, but he also exhorted persons to seek the experience “now.”
3. Holiness, or perfect love, is a work of grace that is both progressive and instantaneous.
4. Holiness, or perfect love, is synergistic; it is lived out in a dynamic relationship with God who provides the grace we need to be holy as we cooperate with such grace.
5. Wesley became suspicious of terms such as the “destruction” of sin, for the reason that this implied an impossibility of sin’s return; but Wesley was highly optimistic about how love shed abroad in our hearts through faith can “exclude” sin. He tired of the debate over whether or not Christian perfection was sinless. His emphasis was on love, not sinlessness as the goal of Christian maturity.
6. One of his major points, if not the major, for Wesley was that the Christian life did not have to remain a life of continual struggle. For him, to deny this type of victorious transformation was to deny the sufficiency of God’s empowering grace—to make the power of sin greater than the power of grace.

JOHN WESLEY

SERMON ONE HUNDRED ONE

THE DUTY OF CONSTANT COMMUNION

The following discourse was written above five-and-fifty years ago, for the use of my pupils at Oxford. I have added very little, but retrenched much; as I then used more words than I do now. But, I thank God, I have not yet seen cause to alter my sentiments in any point which is therein delivered. 1788 **J.W.**

"Do this in remembrance of me." Luke 22: 19.

It is no wonder that men who have no fear of God should never think of doing this. But it is strange that it should be neglected by any that do fear God, and desire to save their souls; And yet nothing is more common. One reason why many neglect it is, they are so much afraid of "eating and drinking unworthily," that they never think how much greater the danger is when they do not eat or drink it at all. That I may do what I can to bring these well-meaning men to a more just way of thinking, I shall, I. show that it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he can; and,

II. Answer some objections.

- I. I am to show that it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he can.
 1. The First reason why it is the duty of every Christian so to do is, because it is a plain command of Christ. That this is his command, appears from the words of the text, "Do this in remembrance of me:" By which, as the Apostles were obliged to bless, break, and give the bread to all that joined with them in holy things; so were all Christians obliged to receive those sign of Christ's body and blood. Here, therefore, the bread and wine are commanded to be received, in remembrance of his death, to the end of the world. Observe, too, that this command was given by our Lord when he was just laying down his life for our sakes. They are, therefore, as it were, his dying words to all his followers.
 2. A Second reason why every Christian should do this as often as he can, is, because the benefits of doing it are so great to all that do it in obedience to him; viz., the forgiveness of our past sins and the present strengthening and refreshing of our souls. In this world we are never free from temptations. Whatever way of life we are in, whatever our condition be, whether we are sick or well, in trouble or at ease, the enemies of our souls are watching to lead us into sin. And too often they prevail over us. Now, when we are convinced of having sinned against God, what surer way have we of procuring pardon from him, than the "showing forth the Lord's death;" and beseeching him, for the sake of his Son's sufferings, to blot out all our sins?
 3. The grace of God given herein confirms to us the pardon of our sins, by enabling us to leave them. As our bodies are strengthened by bread and wine, so are our souls by these tokens of the body and blood of Christ. This is the food of our souls: This gives strength to perform our duty, and leads us on to perfection. If, therefore, we have any regard for the plain command of Christ, if we desire the pardon of our sins, if we wish for strength to believe, to love and obey God, then

we should neglect no opportunity of receiving the Lord's Supper; then we must never turn our backs on the feast which our Lord has prepared for us. We must neglect no occasion which the good providence of God affords us for this purpose. This is the true rule: So often are we to receive as God gives us opportunity. Whoever, therefore, does not receive, but goes from the holy table, when all things are prepared, either does not understand his duty, or does not care for the dying command of his Saviour, the forgiveness of his sins, the strengthening of his soul, and the refreshing it with the hope of glory.

4. Let every one, therefore, who has either any desire to please God, or any love of his own soul, obey God, and consult the good of his own soul, by communicating every time he can; like the first Christians, with whom the Christian sacrifice was a constant part of the Lord's day service. And for several centuries they received it almost every day: Four times a week always, and every saint's day beside. Accordingly, those that joined in the prayers of the faithful never failed to partake of the blessed sacrament. What opinion they had of any who turned his back upon it, we may learn from that ancient canon: "If any believer join in the prayers of the faithful, and go away without receiving the Lord's Supper, let him be excommunicated, as bringing confusion into the church of God."
5. In order to understand the nature of the Lord's Supper, it would be useful carefully to read over those passages in the Gospel, and in the first Epistle to the Corinthians [1 Cor. 11], which speak of the institution of it. Hence we learn that the design of this sacrament is, the continual remembrance of the death of Christ, by eating bread and drinking wine, which are the outward signs of the inward grace, the body and blood of Christ.
6. It is highly expedient for those who purpose to receive this, whenever their time will permit, to prepare themselves for this solemn ordinance by self-examination and prayer. But this is not absolutely necessary. And when we have not time for it, we should see that we have the habitual preparation which is absolutely necessary, and can never be dispensed with on any account or any occasion whatever. This is, First, a full *purpose* of heart to keep all the commandments of God; and, Secondly, a sincere *desire* to receive all his promises.

II. I am, in the Second place, to answer the common objections against constantly receiving the Lord's Supper.

1. I say *constantly* receiving; for as to the phrase of *frequent* communion, it is absurd to the last degree. If it means anything less than constant, it means more than can be proved to be the duty of any man. For if we are not obliged to communicate constantly, by what argument can it be proved that we are obliged to communicate frequently? yea, more than once a year, or once in seven years, or once before we die? Every argument brought for this, either proves that we ought to do it constantly, or proves nothing at all. Therefore, that indeterminate, unmeaning way of speaking ought to be laid aside by all men of understanding.
2. In order to prove that it is our duty to communicate constantly, we may observe that the holy communion is to be considered either, (1.), as a command of God, or, (2.) As a mercy to man.

First. As a command of God. God our Mediator and Governor, from whom we have received our life and all things, on whose will it depends whether we shall be perfectly happy or perfectly miserable from this moment to eternity, declares to us that all who obey his commands shall be eternally happy; all who not, shall be eternally miserable. Now, one of these commands is, "Do this in remembrance of

- me." I ask then, Why do you not do this, when you can do it if you will? When you have an opportunity before you, why do not you obey the command of God?
3. Perhaps you will say, "God does not command me to do this *as often as I can*:" That is, the words "as often as you can," are not added in this particular place. What then? Are we not to obey every command of God as often as we can? Are not all the promises of God made to those, and those only, who "give all diligence;" that is, to those who do all they can to obey his commandments? Our power is the one rule of our duty. Whatever we can do, that we ought. With respect either to this or any other command, he that, when he may obey it if he will, does not, will have no place in the kingdom of heaven.
 4. And this great truth, that we are obliged to keep every command as far as we can, is clearly proved from the absurdity of the contrary opinion; for were we to allow that we are not obliged to obey every commandment of God as often as we can, we have no argument left to prove that any man is bound to obey any command at any time. For instance: Should I ask a man why he does not obey one of the plainest commands of God, why, for instance, he does not help his parents, he might answer, "I will not do it now, but I will at another time." When that time comes, put him in mind of God's command again; and he will say, "I will obey it some time or other." Nor is it possible ever to prove that he ought to do it now, unless by proving that he ought to do it as often as he can; and therefore he ought to do it now, because he can if he will.
 5. Consider the Lord's Supper, Secondly, as a mercy from God to man. As God, whose mercy is over all his works, and particularly over the children of men, knew there was but one way for man to be happy like himself; namely, by being like him in holiness; as he knew we could do nothing toward this of ourselves, he has given us certain means of obtaining his help. One of these is the Lord's Supper, which, of his infinite mercy, he hath given for this very end; that through this means we may be assisted to attain those blessings which he hath prepared for us; that we may obtain holiness on earth, and everlasting glory in heaven.

I ask, then, Why do you not accept of his mercy as often as ever you can? God now offers you his blessing; -- why do you refuse it? You have now an opportunity of receiving his mercy; -- why do you not receive it? You are weak: -- why do not you seize every opportunity of increasing your strength? In a word: Considering this as a command of God, he that does not communicate as often as he can has no piety; considering it as a mercy, he that does not communicate as often as he can has no wisdom.

6. These two considerations will yield a full answer to all the common objections which have been made against constant communion; indeed to all that ever were or can be made. In truth, nothing can be objected against it, but upon supposition that, [at] this particular time, either the communion would be no mercy, or I am not commanded to receive it. Nay, should we grant it would be no mercy, that is not enough; for still the other reason would hold: Whether it does you any good or none, you are to obey the command of God.
7. However, let us see the particular excuses which men commonly make for not obeying it. The most common is, "I am unworthy; and he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." Therefore I dare not communicate, lest I should eat and drink my own damnation."

The case is this: God offers you one of the greatest mercies on this side heaven, and commands you to accept it. Why do not you accept this mercy, in obedience to his command? You say, "I am unworthy to receive it." And what then? You are unworthy to receive any mercy from God. But is that a reason for refusing all

mercy? God offers you a pardon for all your sins. You are unworthy of it, it is sure, and he knows it; but since he is pleased to offer it nevertheless, will not you accept of it? He offers to deliver your soul from death: You are unworthy to live; but will you therefore refuse life? He offers to endue your soul with new strength; because you are unworthy of it, will you deny to take it? What can God himself do for us farther, if we refuse his mercy because we are unworthy of it?

8. But suppose this were no mercy to us; (to suppose which is indeed giving God the lie; saying, that is not good for man which he purposely ordered for his good;) still I ask, Why do not you obey God's command? He says, "Do this." Why do you not? You answer, "I am unworthy to do it." What! Unworthy to obey God? Unworthy to do what God bids you do? Unworthy to obey God's command? What do you mean by this? that those who are unworthy to obey God ought not to obey him? Who told you so? If he were even "an angel from heaven, let him be accursed." If you think God himself has told you so by St. Paul, let us hear his words. They are these: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself."

Why, this is quite another thing. Here is not a word said of being unworthy to eat and drink. Indeed he does speak of eating and drinking unworthily; but that is quite a different thing; so he has told us himself. In this very chapter we are told that by eating and drinking unworthily is meant, taking the holy sacrament in such a rude and disorderly way, that one was "hungry and another drunken." But what is that to *you*? Is there any danger of *your* doing so,-- of your eating and drinking *thus unworthily*? However unworthy you are to communicate, there is no fear of your communicating thus. Therefore, whatever the punishment is, of doing it thus unworthily, it does not concern *you*. You have no more reason from this text to disobey God, than if there was no such text in the Bible. If you speak of "eating and drinking unworthily" in the sense St. Paul uses the words, you may as well say, "I dare not communicate, *for fear the church should fall*," as "for fear I should *eat and drink unworthily*."

9. If then you fear bringing *damnation* on yourself by this, you fear where no fear is. Fear it not for eating and drinking unworthily; for that, in St. Paul's sense, ye cannot do. But I will tell you for what you shall fear damnation; -- for not eating and drinking at all; for not obeying your Maker and Redeemer; for disobeying his plain command; for thus setting at nought both his mercy and authority. Fear ye this; for hear what his Apostle saith: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." (James 2:10.)
10. We see then how weak the objection is, "I dare not receive [The Lord's Supper], because I am unworthy." Nor is it any stronger, though the reason why you think yourself unworthy is, that you have lately fallen into sin. It is true, our Church forbids those "who have done any grievous crime" to receive without repentance. But all that follows from this is, that we should repent before we come; not that we should neglect to come at all.

To say, therefore, that "a man may turn his back upon the altar because he has lately fallen into sin, that he may impose this penance upon himself," is talking without any warrant from Scripture. For where does the Bible teach to atone for breaking one commandment of God by breaking another? What advice is this, -- "Commit a new act of disobedience, and God will more easily forgive the past!"

11. Others there are who, to excuse their disobedience plead that they are unworthy in another sense, that they "cannot live up to it; they cannot pretend to lead so holy a life as constantly communicating would oblige them to do." Put this into plain words. I ask, Why do not you accept the mercy which God commands you to accept? You answer, "Because I cannot live up to the profession I must make when

I receive it." Then it is plain you ought never to receive it at all. For it is no more lawful to promise once what you know you cannot perform, than to promise it a thousand times. You know too, that it is one and the same promise, whether you make it every year or every day. You promise to do just as much, whether you promise ever so often or ever so seldom.

If, therefore, you cannot live up to the profession they make who communicate once a week, neither can you come up to the profession you make who communicate once a year. But cannot you, indeed? Then it had been good for you that you had never been born. For all that you profess at the Lord's table, you must both profess and keep, or you cannot be saved. For you profess nothing there but this,-- that you will diligently keep his commandments. And cannot you keep up to this profession? Then you cannot enter into life.

