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Humility as a Key Component of  
John Wesley's Understanding of a Christian's Spiritual Development

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By

SunAe Lee-Koo

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Humility as a Key Component of  
John Wesley's Understanding of a Christian's Spiritual Development

SunAe Lee-Koo, Ph. D.

Director: James A. Wiseman, O.S.B., S.T.D.

Due to a series of theological controversies John Wesley was involved in, interpretations of Wesley's sermons have dealt with many important theological topics, but the role of humility as applicable to a Christian's journey of holiness has been largely ignored. The major purpose of this dissertation is to fill this lacuna by exploring the idea of humility as a crucial element in Wesley's understanding of the entire process of spiritual restoration of the *imago Dei*. This task involves broadening our understanding of humility in its various aspects, self-knowledge in particular. Humility begins in the awareness of one's spiritual status as being created according to the *imago Dei*. However, this image was lost by original sin and we are now on a journey of restoring it.

The dissertation accordingly examines what Wesley's sermons say about humility as one journeys with the aid of different kinds of grace: (a) the prevenient grace that leads persons humbly to admit their need for divine help; (b) the convincing grace of repentance, which Wesley sometimes elucidates through the parable of the Prodigal Son; (c) the justifying grace by which one's now-acknowledged sins are pardoned and one is reconciled with God and so becomes a Christian; and (d) the sanctifying grace that not only leads one toward the goal of entire sanctification but is also accompanied by humility since even the justified are still weighed down by an inbred inclination toward evil.

In sum, humility in the journey of restoration of the *imago Dei* is identified with self-knowledge before God, with repentance in humble confession of one's sinfulness and helplessness, and with dependence on the Spirit's help as one continues the journey toward the fullness of the *imago Dei*. This journey in company with the Holy Spirit is one of restoring the *imago Dei* by imitating the love of God, shown in the mind that was in Christ, for he who revealed God's love in humility becomes our model for humbly loving both God and neighbor. With "a single eye" fixed on God, a Christian journeys in the footsteps of Christ toward the goal of entire sanctification.

This dissertation by SunAe Lee-Koo fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in 2011 approved by James A. Wiseman, O.S.B., S.T.D., as Director, and by Paul G. McPartlan, D.Phil., William C. Mattison III, Ph.D. and Scott T. Kisker, Ph.D. as Readers.

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James A. Wiseman, O.S.B., S.T.D., Director

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Paul G. McPartlan, D.Phil., Reader

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William C. Mattison III, Ph.D., Reader

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Scott T. Kisker, Ph.D., Reader

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## Chapter I: INTRODUCTION

John Wesley (1703-1791), through his sermons *ad populum* in both written and spoken form, gave hope to plain people in their practical journeys of Christian life.<sup>1</sup>

Asking such practical questions as “How do I become a Christian?” and “How do I remain a Christian?”<sup>2</sup> Wesley understood a Christian’s journey as moving forward in faith, a faith that works by love. Because the journey of salvation cannot be without both faith and love, Wesleyan spirituality is a process that brings together justifying faith and good works. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine Wesley’s understanding of Christian salvation—the movement from a conviction of one’s sinfulness to the heights of Christian perfection—as based on humility. As background to seeing humility as a useful lens for grasping Wesley’s understanding of the entire journey of Christian salvation, we will first briefly consider his theological foci—justification and sanctification by faith—and some ways in which his thought has been approached in recent scholarship.

### A. Wesley’s Theological Foci and Current Study

Wesley focused on justification and sanctification as two crucial aspects of a Christian’s journey. He defines justification by faith as the *imputed* righteousness of Christ, that is, God’s work of salvation “for us” by forgiving our sins through Christ: “we

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<sup>1</sup> Albert C. Outler, introduction to *Sermons* (vols. I-IV) in *The Works of John Wesley*, by John Wesley. Bicentennial ed. (Nashville, TN: Abington, 1984 - ), I: 25. Hereafter referred to as *The Works*. See also “Justification by Faith,” §1, *The Works*, I: 182.

<sup>2</sup> In his sermon “Awake, Thou That Sleepest,” i.4, *The Works*, I: 144, Wesley writes: “I want to know one thing—the way to heaven ... God himself has condescended to teach the way ...”

are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favour of God.”<sup>3</sup> In turn, he defines sanctification as the *imparted* righteousness of Christ in the justified, God’s work of salvation “in us” through the action of the Holy Spirit: “we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God.”<sup>4</sup>

In other words, for Wesley, Christian salvation has two aspects: the imputed righteousness of Christ and the imparted righteousness of Christ, referring to a Christian life of justification and sanctification respectively. This twofold meaning of righteousness allows us to understand Wesleyan spirituality as a journey that combines justifying faith with the sanctifying grace that enables good works. He illustrated this with the image of a seed as the imputed righteousness of Christ by faith: “I believe God *implants* righteousness in everyone to whom he has *imputed* it.”<sup>5</sup> Having had Christ’s righteousness imputed, one then also has the vital power to live out that righteousness in a Christian spiritual life through the sanctifying grace of the God of love. Since one can overcome sinfulness at the height of Christian perfection, Wesley rejected the *simul justus et peccator* of the Reformed tradition as always and everywhere applicable.<sup>6</sup>

Sanctification begun within justification is a Christian’s journey toward perfection, seeking the pure love of God through the love of neighbor. This life of love is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit. As John C. Haughey writes, it is to live

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<sup>3</sup> “On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” ii.1, *The Works*, III: 203. Imputed righteousness caused contention between Wesley and Calvinists. According to Outler, Wesley tried to downplay the use of the term “imputed righteousness of Christ” in order to avoid any conflict, but he did occasionally use it. See, e.g., “The Lord Our Righteousness,” intro.; “Sermon on the Mount, I,” i.11; and “Sermon on the Mount, IX,” §21.

<sup>4</sup> “Justification by Faith,” ii.1, *The Works*, I: 187.

<sup>5</sup> “The Lord Our Righteousness,” ii.12, *The Works*, I: 458. Italics are in the original. The metaphor of seed is also found in “Sermon on the Mount, I,” i.13, *The Works*, I: 482.

<sup>6</sup> This led to Wesley’s being criticized as a Pelagian or Romanist by the Reformed, especially by the Calvinists.

according to “an inner unction the Spirit provides” and to experience “not the Christ who [once] lived but who lives now and acts in [a person] through the Spirit.”<sup>7</sup> Wesley identifies this life with the journey of holiness from the misery of the current moment: it is a movement toward glory in eschatological hope, which begins in humility. In a significant line from one of his sermons he said, “The first step [toward] this glorious change is humility, a knowledge of ourselves, a just sense of our condition”<sup>8</sup>

In his treatise “The Doctrine of Original Sin,” Wesley writes that man’s “knowledge of himself... prepares him for, and confirms him in, just conceptions of the dependence of his salvation, on the merits of Christ for justification, and the power of his Spirit for inward and outward holiness. It humbles the natural pride of man.”<sup>9</sup> This self-knowledge, according to another of Wesley’s sermons, brings conviction of oneself as a sinner, “repentance and lowliness of heart,” by which “the deadly disease of pride is healed.”<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, self-knowledge prior to justification can be understood as a significant aspect of humility at the very beginning of one’s spiritual journey. Knowing oneself as a sinner before God, and therefore confessing one’s sin in faith, prepares one to receive the justifying grace of God.

Moreover, the humility that arises from knowledge of oneself continues in the sanctifying journey of a Christian, according to Wesley, as a process of restoring the *imago Dei*. Knowing one’s helplessness because of one’s “inbred sin,” and therefore being led to

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<sup>7</sup> John C. Haughey, *The Conspiracy of God: The Holy Spirit in Men* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), 103.

<sup>8</sup> “The Image of God,” iii.1, *The Works*, IV: 299. Since this sermon was preached before the Aldersgate experience, some wish to reject this sentence as representative of Wesley’s mature thought on humility. However, Wesley claimed that his first pursuit of holiness had never changed, which means that his journey of seeking God should be understood as a whole even before his well-known conversion experience in 1738.

<sup>9</sup> “The Doctrine of Original Sin,” *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, vol. 9 (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1827), vi.3, 350.; “Original Sin,” iii.3, *The Works*, II: 184.

<sup>10</sup> “Original Sin,” iii.3, *The Works*, II: 184.

surrender one's own will to God, the justified person depends constantly on the aid of the Spirit of God who illumines God's will in the believer's heart. Therefore, in the journey toward entire sanctification, a Christian strives to follow the will of God as manifest in "the mind which was in Christ" (Phil. 2:5)—the emblem of the ultimate humility of God.

Variant forms of humility, especially self-knowledge, are prevalent in Wesley's sermons, treatises, letters, and hymns, as these were collected in The Bicentennial Edition of *The Works of John Wesley*, which has been the major enterprise of Wesley scholars since 1975. The Bicentennial Edition consists of thirty-five volumes of Wesley's work. Though it is not yet complete, this edition, including 151 sermons, includes the following publications: Volumes 1-4: Sermons; Volumes 5–6: Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament; Volume 7: Hymns; Volume 8: Worship; Volume 9: Methodist Societies; Volume 10: Minutes; Volume 11: Appeals; Volumes 12-13: Doctrinal and Controversial Treatises; Volume 14: Social/Political Tracts; Volume 15: Catechetical/Educational Works; Volume 16: Editorial Works; Volume 17: Medical Writings; Volumes 18-24: Journal and Diaries; Volumes 25–31: Letters; Volume 32: Oxford Diaries; Volumes 33–34: Bibliography; Volume 35: Index and Miscellanea.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the Wesley scholars who have studied his writings have focused on theological issues. For example, Thomas A. Noble<sup>12</sup> describes recent Wesley scholarly works from various perspectives, but mostly with a theological concern. Since George

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<sup>11</sup>Volumes in print are 1-4, 7, 9, 11, 18-26. <http://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/cswt/wesley-texts/wesley-works-editorial-project/bicentennial> (accessed March 1, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Noble, "John Wesley as a Theologian: An Introduction," presented at the conference of CERT (Center for Evangelical and Reformed Theology) at the Free University of Amsterdam on April 5, 2007, 2-6, [http://didache.nts.edu/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_view&gid=730&Itemid](http://didache.nts.edu/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=730&Itemid) (accessed August 31, 2010).

Croft Cell characterized Wesley as an organizer as well as a synthesizer of “the Protestant ethic of grace with the Catholic ethic of holiness” in his *The Re-Discovery of John Wesley* (1934), scholars have presented Wesley according to their own special interests. William R. Cannon, in *The Theology of John Wesley, with Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification* (1946), presented “a very Reformed Wesley.” Colin Williams, in *John Wesley’s Theology Today* (1960), dealt with Wesley from the perspective of systematic theology. Wesley also was examined as an English Puritan by Robert Monk and John Newton.

Foremost among such scholars, Albert C. Outler wrote a landmark article in 1961, “Towards a Re-appraisal of John Wesley as a Theologian,” in which Outler presented Wesley primarily as a “folk-theologian.”<sup>13</sup> This inspired many further studies on Wesley, including biographies by Martin Schmidt and Robert G. Tuttle in the 1970s. In the following decade, Gordon Rupp and Philip Watson compared Wesley with Luther. Henry Rack tried to unite *theoria* and *praxis* in his biography of Wesley, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (1989). Ted Campbell’s *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity* (1991) and Randy Maddox’s *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (1994) dealt with the influence of the Greek Fathers on Wesley’s thought. Theodore H. Runyon examined Wesley’s theological perspectives in *The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology Today* (1998). Kenneth J. Collins, in his books *A Faithful Witness: John Wesley’s Homiletical Theology* (1993), *The Scripture Way of*

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<sup>13</sup> Albert C. Outler, “Towards a Re-appraisal of John Wesley as a Theologian,” *The Perkins School of Theology Journal* 14, no. 2 (1961): 5-14; “John Wesley: Folk-Theologian,” *Theology Today* 34 (1977): 150-151. Outler calls Wesley a folk-theologian in that most of the audience of his sermons were common people, and in that he simplified doctrinal issues in order to help common people’s understanding. Out of 150 written sermons, 10 were for peers, 1 for civil officials, 1 for clergy, and the rest *ad populum*.

*Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley's Theology* (1997), and *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (2007), presented Wesley's theology in systematic fashion.<sup>14</sup>

Noble comments that Outler's evaluation of Wesley as "a folk theologian,"<sup>15</sup> not a systematic theologian, implied a different kind of theology:

[As] Maddox later pointed out, there has been something of a change in the way theology is viewed since Outler made that comment in the 1960s. Whereas it was common to view theology primarily as an academic pursuit concerned with the intellectual rigour and coherence of a system of ideas, it has become increasingly recognized that rather than an intellectual discipline whose context is the university – even the *secular* university, where it tries to present its credentials as akin to Religious Studies and so to be classed with Philosophy or Sociology of Religion – Christian Theology is an intellectual and practical discipline which finds its primary context within the Christian Church. As *fides quaerens intellectum*, it traces its genesis to the early Christian fathers, ... John Wesley's theology, like that of Gregory the Theologian, is not formulated in a philosophico-theological treatise, but in sermons.<sup>16</sup>

Kevin Lowery agrees that there has been a renewed interest in Wesley since Outler.

However, in his evaluation on current Wesley scholarship, Lowery argues that Wesley scholars have "predominantly focused on theological themes."<sup>17</sup>

Kenneth Collins also evaluates the state of Wesley studies in North America as "not only alive and well, but actually thriving." Upon reviewing several paradigms of Wesley's theology, Collins commends those of Randy Maddox and Theodore Runyon, despite the fact that each has its own weakness. Maddox's synergistic grace focuses on

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<sup>14</sup> Noble, 2-6. See also, Adrian Hastings et al., *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 430.

<sup>15</sup> Outler, "John Wesley: Folk-Theologian": 150.

<sup>16</sup> Noble, 3-4; Maddox, 15.

<sup>17</sup> Kevin Twain Lowery, *Salvaging Wesley's Agenda: A New Paradigm for Wesleyan Virtue Ethics*. Princeton Theological Monograph Series 86 (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick publications, 2008), 4.

Wesley's theology in terms of responsible grace; Runyon's paradigm of the new creation is significant for understanding Wesley's theology from the perspectives of eschatology and ecology. Even though these authors study critical issues of the Christian journey, such as responsible grace and new creation, their main concern is with a theological paradigm shift.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, Wesley scholars have studied Wesley's understanding of the order of salvation or spiritual development in terms of theological issues.<sup>19</sup> Because the life of Wesley cannot be explained without a reference to a series of theological controversies, it is natural for such scholars to study Wesley's understanding of spiritual development in this way, especially since Outler identified Wesley as "a folk theologian." For this reason, scholars' interpretations of Wesley's sermons have dealt with many important theological topics, but the role of humility as applicable to a Christian's journey of holiness has been ignored.

Though each and every topic of theology can bring spiritual nourishment, there is a need to revisit Wesley's understanding of a Christian life as a process of holiness, so that Wesley's intention expressed in his sermons—helping his hearers understand how they might become and remain Christians—may be applicable to us in the twenty-first century, helping us, too, to become and remain "altogether Christians."<sup>20</sup> One important way to understand this is to grasp what Wesley taught about humility.

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<sup>18</sup> Kenneth J. Collins, "The State of Wesley Studies in North America: A Theological Journey," *Wesley Theological Journal* 44, no. 2 (Fall, 2009): 8.

<sup>19</sup> The scholars mentioned above do not deal in their writings with humility as something essential in Wesley's understanding of the process of spiritual development. Only Collins notes the role of humility before and after justification in Wesley's thought.

<sup>20</sup> In "The Almost Christian," Wesley describes an "altogether" Christian as synonym of a true and real Christian. Michael Lodahl also claims the necessity of the practical issues rooted in theology in his book,

The few who have written specifically on the topic of humility with regard to Wesley have tended to focus on the role of humility in the believer as she or he is conformed to the image of Christ. Richard Morgan Cameron's "The little flowers of John Wesley"<sup>21</sup> and Cyril Charles Richardson's "Poverello and Methodist: a Study in Francis of Assisi and John Wesley"<sup>22</sup> deal with Wesley and some Methodist itinerants' lives regarding humility and poverty in comparison with Francis of Assisi. However, these articles are limited to using several episodes of itinerant preachers' lives, instead of providing an overview of Wesley's understanding of humility in the entire journey of Christian salvation.

The only scholarly article on Wesley's understanding of humility is Kenneth J. Collins' "A Reconfiguration of Power: The Basic Trajectory in John Wesley's Practical Theology."<sup>23</sup> Collins describes Wesley's understanding of humility as poverty of spirit in two aspects, one of them relating to repentance and self-knowledge and the other regarding the Christian humility of the believer after being justified. Although he acknowledges humility as existing prior to justification, Collins' main focus in this article is humility in one's relationship with other people as a necessary element of Christian love in the stage of sanctification. Collins and others give brief mention of humility in connection with other aspects of the work of grace, but only cursorily. None has done a thorough study of Wesley's understanding of humility.

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*God of Nature and of Grace: Reading the Word in a Wesleyan Way* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2003), 22.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Morgan Cameron, "The little flowers of John Wesley," *Religion in Life* 23, no 2 (Spring 1954): 267-278.

<sup>22</sup> Cyril Charles Richardson, "Poverello and methodist: a study in Francis of Assisi and John Wesley," *Religion in Life* 7, no. 2 (Spring, 1938): 218-230.

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth J. Collins, "A Reconfiguration of Power: The Basic Trajectory in John Wesley's Practical Theology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33 (1998): 164-84.

## B. Task and Outline

Those Wesley scholars who have treated the theme of humility in his writings seem to have restricted their account of Christian humility to explicit occurrences of the word “humility,” as a virtue developed through a Christian’s imitation of Christ. And because none of Wesley’s sermons has a direct, explicit focus on “humility,” these scholars have tended not to assign a key role to humility in their account of his views. They have not been concerned with the fact that there are good grounds for holding that Wesley understands self-knowledge, obedience, lowliness, self-denial, and love, topics that *are* the direct focus of many of his sermons, all as aspects of humility. Accordingly, while presenting Wesley as an evangelist, a Puritan-Anglican, a social reformer, or a theologian, these scholars have seldom used humility as a lens through which Wesley’s understanding of Christian spiritual development can be seen as a whole.

In using this lens, it is important to examine how significant is the role of humility from the beginning of one’s self-knowledge through the continuing growth in faith toward the goal of entire sanctification in faith, i.e., the restoration of *imago Dei*. Therefore, the core of this dissertation will be examining humility in each stage of the *via salutis* in Wesley’s perspective. By examining Wesley’s sermons as a main resource in order to determine the role of humility, therefore, the journey of Christian holiness will be seen to include various aspects of humility in the life of holiness.

Accordingly, this dissertation will explore the idea of humility as a crucial element in Wesley’s understanding of the entire process of spiritual restoration of the *imago Dei*

and will seek to determine whether Wesley's theology and practice can rightly be understood as an active pursuit of humility.

The second chapter, on the context of Wesley's spirituality, will provide a necessary foundation for this study, for prior to exploring Wesley's understanding of humility itself, it is important to see the context in which he wrote and preached. To this end, the second chapter will briefly examine some historical, biographical, and theological aspects of Wesley's spirituality, all of which helped form the man he became.

The first part of that chapter will deal with the historical context of Wesley's spirituality. As regards the historical context, the history of the Church of England played an essential role in the life of Wesley, who was ordained as a priest in that Church. The influence of Anglicanism, especially that of Anglican moralists, is important for understanding Wesley's thought on humility as seen in his sermon, "The Image of God." Therefore, a brief description of certain events in English history will be introduced, mainly through the lens of the *Book of Common Prayer*, along with a few other influences on Wesley's thought and life.<sup>24</sup>

The second part of chapter two will focus on the anthropological context of Wesley's spirituality. Wesley's family background tells of another stream of the religious tradition that was deeply rooted in Wesley's life: the Puritan tradition, evident especially in his mother's way of bringing up her children. In addition to the Anglican and Puritan traditions, the Moravian influence will also be briefly examined.

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<sup>24</sup> Though Anglican homilies are as important as the *Book of Common Prayer*, homilies are excluded in the description of the historical context in order to focus on the turmoil of English history.

The third part of the chapter will deal with Wesley's view of theological anthropology, which was intimately related to his understanding of humility. Therefore, Wesley's understanding of original creation, the fall (original sin), and prevenient grace will be introduced, as illuminating what he taught about a person's spiritual development. In this third part, section one will deal with Wesley's understanding of the *Imago Dei* in creation; section two will explore the effects of original sin on the *Imago Dei* after the fall; and section three will examine the prevenient grace by which the Christian journey to the full restoration of the *Imago Dei* can begin. All of this will set the stage for examining Wesley's teaching on humility itself, to be examined in the following chapters.

The third chapter will examine whether or not humility is an integral aspect of Wesley's understanding of justification by faith. In order to present humility as properly applying to the entire process of spiritual development of Wesley's understanding, it is essential to extend the meaning of humility beyond the exact term "humility." Thus, the chapter will begin with the various aspects of humility, self-knowledge in particular.

The first part of chapter three will focus on self-knowledge as an aspect of humility before justification by faith, in order to see whether or not self-knowledge is compatible with humility in Wesley's understanding of the *via salutis*. In this part, human self-knowledge prior to justification will be considered in terms of the prevenient grace of God. It will be shown that, according to Wesley, it is self-knowledge that spurs a person to admit his or her reality before God, and hence, the need of help from God.

The second part of the third chapter will focus on the extent to which humility, in the form of self-knowledge, corresponds to prevenient grace and leads a person to respond

to the justifying grace of God. Humility, in its relation with the convicting grace of God, will be examined. Section one will deal with the work of the convincing grace of God with regard to conscience and moral law, according to Wesley's understanding. In section two, the parable of the prodigal son in Luke will be employed to support the connection of self-knowledge in humility with justification by faith. Additionally, the role of human freedom in the transition from conviction to justification will be briefly explored in section three.

The third part of the chapter will distinguish humility as an integral component of Wesley's understanding of justification by faith. Section one will examine Wesley's understanding of faith. In order to deal with the role of humility in justification, Wesley's understanding of faith will be explained in terms of the knowledge of God, which is closely related to the knowledge of self. The knowledge of God produced by spiritual eye-opening in faith will be examined. Section two will examine the relationship between humility and faith; it will be made clear that the knowledge of oneself as a sinner who needs to be set right with God is coherent with repentance and justification. Section three will consider Wesley's understanding of humility from the perspective of justification by faith. In order to see if humility is compatible with the doctrine of *sola fide*, Wesley's consideration of whether or not humility is a virtue will be explored.

The fourth chapter will demonstrate the role of humility in the journey toward entire sanctification (Christian perfection) in several ways. The first part will explore self-knowledge as a form of humility in the journey of sanctification. Section one will examine self-knowledge of sin remaining in the justified. Section two, accordingly, will examine

Wesley's understanding of repentance in believers, for repenting from inward and outward sins is integral to the journey of sanctification. Section three, therefore, will define the three aspects of sin, according to Wesley: inward sin, sin of commission, and sin of omission. As a remedy to sin for believers, Wesley proposes the knowledge of God.

The second part of the chapter will explore Wesley's understanding of the knowledge of God as the Trinity. Section one will deal with God the Father who is the Creator and the Giver of life. The focus of section two will be God the Son who is given to us for our salvation. In particular, Wesley's understanding of humility according to the mind of Christ will be examined. In section three, Wesley's understanding of God the Holy Spirit will be the focus.

In knowing that God is the Giver who first loved us, therefore saved us, and who wills us to follow His will, the journey of sanctification can be seen as a journey of becoming like God. In the third part of the chapter, the practical life of holiness in humility will be reflected upon with regard to the extent to which we can live out the knowledge of God and of self in practice: how to continue to love God, neighbors, and all our fellow creatures in humility. As examples of being humble based on the knowledge of God and of self, Wesley's views on the love of money and on the need of visiting the sick will be explored. Section one will examine his teaching about the love of money as an especially harmful manifestation of pride, contrary to humility and the love of God. Section two will explore how the humble may imitate God who is Emmanuel by visiting the sick.

After thus examining the role of humility in each stage of a Christian's spiritual development, the fifth and final chapter will summarize the findings of the preceding chapters and so attempt to determine to what extent humility can be seen as a key component in Wesley's understanding of the whole process of Christian spiritual development.

## Chapter II: THE CONTEXT OF JOHN WESLEY'S SPIRITUALITY

### Introduction

Christian spirituality can be understood as the “lived experience”<sup>25</sup> of a person’s life in faith as a sojourner, in which various social, historical, anthropological, and theological experiences converge. With regard to John Wesley’s spirituality and his spiritual development, it is worth studying how he eventually broadened his theological perspective, wove it into his theological anthropology, and expressed it in his socio-historical context throughout his faith journey.

A memory, like a river that runs through one’s soul, can be considered symbolic in that the memory borne through one’s reinterpretation of it reflects one’s life in the present.<sup>26</sup> In that respect, a memory from Wesley’s childhood that he recounted in his old age carries deep significance. When he was six years old, the family’s rectory at Epworth caught fire. After he was rescued by a neighbor just before the rectory collapsed, the whole family prayed and praised God. In grateful remembrance of this event, Wesley referred to himself as a “brand plucked out of the fire.”<sup>27</sup> Wesley mused over this memory in such a way that he came to understand that within God’s providence his life was like a

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<sup>25</sup> Sandra M. Schneiders, “The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline,” in *Minding the Spirit*, ed. Elizabeth A. Dreyer & Mark S. Burrows (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), 6. Schneiders speaks of spirituality as “lived experience.” This “lived experience” involves “the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ” and “the living of his paschal mystery in the context of the Church community through the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>26</sup> John Kotre, *White Gloves: How We Create Ourselves Through Memory* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 57, 72.

<sup>27</sup> John Telford, *The Life of John Wesley* (London: The Epworth Press, 1947), 18; Robert G. Tuttle, *John Wesley: His Life and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 42.

flame that spread a fire in English life, which was dry and destitute both spiritually and physically.

Holding this image of a “brand plucked out of the fire,” Wesley pondered his life as an evangelist of the English Revival movement and an organizer of the Methodist Society in the Church of England.<sup>28</sup> However, his life envisaged as a brand retaining the fire can also be understood as one that took part in the groaning pains of creation and of the people,<sup>29</sup> because not only history and society but also his personal faith journey and that of his community were marked by pain. Wesley persevered through the pain like a woman in labor because he believed that a new life, a new creation, would be brought forth after such pain. Therefore, the pains and challenges Wesley inherited as well as embraced throughout his life need to be addressed in order to better understand his faith journey toward Christian perfection, which may be seen as a journey based on humility.

For this reason, it is important to examine the historical and anthropological contexts in which Wesley’s spirituality was embedded. In this chapter, the historical context of Wesley’s spirituality will first be explored, with special reference to the turmoil in the English Reformation concerning the *Book of Common Prayer*. In a subsequent section we will explore Wesley’s anthropological context by first examining his encounter with the Anglican, Puritan, and Moravian tradition and then by exploring his desire for holiness during his time as a student at Oxford, as a missionary in Georgia, and as an evangelist in England. Having provided this historical and anthropological context, we

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<sup>28</sup> The terms “the Church of England” and “the Anglican Church” are used here without differentiation.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Romans 8:19-22; “The General Deliverance,” §1, *The Works*, II: 437.

will discuss the theological context of Wesley's spirituality by focusing on his theological anthropology, specifically his teaching about creation and original sin.

### **A. Historical Context**

The Church of England was the heritage in which Wesley was formed as an Anglican priest, and his spiritual growth as a brand plucked out of the fire should be understood in its historical context, which is inseparable from the history of the English Reformation. The *Book of Common Prayer* of the Church of England can provide a glimpse into how the Church "in" England became that "of" England.

Henry VIII (1509-1547), who once earned the title "defender of the faith" from Pope Leo X for having critiqued Martin Luther's 95 Theses, challenged the authority of Pope Clement VII when he failed to receive an annulment of his marriage to Catharine of Aragon. Calling himself the "Protector and Supreme Head of the English Church and Clergy" in 1531, Henry VIII emphasized that the crown was essential for the constitution of the English Church. At the same time, he was committed to remaining doctrinally a Catholic. For example, through the application of Six Articles Act, he defended the truth of Transubstantiation, Communion under only one kind, clerical celibacy, vows of chastity, the importance of private Masses, and sacramental confession.<sup>30</sup> However, various acts of Parliament, chiefly the Act of Supremacy, transferred papal authority to the king and made Henry VIII, in everything but name, Pope of England. It only remained for Pope Paul III

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<sup>30</sup> John Brown, *The English Puritans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 7.

to complete the process, which he did by issuing a Bull of Excommunication and deposition against the King and his abettors.<sup>31</sup>

Following the English Reformation in the sixteenth century, what had until then been common values in the English people's hearts and minds were repudiated, and the Roman Catholic Church *in* England became a different kind of Church of England. In 1537 Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, proposed a *Bishop's Book*, which later came out as the first edition of the *Book of Common Prayer*. This *Book of Common Prayer* was provided for parish priests who were confused by the breach from Rome.<sup>32</sup> A second edition, which came out in 1552 during Northumberland's regency, turned out to be more Protestant than the first edition. From Henry VIII until John Wesley's time, as the monarchs changed, the *Book of Common Prayer* also went through revisions. In spite of the intention that it should form the identity of Anglicans, the *Book of Common Prayer* actually became a source of divisions among the people of England.<sup>33</sup>

After the break with the Church of Rome, the Church of England was not always of one accord in either polity or doctrine. Its leaders labeled those who refused to conform to the tenets of the Church of England "nonconformists." Queen Elizabeth found England divided into three groups: a Roman Catholic party who were supporters of Elizabeth's sister Mary; a Protestant party who had been persecuted during Mary's reign; and a middle party who considered themselves neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant but the Church of

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<sup>31</sup> Brown, 5-6.

<sup>32</sup> John R. Moorman, *A History of The Church In England*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1967), 163-168.

<sup>33</sup> Brown, 7; Moorman, 177-78; *The Book of Common Prayer* (London, 1662), <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1662/Baskerville.pdf> (accessed January 20, 2010).

England (catholic and reformed). Unlike Mary, Elizabeth was ready to continue what her father and brother had been doing: retaining Calvinistic doctrine and Catholic liturgy.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, the particular doctrine and liturgical practice of the Anglican Church became the cause of schism among the people in England, although that was not at all the intention of the monarchs. In particular, when Queen Elizabeth made it imperative for the clergy to use of the *Book of Common Prayer* under the Act of Uniformity, various criticisms raised against the *Book of Common Prayer* foreshadowed divisions among English Christians. As the Act of Uniformity imposed certain penalties on those who violated it, many people followed the law simply by conforming their Christian practices to the *Book of Common Prayer* unwillingly.<sup>35</sup> Those who did not conform to the tenets of the Church of England became “nonconformists,” belonging to dissenting groups.<sup>36</sup> Under what was called the Act of Uniformity, conflicts over the theology and liturgy of the *Book of Common Prayer* ironically divided the English people, in a broad sense, into two groups, the Anglicans and the nonconformists.

It was at this time that the Puritans began to raise their voices in opposition to the *Book of Common Prayer*. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the leaders of the Puritans were among the foremost of their age in learning and intellectual force. They opposed an “unenlightened reliance on the priesthood and the outward ordinances of the Church,” the episcopacy in particular. They were firmly grounded in “reverence for Scripture, and for

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<sup>34</sup> Moorman, 199-200.

<sup>35</sup> Melvin B. Endy, *William Penn and Early Quakerism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 8; Moorman, 185-190.

<sup>36</sup> W. G. Peck, *From Chaos to Catholicism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920), 154. The term “dissenter” refers to a number of Protestant denominations, such as Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, Congregationalists and others, who refused to take the Anglican communion or to conform to the tenets of the restored Church of England in 1662.

the sovereign majesty of God, a severe morality, popular sympathies and a fervent attachment to the cause of civil freedom.”<sup>37</sup> As the end of Elizabeth’s life approached, the Puritans had high hopes for the future King James, who had been brought up in Presbyterianism in Scotland. Invited to unify the crowns of England and Scotland, James VI of Scotland became James I of England. A thousand English Puritan clergy signed a plea for James to further the reformation of the Church of England in a Puritan direction. Puritans demanded the abolition of the surplice, the cross in Baptism, and the habit of kneeling at the Communion. They promoted the continuation of extemporary prayer and wanted Sunday to be called “the Lord’s Day” and a priest to be called “minister.” However, their efforts were largely fruitless.<sup>38</sup>

Continuing the policy of the previous monarch, James I declared in 1603 the “Divine Right” of the king and enforced the Act of Supremacy.<sup>39</sup> His forceful policies, however, provoked another counter-wind in the history of England, for many of the Puritans belonged to the House of Commons at the time and identified their Puritan spirit with a “fervent attachment to the cause of civil freedom.”<sup>40</sup> Finally, the “Grand Remonstrance,” which demanded that the king and bishops reduce their power, was

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<sup>37</sup> Cyril Davey, *John Wesley and The Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1985), 4; Bready, 160; David L. Edwards, *Christian England: From the Reformation to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 17, 48; Brown, 3-4. Those who wanted to form a political and religious society under the strictest possible discipline and in conformity with the principles for which they stood left for the American colony in 1620 on the *Mayflower*.

<sup>38</sup> Brown, 113.

<sup>39</sup> Moorman, 222. Henry VIII was James’ great-great-uncle.

<sup>40</sup> Moorman, 229.

presented to King Charles I in 1641 by Parliament. In the following year, war erupted between royalists and the parliamentary army led by Oliver Cromwell.<sup>41</sup>

Under the Cromwellian-Puritan government, the *Book of Common Prayer* was no longer used.<sup>42</sup> The dissenters enjoyed religious freedom during Cromwell's tenure. However, when the Cromwellian government fell, the Puritans fell with it. Once triumphant Puritans became helpless nonconformists, with cruel oppression awaiting them. Then the term "Puritan" came to denote "any who espoused further reform, or tighter discipline." However, "relentless persecution created sacred traditions which [bore] fruit in consecrated lives," and these traditions were bequeathed to John Wesley through his mother Susanna's Puritan faith.<sup>43</sup>

After King Charles II restored the episcopacy, 700 Puritan clergymen were removed from their positions and another "counter reformation" took place, with the *Book of Common Prayer* being reintroduced to the people.<sup>44</sup> Nonconformists were subjected to persecution under various acts passed by Parliament between 1661 and 1665.<sup>45</sup> In addition, when King James II succeeded Charles II in 1685 and endeavored to bring the influence of Roman Catholicism back to England, another strong opposition to the monarchy arose.

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<sup>41</sup> Moorman, 240. William Laud, the archbishop of Canterbury, and Charles I were sentenced to death at the House of Commons and beheaded, Laud in 1645 and the king in 1649. The death of Charles I meant triumph for the Puritans, but many people felt uneasy as they recalled the "Divine Right" of the king.

<sup>42</sup> Richard H. Schmidt, *Glorious Companions: Five Centuries of Anglican Spirituality* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 72. While the Puritans abolished bishops and the *Book of Common Prayer*, Jeremy Taylor as an Anglican loyalist affirmed the office of bishop, and therefore was imprisoned.

<sup>43</sup> David A. Copeland, *Benjamin Keach And The Development of Baptist Traditions in Seventeenth-Century England* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1951), 18; Bryan D. Spinks, *Sacraments, Ceremonies and the Stuart Divines: Sacramental theology and liturgy in England and Scotland 1603-1662* (England: Ashgate, 2002), xii.

<sup>44</sup> Ernest E. Best, *Religion and Society in Transition: The Church and Social Change in England, 1560-1850* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1919), 15; Moorman, 250-251. John Wesley used this 1662 Prayer Book.

<sup>45</sup> Peck, 158. Over 2,000 nonconformist clergymen were forced to resign.

Both Anglicans and nonconformists protested the Roman Catholic influence in the Church of England.<sup>46</sup> Although James II suspended all penal laws against nonconformists, including Roman Catholics, and declared his protection for the established Church by the Declarations of Indulgence in 1688, a formal invitation to assume the throne was extended to William of Orange and Mary by the Parliament. James II fled to France after William invaded at the head of a Dutch army.

Nonetheless, many English people who had taken an oath to King James, affirming the king's "Divine Right" and the people's "Passive Obedience," refused to take the oath of allegiance to William and Mary and kept their allegiance to James II. The problem of authority now became a social issue that divided people into three groups according to their understanding of authority: for Roman Catholics the pope was the authority; for the Protestants the people were the authority; and the Anglicans vested authority in the king. Since the doctrine of "Passive Obedience" was activated under King James II, the Jacobites believed James's heirs (the Stuarts) were the lawful successors. By not taking oaths of allegiance to William of Orange and Mary, these Jacobites became "nonjurors," that is, another version of nonconformists. They held on to their identity as true Anglicans who were the "British Remnant of Primitive Piety." This caused them to lose their positions in the Church and so resulted in further divisions within the country.<sup>47</sup>

This schismatic turmoil remained in many English hearts, including the family of an Anglican priest, Samuel Wesley, Sr. (1662-1735). When Samuel prayed the *Book of*

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<sup>46</sup> Since the time of the Cromwellian government, people who opposed the government policy were referred to as "nonconformists."

<sup>47</sup> J. H. Overton, *The Nonjurors: Their Lives, Principles, and Writings* (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1903), 2-8, 310, 458-59. Among nonjurors who did not take an oath of allegiance were 400 clergy and 6 bishops.

*Common Prayer*, in which a prayer for the king was included, Susanna, his wife, would not say “Amen,” and they often lived apart before 1702. When the reign of William and Mary ended in 1702, Anglicans experienced unity once more as Queen Anne succeeded to the throne. It would not be an overstatement to say that juror Samuel and nonjuror Susanna had their infant son John Wesley in 1703 as evidence of their reconciliation.

In 1689 William and Mary, as King and Queen of England, declared the Act of Toleration,<sup>48</sup> which provided legal protection for dissenting groups under certain conditions. Under this tolerant mood, religious societies such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) were founded by bishops to educate poor children and to help the conversion of the Native Americans as well as English settlers.<sup>49</sup> Some years earlier, in 1678, “a few young men in London of the middle class impressed by Anthony Horneck’s preaching at the Savoy Chapel”<sup>50</sup> began meeting in order to support one another in conducting their lives according to the Church’s teaching. Their numbers grew, and clergymen directed them to love one another, not to revile when they themselves were reviled, to speak evil of no man, to wrong no man, to pray, if possible, seven times a day, and to keep close to the Church of England. By 1710, 42 such societies in London and Westminster were reported.

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<sup>48</sup> Moorman, 264. The Act of Toleration includes these stipulations: meeting houses must be registered with the government; dissenting preachers must be licensed; and meetings for worship must be held in the registered meeting houses, not in private homes. Roman Catholic or Unitarian groups were not to be included under these provisions; Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory: Reflections on Early Methodism* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1989), 17.

<sup>49</sup> Moorman, 267; J. H. Overton, *Life in the English Church, Life in the English Church* (London: Longmans, Green, And Co., 1885), 207-208, 216, 218, 228.

<sup>50</sup> Overton, *Life in the English Church*, 211. Horneck’s influence is not trivial; however it is not the focus of this dissertation. Regarding Horneck and the religious societies in England, see Scott T. Kisker, *Foundation for Revival* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2008). According to his diary in March, 1733, upon reading Horneck’s *The Happy Ascetic* at his father’s advice, Wesley “found a call to Christian primitivism and strict devotional practice to which he would return throughout his life.” Kisker, 157.

Through them, people who had been confused about Romanism and Puritanism now had opportunities to practice their devotions within Anglicanism.<sup>51</sup> According to Scott Kisker, the religious societies conveyed an “Anglican type of Pietism”:

Both Pietism and Restoration Anglicanism focused on sanctification as the goal of the Christian life. The dominant theological school of the Restoration period is known as Anglican Moralism. Following the horrors of the Civil War, Anglican divines feared that the doctrine of justification by faith alone had led ... to antinomianism. As a bulwark against lawlessness, Bishop George Bull and other Caroline divines defended the necessity of works in the scheme of salvation.<sup>52</sup>

John Wesley’s father, Samuel, was one of the supporters of these societies and preached to some of them in London.<sup>53</sup> There people could celebrate the Lord’s Supper, recite public prayers, and sing psalms. Holy Communion was emphasized as “the best means to prevent men from apostatizing by confirming their vows and relieving their spiritual strength”<sup>54</sup> However, members of the societies were suspected of being Jacobites and as a result the religious societies dissolved,<sup>55</sup> but their very existence witnesses to the fact that such societies existed before John Wesley started the Methodist Society.

Even though John’s parents, Samuel Wesley and Susanna Annesley, forsook the dissenters and joined the Church of England before they married, both were from nonconformist families. In particular, his maternal grandfather, Samuel Annesley, was the Puritan pastor at St. Giles Cripplegate in London before the Act of Uniformity was enacted in 1662. When the Church became episcopal, Annesley was dismissed from St. Giles and

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<sup>51</sup> Overton, *Life in the English Church*, 211. Kisker, 173.

<sup>52</sup> Kisker, 173-74. Under Charles II, the restoration of the Church of England was initiated in order to establish the Anglican Church as the national Church. The Caroline Divines confirmed the origin of the Church as having occurred in 200 A.D., when Christianity first arrived in the British Isles.

<sup>53</sup> Overton, *Life in the English Church*, 212. Kisker, 153-54.

<sup>54</sup> Overton, *Life in the English Church*, 210.

<sup>55</sup> Overton, *Life in the English Church*, 212.

became a dissenter. In light of this family history, it is evident that a tendency toward dissent had roots in John Wesley's family.<sup>56</sup> Hence, it is not surprising to find that in him the inherent Puritan tendency toward a disciplined life converged with an Anglican spirituality of good works, both of these influencing Wesley's concern about the social environment of the poor, who were in absolute need of help. Since both Anglican and Puritan traditions were embedded in his family, it is important to see what each of them taught about the main topic of this dissertation, humility.

Humility is a major motif in the Anglican Moralists tradition. As Wesley summarizes in "An Extract from the Whole Duty of Man," "the duty to God is humility; that is, such a sense of our own meanness and his excellency as may work in us unfeigned submission to him."<sup>57</sup> Also, in the *Book of Common Prayer*, Psalm 51 has a prominent place, and it begins with a reference to one's knowledge of oneself as a sinner:

Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great goodness:  
according to the multitude of thy mercies do away mine offences.  
Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness: and cleanse me from my sin.  
For I acknowledge my faults: and my sin is ever before me.<sup>58</sup>

In addition, morning and evening prayers begin each day with an acknowledgement of

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<sup>56</sup> Both Wesley's paternal grandfather, John Westley, and great-grandfather, Bartholomew Westley, were also nonconformist pastors who were ejected in 1662. For further information see Wesley J. Bready's *England Before and After Wesley* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1938).

<sup>57</sup> *The Whole Duty of Man*, which was published anonymously in 1658 and helped define the Anglican tradition, emphasized moral practice in human life and the role of human reason in making moral decisions. Wesley's extract from *The Whole Duty of Man* for his *Christian Library* also emphasizes duty in that those "who have already experienced the free grace of God in Christ Jesus, may hereby be more fully instructed to walk in him, and more thoroughly furnished for every good word and work" (ch.II.1). Wesley, "The Whole Duty of Man," in *Christian Library*, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=279> (accessed March 15, 2011).

<sup>58</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer* (1662), 194. On Communion. Cf. Psalm 51.

transgression.<sup>59</sup> Thus, self-knowledge as humility was affirmed as a foundation of the divine work in human life.

The *Book of Common Prayer* also offers the example of a humble life in the “great humility” of Jesus Christ.<sup>60</sup> In following the example of the Lord, through daily prayers with a “humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient” heart, readers were encouraged to “be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”<sup>61</sup>

Susanna Wesley shared this spirituality as an Anglican. According to William Cannon, Susanna’s teaching of a godly life at home reflected the teaching of the contemporary Anglican Church, in that the doctrine of justification dealt not only with faith and but also with moral endeavor; therefore, “a definite pattern of godliness” was attempted in her way of child upbringing.<sup>62</sup> However, her influence on Wesley derived more from the Puritan than from the Anglican tradition, her Puritan background being traced back to her father, Samuel Annesley. Wesley’s excerpts from his grandfather’s sermons are included in his *Christian Library*, his inclusion of Annesley’s sermon on vanities being especially significant for our understanding of humility from the perspective of the Puritan tradition:

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<sup>59</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, 9, 18, 106. Before morning prayer, the minister’s reading refers to a “humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient” heart, in order to ask for God’s forgiveness. Wesley is also aware of Ps. 51 in his “Sermon on the Mount, I,” i.10, *The Works*, I: 480.

<sup>60</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, 36, 63, 323. See also Wesley’s “Sermon on the Mount, XIII.”

<sup>61</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, 101. Cf. 1 Peter 5:5

<sup>62</sup> William Ragsdale Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley: With Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946), 48-50: “Faith is no longer represented as the free gift of God implanted in the human soul. Rather, it is itself a human act and takes its place among the works of moral endeavor. If man is said to be justified by faith and works, it must be understood that the two terms are essentially the same.” For further Anglican background on Wesley’s thoughts, see Cannon, 29-48.

It is only serious godliness that can really abate the vanity that cleaves to every condition. Other things may, like topical medicines, (as plasters to the wrists,) repel the disease, but while they do not remove the cause, they cannot cure it. We may exchange one vanity for another, and the novelty may please us for a while; but when that is over, the vexation returns. It is true, GOD alone can cure us; but whatever method he takes to do it, whether of indulgence or severity, it is always by framing the heart and life to serious godliness; to hate sin, and love holiness, to live a life of faith, in dependence upon GOD, and resignation to him; to live above the transports of hopes and fears, about things temporal; and to grow up in the graces and comforts of the HOLY GHOST, for things eternal: in short, to be blessings to the world while we live, and to be blessed with GOD when we die: this is the business and fruit of serious godliness; and this alone is that which at present can effectually abate the vexatious vanities which every condition swarms with.<sup>63</sup>

In this sermon, human vanity is like a disease that can be cured only by God through “serious godliness.” Vanity itself may reasonably be understood as a kind of pride, the antonym of humility; whereas “serious godliness” is the holiness that encourages humble dependence on God as the only remedy for vanity.

## **B. Anthropological Context**

When Wesley was born into an Anglican priest’s family, poverty-stricken England was facing social and economic problems resulting from adverse reactions to Industrialization. He was the fifteenth of nineteen children, but when he grew up, only ten children were still living, the others having died in infancy. Raised in poverty, Wesley entered the Charterhouse School in London and then Christ Church in Oxford University

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<sup>63</sup>Wesley, “The Adherent Vanity of Every Condition is Most Effectually Abated by Serious Godliness [Eccles. 6: 11, 12],” in *Christian Library* (Sermon by Dr. Annesley (1620-96)), iii, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/a-christian-library-by-john-wesley> (accessed September 30, 2010).

only because his father was an Anglican priest. When he was ordained in the Anglican Church, he became a fourth-generation pastor.<sup>64</sup>

There are various factors that influenced Wesley's life journey in which he participated in what St. Paul called the groaning pains of the whole creation<sup>65</sup> and was led to stretch his love for others beyond the borders of his native land. Above all, his mother's influence should not be ignored. By reading excerpts from journals and letters exchanged between John Wesley and his mother, Susanna Wesley (1669-1742), it is possible to reflect upon the anthropological aspect of Wesley's spiritual growth. Portions of these documents reveal to us important patterns, trends, and issues in eighteenth-century England through which one can view Wesley's ethos and pathos as inseparably related to his spiritual growth. They bring into focus the Age of Industrialization, Reason, and Revival, while other portions suggest clues to help us visualize Wesley as a seeker, preacher, and reformer. Above all, Susanna's religious training of her children shows the evidence of Puritan seriousness. For example, one of her letters to her son states that obedience is the most important discipline for the training of children:

Dear Jacky,

...

According to your desire I have collected the principal rules I observed in educating my family; which I now send you as they occurred to my mind...As self-will is the root of all sin and misery... Whatever pains it cost, conquer their stubbornness: break the will, if you would not damn the child. I conjure you not to neglect, not to delay this! Therefore, (1) let a child from a year old be taught to fear the rod and to cry softly. In order to [do] this, (2) let him have nothing he cries for, absolutely nothing, great or small; else you undo your own work. (3) At all events, from that age make him do as

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<sup>64</sup> Davey, 4-5. At the time, under the "Act of Toleration," education was available only to members of the middle or upper class or Anglicans; Telford, 20.

<sup>65</sup> Romans 8:22-23.

he is bid, if you whip him ten times running to effect it: let none persuade you it is cruelty to do this; it is cruelty not to do it.<sup>66</sup>

Her emphasis on the children's obedience led Wesley, after his fifth birthday, to set aside a certain length of time every day for Bible reading and the Lord's Prayer.<sup>67</sup> Wesley in his journal records a disciplined life from his childhood:

I believe, till I was about ten years old I had not sinned away that "washing of the Holy Ghost" which was given me in baptism; having been strictly educated and carefully taught, that I could only be saved "by universal obedience, by keeping all the commandments of God;" in the meaning of which I was diligently instructed.<sup>68</sup>

Wesley's emphasis on obedience derived from an understanding of fallen humanity that he had had since childhood.<sup>69</sup> His mother's advice, given upon the opening of the Kingswood school for underprivileged children, shows her focus on teaching children that all humans, even the very young, are fallen in pride:

Teach your children as soon as possibly you can that they are fallen spirits; that they are fallen short to that glorious image of God wherein they were at first created; that they are not now, as they were once, incorruptible pictures of the God of glory; bearing the express likeness of the wise, the good, the holy Father of spirits; but more ignorant, more foolish, and more wicked, than they can possibly conceive. Show them that in pride, passion, and revenge, they are now like the devil. And that in foolish desires and groveling appetites they are like the beasts of the field. Watch over them diligently in this respect, that whenever occasion offers

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<sup>66</sup> Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 25 (Letters I), ed. Frank Baker (London: Clarendon Press, 1980), 331. Hereafter referred to as *Works*. Jacky was Wesley's nickname, used in his mother's letters to him; see also 149, 210. Although this dissertation does not focus on baptism, Wesley understands baptism as a sacrament established by Jesus Christ along with Holy Communion.

<sup>67</sup> Davey, 4. For Susanna's home school see Telford, 13-19.

<sup>68</sup> John Wesley, *The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M.* vol. I. trans. John Emory (New York: B. Waugh and T. Mason, 1837), 70 (on May 24, 1738). Hereafter cited as *The Journal*.

<sup>69</sup> As he was reminded of human wickedness through daily prayers according to *The Book of Common Prayer*.

you may ‘pride in its earliest motions find’ and check the very first appearance of it.<sup>70</sup>

Though Wesley might have lacked at times a creative mind, a deficiency which led him to apply strict rules in his Kingswood school, it is significant to see how thoroughly the virtue of obedience was instilled among young children in the school.<sup>71</sup>

Moreover, Susanna’s strict disciplinary methods made it possible to teach each of her children, including John, to live punctually according to a time line she made.<sup>72</sup> Such regularity greatly influenced Wesley’s lifestyle, not only in his life at Oxford, but also throughout his entire life. One aspect of this tightly scheduled time management approach in terms of rigorous piety can be seen in the schedule of the Holy Club at Oxford.<sup>73</sup> The members resolved to receive the Holy Communion as frequently as possible, and to visit the sick, poor and imprisoned, in addition to adhering to a regular schedule as students:

Monday and Tuesday were thus devoted to the Greek and Latin classics;  
Wednesday to logic and ethics; Thursday to Hebrew and Arabic; Friday to metaphysics and natural philosophy; Saturday to oratory and poetry, chiefly

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<sup>70</sup> “On the Education of Children,” §18, *The Works*, III: 356. In this advice one also sees something of the Anglican Moralism that Susanna conveyed to her son.

<sup>71</sup> V.H.H. Green, *John Wesley* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987), 155. The Kingswood School was founded (1748) by Wesley to educate poor children.

<sup>72</sup> Wesley, *Works*, 25: 210. Mother Susanna’s influence was not limited to his life style. As Wesley confessed that “if anyone spoke to me concerning marrying I used to say I thought I never should, because I should never find such a woman as my father had,” it was his mother that Wesley kept as an exemplary figure. However, having his mother as an exemplary figure whenever he was considering marriage made it difficult for Wesley to marry. A fatal mistake occurred in Wesley’s life when he married a widow, Mrs. Molly Vazeille, who tried and failed to hold Wesley at home—sometimes by force and sometimes by jealousy—and nearly always had to let him go his way on horseback. Wesley’s letter to his wife tells of a man’s tragic marital life, written with that frankness that was characteristic of Wesley. Telford, xxxvi, 232-34, 251, 257; Bufford W. Coe, *John Wesley and Marriage* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1996), 99-126.

<sup>73</sup> Wesley, *Works*, 26: 379-80. When John Wesley and his brother Charles met with William Morgan, Robert Kirkham, George Whitefield, James Harvey, Benjamin Ingham, and John Gambold to study the Greek Testament and the classics, and to pray in the Oxford campus, Wesley applied the same regimen that his mother had taught him at his early age.

composing; Sunday to divinity. At intervals he studied French, ...sometimes amused himself with experiments in optics.<sup>74</sup>

This group, known as the Holy Club, was often referred to as the Reforming Club, the Godly Club, Bible Moths, and Methodists.<sup>75</sup> The intention of the Holy Club was to live a holy life, as revealed in Wesley's father's advice with regard to the Holy Club:

My daily prayers are, that God would keep you humble; and then I am sure that if you continue 'to suffer for righteousness' sake,' though it be but in a lower degree, 'the Spirit of glory and of God' shall, in some good measure, 'rest upon you.' Be never weary of well-doing... Be not high-minded, but fear. Preserve an equal temper of mind under whatever treatment you meet with from a not very just or well-natured world.<sup>76</sup>

Even though they sought a humble and holy life by adhering to the same kind of regimen that Wesley's mother had taught him at an early age, the Holy Club's strict methodical exertion made its members appear eccentric to the other students, and soon they were labeled Methodists.<sup>77</sup> According to Heitzenrater, to become "methodist" in eighteenth-century England was to be devoted "to some method or laying great stress on method."<sup>78</sup> He therefore calls the Holy Club members "the Oxford Methodists," for they would develop methods for diet, reading, acquaintance, and visiting a prison [Castle].<sup>79</sup> "Wesley's methods and rules gave the outward impression of a works-oriented theology grounded in an obligation theory of ethics."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Bready, 187.

<sup>75</sup> Telford, 58, 161.

<sup>76</sup> *The Journal*, 7-8 (December 1, 1729).

<sup>77</sup> Telford, 49, 58, 59.

<sup>78</sup> Heitzenrater, 15.

<sup>79</sup> Heitzenrater, 26, 224. See also diaries on 6 December 1731, 22 May 1732, 19 November 1733, 1 March 1733, and 9 March 1734.

<sup>80</sup> Heitzenrater, 225.

Although in Wesley's diary in 1734 only four members are recorded as being members of his society, these core members, in close relationship with Wesley himself, soon formed a small-group type of Methodist Society, with each serving as leader of one of the groups. For each small study group in this early stage of Methodism, Wesley and other leaders of the Methodist Society assigned almost the same set of rules and schedule. For example, as Heitzenrater records, the works on each group's reading list were very similar: "Homer, Cicero, Virgil, Juvenal... Aldrich, Sanderson, Gravesande, and Kenneth... à Kempis, Law, Taylor, Horneck, Goodman, and Francke."<sup>81</sup>

The appellation "Methodist" implies that people viewed their regimented lifestyle not always positively but also negatively. In December, 1732, a London newspaper, *Fog's Weekly Journal*, commented on these Oxford men, criticizing "the cloak of piety and scholarship in a conscientious manner untypical of that day" and calling them "Methodists."<sup>82</sup> After the death of William Morgan, a member of the Holy Club, in September of the same year, the members of the Holy Club were also called "sons of sorrows," "shameless gutgazers," and "madmen and fools."<sup>83</sup> In response to such criticism, Wesley wrote *People Called Methodists* in order to explain the Holy Club; he said its members would conduct their "life and thought after the disciplined approach of the Early Church."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Heitzenrater, 87.

<sup>82</sup> Heitzenrater, 13-14.

<sup>83</sup> Heitzenrater, 14.

<sup>84</sup> Heitzenrater, 220. A letter from John Clayton to Wesley reveals that the members of the Holy Club thought of their being called "Methodist" as rather positive. Wesley was aware that the term "methodists" was used first in reference to ancient physicians in the time of Nero, and tried to connect the Oxford Methodists' life-style, with its method and regularity, with the ancient sect of physicians. Heitzenrater, 16.

In addition, it is necessary to note that one of the emblems of Wesley presents him as reading even while astride a horse. Wesley's "own recorded bibliography includes over 1,400 different authors with nearly 3,000 separate items ranging from pamphlets to twelve-volume sets."<sup>85</sup> During Wesley's Oxford years in particular, his reading of many spiritual writers intensified his already habitual, meticulous life style. In particular, Wesley described in his journal how reading Jeremy Taylor's *The Rules and Exercises of Holy Living* (1650) and *The Rules and Exercises of Holy Dying* (1651), Thomas à Kempis's *A Treatise of Imitation of Christ* (1400's), and William Law's *Christian Perfection* (1726) and *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1729) led him to ponder true religion and a life devoted to God.<sup>86</sup>

Through these authors Wesley learned the importance of the *appropriation* of the mind of Christ.<sup>87</sup> For example, Jeremy Taylor (1613-67), according to an extract in Wesley's *Christian Library*, explains that it is humility that makes Christian religion different from other worldly wisdom precisely because of the humility of Jesus Christ:<sup>88</sup>

his whole life being a continued example of humility, a vast descent from the glorious bosom of his Father, to the womb of a poor maiden; to the form of a servant, to the miseries of a sinner, to a life of labor, to a state of poverty, to a death

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<sup>85</sup> Lowery, 43. Wesley's "bibliography" means Wesley's own record of all the list of his reading materials.

<sup>86</sup> *The Journal*, 3 (preface to volume III), 71 (May 24, 1738); Green, 21; Theodore H. Runyon. "The Importance of Experience for faith," in *Aldersgate Reconsidered*. ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1990), 100. There are 50 books enlisted in Wesley's *Christian Library* that he selected as recommended books. In his sermon "On a Single Eye," Wesley especially shows the summative influence of à Kempis, Taylor, and Law. See "On a Single Eye," *The Works*, IV: 120-30.

<sup>87</sup> Heitzenrater, 112.

<sup>88</sup> Wesley, "Extracts From The Works Of Jer. Taylor, D.d., Chapters I-iii," in *Christian Library*, sect 4: Of Humility, [http://didache.nts.edu/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_view&gid=730&Itemid](http://didache.nts.edu/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=730&Itemid) (accessed January 25, 2010).

of malefactors, to the grave of death, and the intolerable calamities which we deserved.<sup>89</sup>

Comparing one's own humility to that of Christ, Taylor advises his reader to avoid self-exaltation and to grow in humility by practicing daily reflection, confessing one's sins, and avoiding flatterers.<sup>90</sup>

Because of the significant effect of these authors on Wesley's life, Outler marks the year 1725 as Wesley's first conversion to a life of holiness, that is, a life directed toward the restoration of the *Imago Dei*. As Wesley later wrote in his journal:

I began to alter the whole form of my conversation, and to set in earnest upon a new life. I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. I communicated every week. I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed. I began to aim at, and pray for, inward holiness. So that now, "doing so much, and living so good a life," I doubted not but I was a good Christian.<sup>91</sup>

Although from the perspective of soteriology Wesley would later deny the order of holiness as existing prior to justification,<sup>92</sup> his conviction of the necessity of inward holiness was heightened by this time, especially after his reading of Law's works in 1728-29.<sup>93</sup> Wesley understood inward holiness as "the restoration of the image of God in the

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<sup>89</sup> "Extracts From The Works Of Jer. Taylor, D.d., Chapters I-iii" sect.4: Means of increasing the Grace of Humility.

<sup>90</sup> Jeremy Taylor, *The Rule and Exercise of Holy Living*, (London, 1680), 85; Kari Konkola, "Meek Imperialist: Humility in 17<sup>th</sup> Century England," *Trinity* 28 (2007): 11.

<sup>91</sup> *The Journal*, 71 (May 24, 1738). Wesley's journal on December, 27, 1744 records a letter Wesley received from W. B., in which the Foundry Society is said to have as members the exemplary people who follow the rules of Kempis. 326. *The Journal*, 326.

<sup>92</sup> Outler, "Holiness of Heart and Life," in *Practical Divinity: Readings in Wesleyan Theology*, Vol. 2, ed. Thomas A. Langford (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 193-94. *Imago Dei* will be discussed in the following part: Theological Context.

<sup>93</sup> Schmidt describes eighteenth-century England in terms of the motivation of Law's books, especially *A Serious Call*. "As the nation became more prosperous and powerful, the fractious religious passions of the past were largely set aside in favor of a sometimes bland, lethargic, and complacent tolerance." In such a

life of the believer.”<sup>94</sup> In particular, in his sermon “The Circumcision of the Heart,” Wesley recites Law’s emphasis on constant self-denial. As Law treats self-denial in the context of theological virtues of faith, hope, and love according to St. Paul, Wesley treats humility in the context of self-denial.<sup>95</sup>

According to Heitzenrater, “Wesley at this point states that the marks by which one can judge his state of acceptance are the presence of a humility that brings with it a conviction of corruption, an honest attempt to walk by faith in the light of eternity, and the assurance given by the witness of the Spirit with his spirit that he is a child of God.”<sup>96</sup>

Having been ordained in the Church of England, Wesley also became a Fellow at Lincoln College, where he sharpened his logical acumen through serving as a tutor and a moderator at the daily disputation held in the College hall.<sup>97</sup> During this time at Oxford, Wesley’s eagerness to understand and feel inner holiness led him to be faithful in receiving the bread and wine at the table of the Eucharist and to read the *Book of Common Prayer* daily, these being common and lawful practices in the Church of England according to the Act of Uniformity.<sup>98</sup> However, as Wesley wrote in his journal, he seemed to find good works necessary for salvation in his early days, a time when he understood faith as intellectual assent.<sup>99</sup>

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condition, Law admonishes Christians’ perfunctory commitment to the church, and urges them examine their whole life. Schmidt, 95.

<sup>94</sup> Heitzenrater, 113. Cf. *The Journal* (May 24, 1738), *Works*, 18: 244-45.

<sup>95</sup> “The Circumcision of the Heart,” ii.8, footnote 120, *The Works*, I: 412.

<sup>96</sup> Heitzenrater, 116. “Circumcision of the Heart,” ii.5, *The Works*, I: 411.

<sup>97</sup> Telford, 56; Bready, 187. His ability in developing the intellectual argument reflects the fact that Wesley lived in the age of Deism, which regarded religion as a matter to be treated with skepticism.

<sup>98</sup> Endy, 8.

<sup>99</sup> Outler maintains that the polarization in English theology during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries was between “faith alone” and “holy living.” See, “John Wesley: Folk Theologian”: 154.

In 1735 Wesley left England for mission in the American colony of Georgia. The undercurrent of this Anglican priest's mind as a missionary was surprisingly revealed in his stated intention for this journey:

Our end in leaving our native country was not to avoid want (God having given us plenty of temporal blessings), nor to gain the dung or dross of riches or honour; but singly this - to save our souls; to live wholly to the glory of God.<sup>100</sup>

In this confession is clearly revealed Wesley's pre-Aldersgate lack of understanding of the role of faith in salvation—he was doing this work to save his soul. However, it was during this missionary journey that Wesley would begin a laborious spiritual journey in order to find himself before God. After facing storms during an ocean crossing of almost four months, Wesley lost self-confidence as a missionary and became a seeker of peace and joy in his heart:

Many people were very impatient at the contrary wind. At seven in the evening they were quieted by a storm. It rose higher and higher till nine. About nine the sea broke over us from stem to stern; burst through the windows of the state cabin, where three or four of us were, and covered us all over, though a bureau sheltered me from the main shock. About eleven I lay down in the great cabin, and in a short time fell asleep, though very uncertain whether I should wake alive, and much ashamed of my unwillingness to die.

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In the midst of the psalm wherewith their service began, the sea broke over, split the mainsail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English. The Germans calmly sung on. I asked one of them afterwards, "[Were] you not afraid?" He answered, "I thank God, no." I asked, "But were not your women and children afraid?" He replied, mildly, "No; our women and children are not afraid to die."<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *The Journal*, 14 (October 14, 1735); John Wesley, *The Heart of John Wesley's Journal*. ed. Percy Livingston Parker (London: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1903), 3.

<sup>101</sup> Parker, 6-7. These are from Wesley's journal on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of November, 1735.

Having witnessed the German-speaking Moravians' serious manner and calm spirits that did not fear death in the midst of life-threatening storms, Wesley was "ashamed of [his] unwillingness to die."<sup>102</sup> Thus, his journey in search of inner assurance began in his conversations with the Moravians. As they convinced Wesley that inner assurance was the peace and joy felt in one's heart as a result of faith, he began doubting his faith. The questions raised by a Moravian minister, Gottlieb Spangenberg, seem to have challenged Wesley:

"Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit, that you are a child of God?" I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it, and asked, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" I paused, and said, "I know he is the Saviour of the world." "True," replied he; "but do you know he has saved you?" I answered, "I hope he has died to save me." He only added, "Do you know yourself?" I said, "I do." But I fear they were vain words.<sup>103</sup>

With these questions unresolved, Wesley's acquaintance with the Moravians convinced him of his faithlessness, so he began to seek instantaneous conversion and inner assurance of salvation, like one in groaning pains in labor.<sup>104</sup> Upon his return from Georgia, he experienced on the night of May 24, 1738 an inner assurance after many a day of searching for inner peace:

I think it was about five this morning that I opened my Testament on those words, "There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter i.4). Just as I went out, I opened it again on those words, "Thou are not far from the kingdom of God." In the

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<sup>102</sup> *The Journal*, 16-17 (January 17 and 25, 1736). The dates are incompatible with Parker's *The Heart of John Wesley's Journal*. Here the dates are recorded as being the 17<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of November, 1735. Moravians are a group of people from Moravia, Bohemia who escaped from the Thirty Years War and met Count Nikolas Ludwig Zinzendorf (1700-1760) who offered them his land at Herrnhutt in Germany for their free religious practice. They were characterized by their Lutheran pietism, i.e., Stillness and Quietism.

<sup>103</sup> *The Journal*, 18 (February 7, 1736). Regarding Spangenberg, see Wesley's *Journal* for Feb. 9, 1736.

<sup>104</sup> Telford, 78, 79, 93.

afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul's. The anthem was, "Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice. O let thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. ....In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."<sup>105</sup>

It was after this heartwarming experience that Wesley went through another significant change in the direction of his life, one that was not toward Oxford, but toward the field. George Whitefield, a great Calvinist preacher, asked Wesley to preach outdoors in Bristol and Kingswood.<sup>106</sup> Preaching at a local church or in religious societies had been a regular exercise since his ordination, but Wesley was reluctant to undertake field preaching, for the Anglican Church forbade outdoor preaching. However, reading Jesus' Sermon on the Mount convinced him to do so.<sup>107</sup> Eventually, when the Anglican bishop inquired of Wesley about this kind of preaching, forbidden by the Church, his answer was, "The world is my parish."<sup>108</sup>

As people gathered around him, Wesley began to visit the various Methodist groups in order to tend to those who belonged to the Society.<sup>109</sup> Riding on horseback, Wesley traveled through England, Scotland, and Wales, covering 300,000 miles in the fifty years of his ministry. He traveled to transform the nation by and in the church and to

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<sup>105</sup> Parker, 43; Telford, 101.

<sup>106</sup> Telford, 118.

<sup>107</sup> Tuttle, 119-120. Tuttle describes Wesley's first field preaching at Bristol, which 5000-6000 people listened to his "Sermon on the Mount" at 7:00 in the morning.

<sup>108</sup> Daniel Wise, *John Wesley* (New York: Jennings & Pye, 1874), 173. Wesley in fact meant that he was not a parish minister but a Fellow at Oxford. He later resigned his Fellowship in 1751.

<sup>109</sup> Moorman, 267; In 1710, 42; Overton, *Life in the English Church*, 211-12. The societies existed before Wesley; he was converted at a Society in Aldersgate. Later when lay preachers begin to help Wesley they become circuit riders to itinerate the societies (circuits).

transform society through the preached gospel. As he once said, “as long as God gives me strength to labor, I must use it.”<sup>110</sup>

Such a passionate life, however, was not without problems, even though Wesley was admired by many people in the latter years of his life. Regarding Methodists and field preaching as suspicious and reeking of dissenters’ rebellious acts, some thought Wesley was seeking to overthrow the king and government. The Methodists were viewed as being a threat inasmuch as field preaching broke the boundary of each parish. The new Hanoverian Protestant kings of England, George I and II, sat on uneasy thrones, for it was generally believed that subversive plotters were determined to restore the exiled Roman Catholic Stuarts to the monarchy. An unsuccessful 1715 invasion, followed by an abortive rebellion in 1745, made it all too easy to persuade simple people that the Wesleys were ‘Jacobites in disguise’ seeking to overthrow king and government.<sup>111</sup>

Therefore, many Anglican clergy opposed Methodists for splitting their congregations into factions. Persecution was not unexpected under such conditions.<sup>112</sup> Not only persecutions, but also poverty and humility accompanied Wesley and his preachers in many episodes of his journey, but because of his love for God and people, he was able to remain indifferent in such circumstances.<sup>113</sup>

Ironically, his emphasis on the love for God and neighbor foreshadowed the breach with the Moravians, for the latter considered feelings “a necessary sign of faith”<sup>114</sup> i.e.,

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<sup>110</sup> Davey, 4; Wise, 294.

<sup>111</sup> Overton, *Life in the English Church*, 212.

<sup>112</sup> Davey, 16.

<sup>113</sup> For episodes in detail see Cameron, “The little flowers of John Wesley” and Richardson, “Poverello and methodist: a study in Francis of Assisi and John Wesley.”

<sup>114</sup> Robert Joseph Webster, “The Value of Self-Denial,” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 19, no.1 (Spring 2003): 30.

assurance, and denigrated the importance of the life of love, which Wesley relentlessly emphasized. Although Moravian teaching about the assurance of salvation had great influence on Wesley's understanding of the role of faith in salvation, he reconsidered the assurance in terms of feelings and discovered that feelings did not last or were not always present.<sup>115</sup> He concluded that the life of holiness was all about love rooted in faith. Consequently, Wesley taught it was necessary for a Christian to outgrow feelings, because right faith in God, i.e., the love of God, should grow, beyond feelings, toward the full restoration of the *imago Dei*.<sup>116</sup>

Wesley also raised a question about the fruits of the Spirit, for he sensed a danger in the stillness and quietness among the Moravians in London.<sup>117</sup> Despite the fact that Wesley found assurance among the Moravians, he did not discard or abandon his heritage, neither his experience as an Anglican priest nor the Puritan influence passed on by his mother. Hence, it was inevitable that Wesley would walk a different path from the Moravians.<sup>118</sup>

Envisioning God's dream for humanity in the full restoration of the *imago Dei*, Wesley proceeded with his preaching of Christian perfection. God's freely and universally given grace for Christian perfection gave Methodists hope of living a life of faith that

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<sup>115</sup> Even though the necessity of a Christian to outgrow feelings is under discussion within Randy Maddox, Scott Kisker, and Kenneth Collins, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

<sup>116</sup> Gregory Scott Clapper, *John Wesley on Religious Affections: His Views on Experience and Emotion and Their Role in the Christian Life and Theology* (Michigan: UMI dissertation Information Service, 1985), 213-215.

<sup>117</sup> Wesley seems to raise this question to himself, for this was a teaching not present in Böhler's interactions with Wesley.

<sup>118</sup> The controversy with the Moravians during the years 1739 through 1741 is reflected in Wesley's sermons on the use of the law. *The Works*, II: 1-2. Having broken with the Moravians, Wesley was criticized by them for intellectual pride.

works by love.<sup>119</sup> However, Wesley's thought also led to a severe debate with the Calvinists, especially the hyper-Calvinists in eighteenth-century England with their emphasis on predestination. Though Calvin himself stressed the sovereignty of God and regarded a holy life as evidence of predestination, the concern of many later Calvinists was more with the doctrine of predestination itself than with the importance of leading a holy life. In Wesley's time the hyper-Calvinists were opposed to Wesley's understanding of Christian perfection and of human free will responding to God's free grace.<sup>120</sup>

Love is all in all in Wesley's spiritual development: Creation in the love of God, salvation in the love of God, our responding to God's love through love for God. According to Wesley, this love never precedes God's initiative in accomplishing His will, and our faith is the sphere of Christian love practiced through works of piety and works of mercy. Therefore, Outler writes about "*the distinctive character of evangelical ethics in which the fides caritate formata is always the consequent of the sola fide, never its alternative.*"<sup>121</sup>

In the journey of the restoration of the *imago Dei*, Wesley realized the need to reform the social environment and so continued founding schools and shelters.<sup>122</sup> Having witnessed the usefulness of the societies that existed in the Church of England, and recalling that he himself had been converted at a meeting of a society in Aldersgate Street, Wesley began around 1739 to organize the Methodist Society through the method of class

<sup>119</sup> "The Almost Christian" ii.6, *The Works*, I: 139. Later Wesley also separated from the Calvinists whose predestination did not accord with Wesley's belief in Christian perfection.

<sup>120</sup> See Allan Coppedge's *John Wesley in Theological Debate* (Nappanee, IN: Francis Asbury Press, 1987). According to Coppedge, Calvinists in Wesley's time differed from Calvin's emphasis in that hyper-Calvinists emphasized predestination rather than a holy life.

<sup>121</sup> Outler, introduction to "The Original, Nature, Properties, And Use of The Law," *The Works*, II: 3. Outler's introduction to each sermon in *The Works* is printed in italics, in contrast to Wesley's sermons.