12. Think then what you say, before you say you cannot live up to what is required of constant communicants. This is no more than is required of any communicants; yea, of everyone that has a soul to be saved. So that to say, you cannot live up to this, is neither better nor worse than renouncing Christianity. It is, in effect, renouncing your baptism, wherein you solemnly promised to keep all his commandments. You now fly from that profession. You wilfully break one of his commandments, and, to excuse yourself, say, you cannot keep his commandments: Then you cannot expect to receive the promises, which are made only to those that keep them.
13. What has been said on this pretence against constant communion, is applicable to those who say the same thing in other words: "We dare not do it, because it requires so perfect an obedience afterwards as we cannot promise to perform." Nay, it requires neither more nor less perfect obedience than you promised in your baptism. You then undertook to keep the commandments of God by his help; and you promise no more when you communicate.
14. A Second objection which is often made against constant communion, is, the having so much business as will not allow time for such a preparation as is necessary thereto. I answer: All the preparation that is absolutely necessary is contained in those words: "Repent you truly of your sins past; have faith in Christ our Saviour;" (and observe, that word is not here taken in its highest sense;) "amend your lives, and be in charity with all men; so shall ye be meet partakers of these holy mysteries." All who are thus prepared may draw near without fear, and receive the sacrament to their comfort. Now, what business can hinder you from being thus prepared? -- from repenting of your past sins, from believing that Christ died to save sinners, from amending your lives, and being in charity with all men? No business can hinder you from this, unless it be such as hinders you from being in a state of salvation. If you resolve and design to follow Christ, you are fit to approach the Lord's table. If you do not design this, you are only fit for the table and company of devils.
15. No business, therefore, can hinder any man from having that preparation which alone is necessary, unless it be such as unprepares him for heaven, as puts him out of a state of salvation. Indeed every prudent man will, when he has time, examine himself before he receives the Lord's Supper. whether he repents him truly of his former sins; whether he believes the promises of God; whether he fully designs to walk in His ways, and be in charity with all men. In this, and in private prayer, he will doubtless spend all the time he conveniently can. But what is this to you who have not time? What excuse is this for not obeying God? He commands you to come, and prepare yourself by prayer, if you have time; if you have not, however, come. Make not reverence to God's command a pretence for breaking it. Do not rebel against him for fear of offending him. Whatever you do or leave

undone besides, be sure to do what God bids you do. Examining yourself, and using private prayer, especially before the Lord's Supper, is good; But behold! "to obey is better than" self-examination; "and to hearken," than the prayer of an angel.

16. A Third objection against constant communion is, that it abates our reverence for the sacrament. Suppose it did? What then? Will you thence conclude that you are not to receive it constantly? This does not follow. God commands you, "Do this." You may do it now, but will not, and, to excuse yourself say, "If I do it so often, it will abate the reverence with which I do it now." Suppose it did; has God ever told you, that when the obeying his command abates your reverence to it, then you may disobey it? If he has, you are guiltless; if not, what you say is just nothing to the purpose. The law is clear. Either show that the lawgiver makes this exception, or you are guilty before him.
17. Reverence for the sacrament may be of two sorts: Either such as is owing purely to the newness of the thing, such as men naturally have for anything they are not used to; or such as is owing to our faith, or to the love or fear of God. Now, the former of these is not properly a religious reverence, but purely natural. And this sort of reverence for the Lord's Supper, the constantly receiving of it must lessen. But it will not lessen the true religious reverence, but rather confirm and increase it.
18. A Fourth objection is, "I have communicated constantly so long, but I have not found the benefit I expected." This has been the case with many well-meaning persons, and therefore deserves to be particularly considered. And consider this: First, whatever God commands us to do, we are to do because he commands, whether we feel any benefit thereby or no. Now, God commands, "Do this in remembrance of me." This, therefore, we are to do because he commands, whether we find present benefit thereby or not. But undoubtedly we shall find benefit sooner or later, though perhaps insensibly. We shall be insensibly strengthened, made more fit for the service of God, and more constant in it. At least, we are kept from falling back, and preserved from many sins and temptations: And surely this should be enough to make us receive this food as often as we can; though we do not presently feel the happy effects of it, as some have done, and we ourselves may when God sees best.
19. But suppose a man has often been at the sacrament, and yet received no benefit. Was it not his own fault? Either he was not rightly prepared, willing to obey all the commands and to receive all the promises of God, or he did not receive it aright, trusting in God. Only see that you are duly prepared for it, and the oftener you come to the Lord's table, the greater benefit you will find there.
20. A Fifth objection which some have made against constant communion is, that "the Church enjoins it only three times a year." The words of the Church are, "Note, that every parishioner shall communicate at the least three times in the year." To this I answer, First, What, if the Church had not enjoined it at all, Is it not enough that God enjoins it? We obey the Church only for God's sake. And shall we not obey God himself? If, then, you receive three times a year because the Church commands it, receive every time you can because God commands it. Else your doing the one will be so far from excusing you for not doing the other, that your own practice will prove your folly and sin, and leave you without excuse.

But, Secondly, we cannot conclude from these words, that the Church excuses him who receives only thrice a year. The plain sense of them is, that he who does not receive thrice at least, shall be cast out of the Church: But they by no means excuse him who communicates no oftener. This never was the judgment of our Church: On the contrary, she takes all possible care that the sacrament be duly

administered, wherever the Common Prayer is read, every Sunday and holiday in the year.

The Church gives a particular direction with regard to those that are in Holy Orders: "In all cathedral and collegiate Churches and Colleges, where there are many Priests and Deacons, they shall all receive the communion with the Priest, every Sunday at the least."

21. It has been shown, First, that if we consider the Lord's Supper as a command of Christ, no man can have any pretence to Christian piety, who does not receive it (not once a month, but) as often as he can. Secondly, that if we consider the institution of it, as a mercy to ourselves, no man who does not receive it as often as he can has any pretence to Christian prudence. Thirdly, that none of the objections usually made, can be any excuse for that man who does not, at every opportunity obey this command and accept this mercy.
22. It has been particularly shown, First, that unworthiness is no excuse; because though in one sense we are all unworthy, yet none of us need be afraid of being unworthy in St. Paul's sense, of "eating and drinking unworthily." Secondly, that the not having time enough for preparation can be no excuse; since the only preparation which is absolutely necessary, is that which no business can hinder, nor indeed anything on earth, unless so far as it hinders our being in a state of salvation. Thirdly, that its abating our reverence is no excuse; since he who gave the command, "Do this," nowhere adds, "unless it abates your reverence." Fourthly, that our not profiting by it is no excuse; since it is our own fault, in neglecting that necessary preparation which is in our own power. Lastly, that the judgment of our own Church is quite in favour of constant communion. If those who have hitherto neglected it on any of these pretences, will lay these things to heart, they will, by the grace of God, come to a better mind, and never forsake their own mercies.

Edited by Jason Coyle with corrections by George Lyons and further formatting by Ryan Danker for the Wesley Center for Applied Theology at Northwest Nazarene University.

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Lesson 12: Means of Grace and Sacraments

Due This Lesson

One-page essay
Sermon close
Sermon reading
Journaling

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will

- discuss and identify the means of grace
- articulate the Wesleyan understanding of infant and adult baptism
- explore the meaning of the Eucharist in contrast to other positions

Homework Assignments

Write a one-two page essay: What do you believe about the end of the world?

Continue working with the Wesley sermon that you have selected for the rewrite of the introduction and closing. Using the information from your small groups rewrite the body—Key Points—of the sermon using contemporary/cultural language, illustrations and presentation.

Write in your journal. This assignment is ongoing. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights on the material presented in class. Read a portion of John Wesley's journal and reflect on your reading. His journal can be found at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu>

Wesley Quotes

"By 'means of grace' I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained by God, to be ordinary channels whereby he might convey to persons prevenient, justifying, or sanctifying grace . . . All who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the means that he has given."

Works, Jackson Edition, vol 5: 189

"If, therefore, we have any regard for the plain command of Christ, if we desire the pardon of our sins, if we wish for strength to believe, to love and obey God, then we should neglect no opportunity of receiving the Lord's Supper."

Sermon, "The Duty of Constant Communion," quoted in Outler, p. 336

Wesley's Means of Grace

General means of grace

- Keeping the commandments
- Denying ourselves
- Taking up our cross
- Exercising the presence of God

Instituted or particular means of grace

- Prayer
- Searching the Scriptures
- The Lord's Supper
- Fasting
- "Christian conference"

Prudential means of grace

- Class meetings—small groups
- Prayer meeting
- Covenant and watch night services
- Love feasts—a type of testimony service
- Visiting the sick
- Doing all the good one can
- Reading devotional classics

Baptism

Infant Baptism

When we baptize children, we are acknowledging together several important characteristics of God.

- We proclaim together our common belief in the reality of God's prevenient grace.
- In presenting a child for baptism . . . we acknowledge that God himself is committed to the child in deep and lasting ways—in ways beyond what we could ask or imagine.
- We believe that baptism, as a sign of the new covenant, is a sign of God's promises even to the child.

Believer Baptism

- Bearing the mark of Christ
- Dying the death of Christ
- Living the life of Christ
- Receiving the Spirit of Christ
- Becoming a part of the body of Christ

Eucharist

The classical Eucharistic interpretations.

Transubstantiation

Consubstantiation

Spiritual Presence

Memorialist

Most scholars agree that Wesley's position falls between the concept of spiritual presence and the memorialist position.

Wesley writes:

The Lord's Supper was ordained by God to be a means of conveying either prevenient, justifying, or sanctifying/preserving grace, according to the necessity of the people. The persons for whom it was ordained are all those who know and feel that they want the grace of God, either to restrain them from sin, or to show their sins forgiven, or to renew their souls in the image of God, or to enter into the presence of God in communion with him. No preparation is necessary other than a desire to receive whatsoever grace God pleases to give. No fitness is required other than a sense of our state, or our utter sinfulness and helplessness apart from Christ. Therefore if you want such grace as God pleases to give to you, draw near in faith and find comfort and strength.

It is impossible to grow in our Christian walk without attending to the means of grace in general. But for Wesley, the Eucharist was the most important means, and to neglect it was unthinkable.

Lesson 13: Last Things

Due This Lesson

One-two page essay
Sermon body
Journaling

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will

- identify the “most” Wesleyan of end-time theories
- define the Wesleyan understanding of
 - death
 - resurrection
 - judgment
 - intermediate states
 - new creation

Homework Assignments

Write an essay on one of the following topics:

- What is the Church?
- What is a pastor?

Read Resource 13-4: “Address to the Clergy.”

Write in your journal. This assignment is ongoing. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights on the material presented in class. Read a portion of John Wesley’s journal and reflect on your reading. His journal can be found at:

<http://wesley.nnu.edu>

Wesley Quotes

Wesley always connected the coming Kingdom with present salvation: “He is already renewing the face of the earth. And we have strong reason to hope that the work he hath begun he will carry on unto the day of his Lord Jesus; that he will never intermit this blessed work of his Spirit until he has fulfilled his promises; until he hath put a period to sin and misery, and infirmity, and death; and re-established universal holiness and happiness, and caused all the inhabitants of earth to sing together ‘Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!’ ”

Sermon, “The General Spread of the Gospel,” *Works* 2: 499

Wesley's view of the future, a "new earth" is laced with scriptural references of hope: "Suppose now the fullness of time to be come, and the prophecies to be accomplished—what a prospect is this! . . . Here is no din of arms, no 'confused noise,' no 'garments rolled in blood' . . . no country or city divided against itself, and tearing out its own bowels . . . Here is no oppression to 'make' even 'the wise man mad;' no extortion to 'grind the face of the poor;' no robbery or wrong; no rapine or injustice; for all are 'content with such things as they possess.' Thus 'righteousness and peace have kissed each other;' they have 'taken root and filled the land;' "righteousness flourishing out of the earth," and 'peace looking down from heaven.' "

Sermon, "Scriptural Christianity," *Works* 1:170-71

Last Things

The general consensus of Wesley scholars is that speculation about the end of the world falls outside the realm of what is “Wesleyan.” This is not to say that Wesley did not consider such inquiries at all. It is to say that eschatology is by nature speculative theology. And since Wesley’s primary doctrine, out of which all other doctrines flow, is soteriology, the doctrine of end times is theologically relevant to Wesleyans *only* as it relates to the doctrine of salvation.

It would make little logical sense that Wesley would insist on the dynamic between divine grace and human cooperation in his soteriology where human free will is key, and then subscribe to a unilateral notion of eschatology, where humanity sits by and waits for a preordained and predetermined end where God’s absolute sovereignty is completely divorced from human activity.

Death, Immortality, Resurrection, Intermediate States, and Judgment

Death

The distinguishing characteristic of Christian dying is that one dies with no fear, but with a blessed anticipation of seeing Christ.

Immortality/Resurrection

Wesley clearly stands with the orthodox position regarding immortality: "I believe in the resurrection of the body."

Intermediate States

At certain periods in Wesley's developing thought, he affirms what are known as "intermediate states."

Judgment

Keeping with Wesley's synergistic theology, he stressed that any ultimate judgment that led to hell would only be the result of the person's deliberate choice to resist grace.

New Creation

One distinctive of Wesley's eschatological theology is the concept of the new creation. Toward his later years, he shifted his hope from heaven to a future of new creation. This new creation will be an actual physical place.

Wesley also hinted at the fact that Christian growth will continue in this place.

Wesley's Works (1872 Jackson ed.), vol. 10

AN ADDRESS TO THE CLERGY.