<sup>122</sup> Bready, 160; Edwards, 17, 48.

meeting and band meeting. By 1743, there were formed societies with class and band meetings in London, Bristol, Kingswood, and Newcastle-upon-Tyne.<sup>123</sup>

It was mutual accountability that Wesley encouraged, through class meetings and band meetings, in order to raise moral and spiritual standards among Methodists. He forbade membership to petty criminals, and at class meetings Methodists were examined personally as to their moral and spiritual manner of living.<sup>124</sup> Accordingly, the purpose of the rules of the Methodist Society can be understood as “a guide to holy living,” living by a serious endeavor not only to avoid immorality and encourage charitable causes but also to examine “themselves every night, what good or evil they have done in the day past” and to practice “the profoundest meekness and humility.”<sup>125</sup>

In this anthropological context of Wesley’s spirituality, it is important to see how humility was understood in the Methodist Society. Self-examination is apparent in the method and rules of the Oxford Methodists. Heitzenrater describes “meditative piety” as a distinctive characteristic of the Oxford Methodists; it is self-examination that Wesley developed as a goal of meditation, focusing on the “progress in holy living.”<sup>126</sup> With regard to self-knowledge in this period, it is worth noting that a method that was used under the name of a “general examination” was in accordance with the teaching of Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises*:

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<sup>123</sup> “John Wesley the Methodist,” in *A Plain Account of His Life and Work*. By a Methodist Preacher, The Methodist Book Concern (New York, 1903), ch. IX: society and class, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/john-wesley-the-methodist/chapter-ix-society-and-class> (accessed October 13, 2010).

<sup>124</sup> Telford, 156-157. Within such strict examination, tickets were given for admittance to Holy Communion.

<sup>125</sup> Heitzenrater, 38-39.

<sup>126</sup> Heitzenrater, 89, 90. Regarding the meditative piety, there are authors, whose writings did Wesley use among the Oxford Methodists: Johann Gerhard’s *Meditations*, Thomas Ken’s *Meditations*, Anthony Horneck’s *Best Exercise*, Simon Patrick’s *Christian Sacrifice*, Francis de Sale’s *Introduction to a Devout Life*, Jeremy Taylor’s *Holy Living and Holy Dying*, Robert Nelson’s *Practice of True Devotion*.

Did I in the morning plan the business of the day?  
 Have I been simple and recollected in everything?  
 Have I been or seemed angry?  
 Have I used the ejaculations once an hour?<sup>127</sup>

In addition, there was a “particular examination,” by which the Methodists focused on special virtues each day of the week: Sunday—love of God; Monday—love of man; Tuesday—humility; Wednesday and Friday—mortification and self-denial; Thursday—resignation and meekness; Saturday—thankfulness. Daily examination along with diary keeping was to measure the development of each person’s virtuous life.<sup>128</sup> Self-examination, already undertaken by Wesley in his life at Oxford, became an essential means to see whether or not the rules and resolutions set to improve virtues were in fact effective.<sup>129</sup>

After Wesley’s Aldersgate experience, the Methodist Society maintained the emphasis on self-examination through weekly class and band meetings. However, it was an emphasis on sin that was distinctively characteristic of the self-examination used for mutual accountability among the members of the Society. This is apparent in Wesley’s writing of two conditions in order for a sinner to come to Christ: “A deep sense of his sin and misery; An utter despair of himself, and all things else besides Christ.”<sup>130</sup> Another example can be seen through the questionnaire raised at weekly band meetings:

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?

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<sup>127</sup> Heitzenrater, 90. Cf. Louis J. Puhl, S.J., *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 1952), 23.

<sup>128</sup> Heitzenrater, 91.

<sup>129</sup> Heitzenrater, 112.

<sup>130</sup> John Wesley, *Directions for Renewing Our Covenant with God*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1781), 4, [http://wesley.nnu.edu/fileadmin/imported\\_site/Wesley\\_Covenant-1781.pdf](http://wesley.nnu.edu/fileadmin/imported_site/Wesley_Covenant-1781.pdf) (accessed March 10, 2010).

2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?
5. Have you nothing you desire to keep secret?<sup>131</sup>

Especially through band meetings, Wesley emphasized the importance of deepening fellowship in faith among the members through strict examinations, discipline, and mutual accountability.<sup>132</sup> Heitzenrater indicates that the self-examination went beyond confession among the group; comparing diaries among the members of the group was introduced, as well as pointing out others' faults, so as to encourage the members to strive for improvement morally as well as spiritually.<sup>133</sup> Since band meetings were taken over from the Moravians, such questionnaires on self-examination also indicate Moravian influence on Wesley. This can be compared with the Anglican teaching of faith: the Moravians emphasized "*Christus pro me*" in terms of assurance, while the Anglican defined faith as "a sure trust and confidence in God."<sup>134</sup>

Wesley continued to exhort, until his death, that Christians should pray and live "not by sitting still; but by stirring up the gift of God that is in them... to do all that in us lies to-day, leaving the morrow to God."<sup>135</sup> Due to this conviction practiced in his life, Wesley's journeys on horseback were enormously extensive and his writings voluminous,

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<sup>131</sup> Wesley's Rules for Band-Societies, drawn up December 25, 1738. D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meetings: A Model for Making Disciples* (Evangel Publishing House, 1997), 118-19.

<sup>132</sup> Richard M. Cameron, *Methodism and Society in Historical Perspective* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1961), 37. Band meetings were adopted from Moravian practice.

<sup>133</sup> Heitzenrater, 89. The "Reprimand with tenderness" was followed by an encouragement and instruction of proper conduct.

<sup>134</sup> Heitzenrater, 123.

<sup>135</sup> Tuttle, 326, 351.

in the form of sermons, journals, letters, and diaries.<sup>136</sup> Wesley thus intended in weekly class or band meetings to encourage the Methodists to make a difference through inward and outward holiness while surrounded by a society that was both inhumane and immoral. The efficacy of such a life of practical love greatly influenced many people in England at the time. The historian W. E. H. Lecky remarks that Methodism saved England in the eighteenth century from the inclination to revolt, as had occurred in France.<sup>137</sup> However, Wesley would humbly confess that if he received any praise, it should go to Calvary, where Christ on the Cross shed his blood for us, “free in all, and free for all.”<sup>138</sup>

It is through his [Christ’s] merits alone that all believers are saved, that is, *justified*, saved from the guilt, *sanctified*, saved from the nature of sin, and *glorified*, taken into heaven.<sup>139</sup>

Wesley’s awareness of the sinfulness of humanity is crucial for his understanding of personal relationship with Christ, for he experienced the assurance in faith that saves through acknowledgement of one’s sin. In this sense, it is indispensable to examine his theological anthropology, especially his view of creation and original sin, because for Wesley original sin is the fulcrum between the pre- and post-fall states of human beings. On this fulcrum his understanding of salvation developed.

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<sup>136</sup> The Bicentennial Edition of *The Works of John Wesley* has been the major work of Wesley scholars since 1975.

<sup>137</sup> Telford, xiv.

<sup>138</sup> John Wesley, “Free Grace,” *John Wesley’s Sermons: An Anthology*. eds. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 50. Hereafter referred to as *Anthology*.

<sup>139</sup> “On the Wedding Garment,” *Anthology*, 564. Italics are in the original.

### C. Wesley's Theological Anthropology

Wesley's theological anthropology corresponds to the main lines of Church tradition, and especially to the teaching of Augustine: human nature as created, fallen, and redeemed.<sup>140</sup> Outler regards it as influenced by a Cambridge Platonic perspective, whose understanding of human nature can be described as the *imago Dei* created, defaced, and restored.<sup>141</sup>

Terryl Givens explains that the Christian Platonists' view of human origins is based on a (Neo)Platonic link between the soul's preexistence and deification. In the great upheaval of the English Civil War, and over against the Puritans' view of the total depravity of humanity, there arose a theological resistance that developed through discussing and "debating the proper relationship of reason to faith in Christian devotional life."<sup>142</sup> Several Anglicans at Cambridge worked "to blend the heritage of Plato and Plotinus, humanism, and the *imitatio Christi* into a more expansive and ethically oriented Christianity. This group of clergymen and philosophers became known as the Cambridge Platonists."<sup>143</sup> Among their number was John Norris, a friend of John Wesley's father and a man who befriended John Wesley.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 134; Christina M. Gschwandtner, "Sharing Our Weakness: Christ, Creation, Fallenness," *Wesley Theological Journal* 45, no.1 (Spring, 2010): 165. Cf. St. Augustine, *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 1996). Hereafter referred to as *Enchiridion*.

<sup>141</sup> Outler, Introduction, *The Works*, I: 59.

<sup>142</sup> Terryl L. Givens, *When Souls Had Wings: Pre-Mortal Existence in Western Thought* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 148.

<sup>143</sup> Paul G. Tyson, "Transcendence and Epistemology: Exploring Truth via Post-Secular Christian Platonism," *Modern Theology*, 24:2 (April 2008): 245-70.

<sup>144</sup> "The Image of God," footnote, 1, *The Works*, IV: 292. For the relationship between John Norris and Wesley, see John C. English, "John Wesley's Indebtedness to John Norris," *Church History* 60, no. 1 (Mar., 1991): 55-69. In this article, the author refers to sources that support the link between Norris and Wesley. Norris's influence on Wesley with regard to moral theology is significant; however, it is not the focus of this

This Christian Platonism was one of the popular movements in the eighteenth century in England. As Givens characterizes these Platonists, with their stress on human self-determination and perfectibility they seem to have held positions compatible with Wesley's view of humanity created according to the *imago Dei*.<sup>145</sup>

However, Wesley's understanding of creation does not accord wholly with the perspective of Christian Platonists, who refer to the pre-mortal existence of the soul to answer the problem of theodicy. Unlike the Christian Platonists, Wesley as a *homo unius libri*<sup>146</sup> read the biblical narrative of creation and explained the etiology of evil through Adam's fall. Accordingly, Thomas C. Oden explains Wesley's understanding of human creation with the statement that "the soul is generated in sexual procreation as a gift of God. Once given, *psyche* continues to exist beyond death as a relation with the eternal Life-giver."<sup>147</sup>

In addition, Wesley's emphasis on God's grace does not override his belief in the total depravity of human nature. According to the Anglican Article X, Wesley affirms the necessity of divine grace because of humanity's total depravity: "without the grace of God preventing us that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will," it is impossible for fallen humanity not to sin.<sup>148</sup> It seems, therefore, that only the basic structure of creation-fall-restoration of the image of God may be seen as an influence of Christian Platonism on Wesley's thought.

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dissertation. See D. Stephen Long, *John Wesley's Moral Theology: The Quest for God and Goodness* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2005), 55-62.

<sup>145</sup> Givens, 151, 166.

<sup>146</sup> Wesley, preface to *The Works*. *The Works*, I: 105.

<sup>147</sup> Oden, 32.

<sup>148</sup> Oden, 134. Wesley rearranged the Anglican Article X to be the eighth of his Twenty-four Articles.

Wesley's mention of memory of the pre-fall condition of creation seems to have been understood by Outler as a Christian Platonic tendency; however, this understanding is far from certain, for there is frequent mention of God's creation of humanity (body *and* soul) in Wesley's homilies. Wesley was careful not to offer answers to questions that are beyond our human capacity. For example, he acknowledged that somehow original sin was inherited but confessed that this was a nebulous matter to his understanding.<sup>149</sup> Though there has been much inquiry with regard to the Christian Platonic influence in eighteenth-century England, pursuing this is a task beyond the scope of this dissertation.

As a linear image of the journey, *imago Dei* is *alpha* and at the same time *omega* for a Christian as one remembers that the self was once created in the *imago Dei*, then lost the *imago Dei*, and is now in search of a restoration of the image. Wesley insists on this with all possible clarity in his sermon "Original Sin," where he writes:

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 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 loss 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.<sup>150</sup>

Thus, the two aspects of human nature (in the pre- and post-fall states) became the foundation of the Wesley's understanding of (1) creation, (2) original sin, and (3) the grace

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<sup>149</sup> Outler, introduction to "The One Thing Needful," *The Works*, IV: 352; introduction to "The Image of God," *The Works*, IV: 290.

<sup>150</sup> "Original Sin," iii.5, *Anthology*, 334.

of God that initiates the humble journey of a Christian.<sup>151</sup> Each of these points will be considered in turn.

### 1. *Imago Dei in Creation*

Pivotal to Wesley's understanding of a Christian's journey is an exploration of the pre-fall condition of human nature, since it is the original state of humanity, envisaged like a home, to which one returns throughout one's life journey insofar as one continues seeking holiness in God. God's creation of all things, humanity par excellence, is the story we need to begin with, in order to learn about the *imago Dei* prior to the fall:

At that point of duration which the infinite wisdom of God saw to be most proper, for reasons which lie hid in the abyss of his own understanding, not to be fathomed by any finite mind, God 'called into being all that is,' created 'the heavens and the earth, together with all that is,' ... together with all that they contain. 'All things were created by him, and without him was not anything made that was made.' He created man in particular, after his own image, to be 'a picture of his own eternity.'<sup>152</sup>

In the image of God was man made; holy as he that created him is holy, merciful as the author of all is merciful, perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect. As God is love, so man dwelling in love dwelt in God, and God in him. God made him to be 'an image of his own eternity,' an incorruptible picture of the God of glory. He was accordingly pure, as God is pure, from every spot of sin. He knew not evil in any kind or degree, but was inwardly and outwardly sinless and undefiled. He 'loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his mind, and soul, and strength.'<sup>153</sup>

Wesley, in his first university sermon, "The Image of God," describes the *imago*

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<sup>151</sup> See "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption," *The Works*, I: 248-66.

<sup>152</sup> "The Unity of the Divine Being," §8. *The Works*, IV: 63. In this sermon written in 1789, Wesley's scripturally based story of creation employs John 1:3; Genesis 1:27-27, 2:7; and Wisdom 2:23. Outler recalls from this story of creation the Nicene Creed and Augustine's *Confessions*.

<sup>153</sup> "Justification by Faith," i.1, *The Works*, I: 184.

*Dei* with respect to human understanding, will, and liberty: at creation, the understanding was just, clear, and swift, able to know things comprehensively as they were; a perfect will implied the likeness of God. The perfect will in this created status is love: “man was what God is, Love,”<sup>154</sup> and perfect liberty to use such perfect understanding and perfect will brought forth happiness. Wesley writes, “Man was made with an entire indifference, either to keep or change his first estate.”<sup>155</sup>

In his later sermon “The New Birth,” Wesley extends his understanding of the image of God who is love to three aspects: natural, political, and moral.<sup>156</sup> Accordingly, *imago Dei* in “The Image of God” refers to “the natural image” of God in that Wesley understands humans as spiritual beings having understanding and free will.<sup>157</sup> Endowed with governing power over other creatures, humanity reflects the political image of God.<sup>158</sup> With regard to the moral image, “God created man ... also in righteousness and true holiness.”<sup>159</sup> Wesley discusses the perfect mind of God in creation: “To man this upright and perfect God gave a perfect law, to which he required full and perfect obedience.”<sup>160</sup> Wesley calls this law written in the heart of all humanity “moral law.” As “unalterable rectitude,” moral law is “the everlasting fitness of all things that are or ever were

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<sup>154</sup> “The Image of God,” i.2, *The Works*, IV: 294. Wesley stresses that only love was the vital movement of heart in Adamic perfection. Love ‘was the genial warmth that animated his whole frame. And the flame of it was continually streaming forth, directly to him from whom it came ... likewise the image of their Creator.’”

<sup>155</sup> “The Image of God,” i.3, *The Works*, IV: 295. It is the Triune God that we can find in this natural image of God with regard to perfect knowledge (understanding), will (affection), and liberty. This image of God can be compared to St. Augustine’s concept of the Trinity: mind (knowledge), love, and will in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, 9.1-5, [http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/augustine\\_and\\_the\\_trinity.htm](http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/augustine_and_the_trinity.htm) (accessed March 15, 2011).

<sup>156</sup> “The New Birth,” §1-i.1, *The Works*, II: 187-88.

<sup>157</sup> “The End of Christ’s Coming,” i.3-4, *The Works*, II: 474-75. In this sermon written in 1781, Wesley mentions understanding, will, and liberty as natural image of God.

<sup>158</sup> “The New Birth,” i.1, *The Works*, II: 188.

<sup>159</sup> “The End of Christ’s Coming,” i.7, *The Works*, II: 475.

<sup>160</sup> “Justification by Faith,” i.2, *The Works*, I: 184.

created.”<sup>161</sup> Just as the Creator is love, so was humanity full of love according to the moral law, “which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions,” affirms Wesley.<sup>162</sup> From this broader perspective of the *imago Dei*, we can see that Wesley’s purview of the restoration of the image of God in humanity extends to a Christian’s renewed life in relation to the rest of humanity and other creatures as well as to God.

Since the first humans were such a perfect creation of God, Wesley describes the pre-fall status of humanity as one of perfect happiness:

Then indeed to live was to enjoy, when every faculty was in its perfection, amidst abundance of objects which infinite wisdom had purposely suited to it, when man’s understanding was satisfied with truth, as his will was with good; when he was at full liberty to enjoy the Creator or the creation; to indulge in rivers of pleasure, ever new, ever pure from any mixture of pain.<sup>163</sup>

God “made you to be happy in him; and nothing else can make you happy.”<sup>164</sup> In this estate, every movement of the human heart was love because “man at his creation was full of love.”<sup>165</sup>

With regard to the goal of our life, the sermons “The Image of God” (1730) and “What is Man” (1787) can be compared with one another. In the earlier sermon Wesley is

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<sup>161</sup> “Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” iii.8, *The Works*, II: 13. According to the moral image of God, a human being is brought happiness when a life is ordered by the Logos of God in harmony with the purpose of creation.

<sup>162</sup> “The New Birth,” i.1, *The Works*, II: 188. 1 John 4:8-16.

<sup>163</sup> “The Image of God,” i.4, *The Works*, IV: 295. According to Outler, the link between holiness and happiness is found in the Anglican (catholic) tradition. “Justification by Faith,” footnote 18, *The Works*, I: 185. However, the idea of the happiness also comes from Westminster Confession (1646). See, Rebekah L. Miles, “Happiness, Holiness, and the Moral Life in John Wesley,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*. ed. Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 207-24.

<sup>164</sup> “The New Birth,” i.1, *The Works*, II: 188; According to the Anglican tradition, Wesley also understands the close relation between happiness and holiness: “By the free, unmerited love of God he was holy and happy; he knew, loved, enjoyed God.” See “Justification by Faith,” i.4, *The Works*, I: 185.

<sup>165</sup> “The New Birth,” i.1, *The Works*, II: 188

concerned with the current human status and the fact that human nature had put on death after the fall of Adam.<sup>166</sup> In the later sermon, “What is Man,” the same concern is extended beyond the issue of death. However, in both sermons, the end is described in detail as seeking happiness in God on earth, and glorifying God in heaven by knowing, loving, serving, and enjoying God.<sup>167</sup> There is no contradiction between the two sermons, preached nearly fifty years apart, allowing us to conclude that Wesley was consistent in his understanding of happiness from his early years at Oxford.

Love and happiness are as inseparable as who God is (love) and what God intends (happiness) are indivisible.<sup>168</sup> Though lost after the fall, this was the original state, without reference to which one’s journey of holiness would be impossible, because that state now reflects the goal of our life on this earth: that “we might love God supremely and all things in God, for love is perfect freedom, the very image of God.”<sup>169</sup>

## 2. *Original Sin*

However perfect, happy, and holy humanity was after having been created in the *imago Dei* and “fearfully and wonderfully made,”<sup>170</sup> the first Adam, the representative of humanity, lost all this by eating the forbidden fruit.<sup>171</sup>

To the entire law of love which was written in his heart...it seemed good to the sovereign wisdom of God to superadd one positive law: “Thou shalt not eat of the

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<sup>166</sup> “The Image of God,” i.4, *The Works*, IV: 295.

<sup>167</sup> “What Is Man,” §15. *The Works*, IV: 26.

<sup>168</sup> “The Image of God,” i.2, 4, *The Works*, IV: 294-95.

<sup>169</sup> “The One Thing Needful,” ii.1, *The Works*, IV: 355.

<sup>170</sup> “What Is Man?” §1. *The Works*, IV: 20; Ps. 139:14.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Gen. 2:16-17, 3:1-21.

fruit of the tree that groweth in the midst of the garden'; annexing that penalty thereto, 'In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.'... Man did disobey God; he 'ate of the tree of which God commanded him, [saying], Thou shalt not eat of it.' And in that day he was condemned by the righteous judgment of God.<sup>172</sup>

Adam sinned by forgetting God and by prioritizing his selfish desire over God's will,<sup>173</sup> thereby giving in to the tempter's spirit, i.e., "the spirit of independence, self-will, and pride, productive of all ungodliness and unrighteousness."<sup>174</sup> Thence, human alienation from God began, and the love of the world (creatures) rather than of the Creator overspread the earth, bringing with it idolatry and atheism. Wesley adds the love of the world and anger to these spiritual diseases. He identifies "atheism" as forgetting God, that is, being "without God in the world. ... It is a total, studied inattention to the whole invisible and eternal world; more essentially to death, ... heaven, and hell."<sup>175</sup>

Wesley states that sin is transmitted inter-generationally, albeit admitting it is impossible to explain how, and is experienced in human life through the span of time and space.<sup>176</sup>

'By one man's disobedience,' as the Apostle observes, 'the many,' οἱ πολλοί, as many as were then in the loins of their forefather, 'were made,' or constituted 'sinners:' not only deprived of the favour of God, but also of his image; of all virtue, righteousness, and true holiness; and sunk partly into the image of the devil, in pride, malice, and all other diabolical tempers; partly into the image of the brute,

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<sup>172</sup> "Justification by Faith," i.3, 5, *The Works*, I: 184-85. Gen.2:17; 3:17.

<sup>173</sup> Wesley captures pride and unbelief at the core of original sin. In his quotation of Milton's words, Wesley affirms that Lucifer is "the first sinner in the universe" who was "self-tempted to think too highly of himself." "The End of Christ's Coming," i.8. *The Works*, II: 476; "The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart," i.1. *The Works*, IV: 152.

<sup>174</sup> "The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart," i.3, *The Works*, IV: 154.

<sup>175</sup> "Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith," §20, *The Works*, IV: 58. This particular usage of atheism is unique to Wesley, derived from the literal translation of the Greek word to English: being without God. Hence, I find compatibility between being without God (atheism) and being forgetful of God.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Gen. 5:3.

being fallen under the dominion of brutal passions and grovelling appetites. Hence also death entered into the world, with all his forerunners and attendants, pain, sickness, and a whole train of uneasy as well as unholy passions and tempers.<sup>177</sup>

In addition, he reflects on the predicament of human sinfulness in terms of its social aspects. He is aware of “the extent of the fall, the astonishing spread of original corruption” in the wickedness of the world and in the groaning pains of the earth, including the tragic drama of biblical stories, early church stories, and stories of the contemporary world.<sup>178</sup> Despite the fact that Wesley’s contemporary world view appears absurd from the viewpoint of the twenty-first century, Oden values Wesley’s concern with the social location of sin, for seeing our society in trouble opens our eyes.<sup>179</sup>

Adam, and in him all humans, by the act of vain desire to be like God, that is, a perverted desire of imitation of God, “lost the favour and the image of God, and entailed sin, with its attendant pain, on himself and all his posterity.”<sup>180</sup> Such is the original sin—the exalting of self and pride against God’s command—from which actual sins spring. According to Wesley, atheism is a vain hope to become something without God, although we are in fact nothing without God. Wesley describes beings without God as “atheists in the world”<sup>181</sup> (ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ), and to be without God is unbelief. This “unbelief

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<sup>177</sup> “God’s Love to Fallen Men,” §1, *The Works*, II: 423. Cf. Romans 5:12, 15, 19.

<sup>178</sup> “The Mystery of Iniquity,” §33, *The Works*, I: 467; “Justification by Faith,” i.6, *The Works*, I: 185.

<sup>179</sup> Oden, 158, 160. Oden evaluates Wesley’s world-view as absurd because Wesley, a man with a pre-modern consciousness, sees world history as evidence of original sin or of “the universality of human misery and sin.”

<sup>180</sup> “The Mystery of Iniquity,” § 2, *The Works*, II: 452.

<sup>181</sup> “On Living without God,” §1, *The Works*, IV: 169. See also “Original Sin,” ii.3, “Sermon on the Mount, III,” i.11.

begot pride.”<sup>182</sup> Thence, Wesley declares atheism and pride as the first of the spiritual diseases, from which comes “a continual proneness to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.”<sup>183</sup>

Pride begotten by atheism can be explained through the description of Wesley’s understanding of sin, which has been summarized as follows by Oden:

When Satan transfused his self-will and self-pride into human history, the history of sin was launched, and soon covered the whole world, infecting every facet of the human cognition.” [It is] “what the Arch-deceiver and his affiliated powers seek to do” [in order] “to usurp divine power.”<sup>184</sup>

To usurp is to take something that is not one’s own, which is the characteristic of stealing. With the image of robbery, therefore, Wesley in his *Directions for Renewing Our Covenant with God* writes that “You are exiles from the preference of God, and fallen into a land of robbers and murderers: your sins are robbers, your pleasures are robbers, your companions in sin are robbers and thieves.”<sup>185</sup>

By replacing God’s will with self-will, the deceitfulness of the human heart “leads us to imagine that we are much wiser and better than we show evidence of being. It leads us to deceive not only ourselves but others who depend upon our truth-telling.”<sup>186</sup> As he defines the word “usurp” as devilish will,<sup>187</sup> Wesley maintains that anything that usurps

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<sup>182</sup> “The End of Christ’s Coming,” i.9, *The Works*, II: 477. Wesley draws attention to the pride of Lucifer, “the first sinner in the universe; the author of sin, [who] was self-tempted to think too highly of himself. He freely yielded to the temptation, and gave way first to pride.” i.8, *The Works*, II: 476.

<sup>183</sup> “On the Education of Children,” §§5, 7, *The Works*, II: 350. Wesley continues to add the love of the world and anger to these spiritual diseases.

<sup>184</sup> “The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart,” ii.4, *The Works*, IV: 156.

<sup>185</sup> John Wesley, *Directions for Renewing Our Covenant with God*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: J. Paramore, 1781), 5, [http://wesley.nnu.edu/fileadmin/imported\\_site/Wesley\\_Covenant-1781.pdf](http://wesley.nnu.edu/fileadmin/imported_site/Wesley_Covenant-1781.pdf) (accessed March 10, 2010).

<sup>186</sup> Oden, 150.

<sup>187</sup> “The Circumcision of the Heart,” i.2, *The Works*, I: 403.

“hearts which are due to God” is assigned to a category of idolatry.<sup>188</sup> Adamic self-pride, shown by the usurpation of a heart that is due to God and by one’s thirst for being like God, belongs, therefore, to idolatry.

Accordingly, Wesley understands pride along with self-will as “a species of idolatry.”<sup>189</sup> Considering that Adam was tempted when he was told, “Ye shall be as gods,”<sup>190</sup> idolatry can be described as human beings’ desire for being like God without God (atheistic pride), through the usurpation of divine power (self-pride; idolatry). Wesley also speaks of idolatry as “love of the creature more than the Creator” as he explains the scene of Adam eating of the forbidden fruit in love of his fellow creature, Eve: “Adam sinned in his heart before he sinned outwardly,”<sup>191</sup> by trying to please Eve more than God because Adam ate the fruit not according to God’s will, but as he sought pleasure in Eve.<sup>192</sup>

While Wesley defines “atheism on the one hand and idolatry on the other” as being the general character of humanity, he also identifies the human “thirst for glory” (pride)<sup>193</sup> with a general disease which has affected the whole of human nature. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that idolatry is a kind of atheism, resulting in a disease infecting all

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<sup>188</sup> “Spiritual Idolatry,” i.6, *The Works*, III: 106. For the interconnection between unbelief, independence, and pride, see “The Way to the Kingdom,” ii.2-3, *The Works*, I: 226-27.

<sup>189</sup> “The Repentance of Believers,” i.5, *The Works*, I: 338. Also, Wesley explains in “The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart” that “pride [is] the twin sister of self-will.” §i.1, *The Works*, IV: 152.

<sup>190</sup> Gen.3:5; “Justification by Faith,” iv.8, *The Works*, I: 198; See also “The Image of God” and “The New Birth.”

<sup>191</sup> “On the Fall of Man,” i.1, *The Works*, II: 57.

<sup>192</sup> “The End of Christ’s Coming,” i.9, *The Works*, II: 477.

<sup>193</sup> “The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart,” ii. 3, *The Works*, IV: 156; “The End of Christ’s Coming,” §2, *The Works*, II: 472; “The Repentance of Believers,” i.7, *The Works*, I: 339; “The Important Question,” i.4, *The Works*, III: 184-85.

humanity, namely, a “thirst for glory.” For Wesley, therefore, the forgetfulness of God is atheism and idolatry.<sup>194</sup>

The consequences of original sin mean that he who once was “capable of knowing, loving, and obeying his Creator”<sup>195</sup> lost perfect knowledge of God and the things of God, which is the ground of perfect will and freedom, and at the same time lost the main content of the happiness of humanity. The image of God once remained perfectly in humanity, but is now effaced and lost.<sup>196</sup> Likewise, by losing the knowledge of God, human understanding became defective. “He lost the whole moral image of God, righteousness and true holiness.”<sup>197</sup> Original sin committed through eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil resulted in a blurred discernment between good and evil, and self-deception in the form of pride.<sup>198</sup>

It is ironic that Adam ate the forbidden fruit to have the knowledge of good and evil through yielding to the self-pride that is atheism, but pride caused him (and us) to refuse to know one’s condition, to acknowledge one’s guilt. Oden comments that what Kierkegaard and Freud would show from their psychological perspective was already evident in Wesley’s concern with the issue of self-deception. Wesley declares that apart from God, all things are deception and that true “self-knowledge is hard to come by.”

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<sup>194</sup> “The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart,” ii. 3, *The Works*, IV: 156.

<sup>195</sup> “The General Deliverance,” i.2, *The Works*, II: 439. Pride is considered as the characteristic of evil angels whose work is not to have faith. “Of Evil Angels,” ii.4, *The Works*, III: 22.

<sup>196</sup> “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” i.3-4, *The Works*, II: 5-6.

<sup>197</sup> “The End of Christ’s Coming,” i.10, *The Works*, II: 477. Without having the image of God, “He was unholy; he was unhappy; he was full of sin, full of guilt and tormenting fears,” Wesley maintains.

<sup>198</sup> “The Doctrine of Original Sin,” Pt. II, i.4, *The Works*, IX: 260; Oden, 161, 168.

Therefore, he also points out the necessity of dealing with the predicament of original sin “to which Christ is an answer.”<sup>199</sup>

Hence, due to the defaced image of God after the fall, human understanding is blinded and leads the will to vile affections, while liberty is deprived of virtue and so results in human misery. Wesley explains this misery through the image of one whose gaze is fixed upon “mean, perishing, [and] unsatisfying objects,” and thereby one is unable to “lift up [one’s] eyes toward heaven.”<sup>200</sup> In this image, humanity without the *imago Dei* is presented as being spiritually bent; “free only to evil; free to ‘drink in iniquity like water’; to wander farther and farther from the living God”<sup>201</sup>

Considering not only the natural *Imago Dei*, but also the political and moral *imagines*, the sin of humanity caused broken relationships toward other creatures as well. In spite of the fact that humanity is the conduit of God’s blessing between the Creator and the creation, the post-fall sinful humanity caused the whole of creation to experience pain, sorrow, evil, and vanity, even as humans came to misuse or abuse creation contrary to the will of God.<sup>202</sup> Accordingly, in Wesley’s understanding, a Christian’s journey participates in the groaning pains of the whole creation until the full restoration: It is the *imago Dei* that the groaning spirit of the children of God seeks to restore.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Oden, 157; “The Son of God was manifested in order to destroy [the works of the devil].” “The End of Christ’s Coming,” ii, *The Works*, II: 477.

<sup>200</sup> “The Image of God,” ii. 2-4, iv.1, *The Works*, IV: 298-99, 301.

<sup>201</sup> “The Spirit of bondage and of Adoption,” ii.7, *The Works*, I: 258.

<sup>202</sup> “The General Deliverance,” i.2; ii.1, *The Works*, II: 440, 442; Lodahl, 13-24.

<sup>203</sup> The restoration of the image of God is the sole end of life. See sermons, “What is Man?” and “The General Deliverance.” In “The End of Christ’s Coming,” Wesley seems to emphasize the *imago Dei* in the aspect of morality, as he promotes holiness and righteousness in Christianity. i.10, *The Works*, II: 477; however, as prevenient grace restores “some” of the *imago Dei*, he implies its restoration in all three (natural, political, and moral) aspects: “Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith,” §§8-10, *The Works*, IV: 52.

Without the *imago Dei*, human nature became evil, contrary to God's holy will. "The *understanding* must be brought by HUMILITY to repentance, true self-knowledge, and faith," by which a Christian grows spiritually to be perfectly happy again in God.<sup>204</sup> However, life without God's grace is characterized by vanity in the form of atheism and pride. Wesley describes humanity after the fall without God's grace in terms of *non posse non peccare*, a phrase used by Augustine to indicate that a totally depraved human nature is unable to find a way to happiness without the grace of God.<sup>205</sup> Wesley writes that only grace can cure the "ungodliness and unrighteousness, [so] deeply and strongly rooted in the soul."<sup>206</sup> Awareness of the human propensity to evil, apart from grace, leads to the doctrines of *sola gratia* and *sola fide*, for without grace and faith no one is able to do anything that is acceptable to God.

### 3. *Reason, Liberty, and Conscience: Prevenient Grace*

Only God the Creator, who made humans, knows the human heart; only God's almighty grace can cure the deceitful heart of the idolatry and pride by which humans end up "either thinking of themselves more highly than they ought to think, or glorying in something which they have received, as though they had not received it... seeking happiness out of God."<sup>207</sup> In the search for happiness without God all sins are centered,

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<sup>204</sup> Oden, 137; "The Image of God," iii, 2, *The Works*, IV: 300. Italics are in the original; emphasis on HUMILITY is mine.

<sup>205</sup> Wesley's usage of Latin text comes naturally as he was educated in and mastered Latin and Greek from his early school years. Oden, 134. Cf. Augustine, *Enchiridion*, Ch. 18 on Correction and Grace, Pt. 7.

<sup>206</sup> "The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart," ii.4, *The Works*, IV: 156.

<sup>207</sup> "The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart," i.4, *The Works*, IV: 154.

according to Wesley. In this light, Wesley quotes Augustine's dictum: "Thou hast made us for thyself; and our heart cannot rest till it resteth in thee."<sup>208</sup>

Mercifully, the Creator-God "would not forsake even the depraved work of His own hands," but would provide him "a means of being renewed after the image of him that created him."<sup>209</sup> Wesley writes of God's grace in his scripturally based explanation:

Yet his merciful Creator did not leave him in this helpless, hopeless state. He immediately appointed his Son, his well-beloved Son, 'who is the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person,' to be the Saviour of men, 'the propitiation for the sins of the whole world'; the great Physician, who by his almighty Spirit would heal the sickness of their souls, and restore them not only to the favour but to 'the image of God wherein they were created.'<sup>210</sup>

In order to explain the universal grace of God upon fallen humanity, Wesley introduces the grace of God in terms of prevenient grace, or "'preventing grace'; all the 'drawings' of 'the Father.'"<sup>211</sup> Outler comments that *gratia praeveniens* (preventing or prevenient grace) represents the universal grace of God in that "the Holy Spirit's activity in moving or drawing the will in advance of any conscious resolve."<sup>212</sup> In other words it is

a special gracious activity of the Holy Spirit in the heart and will, always in anticipation (*praeveniens*) of any human initiative or active of choice. 'Preventing' grace (distantly kin to what the Calvinists called 'common grace,' save that it is uniquely the work of the Holy Spirit) 'goes before' conscious awareness of one's condition, to 'turn,' to 'draw,' to stir up 'the desires after God... all the convictions which the Holy Spirit ... works in every child of man.' Thus, it

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<sup>208</sup> "The Unity of the Divine Being," §9, *The Works*, IV: 64. Outler clarifies there are critical changes in Wesley's usage of the Latin text; for example, *irrequietum* is used instead of *inquietum* in the text: "*Fecisti nos ad te; et irrequietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.*" Augustine, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, trans. E. M. Blaiklock (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1983), I. i. Hereafter referred to as *Confessions*.

<sup>209</sup> "The Image of God," [4], *The Works*, IV: 293; Col. 3:10; "On the Fall of Man," ii.8, *The Works*, II: 410.

<sup>210</sup> "The Mystery of Iniquity," §2, *The Works*, II: 452 Cf. Heb. 1:3; Col. 3:10; and 1John 2:2.

<sup>211</sup> "The Scripture Way of Salvation," i.2, *The Works*, II: 156.

<sup>212</sup> "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," footnote 24, *The Works*, III: 203.

displaces ‘natural conscience’ ...; it signifies the divine initiative in all human ‘reactions’ that aspire to faith.<sup>213</sup>

God’s prevenient grace means that all nations and all ages without exception are illuminated by “a faint twilight.”<sup>214</sup> Even though humanity is fallen and base, yet the prevenient grace of God endows everyone with the treasure of reason, liberty and a natural conscience in our earthen vessels. Wesley mentions the importance of reason in understanding Scripture, theology, and affirmations of faith like the Apostle’s Creed.<sup>215</sup> By “some few rays of light” God “prevented utter darkness” and “imparted some imperfect knowledge of the Giver.”<sup>216</sup> Especially, Wesley regards liberty and conscience as means to prepare for the gospel, and at the same time to keep us humble.<sup>217</sup> Therefore, humans are capable of exploring the inner self, while experiencing the dichotomy of nobility (from the pre-fall image of God) and baseness (from the post-fall defaced image of God).<sup>218</sup>

Prevenient grace is also mentioned in the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* of the Church of England. The Tenth Article, on free will, mentions that

The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God.