BRETHREN AND FATHERS, LET it not be imputed to forwardness, vanity, or presumption, that one who is of little esteem in the Church takes upon him thus to address a body of people, to many of whom he owes the highest reverence. I owe a still higher regard to Him who I believe requires this at my hands; to the great Bishop of our souls; before whom both you and I must shortly give an account of our stewardship. It is a debt I owe to love, to real, disinterested affection, to declare what has long been the burden of my soul. And may the God of love enable you to read these lines in the same spirit wherewith they were wrote! It will easily appear to an unprejudiced reader, that I do not speak from a spirit of anger or resentment. I know well, "the wrath

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of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Much less would I utter one word out of contempt; a spirit justly abhorred by God and man. Neither of these can consist with that earnest, tender love, which is the motive of my present undertaking. In this spirit I desire to cast my bread upon the waters; it is enough if I find it again after many days.

Meantime, you are sensible, love does not forbid, but rather require, plainness of speech. Has it not often constrained you, as well as me, to lay aside, not only disguise, but reserve also; and "by manifestation of the truth to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God?" And while I endeavour to do this, let me earnestly entreat you, for the love of God, for the love of your own soul, for the love of the souls committed to your charge, yea, and of the whole Church of Christ, do not bias your mind, by thinking who it is that speaks; but impartially consider what is spoken. And if it be false or foolish, reject it; but do not reject "the words of truth and soberness."

My first design was, to offer a few plain thoughts to the Clergy of our own Church only. But upon farther reflection, I see no cause for being so "straitened in my own bowels." I am a debtor to all; and therefore, though I primarily speak to them with whom I am more immediately connected, yet I would not be understood to exclude any, of whatsoever denomination, whom God has called to "watch over the souls of others, as they that must give account."

In order to our giving this account with joy, are there not two things which it highly imports us to consider: First, What manner of men ought we to be? Secondly; Are we such, or are we not?

- I. And, First, if we are "overseers over the Church of God, which he hath bought with his own blood," what manner of men ought we to be, in gifts as well as in grace?
 1. To begin with gifts; and, (1.) With those that are from nature. Ought not a Minister to have, First, a good understanding, a clear apprehension, a sound judgment, and a capacity of reasoning with some closeness? Is not this necessary in an high

degree for the work of the ministry? Otherwise, how will he be able to understand the various states of those under his care; or to steer them through a thousand difficulties and dangers, to the haven where they would be? Is it not necessary, with respect to the numerous

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enemies whom he has to encounter? Can a fool cope with all the men that know not God, and with all the spirits of darkness? Nay, he will neither be aware of the devices of Satan, nor the craftiness of his children.

Secondly. Is it not highly expedient that a guide of souls should have likewise some liveliness and readiness of thought? Or how will he be able, when need requires, to "answer a fool according to his folly?" How frequent is this need! seeing we almost everywhere meet with those empty, yet petulant creatures, who are far "wiser in their own eyes, than seven men that can render a reason." Reasoning, therefore, is not the weapon to be used with them. You cannot deal with them thus. They scorn being convinced; nor can they be silenced, but in their own way.

Thirdly. To a sound understanding, and a lively turn of thought, should be joined a good memory; if it may be, ready, that you may make whatever occurs in reading or conversation your own; but, however, retentive, lest we be "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." On the contrary, "every scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," every Teacher fitted for his work, "is like an householder who bringeth out of his treasures things new and old."

2. And as to acquired endowments, can he take one step aright, without first a competent share of knowledge? a knowledge, First, of his own office; of the high trust in which he stands, the important work to which he is called? Is there any hope that a man should discharge his office well, if he knows not what it is? that he should acquit himself faithfully of a trust, the very nature whereof he does not understand? Nay, if he knows not the work God has given him to do, he cannot finish it.

Secondly. No less necessary is a knowledge of the Scriptures, which teach us how to teach others; yea, a knowledge of all the Scriptures; seeing scripture interprets scripture; one part fixing the sense of another. So that, whether it be true or not, that every good textuary is a good Divine, it is certain none can be a good Divine who is not a good textuary. None else can be mighty in the Scriptures; able both to instruct and to stop the mouths of gainsayers.

In order to do this accurately, ought he not to know the literal meaning of every word, verse, and chapter; without which there can be no firm foundation on which the spiritual

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meaning can be built? Should he not likewise be able to deduce the proper corollaries, speculative and practical, from each text; to solve the difficulties which arise, and answer the objections which are or may be raised against it; and to make a suitable application of all to the consciences of his hearers?

Thirdly. But can he do this, in the most effectual manner, without a knowledge of the original tongues? Without this, will he not frequently be at a stand, even as to

texts which regard practice only? But he will be under still greater difficulties, with respect to controverted scriptures. He will be ill able to rescue these out of the hands of any man of learning that would pervert them: For whenever an appeal is made to the original, his mouth is stopped at once.

Fourthly. Is not a knowledge of profane history, likewise, of ancient customs, of chronology and geography, though not absolutely necessary, yet highly expedient, for him that would thoroughly understand the Scriptures? since the want even of this knowledge is but poorly supplied by reading the comments of other men.

Fifthly. Some knowledge of the sciences also, is, to say the least, equally expedient. Nay, may we not say, that the knowledge of one, (whether art or science,) although now quite unfashionable, is even necessary next, and in order to, the knowledge of the Scripture itself? I mean logic. For what is this, if rightly understood, but the art of good sense? of apprehending, things clearly, judging truly, and reasoning conclusively? What is it, viewed in another light, but the art of learning and teaching; whether by convincing or persuading? What is there, then, in the whole compass of science, to be desired in comparison of it?

Is not some acquaintance with what has been termed the second part of logic, (metaphysics,) if not so necessary as this, yet highly expedient, (1.) In order to clear our apprehension, (without which it is impossible either to judge correctly, or to reason closely or conclusively,) by ranging our ideas under general heads? And, (2.) In order to understand many useful writers, who can very hardly be understood without it?

Should not a Minister be acquainted too with at least the general grounds of natural philosophy? Is not this a great help to the accurate understanding several passages of Scripture? Assisted by this, he may himself comprehend, and on proper occasions explain to others, how the invisible things of

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God are seen from the creation of the world; how "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork;" till they cry out, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all."

But how far can he go in this, without some knowledge of geometry? which is likewise useful, not barely on this account, but to give clearness of apprehension, and an habit of thinking closely and connectedly.

It must be allowed, indeed, that some of these branches of knowledge are not so indispensably necessary as the rest; and therefore no thinking man will condemn the Fathers of the Church, for having, in all ages and nations, appointed some to the ministry, who, suppose they had the capacity, yet had not had the opportunity of attaining them. But what excuse is this for one who has the opportunity, and makes no use of it? What can be urged for a person who has had an University education, if he does not understand them all? Certainly, supposing him to have any capacity, to have common understanding, he is inexcusable before God and man.

Sixthly. Can any who spend several years in those seats of learning, be excused, if they do not add to that of the languages and sciences, the knowledge of the Fathers? the most authentic commentators on Scripture, as being both nearest the

fountain, and 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 Nice. But who would not likewise desire to have some acquaintance with those that followed them? with St. Chrysostom, Basil, Jerome, Austin; and, above all, the man of a broken heart, Ephraim Syrus?

Seventhly. There is yet another branch of knowledge highly necessary for a Clergyman, and that is, knowledge of the world; a knowledge of men, of their maxims, tempers, and manners, such as they occur in real life. Without this he will be liable to receive much hurt, and capable of doing little good; as he will not know, either how to deal with men according to the vast variety of their characters, or to preserve himself from those who almost in every place lie in wait to deceive.

How nearly allied to this is the discernment of spirits! so far as it may be acquired by diligent observation. And can a guide of souls be without it? If he is, is he not liable to stumble at every step?

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Eighthly. Can he be without an eminent share of prudence? that most uncommon thing which is usually called common sense? But how shall we define it? Shall we say, with the Schools, that it is *recta ratio rerum agibilium particularium*?* Or is it an habitual consideration of all the circumstances of a thing, -

*Quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando?**

and a facility of adapting our behaviour to the various combinations of them? However it be defined, should it not be studied with all care, and pursued with all earnestness of application? For what terrible inconveniences ensue, whenever it is remarkably wanting!

Ninthly. Next to prudence or common sense, (if it be not included therein,) a Clergyman ought certainly to have some degree of good breeding; I mean address, easiness and propriety of behaviour, wherever his lot is cast: Perhaps one might add, he should have (though not the stateliness; for he is "the servant of all," yet) all the courtesy of a gentleman, joined with the correctness of a scholar. Do we want a pattern of this? We have one in St. Paul, even before Felix, Festus, King Agrippa. One can scarce help thinking he was one of the best bred men, one of the finest gentlemen in the world. O that we likewise had the skill to "please all men for their good unto edification!"

In order to this, especially in our public ministrations, would not one wish for a strong, clear, musical voice, and a good delivery, both with regard to pronunciation and action? I name these here, because they are far more acquirable than has been commonly imagined. A remarkably weak and untunable voice has by steady application become strong and agreeable. Those who stammered almost at every word, have learned to speak clearly and plainly. And many who were eminently ungraceful in their pronunciation and awkward in their gesture, have in some time, by art and labour, not only corrected that awkwardness of action and ungracefulness of utterance, but have become excellent in both, and in these respects likewise the ornaments of their profession.

What may greatly encourage those who give themselves up to the work, with regard to all these endowments, many of

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which cannot be attained without considerable labour, is this: They are assured of being assisted in all their labour by Him who teacheth man knowledge. And who teacheth like him? Who, like him, giveth wisdom to the simple? How easy is it for Him, (if we desire it, and believe that he is both able and willing to do this,) by the powerful, though secret, influences of his Spirit, to open and enlarge our understanding; to strengthen all our faculties; to bring to our remembrance whatsoever things are needful, and to fix and sharpen our attention to them; so that we may profit above all who depend wholly on themselves, in whatever may qualify us for our Master's work!

3. But all these things, however great they may be in themselves, are little in comparison of those that follow. For what are all other gifts, whether natural or acquired, when compared to the grace of God? And how ought this to animate and govern the whole intention, affection, and practice of a Minister of Christ!

(1.) As to his intention, both in undertaking this important office, and in executing every part of it, ought it not to be singly this, to glorify God, and to save souls from death? Is not this absolutely and indispensably necessary, before all and above all things? "If his eye be single, his whole body," his whole soul, his whole work, "will be full of light." "God who commanded light to shine out of darkness," will shine on his heart; will direct him in all his ways, will give him to see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. But if his eye, his intention be not single, if there be any mixture of meaner motives, (how much more, if those were or are his leading motives in undertaking or exercising this high office!) his "whole body," his whole soul, "will be full of darkness," even such as issues from the bottomless pit: Let not such a man think that he shall have any blessing from the Lord. No; the curse of God abideth on him. Let him not expect to enjoy any settled peace, any solid comfort in his own breast; neither can he hope there will be any fruit of his labours, any sinners converted to God.

(2.) As to his affections. Ought not a "steward of the mysteries of God," a shepherd of the souls for whom Christ died, to be endued with an eminent measure of love to God, and love to all his brethren? a love the same in kind, but in degree far beyond that of ordinary Christians? Can he

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otherwise answer the high character he bears, and the relation wherein he stands? Without this, how can he go through all the toils and difficulties which necessarily attend the faithful execution of his office? Would it be possible for a parent to go through the pain and fatigue of bearing and bringing up even one child, were it not for that vehement affection, that inexpressible storge, which the Creator has given for that very end? How much less will it be possible for any Pastor, any spiritual parent, to go through the pain and labour of "travailing in birth for," and bringing up, many children to the measure of the

full stature of Christ, without a large measure of that inexpressible affection which "a stranger intermeddleth not with!"

He therefore must be utterly void of understanding, must be a madman of the highest order, who, on any consideration whatever, undertakes this office, while he is a stranger to this affection. Nay, I have often wondered that any man in his senses does not rather dig or thresh for a livelihood, than continue therein, unless he feels at least (which is *extremâ lineâ amare**) such an earnest concern for the glory of God, and such a thirst after the salvation of souls, that he is ready to do anything, to lose anything, or to suffer anything, rather than one should perish for whom Christ died.

And is not even this degree of love to God and man utterly inconsistent with the love of the world; with the love of money or praise; with the very lowest degree of either ambition or sensuality? How much less can it consist with that poor, low, irrational, childish principle, the love of diversions? (Surely, even a man, were he neither a Minister nor a Christian, should "put away childish things.") Not only this, but the love of pleasure, and what lies still deeper in the soul, the love of ease, flees before it.

(3.) As to his practice: "Unto the ungodly, saith God, Why dost thou preach my laws?" What is a Minister of Christ, a shepherd of souls, unless he is all devoted to God? unless he abstain, with the utmost care and diligence, from every evil word and work; from all appearance of evil; yea, from the most innocent things, whereby any might be offended or made weak? Is he not called, above others, to be an example to the flock, in his private as well as public character?

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an example of all holy and heavenly tempers, filling the heart so as to shine through the life? Consequently, is not his whole life, if he walks worthy of his calling, one incessant labour of love; one continued tract of praising God, and helping man; one series of thankfulness and beneficence? Is he not always humble, always serious, though rejoicing evermore; mild, gentle, patient, abstinent? May you not resemble him to a guardian angel, ministering to those "who shall be heirs of salvation?" Is he not one sent forth from God, to stand between God and man, to guard and assist the poor, helpless children of men, to supply them both with light and strength, to guide them through a thousand known and unknown dangers, till at the appointed time he returns, with those committed to his charge, to his and their Father who is in heaven?