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<sup>213</sup> “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” footnote 3, *The Works*, II: 156-57. Later Wesley linked prevenient grace to repentance. See Wesley’s *Notes* on Romans 2:14, and “Predestination Calmly Considered,” §45.

<sup>214</sup> “Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith,” §10, *The Works*, IV: 52.

<sup>215</sup> “The Case of Reason Impartially Considered,” *The Works*, II: 588. Wesley emphasizes prevenient grace in “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” and “On Working Out Our Own Salvation.” Phyllis Mack points out that reason “is of only limited use in assisting the comprehension of spiritual truths,” because “we cannot acquire certain knowledge of God’s existence or his nature” through reason. See Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 33.

<sup>216</sup> “Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith,” §§8-10, *The Works*, IV: 52. Wesley does not explain these “few rays of light” in any detail.

<sup>217</sup> “Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, II,” *The Works*, I: 488; “On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” *The Works*, III: 199. “Heavenly Treasure in Earthen Vessels,” ii.4-7, *The Works*, IV: 166-67.

<sup>218</sup> “Heavenly Treasure in Earthen Vessels,” 1, *The Works*, IV: 162

Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.<sup>219</sup>

Wesley, ordained in the Church of England, must have firmly adhered to the belief that human free will testifies to the universal love of God because all human beings can freely respond to God's saving grace. "God does not necessitate humans to be happy any more than to be miserable. That depends on what they do with their freedom, by grace."<sup>220</sup>

Unlike Calvin's claim of God's unconditional election, Wesley believes that human free will is restored by prevenient grace, by which one can respond (is respond-able) to God's saving work, may respond to God's saving love shown through Jesus on the cross.

Without this free will or liberty one cannot be a moral being, because one cannot practice good works without freedom. "Were human liberty taken away men would be as incapable of virtue as stones."<sup>221</sup>

Wesley also asserts that prevenient grace implies human conscience:

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. Everyone has sooner or later good desires, although the generality of men stifle them before they can strike deep root or produce any considerable fruit.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* (London, 1571), [http://anglicanonline.org/basics/thirty-nine\\_articles.html](http://anglicanonline.org/basics/thirty-nine_articles.html) (accessed March 12, 2010).

<sup>220</sup> Oden, 147.

<sup>221</sup> "On Divine Providence," §15, *The Works*, II: 541.

<sup>222</sup> "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," *Anthology*, 491; It is necessary to note that Wesley means the word "natural" in "natural strength" to refer to humanity's fallen status, while in reference to "natural conscience" the adjective indicates prevenient grace. Wesley's notes on Romans 8:16 also convey his view of conscience: "*The same Spirit beareth witness with our spirit*---With the spirit of every true believer, by a testimony distinct from that of his own spirit, or the testimony of a good conscience. Happy [are] they who enjoy this clear and constant!" John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, (London:

With a measure of conscience restored by God, humans are capable of seeing the reality of the self as sick and vile; admitting the need of a physician marks the turning point toward restoration. Therefore, when Wesley declares that “the first step to this glorious change is humility, a knowledge of ourselves, a just sense of our condition,”<sup>223</sup> such humility is responding to the prompting of divine prevenient grace. Wesley emphasizes humility, self-knowledge, even citing the saying on the Delphi temple: “Know thyself.” However, he critically affirms that knowing self without God is another deception. Self-knowledge before and in God alone leads one to restoration.<sup>224</sup>

## Conclusion

The historical context of the spiritual growth of John Wesley, an Anglican priest, can be conveyed through the image of a mosaic, for it was not only the Anglican Church but also the attitudes of various dissenters that influenced him. Holding the *Book of Common Prayer* in the one hand and the dissenters’ fervent love of God in the other, Wesley merged diverse historical heritages into his own living experience of the Spirit of God. Thus, a Puritan life style, an Anglican foundation, and Moravian as well as Calvinist influences are interconnected in the life of John Wesley, who sought the restoration of the *imago Dei* for himself and others.

As Wesley understood that the original intention of God’s creation is happiness and holiness, and that these are to be found in the likeness of the *imago Dei*, his understanding

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Epworth Press, 1976), 548; T. James MacCormack, *Thoughts from a Warmed Heart* (Northern Ireland: Colourpoint Books, 2002), 103.

<sup>223</sup> “The Image of God,” iii.1, *The Works*, IV: 299-300.

<sup>224</sup> Oden, 151.

of soteriology can be seen as a journey, a journey of restoring the *imago Dei*. This journey, according to Wesley, begins with humility. Since to be humble is, by definition, to be not proud, the beginning of humility can be understood as doing away with pride. Ever since the fall, self-deception in the form of pride led humans to refuse to know their condition and to refuse to acknowledge their guilt. It is through self-knowledge before God that pride is stopped and one is prepared to receive the justifying grace of God.<sup>225</sup>

Wesley's understanding of the journey of the restoration of the *imago Dei* can be seen as a Christian's journey of seeking holiness in happiness or happiness in holiness. The Puritan emphasis on discipline, Moravian influence of self-examination, and Anglican focus on holy living have been woven into Wesley's spiritual journey toward the fullness of the will of God, i.e., love. This is well expressed in his focus on life as *fides caritate formata*.<sup>226</sup> For this journey, according to Wesley, the role of humility is essential, especially in the form of self-knowledge. Therefore, in the following chapter, the role of humility in the whole movement toward justification will be examined.

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<sup>225</sup> Oden, 157, 161, 168.

<sup>226</sup> Outler, introduction to "The Original, Nature, Properties, And Use of The Law," *The Works*, II: 3.

### Chapter III: HUMILITY IN JUSTIFICATION

#### Introduction

In order to use humility as a lens through which we may understand Wesley's *ordo salutis* in this and the following chapter, it is essential to have at least a preliminary understanding of what he meant by the word "humility." Wesley's understanding was very different from that of some of his predecessors and contemporaries. Strong intellectual currents in post-Civil War England sidelined religion as a way to truth and saw it as an obstacle to human freedom and flourishing. Accordingly, the religious meaning of humility tended to fade from use, as when Wesley's contemporary, the philosopher David Hume, defined humility as being simply "a dissatisfaction with ourselves on account of some defect or infirmity."<sup>227</sup> In this sense, the word "humility" conveyed something negative and unacceptable about human life. Wesley, drawing not only on the Judeo-Christian tradition but also on authors from ancient Greece and Rome, had a much broader and more religious concept of humility.

It is true that in Greece at the time of Plato the words *ταπεινος* (*tapeinos*) and *ταπεινοτης* (*tapeinotès*) could denote "the humble" and "humility" without necessarily having any spiritual meaning; the words could simply refer to the low, little, unimportant, miserable, and base. The equivalent Latin adjective *humilis*, which corresponds to *ταπεινος*, might likewise indicate something unimportant, miserable, or base, while

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<sup>227</sup> David Hume, *Of the Passions*, cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "Humility." Cf. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford, 1902).

*humilitas* implied the absence of loftiness, a state of moral weakness or bodily shabbiness.

Hence, it could be used by moralists as associated with pusillanimity or cowardice.<sup>228</sup>

However, humility could also have a positive connotation for Plato, who describes the humble as those who live in accordance with divine law, explaining that they are modest and orderly (ταπεινος και κεκοσμημενος), for they desire happiness and intend to follow the law.<sup>229</sup> As such, the humble live orderly lives according to the divine law, while the proud disdain the law.

Whether its connotation is negative or positive, both aspects of humility in Greek and Latin have common antonyms: inflated pride, self-exaltation, and boastfulness. Hence, prominent is the idea that the over-estimation of self is not humility; a true “reality check” is the base of humility, and knowing oneself is one of its chief characteristics. The maxim engraved in the Delphi temple, “Know yourself (γνωθι σεαυτον),” directs people to remind themselves that they are deficient mortals separated from the gods. An awareness of this separation from divinity becomes the content of self-knowledge when one is humble.

In the Judeo-Christian scriptures, humility is closely associated with one or another form of poverty. In particular, the Hebrew adjectives *‘ani* or *‘anaw*, denoting “poor,” convey the meaning of being humble or bent, for the poor are deprived of the wealth of the world and therefore voluntarily bend themselves before God and submit to God’s will.

The humble are thus the lowly due to their social condition or economic poverty. The

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<sup>228</sup> Pierre Adnès, “Humilité.” *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 7 (1969), 1140. Cf. *Thesaurus graecae linguae* by H. Estinne-Dindorff, art. “Ταπεινος,” t. 7, Paris, 1854, col. 1824-1829; Kittle, art. “Ταπεινος,” t. 8, 1965, p. 2-6; Aristotle, *Rhetorique* II, 6, 1384a 4; pseudo-Aristotle, *Des vertus et des vices* VII, 14, 1251b 44-45.

<sup>229</sup> Adnès, 1140. « et il ne cesse d’avoir à sa suite la Justice, qui venge les infractions à la loi divine et à laquelle, modeste et range (ταπεινος και κεκοσμημενος), celui qui veut le Bonheur s’attache pour la suivre, ... » Adnès also notes that in traditional Greek piety, humanity depends on divinity for help because of the littleness of humanity.

most important point here is that they willingly accept their inferior status with patience, submission, and obedience, treating others with meekness and waiting for God's help in confidence. Here, the image of the poor person as humble is based on that individual's social condition. However, humility with regard to poverty has not only this individual aspect but also a communal aspect, as when the Old Testament records the national humiliation of Israel through exile.<sup>230</sup> There is, in addition, a spiritual aspect to it. The poor come to God in faith, seeking justice, because the ideal Judge, i.e., the Messiah, will treat the poor ('*anawim*) and the lowly with justice:

If [poverty] is the source of justice, that is to say, of faith, of confidence in God, and of submission to his will, it is because poverty is opposite to pride; because it is essentially humility.<sup>231</sup>

Hence, poverty becomes the appropriate attitude when offering one's prayers to God and seeking justice.

As Christianity adopted *humilitas* as one of its religious attitudes, humility often took the form of prayer, in particular that of petition.<sup>232</sup> However, there is a critical difference between ancient ethics and Christianity, for humility in Christian usage entails knowing who God the Creator is, and this gives humans a sense of their being created out of *humus* (dirt or soil). Therefore, humility in terms of self-knowledge includes an

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<sup>230</sup> Adnès, 1142-44.

<sup>231</sup> Adnès, 1144. « Si elle est source de justice, c'est-à-dire de foi, de confiance en Dieu, de soumission à sa volonté, c'est parce qu'elle est opposée à l'orgueil, parce qu'elle est essentiellement humilité. »

<sup>232</sup> H. M. Gardiner et al., *Feeling and Emotion: A History of Theories* (New York: American Book Company, 1937), 89. According to the chapter on "Patristic and Medieval Doctrines of the Affections," it was not until the fifth century that Christian theologians began to use philosophical terms such as virtue, reason, and affectivity, drawn from Greco-Roman thought in particular, in order to articulate them in the psychological as well as the practical aspect of Christian life; Richard B. Steele, "*Gracious Affection*" and "*True Virtue*" According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1994), 37.

awareness of our origin, *humus*. The acknowledgement of God as Creator humbles humans before God. Consequently, humility in Christianity refers not only to the relation of the self as a human to *humus*, but also to the relationship with God as humanity's transcendent and loving Creator who created humans out of dust or soil.<sup>233</sup>

Self-knowledge and the knowledge of God in humility are especially distinctive in the New Testament, where poverty and humility are exemplified in the life and death of Jesus. Poverty is an important theme in the New Testament, as when Isaiah 61:1 is quoted by Jesus the Messiah in Luke 4:18: "The Spirit of the Lord sent me to convey the good news to the poor."<sup>234</sup> Similarly, the first Beatitude directs our attention to the poor: "Happy are you the poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours" (Luke 6:20), and "Happy are the poor in spirit, for the Kingdom of the heavens is theirs" (Matthew 5:3).<sup>235</sup> It is in this context that Jesus teaches that "the first will be the last, and the last will be the first"; "Whoever rises will be let down, and whoever humbles oneself (ταπεινωσησει σεαυτον) will be elevated"<sup>236</sup> Thus, the Beatitude becomes an illustration of the connection between poverty and humility. However, "Jesus is not satisfied with beatifying the humble people;

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<sup>233</sup> Furthermore, there is no conception of oneself as a sinner in the philosophical expression of humility. While the meaning of Latin *humilitas* is limited to lowness, insignificance, baseness, Wesley extends Christian humility to "conviction of sin" in his reflection of humility in his "Sermon on the Mount, I," i.9, footnote 85, *The Works*, I: 480.

<sup>234</sup> Adnès, 1146. Mary's *Magnificat* in the gospel of Luke is exemplary for humility in human life. Here, humility stands against wealth, power, and sufficiency. Albert Gelin, in his meditation on the *Magnificat*, expounds: "One listens here to the woman who has profoundly assimilated the soul of 'anawim, to the point of being, under the influence of the newness of the Incarnation, the most vibrant and the most perfect expression." Albert Gelin, *Les pauvres de Yahve* (Paris, 1953), 125.

<sup>235</sup> One often hears that this Beatitude refers to spiritual poverty in that poverty detaches the heart from the rich. However, there are several other parallel passages of the Greek Bible that interpret the 'anawim in terms of the poor of Yahweh and the humble of heart (spirit): Prov. 29, 23; Is. 57, 15; Ps. 34, 19; 51, 19; Dan. 3, 39, 87. See P. Grelot, "La Pauvreté dans l'Écriture sainte," in *Christus*, n. 31, t. 8, (1961), 324; Adnès, 1147.

<sup>236</sup> Matthew 19:30; 20:16, Mark 10: 31, Luke 13:30; 14:11; 18:14.

he offers himself to them as model,” remarks Adnès.<sup>237</sup> Jesus is “the great mirror and exemplar of all humility.”<sup>238</sup>

In Jesus, then, humility implies more than just poverty in a negative sense, caused by knowledge of oneself as being a lowly, deficient, and poor creature. Jesus presents a positive sense through his own life of humility, which included being modest, kind, and understanding. This positive sense of humility has a twofold object, which can be claimed by a veritable Christian: humility before God and humility in relationship with other people.<sup>239</sup> Paul’s exhortation to treat others better than oneself in Philippians and Romans is to be understood in this line, just as humility in Jesus becomes the foundation of Paul’s exhortation in Romans 12, where he urges Christians to regard others as better than themselves. Furthermore, Paul’s language of love in 1 Corinthians 13 encapsulates a Christian’s way of following Jesus’ humility.<sup>240</sup> For example, when *caritas* is described as being not rude, nor jealous, nor arrogant, nor self-seeking, each adjective presents a love that is humbly seeking God alone, for when one is humble, one is not jealous, nor arrogant, nor self-seeking, but charitable. In the name of love, then, humility places God and neighbor first in a Christian’s heart. The moral perspective revealed in these Scriptures is a horizontal relationship that is grounded in one’s vertical relationship with God.

By far the major source of Wesley’s teaching was the Bible, so much so that he once wrote: “O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it; here

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<sup>237</sup> «Jésus ne se contente pas de béatifier les humbles, il s’offre à eux en modèle. » Adnès, 1147 ; Gelin, 148.

<sup>238</sup> « grand miroir et exemplaire de toute humilité. » Adnès, 1179.

<sup>239</sup> A. Gauthier, *Magnanimité*, 401. Gauthier points out that the Pharisee’s humility shows only before God, failing its part regarding his neighbor, the Publican. Cf. Luke 18:9-14; Adnès, 1149.

<sup>240</sup> Adnès, 1149 ; 1Corinthians 13:4.

is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri* (a man of one book).”<sup>241</sup>

Nevertheless, he was also influenced by a number of later Christian authors, including in a special way Thomas à Kempis, the fifteenth-century author of *The Imitation of Christ*.

Wesley not only read this work himself, he also often published extracts from it for the benefit of the Methodists.<sup>242</sup> In the introduction to the English translation of the *Imitatio Christi*, Leo Sherley-Price writes that “for Thomas, as for all Christians, the sole road to God is through the power and teaching of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.”<sup>243</sup> This road, à Kempis explains, is humility in the desire to be like Christ. Moreover, à Kempis repeatedly urges us to examine ourselves, as a practical way to imitate Christ through humility: “Humble knowledge of oneself is a surer road to God than a deep searching of the sciences” because when one “truly knows himself [and] realizes his own worthlessness,” he “takes no pleasure in the praises of men.”<sup>244</sup>

Therefore, it is not strange to find an echo of à Kempis in Wesley’s definition of humility as a “right judgment of the sinfulness and helplessness of our nature... He who knows himself neither desires nor values the applause which he knows he deserves not.”<sup>245</sup> The influence of à Kempis is much clearer when we read Wesley’s journal entry written two decades after his first reading of that book, for he confesses in the journal that “the more I read [the *Imitation*], the more I liked it. I bought [the book], and read it over and

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<sup>241</sup> Wesley, Letter to John Newton, May 14, 1765, quoted by Maximin Piette, *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*, trans. J. B. Howard (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1937), 428.

<sup>242</sup> See Frank Baker, *A Union Catalogue of the Publications of John and Charles Wesley*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Stone Mountain, GA: George Zimmermann, 1991). Wesley read its English translation, “Christian’s Pattern,” in 1726. See, John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (London: Wesleyan Conference office, 1872; reprint, Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1966), 10.

<sup>243</sup> Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (New York: Penguin Books, 1952), 12.

<sup>244</sup> à Kempis, 28, 31. Cf. Geordan Hammond, “John Wesley and ‘Imitating’ Christ,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 45 (Spring, 2010): 197-212.

<sup>245</sup> “The Circumcision of the Heart,” i.4, *The Works*, I: 404.

over. I was more convinced of sin than ever, and had more power against it.”<sup>246</sup> As revealed in this record, Wesley is convinced of sin more and more: to imitate Christ’s humility begins with knowledge of oneself as a sinner before God. Wesley also reflects on the significance of imitating Christ in his *A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week* (1733). In this *Collection* Wesley specifically refers to imitating Christ’s love, meekness and humility. The imitation of Christ is revealed in the so-called “General Questions”: “Have I been zealous in undertaking and active in doing what good I could?” Obviously it is a question of self-examination that is employed by Wesley for his pursuit of the life of the imitation of Christ.<sup>247</sup>

In light of this influence of the Bible and of à Kempis on Wesley’s understanding of humility, we could say at this point that humility for someone on the way to justification was summed up in what Wesley wrote in one of his sermons on the Sermon on the Mount:

Know thyself. See and feel thyself a sinner. Feel that thy inward parts are very [wicked], that thou art altogether corrupt and abominable, and that the wrath of God abideth on thee. Cast out the beam of pride. Abhor thyself. Sink down as in dust and ashes. Be more and more little, and mean, and base, and vile in thine own eyes.<sup>248</sup>

This “way to justification” was itself multifaceted, but it is not immediately clear simply from reading Wesley’s sermons how best to present this in an orderly manner. As

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<sup>246</sup> *The Journal* (December 27, 1744), 325. Also, Wesley records a letter from W. B. regarding the influence of à Kempis among the people of the Foundry Society. *The Journal*, 326.

<sup>247</sup> Richard Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003), 60; Hammond, 4. See Wesley’s journal on October 19, 1732. Wesley maintained the inquiry regarding self-examination throughout his life, and applied it especially for the Methodists’ understanding of the order of salvation.

<sup>248</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, X,” §7, *The Works*, I: 653. Psalm 5:9 (BCP); 53:4 (BCP). Wesley exhorts his hearers to cast off the beam of impenitence, pride, love of the world, supine carelessness and indifference; “Sermon on the Mount, I,” i.9-10, *The Works*, I: 480. Wesley locates the difference between ancient philosophy’s and Christianity’s understanding of humility in the fact that there is no concept of “sinner” in the ancient philosophical treatments.

Maximin Piette observes in his lengthy study of the context of Wesley's life and thought, "Those who take the pains carefully to read John Wesley's works, especially his *Sermons*, his *Journal*, and his *Notes on the New Testament*, and his defense of Methodism, will doubtless be greatly puzzled by an apparent enigma. They will discover a whole quantity of statements up and down their pages which lack, apparently, anything to bind them together."<sup>249</sup> Piette suggests that beneath all this apparent confusion is a constant appeal to religious experience, in particular Wesley's experience of the love that God had for him and that he had for God.

This is no doubt correct, but there is another, more specific way of bringing some order into our examination of the role of humility in the path toward justification, and that is to follow the thread that Wesley himself suggests in one of his sermons, preached on the Pauline text "Work out your own salvation" (Phil. 2:12). Here Wesley writes:

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 ... till, in another instant, the heart is cleansed from all sin and filled with pure love to God and man. But even

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<sup>249</sup> Piette, 436. Having the Methodist tradition as my background, I personally do not agree with Piette; however, it is worth noting for a fair evaluation.

that love increases more and more, till we “grow up in all things into him that is our head;” till we attain “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”<sup>250</sup>

Following the schema offered in this passage, we will accordingly look at the role of humility as it relates to the life of someone experiencing first the preventing (or “prevenient”) grace of God, then God’s convincing grace (i.e., the grace of repentance), and finally the justifying grace by which one experiences the forgiveness and pardoning love of God.

#### **A. Humility and Prevenient Grace**

Whereas, as we shall see, God’s justifying grace applies only to Christians inasmuch as it is precisely through such grace that one becomes a Christian, Wesley understands God’s prevenient grace as what Michael Lodahl terms “the loving, persuasive presence of God lavished upon all people, and indeed upon all creation,” by which “creation has inherent, redeemable value.”<sup>251</sup> The prevenient grace of God represents the universal love of God because “there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God.”<sup>252</sup>

Prevenient grace is this “coming before” grace of God into human free will and conscience like twilight, which makes it possible for humanity to respond to God’s saving grace.<sup>253</sup> Due to the goodness of the Creator and despite the depravity of humanity fallen from the original *Imago Dei*, God’s prevenient grace restores, in some measure, reason,

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<sup>250</sup> “On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” ii.1, *The Works*, III: 203-4.

<sup>251</sup> Lodahl, 194-95.

<sup>252</sup> “On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” iii.4, *Anthology*, 491.

<sup>253</sup> “Heavenly Treasure in Earthen Vessels,” ii.4-7, *The Works*, IV: 166-67. Liberty, freedom, and free will are used synonymously in this dissertation.

liberty, and conscience in every person. According to Wesley, it is through such grace that everyone bears the partially recovered image of God, which spurs a person to admit her or his reality before God and the need for divine help. Likewise, on account of the prevenient grace of God, human beings, even in fallen nature, can see the status of their true self and thence lean on God's grace for the restoration of the image of God.<sup>254</sup>

One example of this universal grace is found in the human conscience, as Wesley writes:

[Prevenient grace is] an immaterial principle, a spiritual nature, endued with understanding, and affections, and a degree of liberty, of a self-moving, yea, and self-governing power; all that is vulgarly called 'natural conscience', implying some discernment of the difference between moral good and evil.<sup>255</sup>

Everyone, unless he be one of the small number whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron, feels more or less uneasy when he acts contrary to the light of his own conscience. So that no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he hath.<sup>256</sup>

With regard to humility or self-knowledge, it is conscience in particular that witnesses to God's prevenient grace as a reminder of the image of God. According to Wesley, there are three didactic functions of conscience:

First, the true meaning of God's Word; secondly, our own tempers and lives, bringing all our thoughts, words, and actions to remembrance; and thirdly, the agreement of all with the commandments of God.<sup>257</sup>

How well these roles are fulfilled decides the type of conscience one has: good, scrupulous,

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<sup>254</sup> "Heavenly Treasure in Earthen Vessels," §1, *The Works*, IV: 162

<sup>255</sup> "Heavenly Treasure in Earthen Vessels," i.1, *The Works*, IV: 162.

<sup>256</sup> "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," iii.4, *The Works*, III: 207. Cf. 1 Tim. 4:2; "The Witness of Our Own Spirit," §19, *The Works*, I: 312.

<sup>257</sup> "On Conscience," i.13, *The Works*, III: 486.

or hardened. First, a “good conscience” is attuned with God’s will; Wesley calls it “a divine consciousness of walking in all things according to the written Word of God”;<sup>258</sup> secondly, a “scrupulous conscience” appears when the good conscience is carried to the extreme and afflicts the self with fear all the time. It is not sound, rather a “sore evil” that needs to be recovered through prayer.<sup>259</sup> A “hardened conscience” is the third type, which “can violate [or neglect] a plain command of God without any self-condemnation” or uneasiness.<sup>260</sup>

Understanding conscience as a charism in his explication of 1 John 2:20, Wesley writes of the necessity of the Holy Spirit if one is to keep a good conscience: “Ye have an unction from the Holy One; and ye know all things... that are needful to [have] a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man.”<sup>261</sup> With a holy unction, conscience can inform and discern where we stand with regard to the will of God. Having such a conscience, one can look into the self to see whether one is in accordance with God’s will, is away from it for a while, or has forgotten all about it.

Wesley ascribes conscience to the gift of God, for self-knowledge in close connection with conscience is the work of the Holy Spirit. Since the work of the Holy Spirit of God as prevenient grace is an essential part of one’s entire spiritual journey, the fullness of God’s work would be obscured if this self-knowledge (or what Collins calls “initial poverty of spirit”)<sup>262</sup> were cut out of the picture of the whole fabric of God’s

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<sup>258</sup> “On Conscience,” i.12, *The Works*, III: 485. To maintain a good conscience, it is necessary to have the continuing influence of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>259</sup> “On Conscience,” i.13, *The Works*, III: 485.

<sup>260</sup> “On Conscience,” i.14, *The Works*, III: 486.

<sup>261</sup> “On Conscience,” i.13, *The Works*, III: 486.

<sup>262</sup> Collins, “A Reconfiguration of Power: The Basic Trajectory in John Wesley’s Practical Theology”: 180.

justification of sinners. The entire spectrum of God's panoramic works of salvation would be reduced were it not for this prevenient grace of God enabling people to be humble and know themselves before God.

### **B. Humility and Convincing (Convicting) Grace**

As we saw in the earlier-quoted passage from the Sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," according to Wesley prevenient grace brings about "the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against [God]." This "slight" conviction ideally leads one to a deeper conviction of oneself as a sinner, brought about by a further modality of grace that Wesley calls "convincing grace" or the grace of repentance, which he elucidates at various times with reference to the parable of the Pharisee and Publican (Luke 18:9-14) and that of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-24). The former parable figures prominently in his first sermon on the Sermon on the Mount, where he writes that "Our Lord, first, lays down the sum of all true religion in eight particulars, which he explains and guards against the false glosses of men."<sup>263</sup> In addition, he describes these eight Beatitudes as the way to the kingdom of heaven and perfect will of God. In this sermon, Wesley elucidates his understanding of the first Beatitude by underlining the connection of "first repentance" with self-knowledge:

Who then are the 'poor in spirit'? Without question, the humble; they who know themselves, who are convinced of sin; those to whom God hath given that first repentance which is previous to faith in Christ.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> "Sermon on the Mount, I," i.1, *The Works*, I: 475. It is worth noting that he interprets the Lord's Sermon on the Mount as the guidance to be humble, guarding "against the false glosses of men": false glosses as deception.

<sup>264</sup> "Sermon on the Mount, I," i.4, *The Works*, I: 477.

“Previous to faith” is a characteristic of this being poor in spirit, which is given by God.

Outler refers to it as “a prevenient work of the Holy Spirit,” through which one recognizes “one’s alienation from God and [acknowledges] the truth of one’s sinful affections.”<sup>265</sup>

Living in the presence of God is an essential part of self-knowledge. Without this, a quasi self-knowledge, as in the Pharisee’s prayer in the gospel of Luke, may prevail, leading one not to the justifying grace of God but to self-praising aggrandizement. What is truly needed is the confession of the Publican in the parable, a man who is fearfully ashamed of his sin and justified thereby.<sup>266</sup> Augustine explains that humility is first needed by a sinner because the sinner needs the mercy of God in order to become just.<sup>267</sup> Thus, self-knowledge, according to Wesley, is that which brings one to know how she or he deserves punishment and damnation for evil tempers, evil desires and thoughts, evil words and works that are now “ever in his sight.” “Above all, the guilt of ‘not believing on the name of the only-begotten Son of God’ lies heavy upon him.”<sup>268</sup> As such, knowing oneself before God, and thereby acknowledging the condition of sin, is true self-knowledge (humility).

Wesley writes that when one acknowledges and sees only sin and alienation from God “he sees himself therefore utterly helpless with regard to atoning for his past sins; utterly unable to make any amends to God, to pay any ransom for his own soul.”<sup>269</sup>

However, humility before God is not just feeling shy or lame so that one fails to do her or

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<sup>265</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, I,” i.4, *The Works*, I: 477. Outler explains that the equivalence between the humble and the poor in spirit is derived from Bishop Blackall, and that between humility and “authentic self-knowledge” from William Law. See Outler’s footnote nos. 47 and 48 of the “Sermon on the Mount, I.”

<sup>266</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1976), 272 (Luke 18:11-14).

<sup>267</sup> Augustine, *On Free Choice of Will*, trans. Thomas Williams (Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1993), II, 10, 29; Adnès, 1156.

<sup>268</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, I,” i.5, *The Works*, I: 478.

<sup>269</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, I,” i.6, *The Works*, I: 478.

his tasks, for when one stands before God, humility does not simply remain one's inability but becomes one's dependence on God. From this point of view, humility in the form of self-knowledge is not mere helplessness and inability to amend any single sin, but is the knowledge that directs one to seek help from God. Only the poor in spirit stand naked and needy before God, who is the Physician, just as only the physically sick need a human physician.<sup>270</sup> Accordingly, one can say that the poor in spirit who are conscious of their indigence and destitution, i.e., the humble, are in a privileged state of receptivity to divine grace.<sup>271</sup>

In seeking help from God, one is led to a deeper and humbler life, one marked by a desire to imitate Christ as the divine Physician. The more one wants to be healed and restored to the *imago Dei* through imitating Christ, the more she or he finds the self in need of help from God who intends our restoration to what He created us to be. Thus, humility in the form of self-knowledge may become submission to God's will. In this sense, one is led to become a Christian by knowing oneself as a sinner, helpless to emerge from this morass by one's own power.

### 1. *Conscience and the Moral Law*

What Wesley writes about conscience and the moral law is a further help for expounding how he sees a human being coming to an awareness of personal sinfulness.

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<sup>270</sup> Bernard Clairvaux understands a double character of humility: one is the cold knowledge of our infirmities; the other is the enflamed love brought forth by lowness because of self-knowledge: "altera cognitionis, quam nobis veritas parit, altera affectionis, quam charitas format et inflammat." See *Sermo 42* in *Cant.* 6-8, 990b-991d; Adnès, 1165.

<sup>271</sup> Adnès, 1150. Cited from John Chrysostom's *In Matthaëum* 25, 4, PG 57, 332d; *Ecloga de humilitate*, PG 63, 618a. Chrysostom explains that humility is concurrent with self-knowledge because self-knowledge is both the cause and result of humility

Wesley understands conscience as “implanted by God in every soul that comes into the world,” making one capable of “perceiving what is right or wrong in his own heart or life, in his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions.”<sup>272</sup> Thus, when Wesley mentions “natural conscience” he is speaking about a grace given by God:

So that we may say to every human creature, ‘He,’ not nature, ‘hath shown thee, O man, what is good.’ And it is his Spirit who giveth thee an inward check, who causeth thee to feel uneasy, when thou walkest in any instance contrary to the light which he hath given thee.<sup>273</sup>

That everyone has this God-given conscience attested by good desires correlates with what Wesley describes as the moral law: “the mind of God.”<sup>274</sup> The God-given grace of conscience cannot work apart from the moral law, because this moral law is itself the image of God: “This law is an incorruptible picture of the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity. . . . It is the heart of God disclosed to man . . . of his Son – it is ‘the streaming forth’ or outbeaming ‘of his glory, the express image of his person.’”<sup>275</sup> This image of God was lost when humanity fell, but God soon “in some measure re-inscribed” it,<sup>276</sup> and therefore, all of humanity has the ability to see the self standing before the moral law, the rightness and fitness of God.

How human conscience in connection with the moral law witnesses to the work of God’s convincing grace will clarify the role of humility in terms of self-knowledge at the beginning of Christian salvation, as well as in the sanctifying journey toward Christian

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<sup>272</sup> “The Witness of Our Own Spirit,” §5, *The Works*, I: 302.

<sup>273</sup> “On Conscience,” i.5, *The Works*, III: 482.

<sup>274</sup> “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” i.4, *The Works*, II: 7.

<sup>275</sup> “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” ii.3, *The Works*, II: 9. Wesley identifies this law, “the heart of God that disclosed to man,” as the second person of the Trinity.

<sup>276</sup> “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” i.4, *The Works*, II: 7.

perfection. In his discourse on Romans 7:12, “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” Wesley describes the law in Romans 7 not as the Jewish law, or the ceremonial law, or the Roman law, but as the moral law: “St. Paul, by ‘the law’ mentioned in this chapter, does not mean either the ancient law of Rome or the ceremonial law of Moses... but the *moral* law.”<sup>277</sup>

*The commandment which was intended for life* - Doubtless it was originally intended by God as a grand means of preserving and increasing spiritual life, and leading to life everlasting. ...

*The commandment* - That is, every branch of the law. *Is holy, and just, and good* - It springs from, and partakes of, the holy nature of God; it is every way just and right in itself; it is designed wholly for the good of man.<sup>278</sup>

When Wesley mentions the moral law, he signifies it as the law of God and “the mind of God,” which is “coeval with [human] nature”<sup>279</sup> and revealed to the human heart by being engraved “in the inmost spirit ... by the finger of God.”<sup>280</sup> It is “the great, unchangeable law of love, the holy love of God and of our neighbour.”<sup>281</sup> The moral law, like a mirror, reflects the righteousness of God and the original righteousness of humanity. Outler provides an insightful explanation of Wesley’s concepts of the law and the gospel in his introduction to Wesley’s four discourses entitled “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law”:

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<sup>277</sup> “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” i.2, *The Works*, II: 4. Italics are in the original.

<sup>278</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 544 (Romans 7:10, 12). Italics are in the original.

<sup>279</sup> “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” i.4, *The Works*, II: 7. In his “Sermon on the Mount, V,” i.2, Wesley explains that the Ten Commandments convey the moral law, which Jesus came to fulfill, not to destroy.

<sup>280</sup> “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” i.4, *The Works*, II: 7.

<sup>281</sup> “Justification by Faith,” iv.1, *The Works*, I: 194. Moral law and love of God and neighbors are congruent in Wesley’s view. Hence, the restoration of the image of God can be seen especially as the restoration of the moral image of God.

*The ‘original’ of the Law is man’s inborn moral sense—not ‘natural’ in the deist sense but, rather, as an aspect of the residual imago Dei. The ‘nature’ of the Law is Christological, as if Torah and Christ are in some sense to be equated. The ‘properties’ of the Law are threefold and here Wesley follows the standard Puritan exegesis of Rom. 7:12 as to the Law’s holiness and its instrumentality in the delineation of the just and the good.....: the threefold ‘use’ of the Law is to convict, convert, and sustain the believer—in and after justification.*<sup>282</sup>

The moral law, according to Wesley, has three functions that are similar to Calvin’s interpretation of the law: convicting, guiding, and keeping us alive.<sup>283</sup> Calvin explains the three roles of the law through the metaphorical images of a teacher (exposing one’s sins as in a mirror), a bridle (hindering the wicked), and a whip (inciting one to follow the precepts of the moral law).<sup>284</sup> These are adopted into Wesley’s understanding, where they are expressed in terms of the convicting, converting, and sustaining roles of the moral law,<sup>285</sup> which serves as a spiritual catalyst for the righteousness or “unalterable rectitude” of God.<sup>286</sup> Of the three functions, it is the first—the “convicting” function—that is essential for better understanding Wesley’s view of the moral law with regard to knowledge of oneself as a sinner. Of this particular function, Collins writes: “Even this accommodation to human weakness, clothed as it is, is able to spark terror and guilt in the

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<sup>282</sup> Outler, introduction to “The Original, Nature, Properties, And Use of The Law,” *The Works*, II: 2. Outler’s introductions to each sermon in *The Works* are in italics, as is his general introduction to *The Works*. He points out that Wesley ignores the third use of the Law as he stresses the Law as the “*residual imago Dei*.” iv.1 and n., *The Works*, II: 15.

<sup>283</sup> “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” §1, *The Works*, II: 4. Wesley differentiates the moral law from the Jewish dispensation, ceremonial law, or the Mosaic institution; iv.1-3, *The Works*, II: 15-16.

<sup>284</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, vol. II (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 1983), vii.12. Luther discusses only the role of the Law as a teacher; but Calvin adds two more to this: as a bridle and as a whip. Wesley follows Calvin’s understanding and especially stresses the third function of the Law (*tertius usus legis*) as a whip. Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., *Luther’s Works*, 55 vols. Vol. 26: *Lectures on Galatians 1535* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 308.

<sup>285</sup> “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” iv.1-3, *The Works*, II: 15-16.

<sup>286</sup> “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” ii.5; iv. 1-3. *The Works*, II: 10, 15-16. Compare Luther’s and Calvin’s understanding of the functions of the moral law. Pelikan, 308; John T. McNeil, ed., *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 1:360f.

sinner through the agency of the Holy Spirit, thus indicating its tremendous convicting power.”<sup>287</sup> Collins maintains that this convicting power of the law is identified with the work of the Holy Spirit, presenting the latter as the convincing spirit of God.

With the fall, this law of God was effaced from the human heart, and human understanding became darkened. However, the Creator God’s good intention for human happiness was not to leave humanity in darkness:

God did not despise the work of his own hands... he in some measure re-inscribed the law on the heart of his dark, sinful creature. He again ‘showed thee, O man, what is good’ (although not as in the beginning), ‘even to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.’<sup>288</sup>

Therefore, this God-given law shows God’s good intention for all humanity to know God’s mind and will through the law at hand, i.e., in the heart of humanity. In it “is the face of God unveiled; manifested to give... life; that they may see God and live.”<sup>289</sup> For this very reason, it is correct to say that the moral law is “supreme, unchangeable reason; it is unalterable rectitude; it is the everlasting fitness of all things that are or ever were created,”<sup>290</sup> for it is the “brightest efflux of [God’s] essential wisdom,” holy, pure, just, and good.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>287</sup>Collins, *Wesley on Salvation*, 32.

<sup>288</sup> “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” i.4, *The Works*, II: 7. Cf. Micah 6:8.

<sup>289</sup> “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” ii.3, *The Works*, II: 9.

<sup>290</sup> “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” ii.5, *The Works*, II: 10. It is resonant of Anselm’s idea of fittingness and rectitude (*convenientia*) of creation; Wesley preaches the human inability to fulfill this perfect law to a perfect degree. We have all fallen short of the glory of God because “the law condemns all who do not perform uninterrupted as well as perfect obedience” and we all have offended at least in one or another point. In this way, the law leads us to know the sinful status of the self. “The Righteousness of Faith,” ii.4-5, *The Works*, I: 211-12.

<sup>291</sup> “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” ii.6, iii.1, *The Works*, II: 10. This moral law is given by God as “true light which enlightens every man that cometh in to the world.” Wesley does not equate the Mosaic dispensation with the moral law. See ii.1-2. His description of the moral law is paralleled with the image of Christ in Colossians 1: 15-19.

To Wesley, the moral law, flowing out from the divine, holy, and just light, cannot commune with the darkness that corresponds to sin. God's enlightenment upon human hearts illuminates and mirrors the conscience, which, when pricked by the law, makes knees bend before God as the moral law detects and discovers sin:

'Tis true, by this means (as the Apostle observes, [Rom. 7] verse 13) 'sin appears to be sin.' All its disguises are torn away, and it appears in its native deformity... Being now committed against light and knowledge, being stripped even of the poor plea of ignorance, it loses its excuse as well as disguise, and becomes far more odious both to God and man. Yea, and it is true that 'sin worketh death by that which is good,' which in itself is pure and holy.<sup>292</sup>

When Wesley discusses the moral law as relating to conscience, he regards law as a good and "complete model of all truth" for all creatures.<sup>293</sup> Like the ground of rectitude, moral law is the "divine copy" of the goodness of God.<sup>294</sup> Thus, conscience is inseparably related to the moral law; the former reflects the latter. Wesley finds the archetype of the moral law in the original creation:

It pleased the great Creator to make these his first-born sons intelligent beings, that they might know him that created them. For this end he endued them with understanding, to discern truth from falsehood, good from evil; and as a necessary result of this, with liberty, a capacity of choosing the one and refusing the other. ... To employ all the faculties which he had given them, particularly their understanding and liberty, he gave them a law, a complete model of truth, so far as was intelligible to a finite being, and of all good, so far as angelic minds were capable of embracing it. It was also the design of their beneficent Governor herein to make way for a continual increase of their happiness; seeing every instance of

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<sup>292</sup> "The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law," iii.4, *The Works*, II: 11.

<sup>293</sup> "The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law," i.2, *The Works*, II: 6.

<sup>294</sup> "The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law," iii.8, *The Works*, II: 13.

obedience to that law would both add to the perfection of their nature and entitle them to [a] higher reward.<sup>295</sup>

As such, Wesley shows the close connection between conscience and the moral law, for the standard in the moral law leads one to a conscientious reflection on oneself with regard to discerning good from evil. For example, conscientious awareness of uneasiness or peace in one's heart arises when one's conscience reflects her or his status vis-à-vis the moral law engraved in the inmost being of each person. It is clear that conscience and the moral law function together in this self-examination.<sup>296</sup>

Thus, moral law as the mind of God may be seen either as a synonym of conscience (a checker of good and evil) or as the *imago Dei* partially recovered by prevenient grace. In particular, this is the case when both conscience and the moral law converge in the work of self-knowledge by stirring one to remember the image of God, the will of God, or the mind of God. Besides, both conscience and the moral law are universally restored, albeit thus far only partially; in fact, this is a major characteristic of the prevenient grace of God. In an especially forceful passage, Wesley writes that the function of the moral law is

to convince the world of sin. This is indeed the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost, who can work it without any means at all, or by whatever means it pleaseth him, ... But it is the ordinary method of the Spirit of God to convict sinners by the law. It is this [by] which, being set at home on the conscience... is the sinner discovered to himself. All fig leaves are torn away, and he sees that he is 'wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked.' The law flashes conviction on every side.

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<sup>295</sup> "The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law," i.2, *The Works*, II: 6. It is worth noting that as moral law is consistent with love (Cf. footnote 280), so it is with happiness, for moral law is given to increase our happiness through obedience (loving).

<sup>296</sup> "The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law," i.2, *The Works*, II: 15. According to Wesley, "it is the ordinary method of the Spirit of God to convict sinners by the law. ... By this is the sinner discovered to himself."

He feels himself a mere sinner. He has nothing to pay. His ‘mouth is stopped,’ and he stands ‘guilty before God.’<sup>297</sup>

In this convicting role of the law, Wesley is also aware of the extraordinary way of God who can work, according to God’s will, with or without an instrument. However, Wesley’s main focus in this talk of moral law is concerned with the *ordinary* way in which the Holy Spirit works: “The ordinary method of God is to convict sinners by the law, and that only.”<sup>298</sup>

Therefore, it is valid to say that for most people it is the conscience through which the Holy Spirit works for the restoration of humanity toward fullness in God. When it is the work of the Spirit of God, it means that as conscience is endued with the prevenient grace of God, so the works of conscience, in connection with the moral law, are themselves the convincing grace of God. In this sense, conviction of sin before God is not a matter of human effort. It is the Holy Spirit that works through the moral law, leading the convicted to God (or Christ) through an informing or stinging reality check.<sup>299</sup>

## 2. Wesley’s Extensive Use of the Parable of the Prodigal Son

Just as Wesley at times uses the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican to illustrate his teaching about humility as knowledge of oneself as a sinner, at other times he makes a similar use of the parable of the Prodigal Son in the fifteenth chapter of Luke’s Gospel (a parable that is perhaps more appropriately called the parable of the Merciful

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<sup>297</sup> “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” iv.1, *The Works*, II: 15. Heb. 4:12; Rev. 3:17; Rom. 3:19.

<sup>298</sup> “The Law Established through Faith, I,” i.3, *The Works*, II: 22; “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” i.2, *The Works*, II: 15.

<sup>299</sup> “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” iv.3, *The Works*, II: 16.

Father). In his *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament* Wesley explains the younger son's desire of being independent of the Father as the "root of all sins,"<sup>300</sup> i.e., the human tendency to be independent of God; this caused the son to be far from the Father and unmindful of him. According to Wesley, verse 14 ("And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want.") shows that "all his worldly pleasures failing, he grew conscious of his want of real good."<sup>301</sup> Worse is his condition described in verses 15 and 16 ("And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine ate: and no man gave to him.") in that the son employs himself "in the base drudgery of sin" vainly seeking for worldly comforts.<sup>302</sup>

However, there occurs a return journey of the son to his father in verses 17 through 21. The scene in verse 21, where the son finally meets with the father, becomes an example of repentance for many people in the journey of faith. It is meaningful to see the son's returning to his father and making the personal confession of his sin: "I am no more worthy to be called your son" (verse 19). However, what is more substantive in terms of self-knowledge is that this exact confession of self-awareness of sinfulness before the father had already been made in his monologue even before he began his journey back home, for in verse 18 the son knows himself as a sinner ("I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee.") and acknowledges himself unworthy of sonship. Only by such acknowledgement is the son

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<sup>300</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 261 (Luke 15:12). Wesley in his sermon "On Worldly Folly" also warns of the danger of covetousness and possession of things on earth. i.1, *The Works*, IV: 132.

<sup>301</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 261 (Luke 15:14).

<sup>302</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 261 (Luke 15:15-16).

empowered to move back to his father's house. Wesley exclaims, "How accurately are the first steps of true repentance here pointed out!" as he reads the son's monologue, "I will arise and go to my father."<sup>303</sup>

There is still another mode of self-knowledge that spurs the son to consider his return to the father. In verse 17, the phrase "coming to himself" becomes the keynote of his whole journey of homecoming. It makes things become possible. Wesley reckons this self-knowledge as an essential event that proves to be a turning point: "For till then he was beside himself, as all men are, so long as they are without God in the world."<sup>304</sup> When he remembers the abundance of his father's house, the ingrained memory of his home leads him to realize his condition of poverty, sinfulness, and unworthiness alienated from the father. Having experienced this coming to his senses and responding positively to his situation, the son resolves to take the first step of returning to his father, explains Wesley.

The son's life prior to verse 17 is a life without self-knowledge or, as Wesley puts it, a life without God. However, as the son remembers what his father's house was like, he reckons on his father's love and then arises and returns. Of course, the father's love, though the son does not think himself deserving of it, is there as he returns: "While he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him"<sup>305</sup> *even before* his confession of sins. The father, who is running from afar *even before* the son's arrival, represents the prevenient grace of God.

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<sup>303</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 261 (Luke 15:18). The second role of the moral law (converting role) is never apart from the first role of the law (convicting role).

<sup>304</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 261 (Luke 15:17).

<sup>305</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 262 (Luke 15:21).

However, it is also God's grace that prompts the son's awareness: "coming to himself" and confessing, "I have sinned...and am no more worthy to be called thy son."<sup>306</sup>

Thus, the knowledge of self in the son's heart moves him to depart for his father's home. However, it is not the case that the convicted (like the son whose conscience is flooded by self-knowledge) always and automatically becomes the converted (as the son returns to the father). Although the second role of the moral law (converting) cannot occur without the first (convicting), the first role does not necessarily bring forth the second. Wesley observes that there are few who both know themselves and also actually return to God, whereas there are many people who do not effectively respond to the prevenient grace of God. Wesley teaches that the reason for not using freedom rightly in order to return to God is pride. According to Wesley, "'the heart' is not only 'desperately wicked,' but 'deceitful above all things.'"<sup>307</sup>

As self-knowledge is an essential characteristic of humility, so self-deception is a general characteristic of pride. Oden also describes human unresponsiveness in pride as "quasi-conscious self-deception."<sup>308</sup> Deceiving oneself is being ignorant of oneself and is not of humility but of pride, for it is to regard oneself more highly than is proper. The link between self-deception and pride appears clearly in Wesley's argument that where there is no conviction of sin, there is self-deception:

One who was never convinced of sin is always ready to flatter himself, and to think of himself, especially in spiritual things, more highly than he ought to think. And hence it is in no wise strange if one who is vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, when he hears of this privilege of true Christians, among whom he undoubtedly

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<sup>306</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 261 (Luke 15:17, 19).

<sup>307</sup> "The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart," i.5, *The Works*, IV: 155.

<sup>308</sup> Oden, 143-44.

ranks himself, should soon work himself up into a persuasion that he is already possessed thereof.<sup>309</sup>

According to Wesley, it is self-deception, i.e., pride, that hinders the rightful use of freedom in one's return to God. A prideful mind has no true knowledge of self and therefore cannot use free will in the way that God wants us to use it. Hence, unless one turns around in one's way back to God, there can be no talk of humble self-knowledge. Wesley understands "the humble [as those] who know themselves, who are convinced of sin; those to whom God hath given that first repentance which is previous to faith in Christ."<sup>310</sup>

### 3. *Wesley's Teaching on Human Freedom*

This talk of freedom in one's return to God differentiated Wesley from some of the major Protestant Reformers. In Wesley's understanding, the son makes a decision to return to the father according to his own freedom; and for us there is no returning to the Father without a freely responding human reaction to God the Father's saving grace, which itself empowers one freely to choose good or evil. Freedom is the ability given by God that allows one to be a person and not a machine. As Wesley writes:

An attentive inquirer may easily discern, the whole frame of divine providence is so constituted as to afford man every possible help, in order to his doing good and eschewing evil, which can be done without turning man into a machine; without making him incapable of virtue or vice, reward or punishment.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> "The Witness of the Spirit, I," ii.2, *The Works*, I: 277.

<sup>310</sup> "Sermon on the Mount, I," i.4, *The Works*, I: 477.

<sup>311</sup> "On Divine Providence," §15, *The Works*, II: 541.

Human free will, Wesley asserts, testifies to the universal love of God because all human beings can freely respond to God's saving grace. With this free will, or freedom, one is able both to want what is right and to do what is right.<sup>312</sup> As the prodigal son "began to execute his resolution"<sup>313</sup> by arising and coming to his father, those who have free will, restored by the prevenient grace of God, can respond to God's saving love shown through Jesus on the cross and experience the justifying grace of God.<sup>314</sup> When conscience, accompanying free will, is in accordance with God's will, it can lead one to return to God the Healer as well as to know the self as sick in sin.

Wesley accepts John Chrysostom's description of free will through the imagery of a coin, whose two sides are faith and repentance.<sup>315</sup> Until the time when one with free will, restored by the prevenient grace of God, responds, by faith, to God's saving love shown through Jesus on the cross, self-deception or pride keeps the self from returning to God. No matter how conscious a person may be of her or his sinful state, if that awareness does not lead one to undertake a new life, it is not humility leading to God's pardoning grace.<sup>316</sup> However, as John B. Cobb notes, "prevenient grace is not the restoration of natural free-will. Rather, it ensures that 'a measure of free-will is restored to the person, not to human

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<sup>312</sup> Mack, 9.

<sup>313</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 261 (Luke 15:20).

<sup>314</sup> This will is not completely freed as one moves from conviction to justification (where one is set free). One is still bound but is exercising a degree of freedom in responding to grace. That the same grace of God also helps believers to abide continually in the Holy Spirit and to grow and mature, even proceeding to perfection, will be examined in Chapter IV.

<sup>315</sup> For further information see Kelly Steve McCormick's "John Wesley's Use of John Chrysostom on the Christian Life: Faith filled with the Energy of Love" (PhD Diss., Drew University, 1983), 28.

<sup>316</sup> Adnès, 1156; Wesley supposes one exceptional example in which justification might precede self-knowledge in "Heaviness through Manifold Temptations," iii.9, *The Works*, II: 230.

nature.”<sup>317</sup> If freedom is used in accordance with true self-knowledge toward repentance, then that self-knowledge is to be acknowledged as humility. True self-knowledge before God accompanies free will in such a way that one becomes not only convicted but also converted.<sup>318</sup>

### C. Humility and Justifying Grace

While prevenient and convincing grace may be found in anyone, it is only through justifying grace, by which one’s now-acknowledged sins are pardoned and one becomes reconciled with God, that one becomes a Christian. Wesley writes in his first sermon on the Sermon on the Mount: “Then thou learnest of him to be ‘lowly of heart.’ And this is the true, genuine, Christian humility, which flows from a sense of the love of God, reconciled to us in Christ Jesus.”<sup>319</sup> In full accord with the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, Wesley fully accepted the teaching that justification is made available to us *sola fide*, by faith alone, this faith being itself a gift of God. As he writes in his sermon on justification by faith,

By the sacrifice for sin made by the second Adam [the Son of God who has tasted death for every person], as the representative of us all, God is so far reconciled to all the world that he hath given them a new covenant. The plain condition whereof

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<sup>317</sup> Lowery, 19. John B. Cobb, Jr., *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 38-39.

<sup>318</sup> Daniel Steele presents a dualistic perspective on conscience. “He distinguishes the more rational *discriminating power* from the more emotional *impulsive power* of the conscience” Daniel Steele, *Mile-stone Papers: Doctrinal, Ethical and Experimental on Christian Progress* (New York, Nelson & Phillips, 1878), 109. Since the latter can be given by the operations of the Holy Spirit indwelling in the life of a Christian’s sanctifying journey, it is only the discerning power of conscience that is dealt with in this phase prior to justification; Lowery, 28. Discussion regarding free will and self-knowledge will be continued in the following chapter with regard to humility as dependence on the will of God in the journey of sanctification.

<sup>319</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, I,” i.13, *The Works*, I: 482.

being once fulfilled, ‘there is no more condemnation for us,’ but we are ‘justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.’<sup>320</sup>

From the moment of being justified by faith through grace, the journey of a person as a Christian begins “‘from faith to faith,’ ‘from grace to grace,’ until at length he comes unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.’”<sup>321</sup>

However, to be justified does not mean “being made actually just and righteous,”<sup>322</sup> for Wesley teaches that to become actually righteous is to be sanctified. Wesley admits the possibility of experiencing sanctification as “in some degree the immediate *fruit* of justification,” but he definitely differentiates justification from sanctification: Justification is “what God *does for us* through his Son”; sanctification is “what he *works in us* by his Spirit”<sup>323</sup> throughout one’s life-long journey in faith. With this clear delineation, Wesley confirms that “the plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>324</sup> The justifying grace of God pardons sinners by showing His mercy instead of wrath, a mercy through which one is freed from being condemned for sins committed in the past. Hence, it can be inferred that “it is only sinners that have any occasion for pardon: it is sin alone which admits of being forgiven. Forgiveness therefore has an immediate reference to sin and (in this respect) to nothing else.”<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> “Justification by Faith,” i.9, *The Works*, I: 187. Cf. Rom.3:23-24; 5:18, Eph. 2:3.

<sup>321</sup> “Salvation by Faith,” ii.7, *The Works*, I: 124-25.

<sup>322</sup> “Justification by Faith,” ii.1, *The Works*, I: 187.

<sup>323</sup> “Justification by Faith,” ii.1, *The Works*, I: 187. Italics are in the original. Regarding inherent righteousness in the justified, see “The Lord Our Righteousness,” *The Works*, I: 444-65.

<sup>324</sup> “Justification by Faith,” ii.5, *The Works*, I: 189.

<sup>325</sup> “Justification by Faith,” iii.1, *The Works*, I: 190. That one acknowledges one’s own sin as forgiven is a major reason why a sinner ought to be humble.

Denying any idea that one must be holy in order to be justified, Wesley underlines that “it is not a *saint* but a *sinner* that is *forgiven*,”<sup>326</sup> thus acknowledging that sin precedes forgiveness. In this light of God’s pardoning and freeing grace of justification, to know oneself as a sinner becomes essential for one to be pardoned, i.e., to be free from the guilt and condemnation of sin.

Just as he denies that any human effort is involved in the work of justification, Wesley affirms all things as the work of the Holy Spirit, including even his painful awareness of his own lack of faith as described in his journal.<sup>327</sup> Even though Wesley had once maintained the “holy living” tradition as an antecedent condition for justification,<sup>328</sup> the search for inner peace in his heart throughout the Georgia mission can also be envisaged as his personal groaning journey for a new creation in his ‘self,’ rather like the prodigal son’s journey returning home. Wesley’s honest account reveals that though he would try hard by his own efforts, he could not attain peace in his heart.<sup>329</sup> In seeking assurance from God, Wesley finds himself needy, sick, and not able to gain God’s favor other than by faith in Christ the Redeemer. Accordingly, Wesley’s “heart-warming” experience on May 24, 1738 is to be understood as a profound awareness of knowing his true self as pardoned by a gracious and loving God.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> “Justification by Faith,” iii.2, *The Works*, I: 191. Italics are in the original.

<sup>327</sup> *The Journal*, 18 (February 7, 1736).

<sup>328</sup> Regarding the life in holy living tradition, see “The Righteousness of Faith,” *The Works*, I: 200-16.

<sup>329</sup> See *The Journal* of 1736 through 1738.

<sup>330</sup> Wesley scholars debate about whether or not May 24, 1738 is the date of Wesley’s conversion. However much the debate might shed light on the Aldersgate experience, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For further reference regarding the debate, see *Aldersgate Reconsidered*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990). In this book, Heitzenrater proposes that “Aldersgate was not the beginning of Wesley’s Christian life but one significant step in his spiritual pilgrimage.”<sup>91</sup>

### 1. Wesley's Understanding of "Faith Alone"

Since Wesley had already known the idea of *sola fide* through the Anglican *Homilies* and the *Articles of Religion*, it is necessary to ponder just what he meant by now confessing that, "I rarely knew the faith alone...or justification by faith."<sup>331</sup> It is true that he knew the doctrine, the *form*, of religion and faith, but heretofore he had not *experienced* the power of faith and religion, the profound assurance "that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."<sup>332</sup>

What then, was this "faith alone"? Citing Aristotle's view of perceptions through the senses: "*Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuit prius in sensu*," Wesley agrees that our senses are the important avenues of knowledge.<sup>333</sup> Among the five senses—touching, tasting, smelling, hearing, and seeing—he understands sight as the most effective way of perception.<sup>334</sup> However, knowing through seeing has limitations because human knowledge acquired by seeing *per se* cannot exceed the sphere of physical sight, that is, the material, visible world. We do not know what we do not see. Without awareness by faith,

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<sup>331</sup> *The Journal*, 70 ( May 24, 1738). According to Rev. 3:16, the lukewarm state is not recommended. How warm the heart was feeling should not be the concern in this so-called Wesley's conversion experience.

<sup>332</sup> *The Journal*, 70 ( May 24, 1738); Telford, 101. Italics are in the original.

<sup>333</sup> "On the Discoveries of Faith," §1, *The Works*, IV: 29.

<sup>334</sup> Regarding the five senses as useful avenues of knowledge, Augustine's influence is evident. Based on Plato's "extra mission theory" ("seeing [is] the result of visual rays emitted by the eye"), Augustine uses the visual-ray theory to discourse about God through the metaphor of Light. Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, trans. Hugh Bredin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 46; Miles explains further the significance of sight for classical people in terms of gaining knowledge: "sight was an accurate and fruitful metaphor for knowledge because they relied on the physics of vision, subscribed to by Plato and many others, that a ray of light, energized and projected by the mind toward an object, actually touches its object, thereby connecting viewer and object. By the vehicle of the visual ray, the object is not only 'touched' by the viewer, but also the object is 'printed' on the soul of the viewer. The ray theory of vision specifically insisted on the connection and essential continuity of viewer and object in the act of vision." Margaret Miles, "Vision: The Eye of the Body and the Eye of the Mind in Saint Augustine's *De Trinitate* and *Confessions*," *Journal of Religion* 63 (April, 1983): 127.

we lack knowledge of what we cannot see and even make mistakes in many areas where our sight is limited.

Having considered the limit of our knowledge procured through the senses, Wesley writes about the areas of the spiritual and eternal world invisible to physical eyes. He is keenly aware that there is something beyond the material world “which mortal eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into our heart to conceive.”<sup>335</sup> The fact that we cannot see all, and therefore do not know what we do not see, is a defect. In particular, according to Wesley, it is our shortcoming that we cannot perceive the invisible world. Faith is introduced as a remedy for this defect:

Its office begins where that of sense ends. Sense is an evidence of things that are seen; of the visible, the material world, and the several parts of it. Faith, on the other hand, is the ‘evidence of things not seen,’ of the *invisible world*; of all those invisible things which are revealed in the oracles of God. But indeed they reveal nothing, they are a mere ‘dead letter,’ if they are ‘not mixed with faith in those that hear them.’

In particular: faith is an evidence to me of the existence of that unseen thing, my own soul. Without this I should be in utter uncertainty concerning it.<sup>336</sup>

According to Wesley, God’s goodness turns our ignorance to our benefit because it is through awareness of our ignorance that we become humble and so, in humility, may turn to God. As humility is derived from the self-knowledge of our ignorance of God’s will, Wesley finds one of the reasons of our ignorance to be a possibility for its leading us to humility, the antonym of pride: “Hide pride [i.e., the worst of all vices] from man,” so

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<sup>335</sup> “On Faith,” §4, *The Works*, IV: 189.

<sup>336</sup> “On the Discoveries of Faith,” §§4-5, *The Works*, IV: 30. In “Justification by Faith,” Wesley also explains that faith is a divine evidence of things “not discovered by our bodily senses as being either past, future, or spiritual. Justifying faith implies, not only a divine evidence or conviction that ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,’ but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for *my* sins, that he loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*.” iv.2, *The Works*, I: 194.

that God can bring us to Him. Thus, self-knowledge “suffices for faith, but not for knowledge. We can believe in God—we cannot see him.”<sup>337</sup>

Though such an invisible world is not visible to us until the end of earthly life, Wesley declares that we may, through faith, have a kind of view of things invisible to our physical sight.<sup>338</sup> The visual image of faith that Wesley uses is one in which people prior to faith are said to be in darkness and ignorance: just as one cannot see things clearly in darkness, so one cannot understand well what appears dim in darkness. With this visual image, Wesley uses the concepts of seeing, understanding or knowing interchangeably.<sup>339</sup> The self is among the many invisible objects, viewed through faith. Wesley writes that we may have a view of the self in faith when conscience, which reflects the self upon the “divine mirror” of the moral law, meets with God-given faith:

[The Holy Spirit] then convinces us of the desert of our sins, so that our mouth is stopped, and we are constrained to plead guilty before God. At the same time we ‘receive the spirit of bondage unto fear,’ fear of the wrath of God, fear of the punishment which we have deserved, and above all fear of death, lest it should consign us over to eternal death. Souls that are thus convinced feel they are so fast in prison that they cannot get forth. They feel themselves at once altogether sinful, altogether guilty, and altogether helpless. But all this conviction implies a species of faith, being ‘an evidence of things not seen’—nor indeed possible to be seen or known, till God reveals them unto us.<sup>340</sup>

The fact that “all this conviction implies a species of faith” makes it possible to claim that self-knowledge, repentance or conviction under the spirit of servanthood may

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<sup>337</sup> “The Promise of Understanding,” iii.2, *The Works*, IV: 288.

<sup>338</sup> Regarding Wesley’s notion of spiritual senses, Maddox indicates that adequate study of this area is missing. Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 28.

<sup>339</sup> See “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” ii.1, *The Works*, II: 161. Cf. Eph.1:18.

<sup>340</sup> “On the Discoveries of Faith,” §12, *The Works*, IV: 34-35.

converge, in faith, into the spirit of adoption as the work of the one and same Spirit of God. In order to seek the Physician, it is necessary for one to know that she or he is sick. Knowing one's sickness is inseparable from seeking the Physician, albeit that free will plays a significant role along with knowledge. Knowing the self becomes the stepping stone for searching and knowing God the Healer, who knew us even before we searched for Him.<sup>341</sup>

One's conviction of sin, i.e., repentance, thus leads one from fear to the joy of being forgiven in the conviction of the love of God, i.e., faith: "his eyes are opened in quite another manner than before, even to see a loving, gracious God."<sup>342</sup> Having the eyes of the mind opened and enlightened by the "heavenly, healing light," one comes to see and know that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," and that "Christ 'loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*' "<sup>343</sup> Accordingly, Wesley writes "I term 'repentance' or 'conviction' as preparatory to the gift of faith."<sup>344</sup>

What Christ has done and suffered for us till his death on the cross is the summit of the gift of God's love, in which one believes, and thereby receives justifying grace. This is the faith Wesley affirms as the one and only condition of justification. Faith is

'a divine evidence and conviction... of things not seen'—not visible, not perceivable either by sight or by any other of the external senses. It implies both a supernatural *evidence* of God and of the things of God, a kind of spiritual *light* exhibited to the soul and a supernatural *sight* or perception thereof. Accordingly

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<sup>341</sup> "Merciful Creator [on behalf of the fallen humanity] immediately appointed his Son, his well-beloved Son, 'who is the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person,' to be the Saviour of men, 'the propitiation for the sins of the whole world'; the great Physician, who by his almighty Spirit should heal the sickness of their souls, and restore them not only to the favour but to 'the image of God wherein they were created.'" "The Mystery of Iniquity," §1, *The Works*, II: 452.

<sup>342</sup> "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption," iii.2, *The Works*, I: 260.

<sup>343</sup> "The Scripture Way of Salvation," ii.2, *The Works*, II: 161. Italics are in the original.

<sup>344</sup> "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," Pt.I, vii.12, *The Works*, XI: 196.

the Scripture speaks sometimes of God's giving light, sometimes a power of discerning it.<sup>345</sup>

By this divine evidence and conviction, i.e., faith, according to Wesley, one has the Spirit's witness in oneself that she or he is a child of God. Having defined faith as divine conviction, Wesley asserts the doctrine of *sola fide*: "no man is justified till he believes" in things invisible to physical eyes.<sup>346</sup> "Overpowered with the sight, [one's] soul cries out, 'My Lord, and my God!'"<sup>347</sup> Hence, Wesley calls faith "the eye of the new-born soul."<sup>348</sup>

Faith conveys the power of God's deliverance, for "faith is the life of the soul."<sup>349</sup> This faith that one with self-knowledge confesses is itself a gift of God. Thence, it is possible to deduce that what Wesley experienced on the night of May 24, 1738, was the justifying grace of God corresponding to saving faith, in which his groaning pain in self-knowledge as a sinner with the spirit of a servant was transformed into a taste of the joy of being adopted as God's child through saving grace by faith alone: *sola fide*.<sup>350</sup>

As noted earlier, Wesley had once followed a tradition of "holy living," which can be summed up as a life seeking justification by good works, although even then he verbally confessed justification by faith according to the creed in the Anglican Church. Collins also

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<sup>345</sup> "The Scripture Way of Salvation," ii.1, *The Works*, II: 160. Italics are in the original. By "divine evidence and conviction," Wesley means that the conviction he had with regard to the love of God given by divine grace. In this way, Wesley emphasizes that faith is a gift from God.

<sup>346</sup> "The Scripture Way of Salvation," iii.1, *The Works*, II: 162. Faith is the means to attain the end of a Christian's journey, i.e., salvation. "The Scripture Way of Salvation," §1, *The Works*, II: 156

<sup>347</sup> "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption," iii.3, *The Works*, I: 261.

<sup>348</sup> John Wesley, *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: J. Paramore, 1786), 6, [http://openlibrary.org/books/OL13464053M/An\\_earnest\\_appeal\\_to\\_men\\_of\\_reason\\_and\\_religion](http://openlibrary.org/books/OL13464053M/An_earnest_appeal_to_men_of_reason_and_religion) (accessed October 1, 2010). Wesley also describes faith in terms of "intuition" in "The End of Christ's Coming" and as "interior eyes" in "Christian Perfection."

<sup>349</sup> "Awake, Thou That Sleepest," i.11, *The Works*, I: 146. This sermon was preached by Charles Wesley, however, it was inserted into John Wesley's corpus of sermons because it conveys the spirit of the revival among the Methodists.

<sup>350</sup> Contrary to almost all Wesley scholars, Maddox argues that Wesley experienced his conversion around 1725, when he began the Oxford Methodists movement.

notes that Wesley knew the idea of *sola fide* through the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*, *Homilies*, and the *Articles of Religion*. Therefore, Wesley's statement about his life prior to 1738—that "I rarely knew the faith alone...or justification by faith"<sup>351</sup>—needs to be clarified. Having faith in the form of rational assent did not bring joy to Wesley, although he confessed such faith through daily practice. After having the breakthrough in joy, Wesley distinguished the hallmark year 1738 as the transition from the *form* of faith to the *power* of faith. While the number of books he read and the knowledge he acquired through his reading did not produce joy, Wesley came to know that faith is more than a rational assent. Therefore, what Wesley confesses as his previous ignorance may be modified to have him say, "I rarely knew the [power of] faith alone."<sup>352</sup>

Wesley explains this power of faith enlivening the form of faith as an experience of the love of God toward *himself* and not simply for the world in general: "Christ loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*." God gives "grace upon grace": the grace of the spirit of a child over and above the grace of the spirit of a servant; hence joy, peace, and love abound within the justified.<sup>353</sup>

In his sermon "Salvation by Faith," delivered a month after the Aldersgate experience, Wesley confessed that everything is the free grace of God bestowed upon humanity, which is made of *humus*. Realizing that we are mortal, helpless, and sinful beings made out of *humus*, Wesley in humility continues to praise God's undeserved favor upon us:

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<sup>351</sup> Collins, *Wesley on Salvation*, 44.

<sup>352</sup> Collins, *Wesley on Salvation*, 44.

<sup>353</sup> "The Scripture Way of Salvation," i.6, *The Works*, II: 159; "Salvation by Faith," §3, *The Works*, I: 118.

It was free grace that ‘formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into 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, has wrought in us.’... whatever righteousness may be found in man, this also is the gift of God.<sup>354</sup>

Despite such abundant favor of God, the human being is fallen and sinful, and therefore fails to live for the righteousness of God that is “at first impressed on his soul, after the image of his great Creator.”<sup>355</sup> Therefore it is “grace upon grace” if any sinful person is restored to favor with God, for “grace is the source, faith the condition, of salvation.”<sup>356</sup> This faith “is the gift of God.”<sup>357</sup> Thus salvation by faith can be identified with salvation by grace, and thereby justification by faith leaves one nothing about which to be boastful, but instead makes one humble because salvation cannot be earned by any good work; it is attained only by faith, a faith that is itself a gift of God.

## 2. *The Relationship between Repentance and Justification*

There does arise, however, the question of just how Wesley saw the interrelationship between repentance (convincing grace) and justification (justifying grace). We have already seen that first repentance is a gift of God, and thence, everything that brings one to be justified is God’s grace: no one before God can arrogantly boast of that grace. This repentance, according to Wesley, is as necessary as faith “in order to our

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<sup>354</sup> “Salvation by Faith,” §1, *The Works*, I: 117.

<sup>355</sup> “Salvation by Faith,” §2, *The Works*, I: 118.

<sup>356</sup> “Salvation by Faith,” §3, *The Works*, I: 118.

<sup>357</sup> “Justification by Faith,” iv.5, *The Works*, I: 196.

entering into the kingdom of God.”<sup>358</sup> It is apparent that when Wesley describes the beginning of one’s spiritual journey he understands not only faith but also repentance as “the gate of religion.”<sup>359</sup> Wesley further explains that repentance at this beginning state of one’s journey is “a conviction of our utter sinfulness and guiltiness and helplessness, and which precedes our receiving that kingdom of God which our Lord observes ‘is within us.’”<sup>360</sup> Self-knowledge and repentance are inseparable when both are considered as the grace of God: humble self-knowledge before God is given through the prompting work of prevenient grace, just as the conviction of guiltiness in convincing grace (repentance) is a gift of God.

When we recognize the need to blot out all filthiness of darkness, we call out for help from the “Advocate with the Father... [who] is the propitiation for our sins,” for when awakened out of sleep we are “groaning under a sense of the wrath of God.”<sup>361</sup> This repentance requires humility, and thereby one proceeds to confess one’s own faith in God’s pardoning love:

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.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> “The Repentance of Believers,” §2, *The Works*, I: 336. However, repentance in other writings is conjoined with faith, both of them seen as necessary in the Christian journey. See, *Minutes*, 1745; *Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained*, vi.4; *Letter to a Gentleman at Bristol*, Jan.6, 1758.

<sup>359</sup> “The Repentance of Believers,” §1, *The Works*, I: 335.

<sup>360</sup> “The Repentance of Believers,” §2, *The Works*, I: 335.

<sup>361</sup> “Scriptural Christianity,” ii.4, *The Works*, I: 166-67.

<sup>362</sup> “Salvation by Faith,” iii.4, *The Works*, I: 126-27. Repentance is continuously emphasized by Wesley for Christians as he recites Rev. 2:5: “He should come unto us quickly, and remove our candlestick out of its place, except we repent and do the first works.” “Awake, Thou That Sleepest,” iii.13, *The Works*, I: 158.

Thus, Christ our Lord who came to call “sinners to repentance” saved us “by grace... through faith.”<sup>363</sup>

However, when we read the sermon on “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” in which Wesley’s sole focus is on *sola fide*, he seems to take “repentance and fruits meet for repentance” (Acts 26:20) as not necessary for justification, just as in another sermon, “The Repentance of Believers,” he somewhat belittles the necessity of repentance, saying it is “not necessary in the *same sense* with faith, nor in the *same degree*.”<sup>364</sup> What is one to make of such statements?