O who is able to describe such a messenger of God, faith fully executing his high office! working together with God, with the great Author both of the old and of the new creation! See his Lord, the eternal Son of God, going forth on that work of omnipotence, and creating heaven and earth by the breath of his mouth! See the servant whom he delighteth to honour, fulfilling the counsel of his will, and in his name speaking the word whereby is raised a new spiritual creation. Empowered by him, he says to the dark, unformed void of nature, "Let there be light;" "and there is light. Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." He is continually employed, in what the angels of God have not the honour to do, - co-operating with the Redeemer of men in "bringing many children to glory."

Such is a true Minister of Christ; and such, beyond all possibility of dispute, ought both you and I to be.

II. But are we such? What are we in the respects above named? It is a melancholy but necessary consideration. It is true, many have wrote upon this subject; and some of them admirably well: Yet few, if any, at least in our nation, have carried their inquiry through all these particulars. Neither have they always spoken so plain and home as the nature of the thing required. But why did they not? Was it because they were unwilling to give pain to those whom they loved? Or were they hindered by fear of disobliging, or of incurring any temporal inconvenience? Miserable fear! Is any temporal inconvenience whatever to be laid in the balance with the souls of our brethren? Or were they

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prevented by shame, arising from a consciousness of their own many and great defects? Undoubtedly this might extenuate the fault, but not altogether remove it. For is it not a wise advice, "Be not ashamed when it concerneth thy soul?" especially when it concerns the souls of thousands also? In such a case may God

Set as a flint our steady face,
Harden to adamant our brow!

But is there not another hinderance? Should not compassion, should not tenderness, hinder us from giving pain? Yes, from giving unnecessary pain. But what manner of tenderness is this? It is like that of a surgeon who lets his patient be lost because he is too compassionate to probe his wounds. Cruel compassion! Let me give pain, so I may save life. Let me probe, that God may heal.

1. Are we then such as we are sensible we should be, First, with regard to natural endowments? I am afraid not. If we were, how many stumbling-blocks would be removed out of the way of serious Infidels? Alas, what terrible effects do we continually see of that common though senseless imagination, "The boy, if he is fit for nothing else, will do well enough for a Parson!" Hence it is, that we see (I would to God there were no such instance in all Great Britain, or Ireland!) dull, heavy, blockish Ministers; men of no life, no spirit, no readiness of thought; who are consequently the jest of every pert fool, every lively, airy coxcomb they meet. We see others whose memory can retain nothing; therefore they can never be men of considerable knowledge; they can never know much even of those things which they are most nearly concerned to know. Alas, they are pouring the water into a leaky vessel; and the broken cistern can hold no water! I do not say, with Plato, that "all human knowledge is nothing but remembering." Yet certain it is, that, without remembering, we can have but a small share of knowledge. And even those who enjoy the most retentive memory, find great reason still to complain,

Skill comes so slow, and life so fast does fly;
We learn so little, and forget so much!

And yet we see and bewail a still greater defect in some that are in the ministry. They want sense, they are defective in understanding, their capacity is low and shallow, their apprehension is muddy and confused; of consequence, they

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are utterly incapable either of forming a true judgment of things, or of reasoning justly upon anything. O how can these who themselves know nothing aright, impart knowledge to others? how instruct them in all the variety of duty, to God, their neighbour, and themselves? How will they guide them through all the mazes of error, through all the intanglements of sin and temptation? How will they apprise them of the devices of Satan, and guard them against all the wisdom of the world?

It is easy to perceive, I do not speak this for their sake; (for they are incorrigible;) but for the sake of parents, that they may open their eyes and see, a blockhead can never "do well enough for a Parson." He may do well enough for a tradesman; so well as to gain fifty or an hundred thousand pounds. He may do well enough for a soldier; nay, (if you pay well for it,) for a very well-dressed and well-mounted officer. He may do well enough for a sailor, and may shine on the quarter-deck of a man-of-war. He may do so well, in the capacity of a lawyer or physician, as to ride in his gilt chariot. But O! think not of his being a Minister, unless you would bring a blot upon your family, a scandal upon our Church, and a reproach on the gospel, which he may murder, but cannot teach.

Are we such as we are sensible we should be, Secondly, with regard to acquired endowments? Here the matter (suppose we have common understanding) lies more directly within our own power. But under this, as well as the following heads, methinks I would not consider at all, how many or how few are either excellent or defective. I would only desire every person who reads this to apply it to himself. Certainly some one in the nation is defective. Am not I the man?

Let us each seriously examine himself. Have I,

(1.) Such a knowledge of Scripture, as becomes him who undertakes so to explain it to others, that it may be a light in all their paths? Have I a full and clear view of the analogy of faith, which is the clue to guide me through the whole? Am I acquainted with the several parts of Scripture; with all parts of the Old Testament and the New? Upon the mention of any text, do I know the context, and the parallel places? Have I that point at least of a good Divine, the being a good textuary? Do I know the grammatical construction of the four Gospels; of the Acts; of the Epistles; and am I a

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master of the spiritual sense (as well as the literal) of what I read? Do I understand the scope of each book, and how every part of it tends thereto? Have I skill to draw the natural inferences deducible from each text? Do I know the objections raised to them or from them by Jews, Deists, Papists, Arians, Socinians, and all other sectaries, who more or less corrupt or cauponize the word of God? Am I ready to give a satisfactory answer to each of these objections? And have I learned to apply every part of the sacred writings, as the various states of my hearers require?

(2.) Do I understand Greek and Hebrew? Otherwise, how can I undertake, (as every Minister does,) not only to explain books which are written therein, but to defend them against all opponents? Am I not at the mercy of every one who does understand, or even pretends to understand, the original? For which way can I confute his pretence? Do I understand the language of the Old Testament? critically? at all? Can I read into English one of David's Psalms; or

even the first chapter of Genesis? Do I understand the language of the New Testament? Am I a critical master of it? Have I enough of it even to read into English the first chapter of St. Luke? If not, how many years did I spend at school? How many at the University? And what was I doing all those years? Ought not shame to cover my face?

(3.) Do I understand my own office? Have I deeply considered before God the character which I bear? What is it to be an Ambassador of Christ, an Envoy from the King of heaven? And do I know and feel what is implied in "watching over the souls" of men "as he that must give account?"

(4.) Do I understand so much of profane history as tends to confirm and illustrate the sacred? Am I acquainted with the ancient customs of the Jews and other nations mentioned in Scripture? Have I a competent knowledge of chronology, that at least which refers to the sacred writings? And am I so far (if no farther) skilled in geography, as to know the situation, and give some account, of all the considerable places mentioned therein?

(5.) Am I a tolerable master of the sciences? Have I gone through the very gate of them, logic? If not, I am not likely to go much farther, when I stumble at the threshold. Do I understand it so as to be ever the better for it? to have it

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always ready for use; so as to apply every rule of it, when occasion is, almost as naturally as I turn my hand? Do I understand it at all? Are not even the moods and figures above my comprehension? Do not I poorly endeavour to cover my ignorance, by affecting to laugh at their barbarous names? Can I even reduce an indirect mood to a direct; an hypothetic to a categorical syllogism? Rather, have not my stupid indolence and laziness made me very ready to believe, what the little wits and pretty gentlemen affirm, "that logic is good for nothing?" It is good for this at least, (wherever it is understood,) to make people talk less; by showing them both what is, and what is not, to the point; and how extremely hard it is to prove anything. Do I understand metaphysics; if not the depths of the Schoolmen, the subtleties of Scotus or Aquinas, yet the first rudiments, the general principles, of that useful science? Have I conquered so much of it, as to clear my apprehension and range my ideas under proper heads; so much as enables me to read with ease and pleasure, as well as profit, Dr. Henry More's Works, Malebranche's "Search after Truth," and Dr. Clarke's "Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God?" Do I understand natural philosophy? If I have not gone deep therein, have I digested the general grounds of it? Have I mastered Gravesande, Keill, Sir Isaac Newton's Principia, with his "Theory of Light and Colours?" In order thereto, have I laid in some stock of mathematical knowledge? Am I master of the mathematical A B C of Euclid's Elements? If I have not gone thus far, if I am such a novice still, what have I been about ever since I came from school?

(6.) Am I acquainted with the Fathers; at least with those venerable men who lived in the earliest ages of the Church? Have I read over and over the golden remains of Clemens Romanus, of Ignatius and Polycarp; and have I given one reading, at least, to the works of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Cyprian?

(7.) Have I any knowledge of the world? Have I studied men, (as well as books,) and observed their tempers, maxims, and manners? Have I learned to beware of men; to add the wisdom of the serpent to the innocence of the dove? Has God given me by nature, or have I acquired, any measure of the discernment of spirits; or of its near ally, prudence, enabling me on all occasions to consider all circumstances, and

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to suit and vary my behaviour according to the various combinations of them? Do I labour never to be rude or ill-mannered; not to be remarkably wanting in good-breeding? Do I endeavour to copy after those who are eminent for address and easiness of behaviour? Am I (though never light or trifling, either in word or action, yet) affable and courteous to all men? And do I omit no means which is in my power, and consistent with my character, of "pleasing all men" with whom I converse, "for their good to edification?"

If I am wanting even in these lowest endowments, shall I not frequently regret the want? How often shall I move heavily, and be far less useful than I might have been! How much more shall I suffer in my usefulness, if I have wasted the opportunities I once had of acquainting myself with the great lights of antiquity, the Ante-Nicene Fathers; or if I have droned away those precious hours wherein I might have made myself master of the sciences! How poorly must I many times drag on, for want of the helps which I have vilely cast away! But is not my case still worse, if I have loitered away the time wherein I should have perfected myself in Greek and Hebrew? I might before this have been critically acquainted with these treasuries of sacred knowledge. But they are now hid from my eyes; they are close locked up, and I have no key to open them. However, have I used all possible diligence to supply that grievous defect, (so far as it can be supplied now,) by the most accurate knowledge of the English Scriptures? Do I meditate therein day and night? Do I think (and consequently speak) thereof, "when I sit in the house, and when I walk by the way; when I lie down, and when I rise up?" By this means have I at length attained a thorough knowledge, as of the sacred text, so of its literal and spiritual meaning? Otherwise, how can I attempt to instruct others therein? Without this, I am a blind guide indeed! I am absolutely incapable of teaching my flock what I have never learned myself; no more fit to lead souls to God, than I am to govern the world.

2. And yet there is a higher consideration than that of gifts; higher than any or all of these joined together; a consideration in view of which all external and all intellectual endowments vanish into nothing. Am I such as I ought to be, with regard to the grace of God? The Lord God enable me to judge aright of this!

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And, (1.) What was my intention in taking upon me this office and ministry? What was it, in taking charge of this parish, either as Minister or Curate? Was it always, and is it now, wholly and solely to glorify God, and save souls? Has my eye been singly fixed on this, from the beginning hitherto? Had I never, have I not now, any mixture in my intention; any alloy of baser metal? Had I, or have I, no thought of worldly gain; "filthy lucre," as the Apostle terms it? Had I at first, have I now, no secular view? no eye to honour or preferment? to a plentiful income; or, at least, a competency? a warm and comfortable livelihood?

Alas! my brother! "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Was a comfortable livelihood, then, your motive for entering into the ministry? And do you avow this in the face of the sun, and without one blush upon your cheek? I cannot compare you with Simon Magus; you are many degrees beneath him. He offered to give money for the gift of God, the power of conferring the Holy Ghost. Hereby, however, he showed that he set an higher value on the gift, than on the money which he would have parted with for it. But you do not; you set a far higher value on the money than on the gift; insomuch that you do not desire, you will not accept of, the gift, unless the money accompany it! The Bishop said, when you was ordained, "Receive thou the Holy Ghost." But that was the least of your care. Let who will receive this, so you receive the money, the revenue of a good benefice. While you minister the word and sacraments before God, he gives the Holy Ghost to those who duly receive them: So that, "through your hands," likewise, "the Holy Ghost is," in this sense, "given" now. But you have little concern whether he be or not; so little, that you will minister no longer, he shall be given no more, either through your lips or hands, if you have no more money for your labour. O Simon, Simon! what a saint wert thou, compared to many of the most honourable men now in Christendom!

Let not any either ignorantly or wilfully mistake me. I would not "muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn." I know the spiritual "labourer," too, "is worthy of his reward;" and that, if "we sow unto" our flock "spiritual things," it is meet that we "reap of their carnal things." I do not therefore blame, no, not in any degree, a Minister's

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taking a yearly salary; but I blame his seeking, it. The thing blamable is the having it in his view, as the motive, or any part of the motive, for entering into this sacred office.

Hic nigræ succus loliginis, hæc est
Ærugo mera.*

If preferment, or honour, or profit was in his eye, his eye was not single. And our Lord knew no medium between a single and an evil eye. The eye, therefore, which is not single is evil. It is a plain, adjudged case. He then that has any other design in undertaking or executing the office of a Minister than purely this, to glorify God and save souls, his eye is not single. Of consequence, it is evil; and therefore his "whole body" must be "full of darkness." "The light which is in" him "is" very "darkness;" darkness covers his whole soul; he has no solid peace; he has no blessing from God; and there is no fruit of his labours.

It is no wonder that they who see no harm in this, see no harm in adding one living to another, and, if they can, another to that; yet still wiping their mouth, and saying, they have done no evil. In the very first step, their eye was not single; therefore their mind was filled with darkness. So they stumble on still in the same mire, till their feet "stumble on the dark mountains."

It is pleaded, indeed, that "a small living will not maintain a large family." Maintain! How? It will not clothe them "in purple and fine linen;" nor enable

them to fare "sumptuously every day:" But will not the living you have now afford you and yours the plain necessities, yea, and conveniencies, of life? Will it not maintain you in the frugal, Christian simplicity which becomes a Minister of Christ? It will not maintain you in pomp and grandeur, in elegant luxury, in fashionable sensuality. So much the better. If your eyes were open, whatever your income was, you would flee from these as from hell-fire.

It has been pleaded, Secondly, "By having a larger income, I am able to do more good." But dare you aver, in the presence of God, that it was singly with this view, only for this end, that you sought a larger income? If not, you are still condemned before God; your eye was not single.

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Do not therefore quibble and evade. This was not your motive of acting. It was not the desire of doing more good, whether to the souls or bodies of men; it was not the love of God: (You know it was not; your own conscience is as a thousand witnesses:) But it was "the love of money," and "the desire of other things," which animated you in this pursuit. If, then, the word of God is true, you are in darkness still: It fills and covers your soul.

I might add, a larger income does not necessarily imply a capacity of doing more spiritual good. And this is the highest kind of good. It is good to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked: But it is a far nobler good to "save souls from death," to "pluck" poor "brands out of the burning." And it is that to which you are peculiarly called, and to which you have solemnly promised to "bend all your studies and endeavours." But you are by no means sure, that, by adding a second living to your first, you shall be more capable of doing good in this kind, than you would have been had you laid out all your time, and all your strength, on your first flock.

"However, I shall be able to do more temporal good." You are not sure even of this. "If riches increase, they are increased that eat them." Perhaps your expenses may rise proportionably with your income. But if not, if you have a greater ability, shall you have a greater willingness, to do good? You have no reason in the world to believe this. There are a thousand instances of the contrary. How many have less will when they have more power! Now they have more money, they love it more; when they had little, they did their "diligence gladly to give of that little;" but since they have had much, they are so far from "giving plenteously," that they can hardly afford to give at all.

"But by my having another living, I maintain a valuable man, who might otherwise want the necessities of life." I answer, (1.) Was this your whole and sole motive in seeking that other living? If not, this plea will not clear you from the charge; your eye was not single. (2.) If it was, you may put it beyond dispute; you may prove at once the purity of your intention: - Make that valuable man Rector of one of your parishes, and you are clear before God and man.

But what can be pleaded for those who have two or more flocks, and take care of none of them? who just look at them

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now and then for a few days, and then remove to a convenient distance, and say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry?"

Some years ago I was asking a plain man, "Ought not he who feeds the flock, to eat of the milk of the flock?" He answered: "Friend, I have no objection to that. But what is that to him who does not feed the flock? He stands on the far side of the hedge, and feeds himself. It is another who feeds the flock; and ought he to have the milk of the flock? What canst thou say for him?" Truly, nothing at all; and he will have nothing to say for himself, when the great Shepherd shall pronounce that just sentence, "Bind" the unprofitable servant "hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness."

I have dwelt the longer on this head, because a right intention is the first point of all, and the most necessary of all; inasmuch as the want of this cannot be supplied by anything else whatsoever. It is the setting out wrong; a fault never to be amended, unless you return to the place whence you came, and set out right. It is impossible therefore to lay too great stress upon a single eye, a pure intention; without which, all our sacrifice, our prayers, sermons, and sacraments, are an abomination to the Lord.

I cannot dismiss this important article, without touching upon one thing more. How many are directly concerned therein, I leave to the Searcher of hearts.

You have been settled in a living or a curacy for some time. You are now going to exchange it for another. Why do you do this? For what reason do you prefer this before your former living or curacy? "Why, I had but fifty pounds a year where I was before, and now I shall have a hundred." And is this your real motive of acting? the true reason why you make the exchange? "It is: And is it not a sufficient reason?" Yes, for a Heathen; but not for one who calls himself a Christian.

Perhaps a more gross infatuation than this was never yet known upon earth. There goes one who is commissioned to be an ambassador of Christ, a shepherd of never-dying souls, a watchman over the Israel of God, a steward of the mysteries which "angels desire to look into." Where is he going? "To London, to Bristol, to Northampton." Why does he go thither? "To get more money." A tolerable reason for

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driving a herd of bullocks to one market rather than the other; though if a drover does this without any farther view, he acts as a Heathen, not a Christian. But what a reason for leaving the immortal souls over whom the Holy Ghost had made you overseer! And yet this is the motive which not only influences in secret, but is acknowledged openly and without a blush! Nay, it is excused, justified, defended; and that not by a few, here and there, who are apparently void both of piety and shame; but by numbers of seemingly religious men, from one end of England to the other!

(2.) Am I, Secondly, such as I ought to be, with regard to my affections? I am taken from among, and ordained for, men, in things pertaining to God. I stand between God and man, by the authority of the great Mediator, in the nearest and most endearing relation both to my Creator and to my fellow-creatures.

Have I accordingly given my heart to God, and to my brethren for his sake? Do I love God with all my soul and strength? and my neighbour, every man, as myself? Does this love swallow me up, possess me whole, constitute my supreme happiness? Does it animate all my passions and tempers, and regulate all my powers and faculties? Is it the spring which gives rise to all my thoughts, and governs all my words and actions? If it does, not unto me, but unto God be the praise! If it does not, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

At least, do I feel such a concern for the glory of God, and such a thirst after the salvation of men, that I am ready to do any thing, however contrary to my natural inclination, to part with anything, however agreeable to me, to suffer anything, however grievous to flesh and blood, so I may save one soul from hell? Is this my ruling temper at all times and in all places? Does it make all my labour light? If not, what a weariness is it! what a drudgery! Had I not far better hold the plough?

But is it possible this should be my ruling temper, if I still love the world? No, certainly, if I "love the world, the love of the Father is not in" me. The love of God is not in me, if I love money, if I love pleasure, so called, or diversion. Neither is it in me, if I am a lover of honour or praise, or of dress, or of good eating and drinking. Nay, even indolence, or the love of ease, is inconsistent with the love of God.

What a creature then is a covetous, an ambitious, a

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luxurious, an indolent, a diversion-loving Clergyman! Is it any wonder that infidelity should increase, where any of these are to be found? that many, comparing their spirit with their profession, should blaspheme that worthy name whereby they are called? But "woe be unto him by whom the offence cometh! It were good for that man if he had never been born." It were good for him now, rather than he should continue to turn the lame out of the way, "that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the depth of the sea!"

(3.) May not you who are of a better spirit consider, Thirdly, Am I such as I ought to be with regard to my practice? Am I, in my private life, wholly devoted to God? Am I intent upon this one thing, - to do in every point "not my own will, but the will of Him that sent me?" Do I carefully and resolutely abstain from every evil word and work? "from all appearance of evil?" from all indifferent things, which might lay a stumbling-block in the way of the weak? Am I zealous of good works? As I have time, do I do good to all men? and that in every kind, and in as high a degree as I am capable?

How do I behave in the public work whereunto I am called, - in my pastoral character? Am I "a pattern" to my "flock, in word, in behaviour, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity?" Is my "word," my daily conversation, "always in grace," always "meet to minister grace to the hearers?" Is my behaviour suitable to the dignity of my calling? Do I walk as Christ also walked? Does the love of God and man not only fill my heart, but shine through my whole conversation? Is the spirit, the temper which appears in all my words and actions, such as allows me to say with humble boldness, Herein "be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ?" Do all who have spiritual discernment take

knowledge (judging of the tree by its fruits) that "the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God;" and that in all "simplicity and godly sincerity I have my conversation in the world?" Am I exemplarily pure from all worldly desire, from all vile and vain affections? Is my life one continued labour of love, one tract of praising God and helping man? Do I in everything see "Him who is invisible?" And "beholding with open face the glory of the Lord," am I "changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord?"

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Brethren, is not this our calling, even as we are Christians; but more eminently as we are Ministers of Christ? And why (I will not say, do we fall short, but why) are we satisfied with falling so short of it? Is there any necessity laid upon us, of sinking so infinitely below our calling? Who hath required this at our hands? Certainly, not He by whose authority we minister. Is not his will the same with regard to us, as with regard to his first Ambassadors? Is not his love, and is not his power, still the same, as they were in the ancient days? Know we not, that Jesus Christ "is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?" Why then may not you be as "burning and as shining lights," as those that shone seventeen hundred years ago? Do you desire to partake of the same burning love, of the same shining holiness? Surely you do. You cannot but be sensible it is the greatest blessing which can be bestowed on any child of man. Do you design it; aim at it; "press on to" this "mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus?" Do you constantly and earnestly pray for it? Then, as the Lord liveth, ye shall attain. Only let us pray on, and "tarry at Jerusalem, till we be endued with power from on high." Let us continue in all the ordinances of God, particularly in meditating on his word, "in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily," and, "as we have time, doing good to all men;" and then assuredly "the great Shepherd" of us and our flocks will "make us perfect in every good work to do his will, and work in us all that is well pleasing in his sight!" This is the desire and prayer of

Your Brother and Servant,
in our common Lord,
JOHN WESLEY.
LONDON, February 6, 1756.

Lesson 14: Life in the Christian Community

Due This Lesson

Essay
Address reading
Journaling

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will

- develop a Wesleyan ecclesiology
- incorporate pastoral identity into their personal life and ministry
- appreciate Wesley's quest for spiritual formation, as in the Methodist societies
- recognize Wesley's commitment to Christian education in the training of lay pastors and preachers

Homework Assignments

Write a one-two page essay: What is social justice?

During Wesley's lifetime the words "liberal" and "fundamentalist" were not used in the same way that they are used in the church today. How would Wesley see himself in reference to these terms? How would he see the Methodist movement in relation to these terms? How would he respond to being labeled by one of these terms? Write a two-page paper.

Be prepared to show your journal to the instructor during the next class session. The instructor will not read it in detail nor will it be handed in. It will be briefly inspected to note regularity and quality of entries and organization.

Write in your journal. This assignment is ongoing. Include your reflections, reactions, and insights on the material presented in class. Read a portion of John Wesley's journal and reflect on your reading. His journal can be found at: <http://wesley.nnu.edu>

Wesley Quotes

Before 1784 Wesley strongly affirmed the following: "God could have made [the Methodists] a separate people . . . [but] this would have been a direct contradiction to his whole design in raising them up; namely, to spread scriptural religion throughout the land, among people of every denomination, leaving everyone to hold his own opinions and to follow his own mode of worship. This could only be done effectually by leaving these things as they were, and endeavoring to leaven the whole nation with that 'faith that worketh by love.' "

Sermon, "On God's Vineyard," *Works* 3:511

At the heart of Wesley's doctrine of the Church is mutual nurture. He mourns the absence of this in many parishes, and admonishes Methodism to be different: "Who watched over them in love? Who marked their growth in grace? . . . Who prayed with them and for them, as they had need? This, and this alone, is Christian fellowship. But, alas! Where is it to be found? Look east or west, north or south; name what parish you please. Is this Christian fellowship there? Rather, are not the bulk of the parishioners a mere rope of sand? What Christian connexion is there between them? . . . What bearing of one another's burdens?"

A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists, Works 8:251-52

Qualities of the Clergy

1. Good understanding, sound judgment, and a capacity for reasoning
2. Discernment
3. Good memory
4. A deep understanding about the nature of the pastoral call
5. A deep knowledge of the Scriptures
6. Knowledge of the original biblical languages
7. Knowledge of the sciences, philosophy, and logic
8. Knowledge of the Patristic writers
9. Knowledge of personalities and character in people
10. Common sense
11. Courtesy and scholarship
12. Singlemindedness
13. Love for God and neighbor
14. Desire for personal holiness
15. Desire to cooperate with God's grace

Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation is at the very heart of Wesleyanism.

In a Wesleyan context, we also add the interdependence we have on our fellow Christians as integral to our own growth in holiness and love. To be formed spiritually is a communal as well as an individual process. To be formed spiritually *is* the process of sanctification that continues until we die. This was Wesley's goal: for his Methodist people to *go on* to perfect love, and then to *go on* from there living out the sanctifying love they had experienced. For Wesley, this is impossible without the Church.

Christian Education

Wesley expected that education would take place within the societies and bands. Education was at the forefront of Methodism.

Knowledge and devotion are both crucial to the Christian life. Wesley wanted his people to know a wide range of topics, from the Methodist interpretation of the "Articles of Religion," to how to correctly interpret Scripture, to the great devotional classics of the previous centuries, to latest understanding of holiness discussed at the latest Methodist conference.

Lesson 15: Life in the World

Due This Lesson

One-two page essay
Two-page paper
Journals
Journaling

Learner Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will

- understand how “mission” flows naturally from Wesley’s soteriology
- appreciate how prevenient grace affects evangelism
- relate Wesley’s practice of “acts of mercy” with contemporary opportunities for compassionate ministry
- recognize the implications of Wesleyanism for social justice
- relate Wesleyan theology to “liberation” theology

Homework Assignments

Commit to applying the theology and practices of John Wesley—the basis of Nazarene theology—to your ministry.

Write in your journal. Reflect on the wisdom and strength of Wesley’s *via media*.