According to Outler, Jeremy Taylor and other Anglicans regarded repentance as belonging to sanctification. Outler also claims that repentance represented Wesley’s life style in the “holy living” tradition prior to the Aldersgate experience in 1738 and that after 1738 Wesley abjured that tradition in order to uphold *sola fide*.<sup>365</sup> Outler’s comment might make Wesley seem self-contradictory. A similar approach appears in Collins’ interpretation of Wesley’s sermon on “The Scripture Way of Salvation” and leads him to conclude that “repentance is not necessary to be saved in the case of the thief on the cross beside Jesus. Repentance and fruits meet for repentance ... are in some sense necessary to justification, [but only] if there be time and opportunity.”<sup>366</sup> According to Collins, in the case of the thief on the cross, there was no such time and opportunity for him to do

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<sup>363</sup> “Salvation by Faith,” iii.7,8, *The Works*, I: 128. Mark 2:17, Eph. 2:8; “The Witness of the Spirit, I,” ii.4, *The Works*, I: 278. According to Wesley, “While God calls, He makes what He calls.” *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 516 (Romans 1:1).

<sup>364</sup> “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” iii.2, *The Works*, II: 163. “The Repentance of Believers” conveys the necessity of repentance. Italics are in the original.

<sup>365</sup> Maddox does not agree that the year 1738 is the year of Wesley’s conversion. See footnote 38 in “Justification by Faith,” *The Works*, I: 187; “The Righteousness of Faith,” *The Works*, I: 200-16.

<sup>366</sup> Collins, *Wesley on Salvation*, 43. Cf. Luke 23:40-42.

something fit for repentance. In this way, Collins interprets repentance as an unnecessary work, rather than a needful form of self-knowledge before God.

However, it is important to read further in Wesley's sermon since he goes on to say that "repentance and its fruits are only *remotely* necessary, necessary in order to faith; whereas faith is *immediately* and *directly* necessary to justification."<sup>367</sup> By this, Wesley gives exclusive *priority* to faith, without treating repentance as unnecessary.<sup>368</sup> Wesley's teaching about repentance, therefore, is to be considered as the rejection of "justification by repentance," or of any pursuit of justifying grace other than by faith. The importance of repentance as true self-knowledge does not replace faith, but even though repentance is not equivalent to faith, it nevertheless prepares for "the reception of the justifying faith"<sup>369</sup> and is necessary in one's spiritual journey, in the passage from self-knowledge to justification by faith; it is "the gate of religion."<sup>370</sup>

Similarly, Wesley's understanding of the Lukan thief also needs to be reconsidered.<sup>371</sup> Collins and Outler seem to have overlooked Wesley's *Explanatory Notes*, in which Wesley does not exclude the need for repentance even for that thief. Instead, Wesley finds repentance as well as faith essential for justification in his *Explanatory Notes* on Luke 23: 40-42:

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<sup>367</sup> "The Scripture Way of Salvation," iii.2, *The Works*, II: 163. Italics are in the original.

<sup>368</sup> In fact, Wesley's openness toward the possibility of God's extraordinary work includes recognition that God may save anyone by any means according to His will; however, as he preaches to ordinary people about God's ordinary way of deliverance, the necessity of repentance should be regarded as part of the ordinary way of God's salvation. "Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law," iv.3, *The Works*, II: 16.

<sup>369</sup> "The Scripture Way of Salvation," footnote 49, *The Works*, II: 162.

<sup>370</sup> "The Repentance of Believers," §1, *The Works*, I: 335.

<sup>371</sup> The story of the thief is rather significant as Wesley understands robbery as a form of pride. He writes in his sermon "The Way to the Kingdom" that "Of pride cometh contention, vain boasting, seeking and receiving praise of men, and so robbing God of that glory which he cannot give unto another." "The Way to the Kingdom," ii, 3, *The Works*, I: 227.

What a surprising degree was here of repentance, faith, and other graces! and what abundance of good works, in his public confession of his sin, reproof of his fellow-criminal, his honourable testimony to Christ, and profession of faith in him, while he was in so disgraceful circumstances, as were stumbling even to his disciples! This shows the power of divine grace. But it encourages none to put off their repentance to the last hour; since, as far as appears, this was the first time this criminal had an opportunity of knowing anything of Christ. And his conversation was designed to put a peculiar glory on our Saviour in his lowest state, while his enemies derided him, and his own disciples either denied or forsook him. ... He acknowledge him a king, and such a king as, after he is dead, can profit the dead. The apostles themselves had not then so clear conceptions of the kingdom of Christ.<sup>372</sup>

In addition, Wesley points out the thief's pleading with Jesus to remember him in His kingdom after his confession of his sin, and his words to the other thief: "We receive the due reward of our deeds [justly]."<sup>373</sup> This confession can be regarded as the thief's self-knowledge before the Lord, which Wesley identifies with repentance and sees as being as necessary as faith if one is to be justified. As he writes in a passage we have seen earlier:

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.<sup>374</sup>

As noted above, Wesley's understanding of repentance is inseparable from self-knowledge. Furthermore, in accordance with his later sermons "The Way to the Kingdom" (1739) and "The Repentance of Believers" (1767), "repentance and faith are

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<sup>372</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 294 (Luke 23:40-42). Cf. Mark 15:32.

<sup>373</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 294 (Luke 23:41-42).

<sup>374</sup> "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," ii.1, *The Works*, III: 204. Cf. Luke 23:40; Ezek. 11:19; Eph. 2:8. This sermon was published in 1785; however, Wesley had preached on the text (Phil. 2:12-13) since 1732. Outler explains "convincing grace" as equivalent to "the grace of repentance" according to Wesley's sermon "The Repentance of Believers," ii.6 and *Notes* on Luke 23:40.

only the gate of religion,”<sup>375</sup> “the beginning of our Christian course” in the way of the kingdom, which first begins in repentance, “that is, [to] know yourselves.”<sup>376</sup> Declaring repentance “as preparatory to the gift of faith,”<sup>377</sup> Wesley recounts the words of Christ the Lord, “‘I am with you always,’ you who preach remission of sins in my name, ‘even unto the end of the world... [Therefore] be ye hearken to his voice, ‘Repent ye, and believe the gospel.’”<sup>378</sup>

This relationship between conviction in self-knowledge, i.e., repentance, and salvation (or justification) by faith can be clarified through Wesley’s differentiation between the spirit of a servant and that of adoption. How they are different and yet connected underlies Wesley’s understanding of justification by faith. Also, the spiritual passage from being a servant to a child of God shows the significance of humility as an attitude in the journey of faith by grace.

In his “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” Wesley uses a typology of three states of humanity, natural, legal, and evangelical, similar to one used by St. Augustine in his *Enchiridion*.<sup>379</sup> In this typology Wesley describes a person in a natural state as being “in a deep sleep. His spiritual senses are not awake. ... He is utterly ignorant of God... because he is fast *asleep*, he is in some sense at *rest*. Because he is *blind*, he is also *secure*.”<sup>380</sup> In a legal state, a person feels the bondage unto fear and the wrath of God because the law of God becomes clear in one’s heart and one knows one’s own iniquities.

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<sup>375</sup> “The Repentance of Believers,” §1, *The Works*, I: 335.

<sup>376</sup> “The Righteousness of Faith, ii.6; “The Way to the Kingdom,” ii.1, *The Works*, I: 212, 225, 335.

<sup>377</sup> “A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,” pt. I, vii.12, *The Works*, I: 201.

<sup>378</sup> “The Way to the Kingdom,” i.13, *The Works*, I: 225. Cf. Matt. 28:20, Luke 21:31, Mark 1:15.

<sup>379</sup> “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” §5, *The Works*, I: 250. This typology corresponds with Wesley’s view of the images of God in “The New Birth”: natural, political, and moral. “The New Birth,” §1-i.1, *The Works*, II: 187-88; Augustine, *Enchiridion*, xxxi.

<sup>380</sup> “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” i.1, *The Works*, I: 251. Italics are in the original.

From this state, one cries out to God until the spirit of adoption witnesses in his heart and makes him call God “Father.” The third evangelical state is the ideal Christian state with faith and sincerity, according to Wesley.<sup>381</sup>

Wesley characterizes a person without self-knowledge as being like someone in a deep sleep: “the heart of him that lay asleep in darkness.”<sup>382</sup> When a person is touched by God, one awakes into a consciousness of one’s danger because one’s heart perceives now the law of God. Then, one sees God as a just Judge, who “is ‘of purer eyes than to behold iniquity’”<sup>383</sup> and who repays all for one’s wickedness. In a newly earned self-knowledge, one sees one’s sin and knows oneself “naked, stripped of all the fig-leaves which he had sewed together, of all his poor pretences to religion or virtue, and his wretched excuses for sinning against God.”<sup>384</sup> Conviction enables one to “fear God and work righteousness” in the spirit of a servant.<sup>385</sup> Therefore, one feels the fear of death due to the wages of sin.

One’s struggle with the spirit of bondage or fear begins thereby:

I acknowledge that ‘the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin.’ I now see both the spiritual nature of the law, and my own carnal devilish heart, ‘sold under sin,’ totally enslaved... ‘For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, I do not; but what I hate, that I do.’ Such is the bondage under which I groan; such the tyranny of my hard master. ‘To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.’<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” *The Works*, I: 248-266.

<sup>382</sup> “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” ii.1, *The Works*, I: 255. It can be compared to the hardened conscience as seen in the previous part. See p. 75.

<sup>383</sup> “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” ii.1, *The Works*, I: 255.

<sup>384</sup> “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” ii.3, *The Works*, I: 256.

<sup>385</sup> “On Faith, Heb. 11:6,” i.10, *The Works*, III: 497. The transition from the natural to legal state is compatible with the convicting function of the moral law.

<sup>386</sup> “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” ii.9, *The Works*, I: 259. Cf. Romans 7:14-19. Wesley’s early interest in this typology is revealed in Benjamin Ingham’s diary (March 17, 1734) and Wesley’s letter to his mother (Feb. 14, 1735). By “natural” Wesley means “moral anomie.” It should be distinguished from “natural conscience,” which is of prevenient grace.

To have fear of the coming wrath of God witnesses to the fact that one has the spirit of a servant.

Wesley emphasizes the importance of being truly grateful for having the spirit of a servant, because this, too, is a gift of God. Therefore, he recommends that one continue moving forward till the spirit of adoption is given: “Rest not till that Spirit clearly witnesses with your spirit that you are a child of God.”<sup>387</sup> Wesley says that continuous prayers are necessary while one remains only a servant, not yet a child of God who has the Spirit’s witness. This crying out to God comes only from the knowledge of self, confessing that nothing in the self is able to reconcile oneself with God. Then, when this miserable bondage ends, one in the spirit of adoption sees what has been unseen before,<sup>388</sup> that is:

‘the light of the glorious love of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.’ He hath a divine ‘evidence of things not seen’ by sense, even of ‘the deep things of God’; more particularly of the love of God, of his pardoning love to him that believes in Jesus. Overpowered with the sight, his whole soul cries out, ‘My Lord, and my God!’ For he sees all his iniquities laid on him who ‘bare them in his own body on the tree’; he beholds the Lamb of God taking away his sins. How clearly now does he discern ‘that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself; ... making him sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God through him!’<sup>389</sup>

While one in the spirit of servant sees God as an avenging Judge, one in the spirit of adoption sees God as a loving Father. This Wesley calls the evangelical state.

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<sup>387</sup> “On Faith, Heb. 11:6,” i.13, *The Works*, III: 498. Romans 8:15-16; “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” §4, *The Works*, I: 250.

<sup>388</sup> “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” iii.1, *The Works*, I: 260. For the equation of repentance with self-knowledge, see “The Repentance of Believers,” i.1, *The Works*, I: 336.

<sup>389</sup> “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” iii.3, *The Works*, I: 261. Cf. John 2:28; 1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:19, 21.

The transition from the spirit of servant to the spirit of adoption can be envisaged as having one's eyes opened toward God and experiencing God not only as Judge but as loving Father. Self-knowledge of sins requires a person, through repentance in the spirit of servant, to have faith in the God of gracious love and to know him as Father.<sup>390</sup> Therefore, Wesley defines faith that saves as more than a rational assent or a sense cognition.<sup>391</sup> Faith is knowledge endowed by God, by which one may see things beyond knowledge attainable through sense organs. In faith, one sees that "by the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, and he [is] reconciled to the favour of God."<sup>392</sup>

We then see, not by a chain of *reasoning*, but by a kind of *intuition*, by a direct view, that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their former trespasses,' not imputing them to *me*. In that day 'we know that we are of God,' children of God by faith, 'having redemption through the blood' of Christ, 'even the forgiveness of sins.'<sup>393</sup>

As in the parable of the Prodigal Son, the initiative of the journey back home is grounded in the father who draws the son, which makes the son feel good to be home. The father's extravagant love draws the prodigal son to return home into the father's loving arms. Wesley explains that when sinners

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<sup>390</sup> "The Witness of the Spirit, I," i.1, *The Works*, I: 270. "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" [Rom. 8:15]. As this Spirit bears witness to our spirit, we also have the testimony of our own that we are children of God, by scripture as well as various marks such as reason, understanding, and a sanctifying life. i.3-6, *The Works*, I: 272-73. The transition from the legal to evangelical state is compatible with the converting function of the moral law.

<sup>391</sup> "On Faith," §1, *The Works*, IV:188. Another sermon preached on the same text of this sermon in 1788 was entitled "On the Discoveries of Faith," *The Works*, IV: 28-38. Such faith that one can see God and the things of God is followed by obeying God's commandments with a loving heart.

<sup>392</sup> "The Almost Christian," ii.5, *The Works*, I: 139.

<sup>393</sup> "The End of Christ's Coming," iii.1, *The Works*, II: 481. Cf. *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 657 (2 Cor. 5:19). Italics are in the original.

see themselves naked, indigent, and undone, then they recover the exercise of their reason... they remember the blessings they have thrown away... hereupon they resolve to return to their Father, and put the resolution immediately in practice.<sup>394</sup>

Wesley writes of the son's features from the father's viewpoint: "While he was yet a great way off, his father saw him—Returning, starved, naked" and feeling "sorrow of repentance."<sup>395</sup> In addition to the work of prevenient grace, it is the father who runs to the son to hold him in his open arms, long before the son confesses his sins before the father. Even before he arrives at his father's house, the son with self-knowledge in humility meets with the father's embrace and kisses. Previously, the prevenient grace of God had been revealed in the image of the running father; yet more of the grace of God is revealed in this prodigal father's embrace. This is the image of the justifying grace of God. It is grace upon grace: the grace of the embracing father upon the grace of the running father, upon the grace of returning, upon the grace of repentance, upon the grace of self-knowledge, upon the grace of conscience.

To receive the Father's embrace is to respond to the Father's undeserved love by returning. This love interrupts the son's confession. Wesley's commentary on Luke 15:22 is provocative: "God frequently cut[s] an earnest confession short, by a display of his pardoning love."<sup>396</sup> The son responds to the father's love within the embrace: the son receives the love by letting himself be held in the father's open arms. The son's faith in his father's love makes it possible for him to receive the father's loving embrace: sorrowful

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<sup>394</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 263 (Luke 15:32).

<sup>395</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 261 (Luke 15:20).

<sup>396</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 262 ( Luke 15:22). Cutting confession short should not imply that repentance is not necessary. Wesley's later concern on "Sin in Believers" shows the development of his thought on sin. Accordingly, justification implies salvation by faith from the guilt of sin, whereas in sanctification freedom from the power of sin occurs. I will explore this later.

repentance turns into much joy in the father's gracious reception.<sup>397</sup> The spirit of a servant turns into the spirit of a child in gratitude. This "act of God the Father" who forgives our sins, Wesley claims, is "the plain scriptural notion of justification [that] is pardon."<sup>398</sup> In addition, if one does not "see the mercy of God, then he is not a believer; for faith implies light, the light of God shining upon the soul."<sup>399</sup>

### 3. *Whether Wesley Considers Humility a Virtue*

One further point should be considered in this chapter, namely, the question of whether humility, as understood by Wesley, is a virtue.<sup>400</sup> In his sermon "Justification by Faith," Wesley refuses to mingle any effort of human good works with God's grace of justification, in order to emphasize *sola fide*. The strongest passage comes near the end of the sermon, where he says:

Go as altogether ungodly, guilty, lost, destroyed, deserving and dropping into hell; and thou shalt then find favour in his sight, and know that he justifieth the ungodly. As such thou shalt be brought unto the 'blood of sprinkling,' as an undone, helpless, damned sinner. Thus 'look unto Jesus!' There is 'the Lamb of God,' who 'taketh away thy sins!' *Plead thou no works*, no righteousness of thine own! *No humility*, contrition, sincerity! *In nowise*. That were, in very deed, to deny the Lord that bought thee.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 262 ( Luke 15:29).

<sup>398</sup> "Justification by Faith," ii.5, *The Works*, I: 189.

<sup>399</sup> "The First-fruits of the Spirit," ii.3, *The Works*, I: 238.

<sup>400</sup> William Mattison explains "our word 'virtue' comes from the Latin (and ultimately Greek) word for excellence." William C. Mattison, III, *Introducing Moral Theology: True Happiness and the Virtues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 23. According to Stephen Long, Wesley understands virtue as a correlation between truth and love. See "An Israelite Indeed," ii.11, *The Works*, III: 289; Long, *John Wesley's Moral Theology*, 247.

<sup>401</sup> "Justification by Faith," iv.9, *The Works*, I: 198-99. Cf. Heb. 12:2, 24; John 1:29. Italics added.

While making a strong argument for justification by faith alone, Wesley may seem self-contradictory with regard to his understanding of humility, for he appears to deny any human role if one is to be justified, including humility, contrition, and sincerity. Therefore, Wesley's use of the word "humility" in this sermon should be clarified as to determine in what sense he is using the word.

Wesley does indeed here reject humility understood as a virtuous deed, some work that we ourselves do, that could deny or usurp what the Lord has done to buy sinners. However, in fact, in this same sermon, Wesley stresses the necessity of self-knowledge and self-conviction, with which one "as an undone, helpless, damned sinner" looks unto "the Lamb of God, who taketh away *thy* sins."<sup>402</sup> It appears that Wesley is distinguishing "humility as a virtuous deed" from self-knowledge in this sermon, and for this reason he adds "humility" to the list of human efforts useless for salvation. However, it is important to note that Wesley uses self-knowledge as equivalent to humility in other sermons, such as "The Circumcision of the Heart"<sup>403</sup> and "Sermon on the Mount, I." For example, in "Sermon on the Mount, I," Wesley clarifies the meaning of humility as a just sense of one's sins (nothing to be proud of) while underlining that the purport of justification by faith is for us to be humble:

[The purport of justification by faith] is to humble him to the dust, without teaching him to reflect upon his humility as a virtue; to inspire him with that full piercing conviction of his utter sinfulness, guilt, and helplessness, which casts the sinner,

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<sup>402</sup> "Justification by Faith," iv.9, *The Works*, I: 199. Italics is in the original: "Plead thou no works, no righteousness of thine own; no humility, contrition, sincerity! In no wise, that were, in very deed, to deny the Lord that bought thee." Italics is in the original.

<sup>403</sup> "The Circumcision of the Heart," i.2, *The Works*, I: 403. Other sermons that convey humility are "The Duty of Reproving our Neighbour," iii.3; "On Zeal," ii.1; "On Riches," i.6; and "The Unity of the Divine Being," §22.

stripped of all, lost, and undone, on his strong helper, ‘Jesus Christ the righteous.’<sup>404</sup>

Accordingly, it is humility as a virtue or virtuous deed that he rejects, not humility in the form of self-knowledge.<sup>405</sup> In this respect, Wesley differs from many earlier authors in the Christian tradition. The influential fifth-century writer John Cassian focuses on humility not only as an antidote to heal pride, but also as a foundation on which other virtues can be built up,<sup>406</sup> while his contemporary, Augustine, understands humility as a religious virtue because he understands the submission to God as the principal motive of humility. Indeed, it was common for many of the Church Fathers (such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, St. Basil, Hilary of Poitiers, St. Ambrose, and St. John Chrysostom) to understand humility as the first virtue or foundation of spirituality.<sup>407</sup> For instance, Basil claims humility to be the most virtuous of all the virtues because it contains all the others, while Chrysostom describes humility as “the sea” in which all other virtues are anchored. Wesley had read the whole thirteen volumes of Chrysostom’s writings and could recite Chrysostom in Greek. Nevertheless, his view of humility is different from that of Chrysostom.<sup>408</sup>

It is, however, possible that Wesley, embedded in his own tradition of the Anglican Church, may at an earlier time in his life have understood humility as virtue. He was

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<sup>404</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, I,” i.8, *The Works*, I: 480. Cf. “Justification by Faith,” iv.8, *The Works*, I: 198.

<sup>405</sup> Therefore, Wesley’s understanding of a virtue may be compatible with a “meritorious deed” that is a work done to gain God’s favor.

<sup>406</sup> Michel Foucault. *Technologies of the Self*. ed. Luther H. Martin, et al. (Amherst, MA : The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 66.

<sup>407</sup> Adnès , 1153, 1168.

<sup>408</sup> Adnès, 1157. Cf. Chrysostom’s *De renuntiatione saeculi* 9, PG 31, 645b; *Constitutions monastiques* 16, PG 31, 1377c. While Chrysostom and Wesley may agree with each other that humility is the base of a Christian’s life, they seem different in terms of the understanding of humility as a virtue or virtuous work.

certainly familiar with and influenced by the writings of Jeremy Taylor, who emphasized holy living as Christians' duty. According to Taylor,

HUMILITY is the great ornament and jewel of Christian religion; that whereby it is distinguished from all the wisdom of the world; ... first put into a discipline, and made part of a religion.<sup>409</sup>

In any case, it is clear that at least after the Aldersgate experience of 1738 Wesley would never consider humility a virtue in the sense of being something that humans can do of their own accord. His dismissive remarks about humility in his sermon on justification by faith need to be understood as reflecting his awareness that salvation comes only from faith through grace.

At the same time, he continued to understand humility as self-knowledge of oneself as a sinner in need of God's grace. The point of such knowledge is not to attain some "noble virtue of humility," but to know the self before God as a sinful being, alienated from God.<sup>410</sup> Wesley explains humility in self-knowledge in terms of the "poverty of spirit":

'Poverty of spirit', then, as it implies the first step we take in running the race which is set before us, is a just sense of our inward and outward sins, and of our guilt and helplessness'; This some have monstrosly styled the 'virtue of humility'; thus teaching us to be proud of knowing we deserve damnation. But our Lord's expression is quite of another kind; conveying no idea to the hearer but that of mere want, of naked sin, of helpless guilt and misery.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> Jeremy Taylor, *Holy Living and Dying: with Prayers Containing the Whole Duty of a Christian* (New York: Cosimo Inc., 2007), 72. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>410</sup> "Sermon on the Mount, I," i.8, *The Works*, I: 479-80. Cf. Romans 3;19. Linking seeing with knowing, Wesley connects self-knowledge with seeing sin, all sins, in the self. "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption," ii.3, *The Works*, I: 256.

<sup>411</sup> "Sermon on the Mount, I," i.7, *The Works*, I: 479.

Self-knowledge as a form of humility is not counted as a deed to be proud of. The lost and the sick sinner is found and healed by the great Physician only when the sinner knows the self is in need of healing and redemption. A sinner groans in knowing the self and cries “aloud for him that [justifies] the ungodly”<sup>412</sup> in humility. This justifying grace is given freely, only when the self, awakened by knowing one’s misery, turns toward God’s love for forgiveness, believes that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,” and confesses “Christ died for *my* sins, that he loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*.”<sup>413</sup> Wesley claims that this faith is given by God and is “the *only necessary condition*”<sup>414</sup> of justification:

It was likewise in great measure owing to this, when the tempter said, ‘Ye shall be as gods,’ that Adam fell from his own steadfastness and brought sin and death into the world. It was therefore an instance of wisdom worthy of God to appoint such a condition of reconciliation for him and all his posterity as might effectually humble, might abase them to the dust. And such is faith. It is peculiarly fitted for this end. For he that cometh unto God by this faith must fix his eye singly on his own wickedness, on his guilt and helplessness, without having the least regard to any supposed good in himself, to any virtue or righteousness whatsoever. He must come as a *mere sinner* inwardly and outwardly, self-destroyed and self-condemned, bringing nothing to God but ungodliness only, pleading nothing of his own but sin and misery.<sup>415</sup>

As such, self-knowledge is the attitude of the one who comes before God in faith. The inseparable relationship between humility and self-knowledge is clearly described by Wesley in his sermon on “The Circumcision of the Heart”:

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<sup>412</sup> “Justification by Faith,” iii.4, *The Works*, I: 192.

<sup>413</sup> “Justification by Faith,” iv.2, *The Works*, I: 194. Italics are in the original.

<sup>414</sup> “Justification by Faith,” iv.5, *The Works*, I: 196. Italics are in the original.

<sup>415</sup> “Justification by Faith,” iv.8, *The Works*, I: 198. Italics are in the original.

Humility, a right judgment of ourselves, cleanses our minds from those high conceits of our own perfections, from the undue opinions of our own abilities and attainments which are genuine fruit of a corrupted nature. This entirely cuts off that vain thought, ‘I am rich, and wise, and have need of nothing;’ and convinces us that we are by nature ‘wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked.’ It convinces us that in our best estate we are of ourselves all sin and vanity.<sup>416</sup>

To acknowledge one’s ungodliness is essential for forgiveness, for “if thou wert not ungodly there would be no room for him to justify thee as ungodly.”<sup>417</sup>

But even if Wesley spoke of true self-knowledge not as “a virtue” but as a grace, there remains the question of whether or not something received as a divine grace could not rightly be called a virtue. Even though this question is not a main topic of this dissertation, a brief discussion of this issue seems pertinent.

In his sermon “Justification by Faith” Wesley seems to hold that anything that is done by grace cannot be counted as virtue. The word “virtue” is here understood as something good done by our autonomous action.<sup>418</sup> Firmly based in the doctrine of original sin, like Augustine, Wesley affirms that anything good is from God’s grace and he is reluctant to call it virtuous.<sup>419</sup> Even free will is not a human natural ability but a gift of God’s grace. Contrary to anything like a Pelagian understanding, “the grace of God, God’s undeserved love and power in our lives active at each stage, is the key to his thought.”<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> “The Circumcision of the Heart,” i.2, *The Works*, I: 403. Wesley’s emphasis on humility in the equation of self-knowledge and of repentance resonates with William Law, “A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection,” in *The Works of the Reverend William Law, M.A.* Vol. III (London, 1726), 103-4, <http://books.google.com/books?id=ZDoZAQAIAAJ&pg=PA103&lpg=PA103&dq> (accessed January 14, 2010). Law regards true repentance as self-knowledge, that is, humility.

<sup>417</sup> “The Righteousness of Faith,” i.14, *The Works*, I: 209. The correlation of self-knowledge with outward marks in accordance with that knowledge is Wesley’s focus, especially when he discusses self-knowledge in the sanctifying life of a Christian.

<sup>418</sup> “The End of Christ’s Coming,” i.4-7, *The Works*, II: 475.

<sup>419</sup> “Salvation by Faith,” §1, *The Works*, I: 117.

<sup>420</sup> Schmidt, 119.

There is, however, another way to understand virtue, for many (probably most) theologians would say that any good action done with the help of God's grace can be called a virtuous act. This offers another understanding of the term "virtue," according to which human acts are considered virtuous insofar as they are cultivated in a Christian's life-long journey of holiness. However, even then such acts are not a cause for boasting or commendation, for they are all about divine grace and so should be a cause to praise God.

In fact, Wesley's position on virtue with regard to humility seems confusing: sometimes human actions are considered virtuous, at other times not. The tension between original sin and grace surely affected his understanding. Wesley uses the word "nature" in both ways: humanity at the fall and humanity endued with prevenient grace after the fall. When he focuses on original sin, his view of nature is totally "deprived of the favor of God, but also [deprived] of his image; of all virtue, righteousness, and true holiness."<sup>421</sup> He, however, also states that "there is no man that is in a state of mere nature 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.'"<sup>422</sup> Wesley indifferently uses the term "nature" in both ways: we do not have "natural strength" to do good, but all have "natural conscience" to discern what is good.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> "God's Love to Fallen Men," §1, *The Works*, II: 423. Cf. above, footnotes 384.

<sup>422</sup> "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," iii.4, *The Works*, III: 207.

<sup>423</sup> Regarding the lack of "natural strength" after the fall of Adam, see *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*. Cf. Ch. II, footnote 221. In this examination, it is evident that Wesley's thoughts regarding nature evolved. His earlier sermons (between 1733 and 1759) express his view of the natural state of human evil (total depravity), as we read in "Circumcision of the Heart" (1733), "The Righteousness of Faith" (1746), "The Way to the Kingdom" (1746), "Justification by Faith" (1746), and "Original Sin" (1759). On the contrary, his later sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation" (1785) reflects his opinion of human nature with regard to prevenient grace and as not totally depraved.

Wesley's idea that nothing good comes out of fallen nature is explained by a scriptural metaphor: an evil tree produces evil fruits.<sup>424</sup> Despite the fact that some works we perform before being justified seem good to human eyes, they are altogether incapable of earning us justification in the eyes of God. Justification remains purely God's gift, by faith alone.<sup>425</sup> It is clear, then, that when Wesley rejects humility as virtue, he wants to forestall human praise for any good that we do.<sup>426</sup> His sensitive rejection of any possible usurpation of God's glory should be the focus.

Accordingly, Wesley's view of virtue vs. grace may be summed up in the paradoxical claim that anything counted as acceptable to God, e.g., self-knowledge before God, could be called virtuous inasmuch as it is something positive and valuable, always remembering that it is possible only through grace and our free cooperation with such grace (technically called "synergy"). From another perspective, it is not to be called virtuous lest this imply that a good act is possible simply through human autonomy.

## Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that having faith in God's redeeming love through Christ Jesus requires humility in the form of repentance. Repentance requires the knowledge of self, and this self-knowledge comes from God's grace. In this catena, the nexus is God's grace, by which faith is linked with self-knowledge.

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<sup>424</sup> "Justification by Faith," iii.4, *The Works*, I: 192. Cf. Matthew 7:16.

<sup>425</sup> "Justification by Faith," iii.5-6, *The Works*, I: 192-93. Faith is the only condition for justification. Collins comments that this is in a way reminiscent of Anselm's claim that all works, prior to faith, however good they seem to be, are nothing but condemnation. Collins, *Wesley on Salvation*, 41.

<sup>426</sup> "Sermon on the Mount, I," i.7, *The Works*, I: 479.

Saving faith is the conviction given by God who first loved us, the lost. God is the initiator of salvation, and his love is shown on the cross by Jesus' dying for the sake of our sins. God's initiative is also revealed, according to Wesley, in the work of the Holy Spirit, who opens the eyes of understanding and brings us from darkness to light.<sup>427</sup> Faith opens our eyes to see beyond the physical realm of the world. Seeing the reality of the self as sick and vile and acknowledging the need of a physician marks the turning point toward restoration. "The *understanding* must be brought by humility to repentance, true self-knowledge, and faith," by which a Christian grows spiritually to be perfectly happy in God.<sup>428</sup>

God's love toward humanity which brings forth such happiness can be explained in many ways, but Wesley focuses on God's prevenient and convincing grace enabling human self-knowledge before God. He states, "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."<sup>429</sup>

It is only through prevenient grace that God can be perceived before conversion. However, this perception is partial and unclear at best. At regeneration the new

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<sup>427</sup> "God's Love to Fallen Man," i.3, *The Works*, II: 427. Cf. 1Peter 2:9. Since darkness is understood as equivalent to spiritual death in Wesley's sermons, light and life come naturally as the antidotes to darkness and death. Those who are in darkness and death need light and life; and Jesus Christ came for all humanity as the true Light and Life. The only thing needed is to know that the self is in darkness and death; to see if the self is seeing and seeking the Light and the Life. Through seeing the self, one overcomes the spiritually ignorant state, and the darkness is overcome by the Light. As one with self-knowledge confesses the need of God's love, the Light becomes the object of faith. Thus, to know self is to know one's need of God and hence is related to knowing God in faith. Cf. *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 303 (John 1:4).

<sup>428</sup> Oden, 137. Italics are in the original.

<sup>429</sup> "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," ii.1, *The Works*, III: 203. In this sermon, prevenient grace indicates conscience.

Christian receives new senses [e.g., faith], ideas, passions, and tempers, and this new “spiritual sense” is what enables the believer to perceive God. . . . those who would deny God’s existence cannot perceive God, similar to the way that natural sensations will not lead to perception if the senses are not trusted.<sup>430</sup>

Wesley understands that the preventing and convincing grace of God is revealed in the functions of the conscience and moral law, through which one can reflect upon the residual image of God that is the will of God: holy love.<sup>431</sup> Knowing oneself through God’s grace meets with knowing God’s grace through faith. When faith accompanies humility, responding to the prompting of the prevenient and convincing grace of God, our journey in Christianity begins, with *sola fide* and *sola gratia* serving like the two wings of a butterfly.

By faith in Christ, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to every believer, whereby the forgiveness of sins, freedom from the guilt of sin, is brought forth. Hence, the second, converting role of the moral law is evident, as God’s convincing grace leads one to conversion to Christ, in whom the third role of the moral law will subsequently begin in the justified:

‘For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.’ Christ, when he said, ‘It is finished,’ put an end to that law—to the law of external rites and ceremonies—that he might ‘bring in a better righteousness’ through his

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<sup>430</sup> Lowery, 79. Parenthesis is in the original.

<sup>431</sup> Wesley describes conscience as the “unction from the Holy One” and its full recovery as being attuned to God’s will. God’s will can be found in Wesley’s understanding of the moral law (the “unchangeable law of love” and “the holy love of God and neighbour”) because moral law is “the residual *imago Dei*.” Besides, though free will restored by prevenient grace is not perfect, it is worth noting that the freedom to love is what Wesley sees in free will as God’s grace: “love is perfect freedom.” Hence, it is significant that love matters. The God of love, by prevenient grace, prompts and stirs our hearts to return as we reflect on the moral law and the mind of God (by convincing grace); in love, we respond by choosing to love, to love God and neighbors. Therefore, Wesley claims that one may restore the image of God; this restoration of the *imago Dei* can thus be explained in terms of the restoration of the moral image of God, i.e., love. Cf. above, 75, 80-82, 52.

blood, by that one oblation of himself once offered, even the image of God, into the inmost soul of ‘everyone that believeth.’<sup>432</sup>

Like an infant who is dimly aware of light on the brink of being brought to life, one who has the spirit of adoption begins a life by being born again toward the fullness of light.<sup>433</sup> Thus, Wesley writes about the relationship between knowing and seeing in order to explain faith as knowing God through seeing spiritually.

How the prevenient grace of God leads one to receive the justifying grace of God is like awakening to a love that has always been there. To know that we were wonderfully and fearfully made by God to live in happiness for the glory of God makes us see how far we are now from that divine design. With that knowledge of God’s design in creation, our current condition as fallen from the glory of God becomes a sickening reality. With that knowledge of God’s love in creation, however, a hope for returning to God arises. However, knowing God’s love does not come to the heart without faith. By faith, we confess our weakness and helplessness, ask for help from God, and come to realize that we have been known to God as he heals us by the stripes on the body of Jesus on the cross.<sup>434</sup> With that love, we are forgiven, and God heals our fallen status.

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<sup>432</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, IX,” §21, *The Works*, I: 644.

<sup>433</sup> Regarding the metaphor of light and illumination, see “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law”; “The Witness of the Spirit, I.” Three sermons (nos. 106, 117, and 132) are entitled “On Faith.” In his sermon “On Faith: Heb. 11:6,” §1, Wesley defines the power of faith in detail: faith is “a divine evidence, and conviction of things... which are not seen now ... of God and of the things of God.” Such conviction is explained by a metaphor of light. For example, the Israelites were given this light when God entrusted them with the oracles of God, for them to see who God is; and “a burning and a shining light” was given to John the Baptist for him to see “the Lamb of God.” Thus, in seeing the unseen things of God by the illumination of the Spirit of God, the Word of God becomes “the whole and sole rule of their faith” and of the practice of those who have faith. §3, i.8, *The Works*, III: 493, 496.

<sup>434</sup> Cf. Isaiah 53:5.

God loves us; because of love, God works continuously in and through our wandering journey and directs us toward His kingdom. Coming to know that love is, therefore, like a homecoming. Wesley used the image of going into the doorway of the house from the porch outside. The wanderer's journey home has been guided by preventing and convincing grace, but that does not let one get into the door of one's home.<sup>435</sup> Only justifying grace through faith will do that.

If thou knowest he hath taken away thy sins, so much the more abase thyself before him in a continued sense of thy total dependence on him for every good thought and word and work, and of thy utter inability to all good unless he 'water thee every moment.'<sup>436</sup>

Having been justified by faith, a person begins the life-long journey of sanctification:

[Sanctification] 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 'gradually '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... 'till we attain the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'<sup>437</sup>

Like a living tree that grows in faith and produces fruit of love, a Christian continues to grow in faith and experience the restoration of the *imago Dei* through Christ. Wesley's understanding of faith as the opening of spiritual eyesight and being certain of what is

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<sup>435</sup> Wesley analyzed repentance and faith as the porch or door of religion, and holiness as religion itself. See, John Henry Overton, *John Wesley*, ed. A. M. M. Stedman (London: Methuen & Co., 1891), 76.

<sup>436</sup> "Sermon on the Mount, XIII," iii.6, *The Works*, I: 696.