Wesley Quotes

Wesley would “fly away” from the prosperous in order to minister to the poor. Thus Wesley could say to his critics: “The honourable, the great, we are thoroughly willing to leave to you. Only let us alone with the poor, the vulgar, the base, the outcasts of men.”

A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Works 8:239

From Wesleyan theologian Theodore Runyon: “Some theologians have found a peculiar affinity between Wesley’s doctrine of sanctification and movements for social change. When on the individual level Christian perfection becomes the goal, fundamental hope is aroused that the future can surpass the present. And a corresponding holy dissatisfaction is aroused with regard to any present state of affairs—a dissatisfaction that supplies the critical edge necessary to keep the process of individual transformation moving. Moreover, this holy dissatisfaction is readily transferable from the realm of the individual to that of society, where it provides a persistent motivation for reform in the light of ‘a more perfect way’ that goes beyond any status quo.”

The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology Today, Theodore Runyon, pp. 168

Wesleyan Theology

Wesleyan theology is optimistic, intensely optimistic, not only about individual transformation but also social transformation; about the difference perfect love can make, not only in the individual's life, not only in the Church, but also in the world.

Every aspect of Wesley's relentless focus on an individual's holiness was for the purpose of making that individual an agent of perfect love to those around him or her. Inward transformation, if it were real and sustained, necessarily led to what Wesley would call "acts of mercy."

The totality of Wesleyan theology drives toward touching real lives with real love.

Evangelism

“You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those that want you, but to those that want you most. Observe: It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society; but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance.”

“Minutes of Several Conversations,” *Works*,
Jackson, 8: 310

“By salvation I mean, not barely, according to the vulgar notion, deliverance from hell, or going to heaven; but a present deliverance from sin, 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.”

“A Further Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,”
Works, Jackson, 8: 47

Compassionate Ministry and Social Justice

Compassionate Ministry

Methodists gave to the poor, lived with the poor, and preferenced the poor. This was a matter of principal for Wesley, biblically based and theologically sound. But it was driven by contact with real persons whom Wesley called his people to love in the name of Christ.

Social Justice

Wesley was interested not only in feeding, clothing, and caring for the poor but also in rectifying and reforming the social structures that kept them poor. It was, and is, not good enough to call such oppressive structures an unfortunate result of the evil in the world that came as a result of the Fall. Acting, specific intentional acting, for what has come to be known as "social justice" must be at the heart of Wesleyan theology.

Liberation Theology

As has been stated, Wesley sided with the oppressed, the poor, the outcast of society. There is definitely a theme of *liberation* in Wesley's individual and social vision. Flowing out of his optimism about true liberation from the power of sin in this life, he envisioned social liberation for certain classes and marginalized groups, and demanded that his Methodist people work for such human freedoms.

"Holiness" and "perfect love," as taught and lived by John Wesley and his followers, is not only our past, but our future, if we let it guide us—not just as our "distinctive" but as our directive.

Module Evaluation

Exploring John Wesley's Theology

How has this module been helpful to you?

How will it affect your ministry?

How will it affect your preaching and/or Christian education program?

How will it affect your service in the world?

If you were asked, "Who was John Wesley?" how would you answer?

If you were asked, "How is Wesleyan theology unique?" how would you answer?

Any closing remarks?

Glossary

Terms, Significant Events, and Persons

Adoption—Wesley strongly affirms the significance of being a child of God and co-heir with Christ. This aspect of salvation also implies that we are born into a family, a community of brothers and sister in Christ. This prevents us from imagining salvation as a purely privatistic event and life.

Aldersgate—the location of a Moravian meeting where, as Luther's preface to the book of Romans was being read one evening, John Wesley experienced his "heart strangely warmed." Debate persists among scholars (due to Wesley's own changing opinion of the event throughout his writing) as to whether this was a conversion or a subsequent crisis experience.

Amillennialism—the end-times theory that believes that there is no actual thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, but that we stand in a figurative millennium because we stand between the first and second Advents of Christ.

Anabaptists—developed from eclectic groups in the 16th century who refused to allow their children to be baptized and reinstated the baptism of believers. Their views were similar to those of Swiss Brethren, with pacifism and nonresistance strongly emphasized.

Anachronistic—out of place within a particular period in history. (For example, the use of laptop computers by monks in a 16th-century monastery would be anachronistic.)

Analogy of faith—the connecting theme of Scripture. For Wesley this could be reduced to four particular truths: the corruption of sin, justification by faith, the new birth, and present inward and outward holiness. These elements unify Scripture and act as an interpretive guide to problematic passages.

Apostolicity—one of the four marks of the Church established in the Nicene Creed, which determines authenticity of doctrine or practice by virtue of its continuity from the time of the apostles through apostolic succession.

Aristotle (384-322 BC)—Plato's student who became an influential philosopher in his own right. Aristotle's writings encompass a wide range of subjects from ethics and politics to physics and metaphysics. Although he was Plato's disciple, his ideas were very different from his teacher's. Instead of attributing perfection only to ideas, Aristotle allowed that matter could improve progressively toward perfection. Perfection is judged by matter's actualization of its full potential. His philosophy, especially the concept of a prime mover, the self-causing cause of all that exists, was influential on the medieval theologian and philosopher St. Thomas Aquinas and on subsequent theological formulations.

Assurance—confidence as to one's right relationship with God, through an inner spiritual impression. See "witness of the Spirit."

Band/class meetings—groups of Methodists who met for prayer, confession, and edification. Their meetings followed a specific “method” and had guidelines for participation. These were fundamental to the growth and sustained impact of the Methodist movement.

Book of Homilies—the Anglican sermon book.

Book of Common Prayer—the liturgical book created and adapted by Thomas Cranmer, the archbishop of Canterbury, in response to the English church’s need for reform (editions in 1549, 1552, and 1553). Written in the vernacular, the simpler liturgies allowed for lay participation and reflect more reformed theological convictions. Also included in the book were Scripture readings and sermons, all in English.

Christus Victor Theory of the Atonement—developed in the Early Church period. It affirms simply that Christ has been victorious over sin, by taking sin upon himself innocently and by being raised from the dead by the power of God. This same power can defeat sin within us.

Clement of Alexandria—[c.150-c.215] a theologian who is most widely known for his attempt to defend Christianity in the face of pagan critics. The Logos—which he argued was made incarnate in Jesus—is the main theme of the majority of his writing. He is also known as a “Christian Stoic.”

Consubstantiation—similar to transubstantiation, Christ’s body and blood is literally present in the bread and wine. The difference is that it is a paradox in that at the same time as being Christ it remains bread and wine in essence.

Council of Nicaea—called by Emperor Constantine to settle divisions within the Christian Church, this first council (AD 325) dealt with the Arian controversy. The theological division came from varying understandings of Christology. The Arian supporters believed Christ to be of a similar substance as the Father (rendering Him a somewhat demi-god status), whereas Athanasius and his supporters held that Christ and the Father were “homoousios,” that is, of the same substance. With much politics involved, Athanasius and his followers were deemed orthodox, affirmed the full divinity of Christ.

Creatio ex nihilo—literally, “creation out of nothing.”

Dictation theory of inspiration—a theory held in some conservative circles. It implies that God gave the authors of Scripture each word to write down. Therefore, if God wrote every word, then the Bible is without error in every respect—in its science, history, and cosmology.

Dispensationalism—originated among the Plymouth Brethren, namely John N. Darby. This theory is popular in evangelical churches and is essentially pessimistic about the condition of the world. It is characterized by 3 main points: (1) the division of history into eras [usually in sevens] (2) mention of a dual Second Coming including a secret rapture before a public revelation, (3) and the division of the church into Gentile and Jewish churches.

Eclecticism—the practice of gathering and piecing together information or beliefs from a variety of sources.

Ecological theology—the branch of theology interested in the care of creation as a whole, and the interaction between humanity and those elements that are not human (i.e., animals, environment etc.)

Edward VI (1537-53)—Henry VIII's invalid son (from his third marriage to Jane Seymour) who came to the throne at the age of nine after his father's death. Having been tutored by Protestant scholars, Edward was a Protestant. Because of his youth, advisors did much of the ruling for the young king and they enacted many radical Protestant reforms during his short reign.

Elizabeth I (1533-1603)—known as the “virgin queen” or “Gloriana,” Elizabeth is one of the most successful monarchs of British history. She was the daughter of Henry VIII's second wife, Anne Boleyn. A moderate Protestant, Elizabeth desired the political and religious security that had blatantly escaped both of her half-siblings during their times as monarch. Thus, she sought stability and compromise between rival factions of conservatives and reformers. In her long life she never married and secured England's position as an independent and powerful nation.

Elizabethan Settlement—the position reached by Queen Elizabeth I and her parliament, on the basis of the *Act of Supremacy* and the *Act of Uniformity* passed in January 1559, that sought both the political and religious balance between conservative Catholicism and radical Protestantism.

Empiricism—reliance on observable data to establish truth.

Enthusiasm—an irrational fanaticism based on individualistic revelation and interpretation.

Entire sanctification—the central doctrine of the Holiness Movement. A second crisis experience following regeneration; it is an experience that cleanses one from original sin, or cancels out the “carnal nature” and the “bent toward sinning,” thus enabling an entirely sanctified person to significantly progress in a life of holiness or virtuous living.

Ephraem Syrus—[c.306-c.373] a classical writer of the Syrian Church who used flowery rhetoric to teach orthodoxy. His peers nicknamed him “the lyre of the Holy Spirit” although his poetic gifts did not make up for his lack of theological study.

Epistemology—the philosophical discipline concerned with the nature, manner, and validity of human knowledge.

Eschatology—the branch of theology that deals with the doctrine of the end times.

Eucharist—literally, “thanksgiving,” the traditional name of the sacrament more commonly known as Communion or the Lord's Supper in evangelical circles.

Evangelical human state—one of Wesley's states of human life, this is subsequent to new birth in Christ, we are not under the law, but now under grace.

Faith—the cooperative relationship we have with God. The essence of trust in Christ for every moment along the way of salvation.

Francis Asbury—a preacher sent by Wesley to America, who, during the Revolutionary War, sympathized with the Americans and was the only Methodist minister to remain. He, along with Thomas Coke, led the American Methodists after the split from the Church of England.

Francis Fenelon/François Fénelon (1651-1715)—a Catholic writer, teacher, and archbishop, Fenelon was firm in his orthodoxy, but gentle in his method. His ideas on the necessity of moral behavior even for royalty brought disapproval from the French monarch Louis XIV. He was sought after as a spiritual director. His thoughts and writings were influential in 18th-century thought, even among non-French Protestants (particularly John Wesley).

Fundamentalism—emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a conservative response to liberal Protestantism. It is defined by a commitment to certain key doctrines; namely the Virgin Birth, the *penal satisfaction* theory of the Atonement, inerrancy of Scripture, physical resurrection, and dispensationalism theory of the end times.

George Whitefield—a popular evangelist, theologically Calvinistic, in England contemporary with Wesley. Like Wesley, when clergy refused to let him preach in their churches, he moved his sermons out to the open air. He was quite popular in America.

General revelation—what can be universally known about God through observation of nature and reflecting on human characteristics (i.e., conscience, desire for justice).

Glorification—refers to the resurrection of the body into a state of final perfection.

Governmental Theory of the Atonement—often associated with Arminianism, formally developed by a student of James Arminius, Hugo Grotius. Christ's death allowed God to offer forgiveness to all who repented while at the same time retain governmental control. An important distinction must be made from the *satisfaction theory* in that Christ did not pay the penalty for our sin but instead suffered for us. Such a distinction is crucial for Arminians because this atonement is unlimited. Thus, if Christ had paid the penalty for all, then no one would be in need of redemption because Christ would have already taken the punishment. Instead the *governmental theory* insists that Christ's suffering was a substitute for penalty so that persons could receive forgiveness yet at the same time understand the seriousness of their sin as to not return to it.

Gradual sanctification—this is the process prior to entire sanctification that brings the individual into a gradual knowledge of his or her inbeing sin, or original sin. Once the person, through the Holy Spirit, comes to a complete renunciation of inbeing sin, an instantaneous cleansing [entire sanctification] takes place, and gradual sanctification continues until one dies. See "progressive sanctification."

Gregory of Nyssa—[330–c.395] bishop of Nyssa. His chief theological contribution was his views on Christology, the Trinity, and human "perfection."

Henry VIII (1491-1547)—king of England who, as a result of his desire for a divorce and political independency from Rome, split from Roman Catholicism and became the head of the Church in England. Throughout his life, he had a total of six wives, one of whom bore him a son, the invalid Edward VI, who inherited his throne as a child. Henry's daughters Mary and Elizabeth also ruled subsequently. Well-educated and deeply religious, Henry alternated between acting on political necessity (i.e., sovereignty, threat of internal and external opposition) and religious conviction (conservative) throughout his reign. Though independent of Roman Catholicism, Henry's changes to the church were relatively minor. However, his reign set in motion a tumultuous and ultimately formative period of England's religious and political history.

Holy club—the derisive name given by Oxford students to the group John and Charles Wesley and a few friends began rather informally in 1730 with the purpose of study. Their disciplined group soon expanded its focus beyond study to include mutual accountability and works of mercy (teaching orphans, visiting prisoners and elderly).