<sup>437</sup> "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," ii.1, *The Works*, II: 204.

invisible to physical eyesight (Hebrews 11:1) becomes the foundation of his understanding of a Christian's continuous journey in grace toward sanctification.

Wesley maintains that “till you have these internal senses, till the eyes of your understanding are opened, you can have no apprehension of divine things, no idea of them at all.”<sup>438</sup> The more one sees the love of God in Christ, the more one may become like God, for one becomes what she or he sees.<sup>439</sup> Thus, the humble knowledge of God in this opening of spiritual eyesight will lead a Christian to live a humble life of love in faith. Humility in knowing as well as humility in loving (becoming like Christ) become essential in the stage of sanctification. This role of humility in the sanctification of a Christian's life will be the focus of the next chapter.

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<sup>438</sup> “An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,” §33, *The Works*, XI: 57.

<sup>439</sup> The humility of God will be discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter IV: HUMILITY IN SANCTIFICATION

### Introduction

One of Wesley's most concise descriptions of sanctification appears in his sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation," where he first speaks of justification as being another word for pardon, the pardon of all our sins by a gracious God, and then goes on to say:

And at the same time that we are justified, yea, in that very moment, sanctification begins. In that instant we are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit: there is a real as well as a relative change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel "the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us"; producing love to all mankind, and more especially to the children of God; expelling the love of the world, the love of pleasure, of ease, of honour, of money, together with pride, anger, self-will, and every other evil temper; in a word, changing the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, into "the mind which was in Christ Jesus."<sup>440</sup>

But if sanctification begins at that point, it will nevertheless need to grow and deepen if one is to be brought to "Christian perfection" or "entire sanctification," i.e., the restoration of the *imago Dei* in its fullness with regard to love God and neighbor.<sup>441</sup> This was the doctrine which Wesley considered as Methodism's most distinctive gift to Christianity and was the subject of what many consider his most important single work, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, where he describes perfection as the genuine living out of the great commandments of love of God and neighbor in such a way that one does not willfully act

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<sup>440</sup> "The Scripture Way of Salvation," i.5, *The Works*, II: 158.

<sup>441</sup> Wesley identifies Christian perfection with holiness: "it is only another term for holiness." "Christian Perfection," i.9, *The Works*, II: 104. This idea comes from the early Eastern traditions, according to Outler, "as a never ending aspiration for all of love's fullness." Outler, introduction to "Christian Perfection," *The Works*, II: 98.

contrary to God's will.<sup>442</sup> Anyone who receives such perfection in this life will, therefore, give glory to God and for that reason be truly humble:

Holy, and true, and righteous Lord,  
 I wait to prove thy perfect will:  
 Be mindful of thy gracious word,  
 And stamp me with thy Spirit's seal.  
 Thy faithful mercies let me find  
 In which thou causest me to trust;  
 Give me the meek and lowly mind,  
 And lay my spirit in the dust.  
 Show me how foul my heart hath been,  
 When all renewed by grace I am;  
 When thou has emptied me of sin,  
 Show me the fullness of my shame.  
 Open my faith's interior eye,  
 Display thy glory from above;  
 And all I am shall sink and die,  
 Lost in astonishment and love.  
 ...  
 Now let me gain perfection's height!  
 Now let me into nothing fall!  
 Be less than nothing in thy sight,  
 And feel that Christ is all in all!<sup>443</sup>

In this dissertation, however, our concern is on the whole process of sanctification, not just the stage at which, ideally, one is perfected.

Just as in the case of justification, humility in sanctification is largely a matter of self-knowledge, although its modality will here be rather different. In addition, as noted at the end of the previous chapter, this ongoing movement of sanctification is also characterized by a marked increase in spiritual sight or sensitivity, above all in a deepening knowledge of the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These two points—self-

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<sup>442</sup> Though our work is involved, sanctification is a gift; like justification, one is sanctified by grace.

<sup>443</sup> "Christian Perfection," Poem: The Promise of Sanctification, 23-28, *The Works*, II: 124. Wesley inserted his brother Charles' poem at the end of his sermon on Christian perfection.

knowledge and knowledge of the triune God—will provide the principal framework for our reflections on humility in sanctification, and will be followed by a concluding section on humility in certain activities that Wesley considered especially important for a sanctified Christian.

### A. Self-Knowledge in the Journey of Sanctification

Justification does not guarantee that the justified and inchoately sanctified person will go on to Christian perfection without having any trial. After the Aldersgate experience, Wesley himself experienced that the joy of that evening was temporary, not sustained for even a week. Remembering “how quickly the euphoria of his own Aldersgate experience had passed,”<sup>444</sup> he records in his journals on May 27 and 28 in 1738: “My soul continued in peace, but yet in heaviness because of manifold temptations”;<sup>445</sup> “I walked in peace, but not in joy.”<sup>446</sup> Having undergone the absence of joy after such a conversion, Wesley understood that the journey of sanctification for Christians would be marked by groaning and struggle against any remaining sins that stood in the way of the full restoration of the image of God in them:

After God has delivered them that fear him from the bondage of sin and Satan; after they are ‘justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus,’ yet not many of them immediately enter into ‘the rest’ which ‘remaineth for the people of God.’ The greater part of them wander more or less out of the good way into which he hath brought them. They come as it were into a ‘waste and howling

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<sup>444</sup> Outler, introduction to “The Wilderness State: Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations,” *The Works*, II: 202.

<sup>445</sup> *The Journal*, 75 (May 27, 1738).

<sup>446</sup> *The Journal*, 75 (May 28, 1738). Later in his letter to his brother Charles on June 26, 1766 John writes: “if [I have any fear, it is not that of falling] into hell, but of falling into nothing.” Likewise, Wesley prefers “heaviness” to “darkness” in order to explain the groaning or restless status of the soul in the journey of sanctification.

desert,' where they are variously tempted and tormented. And this some, in allusion to the case of the Israelites, have termed 'a wilderness state.'<sup>447</sup>

No longer experiencing that "satisfactory 'conviction of things not seen,' which they once enjoyed," Christians experience that "darkness is again on the face of their souls, and blindness on the eyes of their understanding... they are shorn of their strength, and become weak and feeble-minded, even as other men."<sup>448</sup> Such a religious anxiety causes a Christian to be ever humble before God, until the full restoration of the image of God.

### 1. *The Sin that Remains in Believers*

Accordingly, even though justification by faith means pardon of sin and freedom from punishment, according to Wesley sin remains in believers. Wesley's discourses "On Sin in Believers" and "The Repentance of Believers" show how seriously he had examined himself as well as other Methodists concerning their journey after justification. His thoughts on sin in believers and on repentance emphasize how weak Christians remain even though, through faith, they have been "born again from above." When one is justified,

Sin is then overcome, but it is not rooted out; it is conquered, but not destroyed. Experience shows [the new believer], first, that the root of sin, self-will, pride, and idolatry, remain still in his heart. But as long as he continues to watch and pray, none of them can prevail against him. Experience teaches him, secondly, that sin (generally pride or self-will) cleaves to his best actions. So that even with regard to these he finds an absolute necessity for the blood of atonement."<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> "The Wilderness State," §1, *The Works*, II: 205.

<sup>448</sup> "The Wilderness State," i.1, *The Works*, II: 206. The soul's state in wilderness or darkness is differentiated from heaviness, which is caused by "the trial of [Christians'] faith." Accordingly, Christians in heaviness do not lose hope, peace and joy of the faith in God; "though they were heavy, yet were they holy." "Heaviness through Manifold Temptations," i.1-6, *The Works*, II: 223-24.

<sup>449</sup> "The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart," ii.5, *The Works*, IV: 157.

This knowledge of self, even after being justified, shows the necessity of humility in the journey of sanctification. Those who have been justified and are in the way of sanctification must yet be alert in their journey, for Wesley regularly warns of the possibility of falling back because of the sin remaining in believers, just like “a falling after the soaring on the wings of an eagle (Isa. 40:31)”<sup>450</sup> Hence the necessity of self-knowledge that even the justified need to maintain in their daily lives.

This self-knowledge is nevertheless of a different modality than that which preceded justification. If the journey to justification was a groaning under fear in the spirit of servant, the journey after justification and new birth is another kind of groaning, rather like the wilderness journey of the Israelites whose journey after the exodus was marked by fears, doubts, and anxieties, for the fact that one is liberated from the guilt of sin through justifying grace does not mean that one is liberated from the power of sin. To be born again through justifying grace means to “not ‘continue in sin’; that believers cannot ‘live any longer therein’ (Rom. 6:1); that they are ‘planted together in the likeness of the death of Christ’ (Rom. 6:5).”<sup>451</sup> However, humble examination of self leads one to see there is “inbred sin” in the self, even in the justified.<sup>452</sup>

Concerning this inbred sin, Wesley describes original, “inbred corruption” of human nature as an inclination to evil, which is manifested in “atheism and idolatry, pride,

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<sup>450</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, I,” ii.1, *The Works*, I: 483.

<sup>451</sup> “Christian Perfection,” §3, *Anthology*, 74.

<sup>452</sup> *The Journal*, March 28, 1763. The discourse, “On Sin in Believers” evoked controversy with the Lutherans. While Lutherans claimed “no sin in any that are justified,” Wesley pointed out the reality of sin in believers with regard to “inbred sin.” *The Works*, I: 315-16. Collins, *Wesley on Salvation*, 34.

self-will, and love of the world.”<sup>453</sup> From this inbred sin all other sins grow.<sup>454</sup> Therefore,

he calls it the “evil root” or “evil fountain” of sin:

Hence springs unbelief, ever departing from the living God; saying, ‘Who is the Lord that I should serve him?’... Hence independence, affecting to be like the Most High; hence pride, in all its forms, teaching thee to say, ‘I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.’ From this evil fountain flow forth the bitter stream of vanity, thirst of praise, ambition, covetousness, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. From this arise anger, hatred, malice, revenge, envy, jealousy, evil surmising; from this, all the foolish and hurtful lusts that now ‘pierce thee through with many sorrows,’ and if not timely prevented will at length ‘drown thy soul in everlasting perdition.’<sup>455</sup>

Due to this root of inbred sin, it is possible for the justified to fall from grace. Wesley

explains how, in eight stages, outward sin springs from that which is inbred:

You see the unquestionable progress from grace to sin: Thus it goes on, from step to step. (1.) The divine seed of loving, conquering faith, remains in him that is born of God. ‘He keepeth himself,’ by the grace of God, and ‘cannot commit sin.’ (2.) A temptation arises; whether from the world, the flesh, or the devil, it matters not. (3.) The Spirit of God gives him warning that sin is near, and bids him more abundantly watch unto prayer. (4.) He gives way, in some degree, to the temptation, which now begins to grow pleasing to him. (5.) The Holy Spirit is grieved; his faith is weakened; and his love of God grows cold. (6.) The Spirit reproves him more sharply, and saith, ‘This is the way; walk thou in it.’ (7.) He

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<sup>453</sup> Harald Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1980), 27. This inbred sin seems to be related to the original sin described in chapter II as atheism, usurpation, thirst for glory, and self-deception (see, footnotes 148, 166, and 167). Hence, the question can be raised of whether or not the original sin remains even after justification; whether or not this inbred sin is the consequence of original sin. However interesting the question may be, this is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

<sup>454</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, XI,” i, *The Works*, I: 534. Lindström, 23; In his *Doctrine of Original Sin*, Wesley identifies sin with “ ‘any want of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God,’ given as a rule to the reasonable creation.” pt. II, ii.4, *The Works*, IX: 264. This sin comes to be “of our nature,” or a kind of second nature to all who share in human history after the Fall.

<sup>455</sup> “The Way to the Kingdom,” ii.2, *Anthology*, 128-29. These are truly evil roots, as Wesley finds evil fruits growing out of these: “Of pride cometh contention, vain boasting, seeking and receiving praise of men, and so robbing God of that glory which he cannot give unto another. Of the lust of the flesh come gluttony or drunkenness, luxury or sensuality, fornication, uncleanness, variously defiling that body which was designed for a temple of the Holy Ghost: of unbelief, every evil word and work... all these... provoking the Most High, grieving the Holy One of Israel.” ii.3.

turns away from the painful voice of God, and listens to the pleasing voice of the tempter. (8.) Evil desire begins and spreads in his soul, till faith and love vanish away: He is then capable of committing outward sin, the power of the Lord being departed from him.<sup>456</sup>

The evidence of this carnal or partially spiritual Christian life was, according to Wesley, found in David who once confessed God as his Shepherd through many Psalms: “yet such a child of God could and did commit sin; yea, the horrid sins of adultery and murder.”<sup>457</sup> Another example is the people at Corinth in the time of St. Paul: “They were doubtless ‘renewed in the spirit of their mind,’ or they could not have been so much as ‘babes in Christ.’ Yet they had not the whole mind which was in Christ, for they *envied* one another.”<sup>458</sup> Being holy, but not entirely so, characterizes one who is a spiritual babe in Christ. Put differently, the justified “is saved from sin; yet not entirely: it *remains*, though it does not *reign*.”<sup>459</sup> In this reality of sin in believers, Wesley finds that the self, even after justification, is liable to commit outward sin because there is “a deep sense of the loathsome leprosy of sin” in believers, from which evil tempers are derived.<sup>460</sup>

The sin remaining in the heart of the justified is related to the absence of humility, i.e., pride. According to Wesley, self-will, the love of the world, the desire of the flesh, and covetousness are all different versions of the same pride, which is the root sin still remaining in the heart of the justified. Wesley was sincere in his description of the joy and peace that one will experience right after the bestowal of justifying grace, but he was

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<sup>456</sup> “The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God,” ii.9, *The Works*, I: 440; Lindström, 39. Wesley warns that in the joy of experiencing the Holy Spirit’s presence, the heart gradually yields to temptation. In “The Witness of the Spirit, II,” Wesley explains that the Holy Spirit grieves when Christians commit sin and omit love. ii.1, *The Works*, I: 286.

<sup>457</sup> “The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God,” ii.4, *The Works*, I: 437.

<sup>458</sup> “On Sin in Believers,” iv.2, *The Works*, I: 326. Italics are in the original.

<sup>459</sup> “On Sin in Believers,” iv.3, *The Works*, I: 327. Italics are in the original.

<sup>460</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, I,” i.4, *The Works*, I: 477.

also insightful in acknowledging that “in process of time he will feel again... either ‘the desire of the flesh, or the desire of the eye, or the pride of life.’”<sup>461</sup>

The more a Christian desires the things of “the world,” the more she or he will forget or ignore God, and this ignorance of God is another name for pride, the absence of humility, whereas knowledge of oneself and God is precisely not forgetting. The very moment(s) when a Christian forgets God, evil has the opportunity to grow into what Wesley calls

the pride and haughtiness of spirit, the constant bias to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; the vanity, the thirst after the esteem or honour that cometh from men; the hatred or envy, the jealousy or revenge, the anger, malice, or bitterness; the inbred enmity both against God and man which appears in ten thousand shapes; the love of the world, the self-will, the foolish and hurtful desires which cleave to his inmost soul.”<sup>462</sup>

When forgetfulness overshadows the heart of the justified, a Christian seeks pleasure in the world, and the desire of the eye will fill up one’s heart. When one seeks pleasure in earthly things, i.e., created beings and not their Creator, then the love of the world gives birth to envy and to the comparison of oneself with others, from which comes covetousness.

Wesley clearly states that covetousness is against the love of God. In this way, the love of money and “a desire of *having more*, or increasing in substance” becomes “too frequently ‘the root of all evils.’”<sup>463</sup> Having closely related covetousness to greed, Wesley finds that this, too, is caused by the forgetfulness of the God who is the Giver, and that it witnesses to the sin remaining in the heart of the justified.

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<sup>461</sup> “The Repentance of Believers,” i.5, *The Works*, I: 338.

<sup>462</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, I,” i.4, *The Works*, I: 478.

<sup>463</sup> “The Repentance of Believers,” i.9, *The Works*, I: 340. Italics are in the original.

The sin that remains becomes manifested through our words and acts, so heeding one's mouth and controlling one's temper are important parts of the journey of sanctification.<sup>464</sup> Wesley wonders if there is anyone who is innocent in thoughts, tempers, emotions, and words, utterly without anger. We are all liable to fall and thereby give sin the power to reign in us once more. In other words, this liability reminds us that sin could again usurp our hearts if we give in to it, allowing the carnal mind to forget God and so fall into doubt and unbelief.<sup>465</sup> This being so, it is understandable that Wesley sometimes uses the image of battle when discussing the journey of sanctification in faith.

Much of what Wesley held on this point is summed up in his sermon "On Sin in Believers," where he says that "every man who is 'born of the Spirit' is a *spiritual man*... yet [he is not] *altogether* spiritual."<sup>466</sup> Though the justified has power over sin from the moment of justification, Wesley acknowledges that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit," according to St. Paul.<sup>467</sup> As long as one is "in some degree, *carnal*, that is, *unholy*," a Christian is not an altogether Christian.<sup>468</sup>

In order to provide a better understanding of his position, Wesley employs in this sermon the analogy of human maturation from infancy to adulthood. Any absence of conformity to the whole mind which was in Christ can be regarded as sin remaining in the

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<sup>464</sup> "The Repentance of Believers," i.11, *The Works*, I: 341-42.

<sup>465</sup> "On Sin in Believers," iv.13, *The Works*, I: 331-32.

<sup>466</sup> "On Sin in Believers," iv.1, *The Works*, I: 326. Italics are in the original.

<sup>467</sup> "On Sin in Believers," iii.1, *The Works*, I: 321. Cf. Gal.5:17. Wesley indicates that believers at Corinth, according to Paul, show envy and strife among themselves, which evidences their spiritual status as carnal or "babes in Christ," iii.2.

<sup>468</sup> "On Sin in Believers," iv.1, *The Works*, I: 326. Italic are in the original. In "The Almost Christian," Wesley distinguishes between the almost and altogether Christian in that the former is without faith, and the latter with faith. In "On Sin in Believers," the word "altogether" conveys the sense of holiness or perfection. Therefore, an "altogether Christian" in this sentence needs to be understood as a perfect Christian. Regarding social holiness compatible with the altogether Christian, see also "Preface" to *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1739.

believer, who is in this respect a babe or youth in Christ.<sup>469</sup> Therefore Wesley understands the journey of sanctification as a journey of becoming liberated from the power of sin. The more one is liberated from its power, the more one is conformed to the mind of Christ. In other words, the more a Christian is humble, the more the image of God is restored, for by humility is pride healed, by humility envy is cured, and by humility the power of sin is cast off.

Humility comes from this self-knowledge of the liability to sin in the justified, for “Radical dependence upon God is our only hope of authentic self-understanding.”<sup>470</sup> With this acknowledgement, a Christian ought to be humble and continue to repent throughout the journey of sanctification in order not to fall.

‘Be not high-minded, but fear.’ Let us fear sin more than death or hell. Let us have a jealous (though not painful) fear, lest we should lean to our own deceitful hearts. ‘Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.’ Even he who now standeth fast in the grace of God, in the faith that ‘overcometh the world,’ may nevertheless fall into inward sin, and thereby ‘make shipwreck of his faith.’<sup>471</sup>

Only in this humble knowledge can a Christian continue to go forward to the renewal of the self “after the image of him that created it.”<sup>472</sup> Without humility or self-knowledge the self cannot tread the path that brings it back to its original state.

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<sup>469</sup> Wesley compares spiritual stages with natural stages of life in terms of newborn babes, little children, young men, and fathers (elders). See “Christian Perfection,” ii.1, *The Works*, II: 205. Cf. 1 John 2:13-27.

<sup>470</sup> “The Deceitfulness of Human Heart,” intro., *The Works*, IV: 149.

<sup>471</sup> “The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God,” iii.4, *The Works*, I: 442-43. In “Sermon on the Mount, I,” i.11, Wesley describes this fear as “filial fear of offending our Father.”

<sup>472</sup> “The Circumcision of the Heart,” §3, *The Works*, I: 402.

## 2. Repentance in Believers

Although the justified do experience a change wrought in them through Christ, nevertheless “sin was only suspended, not destroyed. Temptations return and sin revives, showing it was but stunned before, not dead. They now feel two principles in themselves, plainly contrary to each other: ‘the flesh lusting against the spirit,’ nature opposing the grace of God.”<sup>473</sup> One who has experienced justification by faith still feels the existence of the “propensity to pride, self-will, anger, revenge, love of the world, yea, all evil: a root of bitterness.”<sup>474</sup> The journey of sanctification as the process of the recovery of the *imago Dei* can therefore be understood as the process of curing the sin remaining in believers, so that Christians can lessen the outward sin that grows out of inbred sin. As regards those who know themselves as helpless with regard to inward and outward sins, Wesley urges them to repent and believe the gospel.<sup>475</sup> In Outler’s words, “*a Christian’s progress in sanctification does not preclude repentance.*”<sup>476</sup> Without repenting of their inward and outward sins, Christians cannot grow toward the fullness of this journey of sanctification.

Wesley mentions two kinds of repentance: “initial repentance” and “subsequent repentance.” The former is concerned with actual sin, the latter with “inbred or original sin.”<sup>477</sup> Both the initial and subsequent repentance employ self-knowledge. Initial repentance is to know ourselves previous to faith. Second repentance, after justification, is

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<sup>473</sup> “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” i.6, *The Works*, II: 159.

<sup>474</sup> “The Repentance of Believers,” i.10, *The Works*, I: 341.

<sup>475</sup> “The Way to the Kingdom,” ii.7, *The Works*, I: 229.

<sup>476</sup> Outler, introduction to “The Way to the Kingdom,” *The Works*, I: 217. Outler’s introduction is written in italics. If one says “there is no place for repentance” in the justified, “consequently there is no place for his being ‘perfected in love,’ to which that repentance is indispensably necessary. For Wesley himself on this point, see “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” iii.13, *The Works*, II: 166.

<sup>477</sup> Collins, *Wesley on Salvation*, 34.

also to know ourselves,<sup>478</sup> but if the first is to know one's ignorance of God and to seek humbly the mercy of God to be saved, the second is to know yet "the inbred corruption of [our] nature," from which pride, independence from God, atheism, and vanity spring.<sup>479</sup> First repentance is closely related to the conviction of sin, whereas second repentance involves a change of heart from all sin to all holiness. To do away with the sin in believers, i.e., to overcome the power of sin, this second or subsequent repentance is required of Christians.<sup>480</sup>

Unlike the initial repentance, there is no servile fear of condemnation in the believers' repentance, because now they have faith in Christ who is their Advocate with God.<sup>481</sup> Faith is the remedy for the disease of eternal death and misery:<sup>482</sup>

He is convinced, both that in many respects he has thought of himself more highly than he ought to think, and that he has taken to himself the praise of something he had received . . . yet he knows he is in the favour of God. He cannot and ought not to 'cast away his confidence.' 'The Spirit still witnesses with his spirit, that he is a child of God.'<sup>483</sup>

Self-knowledge and humility in sanctification come with "filial fear of offending our Father"<sup>484</sup> Wesley assures believers who have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit that even though they may at times fall away, they can rise again because of the faith in which

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<sup>478</sup> "The First-fruits of the Spirit," iii.4, *The Works*, I: 245.

<sup>479</sup> "The Way to the Kingdom," ii.2, footnote 64, *The Works*, I: 226. Cf. 1 John 2:16. St. Augustine's *triplex concupiscentia* (*Confessions*, X.xxx.41)—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—appears continuously in Wesley's sermons.

<sup>480</sup> "The Repentance of Believers," §2, *The Works*, I: 336. Self-knowledge of the justified implies how weak a Christian can be without the continuous help of the Holy Spirit. Without God's grace, one is always liable to fall back into sin.

<sup>481</sup> "The First-fruits of the Spirit," ii.7, *The Works*, I: 240.

<sup>482</sup> "On Eternity, §17, *The Works*, II: 368.

<sup>483</sup> "The Repentance of Believers," i.3, *The Works*, I: 337.

<sup>484</sup> "Sermon on the Mount, I," i.11, *The Works*, I: 481.

“we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins.”<sup>485</sup> Therefore, Wesley distinguishes between sin before and after justification inasmuch as sin after one is justified brings the self to “repent in dust and ashes” and yet be able to say, “I know that my Redeemer liveth;’ ‘and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God.’”<sup>486</sup>

The repentance of the justified includes self-knowledge: “a conviction of the sin which *remains* in our heart.”<sup>487</sup>

This implies no guilt, no sense of condemnation, no consciousness of the wrath of God. It does not suppose any doubt of the favour of God... it is properly a conviction wrought by the Holy Ghost of the ‘sin’ which still ‘remains’ in our heart, of φρόνημα σαρκός, ‘the carnal mind,’ which ‘does still *remain*,’ as our Church speaks, ‘even in them that are regenerate’—although it does no longer *reign*.

...

It is a conviction of the tendency of our heart to self-will, to atheism, or idolatry; and above all to unbelief, whereby in a thousand ways, and under a thousand pretences, we are ever ‘departing’ more or less ‘from the living God.’<sup>488</sup>

With the self-knowledge of helplessness and remaining inward sin, Christians humbly ask

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<sup>485</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, IV,” i.9, *The Works*, I: 538. This is different from the idea of the perseverance of the saints, for Wesley here considers sinners’ repentance, yet knows the possibility of falling away in the deceitfulness of sin. Cf. 1John 2:1-2.

<sup>486</sup> “The First-fruits of the Spirit,” iii.2, *The Works*, I: 244. With regard to sin after justification, Outler indicates the homilies of Macarius, the Egyptian hermit, as an influence on Wesley’s understanding. For further reading, see Hoo-Jung Lee, “The doctrine of new creation in the theology of John Wesley” (PhD diss., Emory University, 1991).

<sup>487</sup> “The Repentance of Believers,” i.2, *The Works*, I: 337. Wesley calls it the second repentance, the repentance of sin which remains. Italics is in the original; “The First-fruits of the Spirit,” iii.2, *The Works*, I: 244. “Then that faith again cancels all that is past, and there is no condemnation to thee. At whatsoever time thou truly believest in the name of the Son of God, all thy sins antecedent to that hour vanish away as the morning dew. Now, then, ‘Stand thou fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made thee free.’ He hath once more made thee free from the power of sin, as well as from the guilt and punishment of it. O ‘be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage’! nor the bondage of slavish tormenting fear, of guilt and self-condemnations.”

<sup>488</sup> “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” iii.6, *The Works*, II: 165. As an example of remaining sin, Wesley describes our proneness to evil, to pride, to anger, to love of honor and pleasure in the world, from which actual sins spring. Italics are in the original. Cf. *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*, IX: ‘Of Original or Birth Sin.’

for God's help, so that they can continue the journey of sanctification without falling into temptation.

In this knowledge of self, Wesley observes that inbred sin is connected with the lack of the poverty of spirit, i.e., "a continual sense of our total dependence on [God] for every good thought or word or work; of our utter inability to [do] all good unless he 'water us every moment'; and an abhorrence of the praise of men, knowing that all praise is due unto God only."<sup>489</sup> Wesley observes unbelief (atheism), independence, pride, lust of the eye, desire for vanity and praise, anger, hatred, malice, envy, etc., as branches of sin that spring from the inbred sin. Each of these proves the absence of the poverty of spirit, that is, humility. Put differently, inbred sin is connected with the absence of humility<sup>490</sup> With "a loving shame, a tender humiliation before God,"<sup>491</sup> believers' self-knowledge leads them to change their hearts. Hence, the repentance of inbred sin can be identified with the "circumcision of heart [which] implies humility, faith, hope, and charity."<sup>492</sup> Wesley firmly states that the "faith which bringeth not forth repentance and love and all good works, is not that 'right living faith' which is here spoken of, 'but a dead and devilish [faith].'"<sup>493</sup>

### 3. *Three Aspects of Sin*

In order to see the link between repentance and humility, it is helpful to explore three

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<sup>489</sup> "Sermon on the Mount, I," i.13, *The Works*, I: 482. Cf. Isaiah 27:3.

<sup>490</sup> "The Way to the Kingdom," ii.2, *Anthology*, 128-29.

<sup>491</sup> "Sermon on the Mount, I," i.13, *The Works*, I: 482.

<sup>492</sup> "The Circumcision of the Heart," i.2, *The Works*, I: 403. Taylor also sees humility, the very essence in the mind of Christ, as a remedy for pride, and furthermore as "the root of a goodly tree." Taylor, *Holy Living and Dying*, 84.

<sup>493</sup> "The Almost Christian," ii.4, *The Works*, I: 138.

aspects of sin in Wesley's understanding: inward or inbred sin, outward sin (sin of commission), and sin of omission.<sup>494</sup> Regarding the sin that remains in the justified, Wesley portrays it as a disease. The disease of atheism can be cured through humility in the knowledge of God: "God heals all our Atheism by knowledge of Himself and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; by giving us faith."<sup>495</sup> Wesley continues to name repentance, lowliness of heart, resignation, submission to God's will, and the love of God as remedies for sins of pride, self-will, and love of the world.

Regarding sins of commission and of omission, it is worth noting the questionnaire Wesley provides for the self-examination of Christians:

Does your conscience accuse you of committing any sin whereby you grieve the Holy Spirit of God?<sup>496</sup>

Inquire next if there [is] not some sin of omission which separates between God and you. Do you 'not suffer sin upon your brother? Do you reprove them that sin in your sight? Do you walk in all the ordinances of God? In public, family, private prayer? If not, if you habitually neglect any one of these known duties, how can you expect that the light of his countenance should continue to shine upon you? Make haste to 'strengthen the things that remain,' then your soul shall live.<sup>497</sup>

In addition, the exercise of confession among the band members shows how significant it is for Methodists to be aware of the vulnerability to sin, especially for the members of the band meeting, who are justified, know the love of God, and seek sanctification by faith through grace. For this reason, Lester Ruth describes band meetings

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<sup>494</sup> Lindström, 38. As for sins of omission, there are various forms of negligence such as "neglecting to punish one's brother for his sins, failing to rebuke those who sin in one's presence, letting slip any means of grace, and omitting to pray in public, in the family, and in private."

<sup>495</sup> "Original Sin," iii.3, *The Works*, II: 184. I articulated in the previous part that humility was compatible with the knowledge of God in that humility is shown in the knowledge of self and of God: self-knowledge before God leads one to faith, which is the knowledge of God.

<sup>496</sup> "The Wilderness State," iii.2, *The Works*, II: 214.

<sup>497</sup> "The Wilderness State," iii.3, *The Works*, II: 215.

as “groups of ‘professors’ who assist each other toward the goal of sanctification. The tone was more intense and confessional.”<sup>498</sup> The weekly meeting of band members was a practice of humility based on the knowledge of self before God. Members were to answer the following five questions:

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?
5. Have you nothing you desire to keep secret?<sup>499</sup>

Having exposed oneself to other members by answering this questionnaire, the confession of sin became an important “humili-meter” among band members.

Certainly, it is not God’s will that we fall back into darkness again: “His invariable ‘will is our sanctification,’ attended with ‘peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.’”<sup>500</sup> However, because of this possibility of falling back into darkness or heaviness even in the stage of sanctification, Wesley warns Christians to be alert and cautious at all times: “O stir

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<sup>498</sup> Lester Ruth, *Early Methodist Life and Spirituality* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2005), 259. While class meetings were required for all Methodists, band meetings were optional. Due to the intensive and confessional character of the band meetings, there were not many Methodists who belonged to them. Both kinds of meetings strengthened the relationship among the Methodists. See also, Cameron, 38.

<sup>499</sup> Henderson, 118-19. After the five basic questions, any of the following questions could be raised: 1. Have you the forgiveness of your sins? 2. Have you peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ? 3. Have you the witness of God's Spirit with your spirit, that you are a child of God? 4. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart? 5. Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you? 6. Do you desire to be told of your faults? 7. Do you desire to be told of all your faults, and that plain and home? 8. Do you desire that every one of us should tell you, from time to time, whatsoever is in his heart concerning you? 9. Consider! Do you desire we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear, concerning you? 10. Do you desire that, in doing this, we should come as close as possible, that we should cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom? 11. Is it your desire and design to be on this, and all other occasions, entirely open, so as to speak everything that is in your heart without exception, without disguise, and without reserve? There were two types of band meetings: band meetings for a single sex, and select co-ed ones. At the end of the confessions forgiveness was pronounced. See “John Wesley the Methodist,” in *A Plain Account of His Life and Work*.

<sup>500</sup> “The Wilderness State,” ii.1, *The Works*, II: 208. Cf. 1 Thess. 4:3; Rom. 14:17.

yourself up before the Lord! ...Pour out your soul unto God in prayer, and continue therein with all perseverance! Watch! Awake out of sleep, and keep awake!”<sup>501</sup> lest you be alienated from the life of God. To do away with sinning in the journey of sanctification—such sin reminding the Christian of the possibility for backsliding—is to do away with the sins of commission and of omission. In this sense, repentance in believers means Christians actively living in accordance with God’s will: “Be holy, because I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:13-16).

Despite God’s will for us to be holy, this journey is not possible by our own efforts. To explain this, Wesley examines the utter helplessness of humanity even in the justified.<sup>502</sup> Such helplessness has two aspects with respect to sin: powerlessness against the sin of omission so that one does not do good, and uselessness against the sin of commission so that one does not stop doing evil.<sup>503</sup> Wesley describes this helplessness in Christians as a state of having “no power either to do good or resist evil; no ability to conquer or even withstand the world, the devil, or their own evil nature.”<sup>504</sup> Because of the helpless condition of the self, Christians should seek God’s help, for with such help Christians are capable of doing things that they could not do by their own strength.<sup>505</sup> Therefore, the knowledge of being helpless and without strength, were it not for the Holy Spirit, must always be kept in mind.<sup>506</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> “The Wilderness State,” iii.5, *The Works*, II: 217.

<sup>502</sup> “The Repentance of Believers,” i.1, i.16-17, *The Works*, I: 336, 344-45. James 4:17: “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” Concerning the sins of omission, Wesley points out a Christian’s negligence of the duty toward God, e.g., disregarding such means of grace as hearing the Word and praying in public and in private.

<sup>503</sup> “The Repentance of Believers,” i.17, *The Works*, I: 345.

<sup>504</sup> “The Repentance of Believers,” i.17, *The Works*, I: 345.

<sup>505</sup> “The Repentance of Believers,” i.17, *The Works*, I: 345.

<sup>506</sup> “The Way to the Kingdom,” ii.6, *The Works*, I: 229.

Unlike the conviction of the fallen nature before justification, after justification Christians are convinced that we cannot do anything good without the help of the Holy Spirit. With this conviction, the justified perform works of piety and works of mercy with the Spirit's aid. In this way, repentance after justification, in all the works of piety and of mercy that are necessary to full sanctification, leads one towards such fullness.<sup>507</sup> Wesley claims that "this is the way wherein God hath appointed his children to wait for complete salvation."<sup>508</sup>

The Holy "Spirit helps in our weakness" (Rom. 8:26) so that we may become humble before God instead of being proud, and may become obedient to God so that we can follow God instead of taking a step ahead of God. By doing away with sins of commission and sins of omission and by gifting us with purity of heart, the Holy Spirit cultivates in us the antidote to sin, which becomes the way of restoring or recovering the image of God that was lost.

For example, for the sin of unbelief, the knowledge of God becomes the remedy,<sup>509</sup> for the sin of independence, submission to the will of God; for the sin of pride, humility before God; for the sin of the lust of the eye, a single eye fixed upon God; for the sin of

<sup>507</sup> "The Scripture Way of Salvation," iii.10, *The Works*, II: 166. Cf. "Means of Grace," *The Works*, I: 376-97.

<sup>508</sup> "The Scripture Way of Salvation," iii.10, *The Works*, II: 166. According to Wesley, "all works of piety [are] such as public prayer, family prayer, and praying in our closet; receiving the Supper of the Lord; searching the Scriptures by hearing, reading, meditating; and using such a measure of fasting or abstinence as our bodily health allows"; "all works of mercy, whether they relate to the bodies or souls of men; such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, visiting those that are in prison, or sick, or variously afflicted; such as the endeavouring to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the stupid sinner, to quicken the lukewarm, to confirm the wavering, to comfort the feebleminded, to succor the tempted, or contribute in any manner to the saving of souls from death." iii.9.

<sup>509</sup> "Salvation by Faith," iii.4, *The Works*, I: 127. In particular, the knowledge of the love of God in Christ is closely related to a Christian's faith journey because without this knowledge there is no way for people to know that "there is yet forgiveness with him, [thence] they will cry aloud that he would blot out their sins. This is the essence of the gospel preaching that Wesley insists preachers should proclaim. This gospel preaching, on faith in Christ, is for the poor, for "they have a peculiar right to have the gospel preached unto them [Mt. 11:5; Lk. 7:22]." iii.7.

desiring vanity and praise, the knowledge of oneself as a sinner before God;<sup>510</sup> for the sin of anger, hatred, malice, and envy, the knowledge of oneself as a creature before God.<sup>511</sup>

In sum, it is humility and love of God that Wesley suggests as the remedy to prevent one from committing sin against God's will. To restore the image of God, according to the mind of Christ, implies nothing other than to live in "faith thus working by love,"<sup>512</sup> with "a loving, thankful acquiescence in, and conformity to, the whole will and word of God."<sup>513</sup>

In this life-long process of the journey with the Holy Spirit, Wesley warns his hearers and readers not to fail to keep watching and praying, lest they commit sins of omission.<sup>514</sup> To be alert in prayer guides one's way in sanctification, for prayer is a means of grace that Christians are to use in order to grow in their dependence on God.<sup>515</sup> Hence, it can be said that prayer is a means of humility. It is in this watchfulness in the journey of sanctification that we may understand fully why Wesley sets a high standard for Christians to be sanctified always here and now:

[God] is able to save you from all the sin that still remains in your heart. He is able to save you from all the sin that cleaves to all your words and actions. He is able to save you from sins of omission, and to supply whatever is wanting in you. It is true, 'This is impossible with man; but with [the] God-man all things are possible.'<sup>516</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> Romans 13:14.