Ignatius—[c.35-c.107] bishop of Antioch. He was adamant against Early Church heresies, especially those denying the true and full humanity of Christ. He is known through his attacks upon these heresies written in seven preserved letters.

Imago Dei—literally "image of God," Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, interpreting Wesley, defines the image of God in humanity as the capacity to love.

Inbeing sin—namely, original sin, this is Wesley's preferred term. It is the sin that is innate in persons prior to new birth and does not bring guilt but is involuntary; essentially a predisposition toward sin.

Inerrancy debate—began toward the first part of the 20th century. This is the belief that the Scriptures are without error *in the original manuscripts*. This qualification is meant to address the errors that can be found in Scripture today. Often "inerrancy" is held by more conservative churches and identifies biblical authority on the basis of a verbal dictation theory of inspiration.

Initial sanctification—Wesley never actually used this term, but it signifies his belief that the moment of salvation begins the process of being made righteous.

Irenaeus—[c.130-c.200] bishop of Lyons. Major critic of Gnosticism, his most famous work is *Against Heresies*. He was one of the first great theologians who—during a time prior to the canonization of Scripture—used his emphasis upon scriptural texts (containing the OT and most of the books now known as the NT), and the religious and theological tradition to oppose Gnostic heresy.

James Arminius/Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609)—a renowned Dutch Reformed scholar, he began to doubt the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. Repeatedly defending his resulting doctrinal adaptations against stark Calvinist theologians, Arminius grew to support a divine sovereignty that was compatible with real human free will and believed that Christ's death was for all, not only the elect. Arminian theology was influential on John Wesley.

Jeremy Taylor (1613-67)—an Anglican bishop and writer of the devotional works *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*. Wesley adopted his suggestion that the first rule of holy living is care for one's time (evidenced in precise journaling).

John Chrysostom—[c.344/354–407] bishop of Constantinople and known as “golden-mouth” for his extraordinary preaching ability and his emphasis on perfect love.

John of the Cross (1542-91)—a mystic doctor of the church, who, having been convinced by St. Teresa to become part of the Carmelite order, wrote poetically and theologically about his mystical experiences. In his works, he emphasizes the soul’s transformation and participation in God, which results in works of love.

Justification—by God implies that our sins are forgiven. The guilt of our sin is taken away. God no longer condemns us for our transgressions against Him. Wesley affirmed justification. However, he believed that fuller salvation goes beyond justification to address the underlying problem or disease. Wesley’s “therapeutic” model takes him further.

Lay preachers—the growth and geographical spread of Methodist societies led to the necessity of lay preachers. While John and Charles Wesley (and later more ordained ministers) itinerated among the groups, they relied on local members to act as leaders in their absence, following established guidelines.

Legal human state—one of Wesley’s states of human life—this is our position before God prior to new birth. We live under the law, and if we allow the law to do its work, it will drive us to the place of recognizing our need for salvation.

Mary Tudor (1516-58)—popularly referred to as “Bloody Mary,” Henry VIII’s eldest daughter, whose mother was his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, was a devout Catholic. Beginning her reign at her brother’s death (and the execution of another female contender for the throne) Mary came to power and attempted to reunite the Church of England with Rome.

Memorialist—the doctrine of the Eucharist developed by Ulrich Zwingli [1484-1531] that affirms that the Lord’s Supper is taken as a memorial of the death of Christ similar to a Veteran’s or Memorial Day celebration.

Monophysitism—this Christological heresy says that the Incarnate Christ had only one divine nature.

Moral attributes of God—descriptions of the ways God acts toward humans. Attributes such as justice, forgiveness, mercy, and grace are generally placed in this category.

Moral Influence Theory of the Atonement—established by Abelard [1079-1142] this theory apparently attempts to deal with some of the flaws in the *penal satisfaction theory*. For the *moral influence theory* the Atonement is found in the Incarnation instead of in the Crucifixion and Resurrection. Christ came to set the perfect example of love and only died as another demonstration among many of that love. Salvation is experienced as an act of recognition of this ultimate example of love as a lifestyle.

Moravians—German Pietists whose emphasis on the availability (and necessity of) of assurance of salvation had a deep impact on John Wesley’s spiritual development.

Mysticism—the direct experience of God. The mystic experience allows a person to cross the normal bounds of reason for a deeply personal revelation of God. The validity of practices or phenomena with mystic union as the goal are of debated worth among Christian thinkers.

Natural attributes of God—the attributes without which God would not be God. Traditionally, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, and invulnerability fall under this heading.

Natural human state—one of Wesley's states of human life—this is only a hypothetical state since the Fall. It was the state in which God created Adam and Eve.

New creation—in reference to Wesleyan eschatology this theory takes literally the resurrection of the body. This new creation will be an actual physical place. In such a place, all of creation will be redeemed and participate in God at a higher level, following glorification, thus sin will not be an issue.

Origen—[c.185-c.254] one of the Greek Fathers from Alexandria; one of the first systematic theologians of the Early Church who was unfortunately condemned as a heretic toward the end of his life. Nonetheless his works are foundational to Christian theology and still highly regarded.

Patristics—the branch of theological study involving the writings of the Fathers of the Church (following the writings that became part of the New Testament, between the late 1st and 8th centuries). This study brings to light the history, doctrine, and polity of the Early Church.

Penal Satisfaction Theory of the Atonement—very similar to the *satisfaction theory*, but it is not God's honor that needs vindication but God's justice. It is just that sin be punished. Christ thus takes the punishment upon himself, thus maintaining God as a just God.

Perfectionist controversy—Wesley's emphasis on Christian perfection, that is, to love God with one's whole heart, soul, and mind, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, came under attack. Many of the disagreements grew out of a misunderstanding of terminology, with "perfection" understood as a finished state achieved by human effort. This misunderstanding was promoted by the London Society in the 1760s. Wesley strongly disciplined them and dismissed their leaders. It caused Wesley to be clearer about his own beliefs on sanctification. Wesley's perception of perfection was one of humans' graced cooperation with the saving will of God in response to the justifying work of Christ.

Plato (427-347 BC)—a Greek philosopher whose philosophical and political ideas are expressed (except one small collection, the *Epistles*) in his writings through the character of Socrates, his mentor. A prolific writer, his writings (most notably, *The Republic*) are in dialogical format. His influence on theological thought is nearly immeasurable. His metaphysics in which the higher world of "Ideas" or "Forms" represent perfection and are merely imitated by the physical world of human experience.

Plenary—meaning "full," this understanding of inspiration describes the Wesleyan view that Scripture is inspired as a whole. It is authoritative for Christian life and practice, informing all that must be known for salvation.

Pneumatology—the branch of theology that deals with the doctrine of the Spirit.

Postmillennialism—human cooperation in history is crucial to bringing about God’s kingdom on earth.

Premillennialism—adherents normally base their conclusions on a literal interpretation of the Book of Revelation. The belief is accompanied by the idea that the world will worsen until the day of Christ’s return.

Prevenient grace—in Wesley’s mature thought, this sort of grace was that which gave a certain amount of light to every human being that awakens the spiritual senses. Thus it allows Wesley to emphasize God’s saving activity and stay out of Pelagian territory. Prevenient grace means that God takes the initiative in the matter of conversion, inclining us to turn toward Him, wooing us, giving us opportunity for repenting and believing, but never irresistibly.

Progressive sanctification—growth in the likeness of Christ and the deepening of holy character following the moment of entire sanctification. Use of the term “progressive” does **not** suggest a gradual cleansing from sin. See “gradual sanctification.”

Puritanism—beliefs of the extreme English Protestants who were not satisfied with the Elizabethan Settlement and sought that the church be further distanced from Catholicism according the Genevan (Reformed) model. All forms of church decoration were considered idolatrous and forms of church worship were to have express scriptural warrant. The movement had political aims as well and led eventually to the Great Rebellion (or Puritan Revolution) in England in 1642.

Quadrilateral—the criteria by which theological ideas can be tested for truth. This name for Wesley’s practice of checks and balances was a later designation, but throughout his works there is evidenced a method by which Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience together testify to truth.

Quietism—a belief among some pietistic groups that the life of holiness should be one of meditation and “stillness.” Works of piety and pursuit of means of grace are discouraged in favor of a private, “nonworking” devotion.

Ransom Theory of the Atonement—envisions humanity being held captive by Satan. Christ’s death is the ransom, or payment given in order to free us from Satan’s imprisonment. The resurrection of Jesus, however, is God’s way of taking back the ransom from Satan.

Rationalism—reliance on reason for the establishment of religious truths, often recognizing innate knowledge.

Recapitulation Theory of the Atonement—developed early in the history of the Church. It focuses on Jesus Christ as the Second Adam. This theory focuses on more than the Cross; it envelops all of Christ’s life, lived obediently for God. What Adam did wrong through disobedience, Jesus does right through obedience. The Cross is the greatest expression of that obedience. Jesus in a sense redeems human life by giving us a model for living the life fully committed to the will of God.

Reconciliation—in reference to God. This is the theme that we find in Wesley's writing, and also in Charles' hymns. This is the sense that the alienation and estrangement from God implicit in sin is overcome when we come into a new relationship with God.

Redemption—redemption implies liberation from sin. Exodus acts as a metaphor for redemption. Redemption also implies receiving a new purpose, namely, to love God with all our being, and our neighbor as ourselves. Our lives are redeemed from sin and for love.

Regeneration—Wesley's favorite word for salvation is "new birth." This concept implies that we are regenerated, "born again," and are new creations in Christ. Wesley never wanted his doctrine of sanctification to minimize the power and significance of new birth.

Remonstrants—supporters of Arminian doctrine (formally stated in "The Remonstrance") that challenged extreme Calvinist doctrines of limited atonement and irresistible grace. They were condemned by an alliance of Contra-Remonstrants at the Synod of Dort (1618-19).

Repentance—literally, "a change of mind."

Satisfaction Theory of the Atonement—concerned that sin has been an affront to God's sense of honor. This honor must be vindicated, and thus God sends Jesus to die on the Cross as a means of atoning for sin and of restoring God's sense of satisfaction that sin has been paid for.

Sola fide—"faith alone" as necessary for salvation. This was Luther's battle cry against the Catholic emphasis on good works.

Sola Scriptura—"scripture alone" an doctrine developed in the 15th-century by reformer Martin Luther in a reaction to the authority of the Catholic Church. Such a principle insists that Scripture alone is the source of authority for the Christian and the Church.

Soteriology—the branch of theology that deals with the doctrine of salvation.

Special revelation—revelation regarding the nature of God, revealed fully in Jesus the Christ and witnessed to in Scripture.

Spiritual presence—a Calvinist doctrine of the Eucharist. The Lord's Supper is taken as a memorial and an emphasis upon Christ's spiritual presence among the participants.

Spiritual senses—the God-given human capacity to know of God's existence and spiritual realities. Every human has spiritual senses, but must be awakened by the Holy Spirit.

Subordinationism—a sub-Christian Christological heresy insisting that Christ is less important than God.

Synergism—in theology, the idea that God and humans cooperate toward human salvation. God’s grace is not overpowering but initiates a relationship to which humans must respond.

Teresa of Avila (1515-82)—a Spanish Carmelite nun and mystic. She wrote extensively about her “spiritual union” and prayerful meditation seeking Christian perfection. St. Teresa also brought about reforms within her order and (together with St. John of the Cross) established houses practicing primitive rule called the Discalced Carmelites.

Theological anthropology—the branch of theology that deals with humanity’s metaphysic and moral being.

Theological method—the lens for viewing theological subjects and the manner in which examination, evaluation, and decisions are made.

Thomas à Kempis (c.1380-1471)—the mystic monastic who authored *Imitation of Christ*, whose devotional writings reflect ascetic, homiletic, poetic, and biographic interests.

Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274)—arguably the greatest medieval philosopher and theologian. His most important works are the *Summa Contra Gentiles* and the *Summa Theologiae*. An Aristotelian empiricist, Thomas emphasized the needed correlation of reason and faith but admitted that faith must extend beyond reason’s capabilities. In the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas desired to form a consistent, systematic treatise involving the whole life of the Church, including doctrine, morals, worship, and spiritual practice.

Thomas Coke—an ordained Anglican priest who became Wesley’s second in command in later days. He was mission-minded and was specially ordained by Wesley before leaving for America so that he could ordain the much-needed clergy there.

Total depravity—the pessimistic Calvinist doctrine of the state of humanity that claims that through the Fall we are totally depraved, without God in the world, and corrupted beyond repair in this life. Essentially that the *imago dei* is not distorted but completely lost.

Total deprivity—the optimistic Wesleyan doctrine in response to the Calvinist theory that states that through the Fall we are deprived of our primary relationship with God. Our other relationships are therefore distorted, but the capacity for love and the hope of renewal remains. Essentially that the *imago dei* is not completely lost but only distorted.

Transubstantiation—the Roman Catholic doctrine dealing with the Eucharist that states that the bread and wine actually becomes the body and blood of Christ, in the invisible essence though not in its visible accidents.

Via media—the “middle way” characteristic of Anglican theology that has subsequently come to characterize Wesleyan thought. Originally, it was the balance between Protestants (Reform) and Roman Catholics (traditional) arrived at by the Elizabethan Settlement, but it continues as the desire for balance between radical poles in the theological spectrum.

William Law (1686-1761)—a Nonjuror (a clergy member who, out of recognition of the Divine Right of Kings, would not swear an oath to William and Mary in respect for the oath sworn to the former monarch) whose writings emphasized holy living, devotion, and Christian perfection.

Witness of the Spirit—commonly referred to as the doctrine of assurance, this distinctive Wesleyan doctrine has been heavily debated by others (on the basis of enthusiasm or the accusation that it implies continuing special revelation by the Spirit to the individual). Wesley described this experience as the Spirit of God's direct impression on his soul of the certainty of his being accepted and loved by God—that is, having restored relationship.

JOHN WESLEY

SERMON FIFTY-FIVE

ON THE TRINITY

ADVERTISEMENT

Some days since I was desired to preach on this text. I did so yesterday morning. In the afternoon I was pressed to write down and print my sermon, if possible, before I left Cork. I have wrote it this morning; but I must beg the reader to make allowance for the disadvantages I am under; as I have not here any books to consult, nor indeed any time to consult them.

Cork, May 8, 1775.

There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: And these three are one." 1 John 5:7.

1. Whatsoever the generality of people may think, it is certain that opinion is not religion: No, not right opinion; assent to one, or to ten thousand truths. There is a wide difference between them: Even right opinion is as distant from religion as the east is from the west. Persons may be quite right in their opinions, and yet have no religion at all; and, on the other hand, persons may be truly religious, who hold many wrong opinions. Can any one possibly doubt of this, while there are Romanists in the world? For who can deny, not only that many of them formerly have been truly religious, as Thomas a Kempis, Gregory Lopez, and the Marquis de Renty; but that many of them, even at this day, are real inward Christians? And yet what a heap of erroneous opinions do they hold, delivered by tradition from their fathers! Nay, who can doubt of it while there are Calvinists in the world, -- assertors of absolute predestination? For who will dare to affirm that none of these are truly religious men? Not only many of them in the last century were burning and shining lights, but many of them are now real Christians, loving God and all mankind. And yet what are all the absurd opinions of all the Romanists in the world, compared to that one, that the God of love, the wise, just, merciful Father of the spirits of all flesh, has, from all eternity, fixed an absolute, unchangeable, irresistible, decree, that part of all mankind shall be saved, do what they will; and the rest damned, do what they can!
2. Hence, we cannot but infer, that there are ten thousand mistakes which may consist with real religion; with regard to which every candid, considerate man will think and let think. But there are some truths more important than others. It seems there are some which are of deep importance. I do not term them *fundamental* truths; because that is an ambiguous word: And hence there have been so many warm disputes about the number of *fundamentals*. But surely there are some which it nearly concerns us to know, as having a close connexion with vital religion. And doubtless we may rank among these that contained in the words above cited: There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: And these three are one.
3. I do not mean that it is of importance to believe this or that *explication* of these words. I know not that any well judging man would attempt to explain them at all.

One of the best tracts which that great man, Dean Swift, ever wrote, was his Sermon upon the Trinity. Herein he shows, that all who endeavored to explain it at all, have utterly lost their way; have, above all other persons hurt the cause which they intended to promote; having only, as Job speaks, "darkened counsel by words without knowledge." It was in an evil hour that these explainers began their fruitless work I insist upon no explication at all; no, not even on the best I ever saw; I mean, that which is given us in the creed commonly ascribed to Athanasius. I am far from saying, he who does not assent to this shall without doubt perish everlastingly." For the sake of that and another clause, I, for some time, scrupled subscribing to that creed; till I considered (1.) That these sentences only relate to *wilful*, not involuntary, unbelievers; to those who, having all the means of knowing the truth, nevertheless obstinately reject it: (2.) that they relate only to the *substance* of the doctrine there delivered; not the philosophical *illustrations* of it.

4. I dare not insist upon any one's using the word Trinity, or Person. I use them myself without any scruple, because I know of none better: But if any man has any scruple concerning them, who shall constrain him to use them? I cannot: Much less would I burn a man alive, and that with moist, green wood, for saying, Though I believe the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; yet I scruple using the words *Trinity* and *Persons*, because I do not find those terms in the Bible." These are the words which merciful John Calvin cites as wrote by Servitus in a letter to himself. I would insist only on the direct words, unexplained, just as they lie in the text: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: And these three are one."
5. "As they lie in the text : " -- but here arises a question: Is that text genuine? Was it originally written by the Apostle, or inserted in later ages? Many have doubted of this; and, in particular, the great light of the Christian church, lately removed to the Church above, Bengelius, -- the most pious, the most judicious, and the most laborious, of all the modern Commentators on the New Testament. For some time he stood in doubt of its authenticity, because it is wanting in many of the ancient copies. But his doubts were removed by three considerations: (1.) That though it is wanting in many copies, yet it is found in more; and those copies of the greatest authority: -- (2.) That it is cited by a whole gain of ancient writers, from the time of St. John to that of Constantine. This argument is conclusive: For they could not have cited it, had it not been in the sacred canon: -- (3.) That we can easily account for its being, after that time, wanting in many copies, when we remember that Constantine's successor was a zealous Arian, who used every means to promote his bad cause, to spread Arianism throughout the empire; in particular the erasing this text out of as many copies as fell into his hands. And he so far prevailed, that the age in which he lived is commonly styled, *Seculum Aranium*, -- "the Arian age;" there being then only one eminent man who opposed him at the peril of his life. So that it was a proverb, *Athanasius contra mundum*: "Athanasius against the world."
6. But it is objected: "Whatever becomes of the text, we cannot believe what we cannot comprehend. When, therefore, you require us to believe mysteries, we pray you to have us excused."

Here is a two-fold mistake: (1.) We do not require you to believe any mystery in this; whereas; you suppose the contrary. But, (2.) You do already believe many things which you cannot comprehend.

7. To begin with the latter: You do already believe many things which you cannot comprehend. For you believe there is a *sun* over your head. But whether he stands still in the midst of his system, or not only revolves on his own axis, but rejoiceth as a giant to run his course; you cannot comprehend either one or the other: *How* he moves, or *how* he rests. By what power, what natural, mechanical power, is he upheld in the fluid either? You cannot deny the fact: Yet you cannot account for it, so as you satisfy any rational inquirer. You may indeed give us the hypothesis of Ptolemy, Tycho Brahe, Copernicus, and twenty more. I have read them over and over: I am sick of them; I care not three straws for them all.

Each new solution but once more affords
New change of terms, and scaffolding of words:
In other garb my question I receive,
And take my doubt the very same I gave.

Still I insist, the *fact* you believe, you cannot deny; but the *manner* you cannot comprehend.

8. You believe there is such a thing as *light*, whether flowing from the sun, or any other luminous body; but you cannot comprehend either its nature. or the manner wherein it flows. How does it move from Jupiter to the earth in eight minutes; two hundred thousand miles in a moment? How do the rays of the candle, brought into the room, instantly disperse into every corner? Again: Here are three candles, yet there is but one light. I explain this, and I will explain the Three-One God.

9. You believe there is such a thing as *air*. It both covers you as a garment, and,

Wide interfused,
Embraces round this florid earth.

But can you comprehend how? Can you give me a satisfactory account of its nature, or the cause of its properties? Think only of one, its elasticity: Can you account for this? It may be owing to electric fire attached to each particle of it; it may not; and neither you nor I can tell. But if we will not breathe it till we can comprehend it, our life is very near its period.

10. You believe there is such a thing as earth. Here you fix your foot upon it: You are supported by it. But do you comprehend what it is that supports the earth? "O, an elephant, says a Malabarian philosopher "and a bull supports him." But what supports the bull? The Indian and the Briton are equally at a loss for an answer. We know it is God that "spreadeth the north over the empty space, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. This is the fact. But how? Who can account for this? Perhaps angelic but not human creatures.

I know what is plausibly said concerning the powers of projection and attraction. But spin as fine as we can, matter of fact sweeps away our cobweb hypothesis. Connect the force of projection and attraction how you can, they will never produce a circular motion. The moment the projected steel comes within the attraction of the magnet, it does not form a curve, but drops down.

11. You believe you have a *soul*. "Hold there," says the Doctor; [Dr. Bl__r, in his late tract.] I believe no such thing. "If *you* have an immaterial soul so have the brutes too." I will not quarrel with any that think they have; nay, I wish he could prove it: And surely I would rather allow *them* souls, than I would give up my own. In this I

cordially concur in the sentiment of the honest Heathen. *Si erro, libenter erro; et me redargui valde recusem.* "If I err, I err willingly; and I vehemently refuse to be convinced of it." And I trust most of those who do not believe a Trinity are of the same mind. Permit me then to go on. You believe you have a soul connected with this house of clay. But can you comprehend how? What are the ties that unite the heavenly flame with the earthly clod? You understand just nothing of the matter. So it is; but how none can tell.

12. You surely believe you have a *body*, together with your soul, and that each is dependent on the other. Run only a thorn into your hand; immediately pain is felt in your soul. On the other side is shame felt in your soul? Instantly a blush overspreads your cheek. Does the soul feel fear or violent anger? Presently the body trembles. These also are facts which you cannot deny; nor can you account for them.
13. I bring but one instance more: At the command of your soul, your hand is lifted up. But who is able to account for this? For the connexion between the act of the mind, and the outward actions? Nay, who can account for *muscular motion* at all; in any instance of it whatever? When one of the most ingenious Physicians in England had finished his lecture upon that head, he added, Now, gentlemen, I have told you all the discoveries of our enlightened age; and now, if you understand one jot of the matter, you understand more than I do." The short of the matter is this: Those who will not believe anything but what they can comprehend, must not believe that there is a sun in the firmament; that there is light shining around them; that there is air, though it encompasses them on every side; that there is any earth, though they stand upon it. They must not believe they have a soul; no, nor that they have a body.
14. But, secondly, as strange as it may seem. in requiring you to believe, "there are three that bear record in heaven the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: And these three are one;" you are not required to believe any mystery. Nay, that, great and good man, Dr. Peter Browne, sometime Bishop of Cork, has proved at large that the Bible does not require you to believe any mystery at all. The Bible barely requires you to believe such facts; not the manner of them. Now the mystery does not lie in the *fact*, but altogether in the manner.

For instance: God said, let there be light: And there was light." I believe it: I believe the plain *fact*: There is no mystery at all in this. The mystery lies in the *manner* of it. But of this I believe nothing at all; nor does God require it of me.

Again: "The Word was made flesh." I Believe this fact also. There is no mystery in it; but as to the *manner how* he was made flesh, wherein the mystery lies, I know nothing about it; I believe nothing about it: It is no more the object of my faith, than it is of my understanding.

15. To apply this to the case before us: There are three that bear record in heaven: And these three are One. I believe this *fact* also, (if I may use the expression,) that God is Three and One. But the *manner how* I do not comprehend and I do not believe it. Now in this, in the *manner*, lies the mystery; and so it may; I have no concern with it: It is no object of my faith: I believe just so much as God has revealed, and no more. But this, the *manner*, he has not revealed; therefore, I believe nothing about it. But would it not be absurd in me to deny the fact,

because I do not understand the manner? That is, to reject *what God has revealed*, because I do not comprehend *what he has not revealed*.

16. This is a point much to be observed. There are many things "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. Part of these God Hath "revealed to us by his Spirit:" -- "*Revealed*;" that is, unveiled, uncovered: That part he requires us to believe. Part of them he has not revealed: That we need not, and indeed cannot, believe: It is far above, out of our sight.

Now, where is the wisdom of rejecting what is revealed, because we do not understand what is not revealed? of denying the *fact* which God has unveiled, because we cannot see the *manner*, which is veiled still?

17. Especially when we consider that what God has been pleased to reveal upon his head, is far from being a point of indifference, is a truth of the last importance. It enters into the very heart of Christianity: It lies at the heart of all vital religion.

Unless these Three are One, how can "all men honour the Son, even as they honour the Father?" "I know not what to do," says Socinus in a letter to his friend, with my untoward followers: They will not worship Jesus Christ. I tell them it is written, "Let all the angels of God worship him." They answer, "However that be, if he is not God, we dare not worship him. For it is written, 'Thou shalt worship the lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.'"

But the thing, which I here particularly mean is this: The knowledge of the Three-One God is interwoven with all true Christian faith; with all vital religion.

I do not say that every real Christian can say with the Marquis de Renty, "I bear about with me continually an experimental verity, and a plenitude of the presence of the ever-blessed Trinity." I apprehend this is not the experience of babes," but, rather, "fathers in Christ."

But I know not how any one can be a Christian believer till he "hath," as St. John speaks, "the witness in himself;" till "the Spirit of God witnesses with his spirit, that he is a child of God;" that is, in effect, till God the Holy Ghost witnesses that God the Father has accepted him through the merits of God the Son: And, having this witness, he honours the Son, and the blessed Spirit, "even as he honours the Father."

18. Not that every Christian believer *advert*s to this; perhaps, at first, not one in twenty: But if you ask any of them a few questions, you will easily find it is implied in what he believes.

Therefore, I do not see how it is possible for any to have vital religion who denies that these Three are one. And all my hope for them is, not that they will be saved during their unbelief, (unless on the footing of honest Heathens, upon the plea of invincible ignorance,) but that God, before they go hence, "will bring them to the knowledge of the truth."

Edited by David R. Leonard with corrections by Ryan Danker and George Lyons of Northwest Nazarene University (Nampa, Idaho) for the Wesley Center for Applied Theology.

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