<sup>511</sup> "Sermon on the Mount, II," i.5, *The Works*, I: 490.

<sup>512</sup> "Original Sin," *Anthology*, 333; "The New Birth," *Anthology*, 340.

<sup>513</sup> Lindström, 42-43.

<sup>514</sup> "The Repentance of Believers," i.14, *The Works*, I: 343-44. Wesley's admonition on the sins of omission is influenced by Archbishop Ussher. His other sermons on the same topic are "The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God," "The Law Established through Faith, I," "The Wilderness State," and *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*.

<sup>515</sup> "Heaviness through Manifold Temptation," v.4, *The Works*, II: 235.

<sup>516</sup> "The Repentance of Believers," ii.2, *The Works*, I: 347.

This new life is, therefore to be understood as one of being born again spiritually. Within this new birth, God's sanctifying grace at work in the justified restores the image of God in us "in righteousness and true holiness, when the love of the world is changed into the love of God, pride into humility, passion into meekness; hatred, envy, malice, into a sincere, tender, disinterested [i.e., unprejudiced] love for all mankind."<sup>517</sup> In particular, the change from pride to humility is important because Wesley sees pride as "the root of that grand work of the devil."<sup>518</sup> Therefore, sanctification is a real change in the whole soul by the sanctifying grace of God, a change that "is no other than the whole mind which was in Christ Jesus. It consists of all heavenly affections and tempers mingled together in one," which Wesley calls "gospel holiness," i.e., the *imago Dei* impressed upon the hearts of the justified.<sup>519</sup>

### **B. Knowledge of the Triune God in the Journey of Sanctification**

To mention the Triune God in this stage of sanctification does not necessarily mean that one does not know God the Trinity before sanctification. The knowledge of God in the Trinity is throughout one's journey of salvation; even before justification, the convicting and converting functions of the moral law convey the love of the Triune God.<sup>520</sup> For example, as José Bonino explains, prevenient grace reveals "a theological way of underlining the necessary unity of God's triune work (*opera trinitatis*)—in which the love the Father, the presence of 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' and the

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<sup>517</sup> "The New Birth," ii.5, *The Works*, II: 194.

<sup>518</sup> "The End of Christ's Coming," iii.2, *The Works*, II: 481.

<sup>519</sup> "The New Birth," iii.1, *The Works*, II: 194.

<sup>520</sup> Cf. above, pp. 79 (footnote 274), 81, 83, 118.

creative Spirit that hovered over the face of the chaos cannot be divided (*indivisa sunt*).”<sup>521</sup>

Even though the work of the Triune God is definitely present in one’s journey toward justification, according to Wesley, the true knowledge of God is possible only by faith. One can know God only through faith. Therefore, it is appropriate to deal with the knowledge of God the Trinity in this stage of sanctification.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, according to Wesley self-knowledge is inseparable from the knowledge of God in the journey of sanctification, and this is not knowledge of God in an abstract way but of the Trinitarian God revealed in Scripture and in the Church’s tradition. Wesley strongly opposed the Socinian denial of Christ’s divinity, even as he also criticized the Arian understanding of Christ as “a little God,” inferior to the Father.<sup>522</sup> Being aware of confusion in the Church over Trinitarian doctrine, Wesley insisted that expressions of the same honor are due to all three persons of the “Three-One God, Father, Son, and Spirit, world without end.”<sup>523</sup> According to the Athanasian Creed, included in the *Book of Common Prayer*, the Son is “in glory equal with the Father, in majesty co-eternal.”<sup>524</sup> In accord with this creed, Wesley’s theology is thoroughly Trinitarian, even though he does not insist on using the term “Trinity.” This reluctance is related to his opinion on Calvin’s execution of Servetus:

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<sup>521</sup> José Míguez Bonino, “Wesley in Latin America,” in *Rethinking Wesley’s Theology*. ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 177. According to Wesley, God’s self-revelation is always through the second person of the Trinity; the Father in inaccessible light reveals self by the Word. For more reference see, “The End of Christ’s Coming” and “Original, Nature, Uses and Properties of Law.

<sup>522</sup> “On Knowing Christ after the Flesh,” §5, *The Works*, IV: 100.

<sup>523</sup> “On Knowing Christ after the Flesh,” §16, *The Works*, IV: 106.

<sup>524</sup> “On Knowing Christ after the Flesh,” §8, *The Works*, IV: 102. From this perspective, Wesley warns even against the use of the word “dear” when addressing God. To him, “dear Lord” is an expression of “improper familiarity with God” and a possible cause of irreverence. See §§ 9-12; Collins, “A Reconfiguration of Power: The Basic Trajectory in John Wesley’s Practical Theology”: 167.

I dare not insist upon anyone'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 Servetus 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.'<sup>525</sup>

Therefore, for Wesley, "the Three-One God"<sup>526</sup> is the God of love with regard to our salvation.

Wesley insists that created beings do not have the capacity to know this Three-One God perfectly. He acknowledges that what we think of as our knowledge of God is actually "only some of his attributes he hath been pleased to reveal to us in his Word," such as the truth that "He *is* from everlasting to everlasting."<sup>527</sup> Nevertheless, Wesley optimistically finds that the reason God clouds our vision of him is to lead us to humility, so that we might "walk by faith, not by sight."<sup>528</sup>

To have any knowledge of God, according to Wesley, is possible only through God's grace that opens our interior eye. Out of love for us, the God who initiates the work of our salvation opens the eyes of our understanding. When God "gives us the light of the

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<sup>525</sup> "On The Trinity," §4, footnote 11, *The Works*, II: 377-78. Cf. 1John 5:7. Wesley decried Calvin's execution of Servetus for not using the term "Trinity." In that regard, Wesley did not consider it necessary to use "Trinity" as the only term to express the Triune God.

<sup>526</sup> "On The Trinity," §17, *The Works*, II: 385. Outler comments that Samuel Wesley, Sr. used this phrase in his *Life of Christ* (1697), II, 778.

<sup>527</sup> "The Unity of the Divine Being," §2, *The Works*, IV: 61. Wesley finds a biblical foundation for God's eternal attributes in such passages as Mic. 5:2, Rev. 1:4; 4:8, and Pss. 90:2; 103:17. Among these attributes are omnipresence, perfection, omniscience, and holiness.

<sup>528</sup> 2 Cor. 5:7 in "Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith," §1, *The Works*, IV: 49; Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory*, 113; "The Promise of Understanding," iii.1, *The Works*, IV: 287: "conscious how little we can know of him, we may be the more intent upon knowing ourselves."

knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, a picture of God, so far as he is imitable by man,”<sup>529</sup> then the enlightenment of our spiritual eyes make it possible for us to “see the things which the natural ‘eye hath not seen, neither the ear heard.’ We have a prospect of the invisible things of God.”<sup>530</sup> In this sense, faith that not only justifies a sinner but also sanctifies the justified can be described as seeing and knowing the God of love.<sup>531</sup>

This God of love is expressed in Wesley’s Trinitarian understanding of God, based on 1 John 5:8: “Nothing can separate the Spirit from the Father and the Son... They are one in essence, in knowledge, in will, and in their testimony.”<sup>532</sup> Our consideration of the knowledge of God in this chapter will therefore treat each of the persons of the Trinity in turn, in each case showing the effects of such knowledge for the practical conduct of a Christian’s life.

### 1. *Knowledge of the Father*

We have already seen that Wesley first of all understands God as Creator, a role traditionally ascribed to the Father. The God “who made heaven and earth” initiates a relationship with humanity through creating men and women after his own image:

[God created us] after his own image, to be ‘a picture of his own eternity.’ When he had raised man from the dust of the earth, he breathed into him an immortal

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<sup>529</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, III,” iv, *The Works*, I: 530.

<sup>530</sup> “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” ii.1, *The Works*, II: 160-61.

<sup>531</sup> D. Stephen Long, *Speaking of God: Theology, Language, and Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 127. Long quotes Victor Preller who identifies *scientia dei* (knowledge of God) with faith. Preller also explains Augustine’s threefold account of faith in terms of Aquinas’s understanding: “‘credere Deum’ (believing that God exists), ‘credere Deo’ (believing what God says), ‘credere in Deum’ (faith of commitment).” Long, 136.

<sup>532</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 917-18 (1John 5:8).

spirit. Hence he is peculiarly called ‘the Father of our spirit’; yea, ‘the Father of the spirits of all flesh.’<sup>533</sup>

Therefore, God “spare[s] no pains to preserve always a deep, a continual, a lively, and a joyful sense of his gracious presence.”<sup>534</sup>

God made us “wonderfully and fearfully” for his glory.<sup>535</sup> God as “the Father of the universe, of all the families both in heaven and earth,”<sup>536</sup> is the giver of being and life: out of the paternal love of God the whole creation has come into being. In particular, God endued humans with the *imago Dei* and created them to be happy:

He made all things to be happy. He made man to be happy in himself. He is the proper centre of spirits, for whom every created spirit was made. So true is that well-known saying of the ancient fathers: *Fecisti nos ad te; et irrequietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te*—Thou hast made us for thyself; and our heart cannot rest till it resteth in thee.<sup>537</sup>

This Father of all is “our Creator, the Author of our being; he who raised us from the dust of the earth, who breathed into us the breath of life, and we became living souls.”<sup>538</sup> This Father is also “our Preserver, who day by day sustains the life he has given; of whose continuing love we now and every moment receive life and breath and all things.”<sup>539</sup> As both Creator and Preserver, God is present to all creation, as Wesley teaches by appending some lines of poetry to verses of Psalm 139:

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<sup>533</sup> “The Unity of the Divine Being,” §8, *The Works*, IV: 63. Cf. Gen. 1:27, Wisd. 2:23, Heb. 12:9, Num. 16:22; 27:16.

<sup>534</sup> “On the Omnipresence of God,” *Anthology*, 523.

<sup>535</sup> “What Is Man?” §1. *The Works*, IV: 20. Cf. Ps. 139:14.

<sup>536</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, V,” iii.5, *The Works*, I: 579.

<sup>537</sup> “The Unity of the Divine Being,” §9, *The Works*, IV: 63.

<sup>538</sup> “The Sermon on the Mount, VI,” iii.4, *The Works*, I: 578.

<sup>539</sup> “The Sermon on the Mount, VI,” iii.4, *The Works*, I: 578. For further a Trinitarian perspective, see 1 John 5:7 and Wesley’s sermon “On the Trinity,” *The Works*, II: 374-86.

Thou art about my bed, and about my path, and spiest out all my ways.’ ‘Thou has fashioned me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.’ ... If I could ascend, speaking after the manner of men, to the highest part of the universe, or could I descend to the lowest point, thou art alike present both in one and the other... Indeed thy presence and knowledge not only reach the utmost bounds of creation, but

Thine omnipresent sight,  
Even to the pathless realms extends  
Of uncreated night.<sup>540</sup>

Contrary to the deists’ understanding of God’s absence in the world after creation,<sup>541</sup> Wesley writes that “God acts in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, throughout the whole compass of his creation; by sustaining all things, without which everything would in an instant sink into its primitive nothing.”<sup>542</sup> For this reason,

The serious beholder of space, whether in macrocosm or microcosm, acknowledges with awe that God meets us in every meeting, each moment, each twinkling of the eye, every millimeter of space – God is with us. Emmanuel, the song of the Incarnation, is the grand historical illuminator of the blunter rational idea of omnipresence.<sup>543</sup>

Wesley also uses the metaphor of Light in order to describe the love of the Father as the Giver of undifferentiated care to all, giving some “streaks of light” in order to prevent “utter darkness.”<sup>544</sup> Though the Fall left us in darkness, God shows boundless love through prevenient grace, and restores some of the *imago Dei* so that we may find

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<sup>540</sup> “On the Omnipresence of God,” i.1, *The Works*, IV: 41. The poem is also found in “Sermon on the Mount, VI,’ iii.6 and in John Wesley, *Collection of Psalms and Hymns* (London, 1737), 4, [http://books.google.com/books?id=1\\_UPAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=collection+of+psalms+and+hymns+by+wesley&source](http://books.google.com/books?id=1_UPAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=collection+of+psalms+and+hymns+by+wesley&source) (accessed November 3, 2010).

<sup>541</sup> Oden, 34.

<sup>542</sup> “On the Omnipresence of God,” ii.1; footnote 9, *The Works*, IV: 42. According to Outler, this is Wesley’s concept of “ontological anxiety” (in his letter to Charles on June 27, 1766), which is compatible with Augustine’s. Cf. *Confessions*, XI. iv, XII. vii.

<sup>543</sup> Oden, 37.

<sup>544</sup> “Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith,” §9, *The Works*, IV: 52.

happiness in God. As the “Father of lights, from whom every good and perfect gift descendeth,”<sup>545</sup> God gives us light out of love. e.g., the light of the Decalogue and of Christ the Light, who is the image of the eternal love of the “Father of all things”<sup>546</sup>

As the loving Giver of all grace (prevenient, convincing, justifying, and sanctifying), God knows the creation altogether, even all thoughts before they are formed into words.<sup>547</sup> Thus, God is known as the Giver of love, the Giver of life in creation, and the Giver of grace in restoration, ever watching over those who “fight for the good fight in faith.”<sup>548</sup> Wesley writes that you “cheerfully expect that he before whom you stand will ever guide you with his eye, will support you by his guardian hand, [and] will keep you from all evil.”<sup>549</sup>

To have faith in a loving Father who is eternal with regard to time as well as omnipresent with regard to space, therefore, gives us hope as the remedy for any temptation to despair due to the fickleness or changeability of humanity. Our hope is especially strengthened through our knowing that God is also the Giver of His only begotten Son, for “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath begotten us again of his abundant mercy.”<sup>550</sup>

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<sup>545</sup> “The Witness of Our Own Spirit,” §13, *The Works*, I: 308. The image of light that enlightens everyone was mentioned in chapter II with regard to prevenient grace. While Wesley holds both the total depravity of the *imago Dei* and its partial recovery by prevenient grace he does not discuss the exact proportion of restoration. Rather, he focuses on God’s initiating grace in the restoration of the image of God in humanity through the journey of salvation by faith. Among natural, political and moral *imagines Dei*, the moral image of God appears to be the crucial factor in one’s sanctification.

<sup>546</sup> John Wesley, “A Letter to a Roman Catholic,” in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert C. Outler (New York: Library of Protestant Theology, 1964), 494; Oden, 29. Although Wesley does not use inclusive language in his writing, especially with reference to God, he went beyond the practice of the average Englishmen living in the eighteenth century, as seen, e.g., in his allowing women preachers among the Methodists.

<sup>547</sup> “On the Omnipresence of God,” iii.3, *The Works*, IV: 46.

<sup>548</sup> “On the Omnipresence of God,” iii.5, *The Works*, IV: 47.

<sup>549</sup> “On the Omnipresence of God,” iii.6, *The Works*, IV: 47.

<sup>550</sup> “Heaviness through Manifold Temptations,” iv.3, *The Works*, II: 232.

If he is a Father, then he is good, then he is loving to his children. And here is the first and great reason for prayer. ... [This is] the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all that believe in him; who justifies us ‘freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus’; who hath ‘blotted out all our sins’; ‘and healed all our infirmities’; who hath received us for ‘his own children, by adoption and grace’; ‘and because we are sons, hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father’<sup>551</sup>

Such knowledge of the Father as Creator and Giver profoundly affects the way Christians live their life, not least because it leads them in all humility to give thanks to God for so many gifts. As Wesley writes, a Christian way of life means to live in gratitude because what one has is “not your *own*. It cannot be, unless you are Lord of heaven and earth.”<sup>552</sup> Wesley describes true religion “as a life of *gratitude for God’s good gifts and benevolence toward the needy neighbor in response to God’s gifts* ... in creation and redemption.”<sup>553</sup> Unlike false religion, which “may appear as an arid *practical atheism*,”<sup>554</sup> true religion is founded on faith in God. When we acknowledge and believe that we are God’s creatures, “we owe all we are and have to him[:] surely [God] has a right to all we are and have, to all our love and obedience.”<sup>555</sup>

When in this way we confess God as the Giver and Creator of all creation, we also confess ourselves as stewards: there is nothing we can claim as ours. Being humbly aware that everything is given, we cannot boast of anything as our own. Rather, we are to share things with other people. Wesley urges, “Let us employ our whole soul, body and substance, according to the will of our Lord. Let us render unto God the things that are

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<sup>551</sup> “The Sermon on the Mount, VI,” iii.4, *The Works*, I: 578-79. Cf. Rom. 3:24; Ps. 51:9; Ps. 103:3; Gal. 4:6.

<sup>552</sup> “The Danger of Increasing Riches,” ii.17, *The Works*, IV: 186.

<sup>553</sup> Oden, 41. See also “The Unity of the Divine Being,” §16-17, *The Works*, IV: 67. Italics are in the original.

<sup>554</sup> Oden, 41. Italics are in the original. Cf. “The Righteousness of Faith,” i,1-14, *The Works*, I: 204-9.

<sup>555</sup> “The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart,” i.2, *The Works*, IV: 153. It is worth noting that Wesley’s claim is made at the dawn of the Enlightenment, when human autonomy was emphasized instead of obedience to the Creator.

God's, even all we are and all we have!"<sup>556</sup> Thus, in response to the knowledge of God as the Giver of all creation, Wesley claims that our proper role is one of stewardship.<sup>557</sup>

Even though Wesley does not directly quote Aquinas, such an attitude is in accordance with Aquinas' statement that what is freely given is divine grace, that is, love, "for the good which is in a creature is due to the will of God, and therefore some of the good in a creature is due to the love of God."<sup>558</sup> Jeremy Taylor, whom Wesley avidly read, expressed the same truth in these words:

O, mortify in me all proud thoughts and vain opinions of myself; let me return to thee the acknowledgment and the fruits of all those good things thou hast given me, that, by confessing I am wholly in debt to thee for them, I may not boast myself for what I have received, and for what I am highly accountable; and for what is my own teach me to be ashamed and humble, it being nothing but sin and misery, weakness and uncleanness.<sup>559</sup>

Acknowledging that nothing is of us, but of God, we renounce our will. Seeing in faith that God the Creator is also the Giver, we become dependent on God. Whereas God is the "infinite and independent Being"<sup>560</sup> and the Father of all things, we are temporal, mutable, and dependent,<sup>561</sup> finding the ground of our existence in God. This is the humble attitude that will characterize a Christian on the way to entire sanctification.

## 2. *Knowledge of the Son*

Wesley describes a very high Christology in that "God the father none hath seen,

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<sup>556</sup> "The Danger of Increasing Riches," ii,13, *The Works*, IV: 184.

<sup>557</sup> Stewardship will be discussed further in the latter part of this chapter.

<sup>558</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I-IIae, Q. 110, Art. 1.

<sup>559</sup> Taylor, *Holy Living and Dying*, 126.

<sup>560</sup> "A Letter to a Roman Catholic," in *John Wesley*, 494.

<sup>561</sup> Oden, 40.

nor can see; that from all eternity he hath dwelt in light unapproachable; and by the Son of his love that he hath at any time revealed himself to his creatures.”<sup>562</sup> Wesley calls Jesus “God over all,”<sup>563</sup> one who is “equal with the Father as touching his Godhead, though yielding to the Father as touching his manhood.”<sup>564</sup> By giving God-self to humanity for salvation, Jesus Christ “was made man, joining the human nature with the divine in one person, being conceived by the singular operation of the Holy Ghost and born of the Blessed Virgin Mary.”<sup>565</sup>

Jesus, the Son of God, is the crux of the gift (love) of God. He is the invisible God (Col 1:15) who has been revealed as God made visible by being given to us. This image of God, visible to us, is the Son whose life and death in humility is the summit of God the Father’s gifts. Without having the ultimate gift from God unto all humanity, that is, Christ the Son who lived, died and rose for our sake, Christian faith would not be possible:

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*.<sup>566</sup>

The fact that God became a human being for us, was given for us as our atonement, and

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<sup>562</sup> “The End of Christ’s Coming,” ii.1, *The Works*, II: 478. Wesley describes the appearance of the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, in the Old Testament, as well as in the New Testament. For example, God who walked with Enoch, and who spoke to Moses, is understood as the Son of God. ii.3; God the Light gives us light out of love. e.g., the light of Decalogue and Christ the Light. This, according to Wesley, is the image of the eternal love of the “Father of all things.” “A Letter to a Roman Catholic,” in *John Wesley*, 494; Oden, 29.

<sup>563</sup> “On Knowing Christ after the Flesh,” §3, *The Works*, IV: 99.

<sup>564</sup> “The Lord Our Righteousness,” i.1, *The Works*, I: 452. In the “Sermon on the Mount, I,” Jesus is described as the one who refers to himself with the divine name, “I Am.” Oden, 178.

<sup>565</sup> Oden, 179; “Letter to a Roman Catholic,” in *John Wesley*, 494 (§7).

<sup>566</sup> “Salvation by Faith,” i.5, *The Works*, I: 121. Italics are in the original.

was therefore offered for our salvation, shows the divine language of love.<sup>567</sup> Christ's humble self-emptying through his life, death, and resurrection makes possible the forgiveness of our sins and the restoration of the *imago Dei*. Christ's blood is ever important because "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."<sup>568</sup>

Therefore, Wesley beseeches: "Be it all thy hope to be washed in his blood and renewed by his almighty Spirit 'who himself bare all our sins in his own body on the tree.'"<sup>569</sup>

Having "utterly renounced [our] own,"<sup>570</sup> we stand humbly guilty before God, "look unto Jesus as the whole and sole propitiation for our sins,"<sup>571</sup> and receive the "righteousness which is of God by faith."<sup>572</sup>

The Son of God strikes at the root of that grand work of the devil, pride, causing the sinner to humble himself before the Lord, to abhor himself as it were in dust and ashes. He strikes at the root of self-will, enabling the humbled sinner to say in all things, 'Not as I will, but as thou wilt.' He destroys the love of the world, delivering them that believe in him from 'every foolish and hurtful desire'; from 'the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life.' He saves them from seeking or expecting to find happiness in any creature. As Satan turned the heart of man from the Creator to the creature; so the Son of God turns his heart back again from the creature to the Creator.<sup>573</sup>

The Christian journey of sanctification is only possible through this God-given-gift. In the knowledge of God the Son as the Given, we are to grow toward the fullness of sanctification, Christian perfection, throughout our journey:

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<sup>567</sup> "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweetsmelling savor." *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 716 (Eph. 5:2).

<sup>568</sup> "Christian Perfection," ii.28, *The Works*, II: 120. Cf. Col. 1:14. See also his introductory comment in "On Knowing Christ After the Flesh," *The Works*, IV: 97.

<sup>569</sup> "Sermon on the Mount, I," i.10, *The Works*, I: 481. Only then is the kingdom of heaven in our hearts with righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Cf. 1Pet. 2:24.

<sup>570</sup> "Salvation by Faith," iii.5, *The Works*, I: 127.

<sup>571</sup> "Justification by Faith," iv.8, *The Works*, I: 198.

<sup>572</sup> "Satan's Devices," ii.3, *The Works*, II: 149.

<sup>573</sup> "The End of Christ's Coming," iii.2, *The Works*, II: 481.

As a ‘newborn babe he gladly receives the ἄδολον, the 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 comes unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.’<sup>574</sup>

In this growing and knowing journey of sanctification, therefore, it is essential to look unto Jesus. This looking becomes a key point in this faith journey, because when looking upon God the Son, God as Judge is seen also as the Mediator God for the remission of our sins. To look unto Jesus is to see how God in Christ shares his great love with us.<sup>575</sup> Put differently, by having faith in Christ, by knowing and believing in the merits of Christ for the sake of our salvation, we come to understand, in faith, the merits of his life, death, and resurrection.

To look unto Jesus, however, is not merely to know his relationship with God the Father. Wesley warns that even devils confess Christ as the Son of God (Luke 4:34).<sup>576</sup> Rather, to look unto Jesus, according to Wesley, is to have faith: to know that Christ, the Son of God, “tasted death for every man” and “by the righteousness of one [Christ] the free gift came upon all men unto justification.”<sup>577</sup> God the Father’s love is presented in the Son of God as our Physician, the gift of God, or God the Given.<sup>578</sup> By being crucified and buried, our Physician overcame death, and by rising brought life, breaking the fear of death. Christ, by giving all of himself, “redeemed me and all mankind; having thereby ‘made a

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<sup>574</sup> “Salvation by Faith,” ii.7, *The Works*, I: 124-25. Cf. Romans 1:17; John 1:16; Ephesians 4:13.

<sup>575</sup> To see the Son is to see the Father. Wesley writes of “the similitude of Jehovah... namely, the Son of God.” “The End of Christ’s Coming,” ii.3, *The Works*, II: 479. Cf. 1John 1:2.

<sup>576</sup> “Salvation by Faith,” i.2, *The Works*, I: 119.

<sup>577</sup> “Justification by Faith,” i.8, *The Works*, I: 186.

<sup>578</sup> “The Law Established through Faith, I” i.3, *The Works*, II: 23. The term “God the Given” is my emphasis, derived from Oden’s expression, “God’s gift on the cross.” Oden, 266.

full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.”<sup>579</sup>

As spiritual sight deepens, one sees what one confesses in faith:

He sees that he has ‘an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,’ and that he has ‘redemption in his blood, the remission of his sins.’ He sees a ‘new way’ that is ‘opened into the holiest by the blood of Jesus’; and his ‘light shineth more and more unto the perfect day.’<sup>580</sup>

‘He died for all, that they who live,’ all who live upon the earth, ‘might not henceforth,’ from the moment they knew him, ‘live unto themselves,’ seek their own honour, or profit, or pleasure, ‘but unto him,’ in righteousness and true holiness.<sup>581</sup>

Therefore, to look unto Jesus means to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;”<sup>582</sup> who ascended into heaven and intercedes for us until the completion of God’s salvation.<sup>583</sup> In this knowledge of God sanctification ever continues. Christ died in love as he lived in love, and wants us to live in love. In fact, love can be considered another name of Christ, as he is given to us by God who is love. Therefore, the name “Christian” implies a people who love God and their neighbors.<sup>584</sup> Thanks to the merits of Christ for our salvation, Christians look unto Christ in whom is revealed the face of God.

The knowledge of Christ who is given to us enables us to walk as Christ walked, by having the mind of Christ. Wesley connects the knowledge of God with having the mind of God, which was in Christ. Indeed, Wesley emphasizes the mind of Christ as the

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<sup>579</sup> “Justification by Faith,” i.7, *The Works*, I: 186. Wesley quotes the Eucharistic Prayer from the *Book of Common Prayer*.

<sup>580</sup> “On Living without God,” §9, *The Works*, IV: 172. Cf. Heb. 10:19-20; Prov. 4:18. In this sermon, Wesley explains the universal change in all human senses as they become spiritually awakened to see God, hear God’s voice, taste goodness, and feel God’s love. However, this dissertation intentionally limits its discussion to the sense of sight.

<sup>581</sup> “On Knowing Christ after the Flesh,” §2, *The Works*, IV: 99. Cf. 2Cor. 5:15.

<sup>582</sup> “Original Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” iv.9, *The Works*, II: 19.

<sup>583</sup> Oden, 183.

<sup>584</sup> “The Almost Christian,” ii.(1).1-(II).2, *The Works*, I: 137.

sublime goal for Christians to attain, in order to be like Christ who was humble and obedient to the will of God. Only then, according to Wesley, may a Christian confess that “the life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*.”<sup>585</sup> Christ is the object of our faith that justifies and sanctifies us according to God’s will, for not only was God “‘in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,’ but also Christ loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*.”<sup>586</sup>

The lowliness of Christ’s heart, Wesley teaches, is shown throughout his life and death, but first of all in his coming down to earth from heaven, and becoming like one of us. The essence of the mind in Jesus Christ is described in his *Explanatory Notes* on Philippians 2:6-8:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, counted it no act of robbery to be equal with God: Yet emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.<sup>587</sup>

This coming down to be incarnated is the essence of the mind of Christ: “He was content to forgo the glories of the Creator, and to appear in the form of a creature; nay, to be made in the likeness of the fallen creatures; and not only to share the disgrace, but to suffer the punishment.”<sup>588</sup> In this mind of God, i.e., love, “He *emptied* and He *humbled himself*.”<sup>589</sup> In the mind of God, Christ, the Son of God, we see God who created us in

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<sup>585</sup> “Satan’s Devices, ii.3, *The Works*, II: 149; “The End of Christ’s Coming,” ii.7, *The Works*, II: 480. Cf. Gal. 2:20. Italics are in the original.

<sup>586</sup> “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” ii.2, *The Works*, II: 161. Receiving Christ “in all his offices, as our Prophet, Priest, and King” is to have a divine conviction. Cf. Gal. 2:20; “On Faith,” §11, *The Works*, IV: 196.

<sup>587</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 730-31 (Philippians 2:6-8). Italics are in the original.

<sup>588</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 730 (Philippians 2:7).

<sup>589</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 730 (Philippians 2:6). Italics are in the original.

love, emptied himself in order to be in this temporal world, and was born like us out of love. Therefore, it is the humility of God that Wesley describes in Christ's voluntary humiliation and obedience to "God, though equal with Him."<sup>590</sup>

Wesley explains that our belief that Christ "being in the form of God, counted it no act of robbery to be equal with God" means that Christ is God "*in the essential form*" with "no invasion of another's prerogative, but [by] His own strict and unquestionable right."<sup>591</sup> It is the opposite to our pride, which brings about a "robbing God of that glory which he cannot give unto another."<sup>592</sup> Therefore, for us, to follow Christ's humility in the form of kenotic love is nothing but to empty ourselves of things procured by robbery. Collins writes that Christ's kenotic humility is not applicable to humans in the same way or according to the same measure. "Becoming empty" may sound similar, but for Christ kenosis is to let go of something that *belongs* to him, while for us it is to let go of something that does *not* belong to us: by humility we become empty of our false self and so become who we ought to be.<sup>593</sup>

Moreover, the mind of Christ with regard to humility is found in the way he lived among us, humbling himself so as "to take upon himself the form of a servant, to be found in fashion as a man."<sup>594</sup> That the purpose of God's incarnation is for God to be with us, sinners, and to serve us delivers a strong message about what it means to say "Emmanuel," God with us. Christ's presence and action in human life is the love of God shown in a

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<sup>590</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 731 (Philippians 2:9).

<sup>591</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 730 (Philippians 2:6).

<sup>592</sup> "The Way to the Kingdom," ii.3, *The Works*, I: 227.

<sup>593</sup> Collins also states that "the humility of Christ is not associated with the self-knowledge that emerges from a painful perception of the "distance" between God and humanity, but is intricately identified with the divine righteousness itself." "A Reconfiguration of Power: The Basic Trajectory of John Wesley's Practical Theology": 177. Italics are my emphasis.

<sup>594</sup> "On Knowing Christ after the Flesh," §10, *The Works*, IV: 103.

tangible way. To be with the outcast was a principal form of Jesus' presence during his earthly life. To liberate those who were bound either physically or spiritually was Jesus' mission, as when he opened the eyes of the blind, the ears of the deaf, and the mouth of the mute, and when he proclaimed Good News to the poor.<sup>595</sup> Coming down from the heavenly king's throne, God was with those who needed his presence the most.

In addition, the mind of Christ is vividly manifest in his being abandoned on the cross, crying out, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani" (Mt. 27:46). Commenting on this verse, Wesley writes:

About the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice - Our Lord's great agony probably continued these three whole hours, at the conclusion of which he thus cried out, while he suffered from God himself what was unutterable. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me - Our Lord hereby at once expresses his trust in God, and a most distressing sense of his letting loose the powers of darkness upon him, withdrawing the comfortable discoveries of his presence, and filling his soul with a terrible sense of the wrath due to the sins which he was bearing.<sup>596</sup>

This self-emptying love of God shows us that to be like him we must de-center in order to be re-centered in the image of God. Wesley urges: "Behold how he loveth thee! What could he have done more for thee which he hath not done? ... Look steadily upon him till he looks on thee, and breaks thy hard heart. Then shall thy 'head be waters, and thy eyes fountains of tears.'"<sup>597</sup>

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<sup>595</sup> Cf. Mark 7-8.

<sup>596</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 134 (Mt. 27:46). It is like God hiding his face as in the case of the suffering of Job in Job 23:2. *John Wesley's Notes on the Bible*, ed. Sulu Kelley and Bill Brown <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/john-wesleys-notes-on-the-bible/notes-on-the-book-of-job> (accessed February 9, 2011).

<sup>597</sup> "The Righteousness of Faith," iii.3, *The Works*, I: 215.

The mind of God that was in Christ can truly be understood as the kenotic humility of God, kenotic enough to love people in need as their Emmanuel and loving enough to be abandoned for the sake of their sins.<sup>598</sup> Therefore, having the mind of God in Christ through imitating Christ's love in humility effects the restoration of the image of God in one who has been justified: "He is purified from pride; for Christ was lowly of heart. He is pure from self-will or desire; for Christ desired only to do the will of his Father, and to finish his work. And he is pure from anger, in the common sense of the word; for Christ was meek and gentle, patient and long-suffering."<sup>599</sup>

In some of his most powerful and beautiful sermons Wesley describes the way of life of a Christian who has put on the mind of Christ, as when he writes in one such discourse: "'The life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*' – the proper voice of a child of God. He will then be 'born of God,' inwardly changed by the mighty power of God from 'an earthly, sensual, devilish' mind to 'the mind which was in Christ Jesus.'"<sup>600</sup>

Wesley continues to explain Christianity as true religion with regard to imitating Christ: "the full response of faith and love to this one God is the ground of true human happiness and true religion."<sup>601</sup> He summarizes this full response as follows:

I rejoice because he gives me to feel in myself "the mind that was in Christ": simplicity, a single eye to him in every motion of my heart; power always to fix the

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<sup>598</sup> "On Divine Providence," 11, *The Works*, II: 539. Cf. "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweetsmelling savour" (Ephesians 5:2).

<sup>599</sup> "Christian Perfection," ii.26, *The Works*, II: 119.

<sup>600</sup> "On the Discoveries of Faith," §14, *The Works*, IV: 36. Italics are in the original. Wesley continues to provide Scriptural verses such as Gal.3:26, 1 John 5:10, Rom. 5:5; 8:16: "'Ye are the sons of God by faith; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' 'He that believeth' as a son (as St. John observes) 'hath the witness in himself.'"

<sup>601</sup> "The Unity of the Divine Being," §16-17, *The Works*, IV: 67. Oden, 41.

loving eye of my soul on him who “loved me, and gave himself for me,” to aim at him alone, at his glorious will, in all I think or speak or do; purity, desiring nothing more but God, “crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts,” “setting my affections on things above, not on things of the earth”; ...<sup>602</sup>

In our knowledge of Christ, we realize and solidify the meaning of our lives as Christians, and we continue on the journey of sanctification with a single eye on him. According to Wesley, living with this clear focus is not possible without the aid of the Holy Spirit, so we turn next to what the justified know of the third person of the Trinity.

### 3. *Knowledge of the Holy Spirit*

It was no less a Wesley scholar than Albert Outler who once made the striking claim that John Wesley and his brother Charles “were working with a distinctive *pneumatology* that has no exact equivalent in ‘Western spirituality’ up to our time.... The brothers Wesley placed [Christian perfection] as the capstone of their vision of the entire ‘order of salvation’ and made it turn on an especially vivid sense of the pervasive and personal reality of the Holy Spirit in all human experience.”<sup>603</sup> Outler elsewhere states that the Holy Spirit is the divine agent in the order of salvation, and is “the primal force in all authentic spirituality.”<sup>604</sup>

According to Wesley himself, it is through the Holy Spirit that God the Father is continually showering divine grace upon us so that we might grow unto the fullness of the mind of Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, we become the bearers of the witness that we are

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<sup>602</sup> “The Witness of Our Own Spirit,” §16, *The Works*, I: 310.

<sup>603</sup> Outler, preface to *John and Charles Wesley: Selected Writings and Hymns*, ed. Frank Whaling (New York: Paulist, 1981), xv.

<sup>604</sup> Outler, introduction to *The Works*, I: 57.

children of God.<sup>605</sup> Through the Holy Spirit, liberty is given to the faithful, which frees them from the guilt and punishment of sin.<sup>606</sup> In addition, through the Holy Spirit liberty from the power of sin is bestowed upon a Christian as she or he lives—as a co-worker with the Spirit—a life marked by forgiveness as well as a life of love in the power of righteousness.<sup>607</sup> Through the Holy Spirit, we are assured that we are witness-bearers who walk after the will of God.<sup>608</sup> “*The same Spirit beareth witness with our spirit.* [The Holy Spirit witnesses] with the spirit of every true believer, by a testimony distinct from that of his own spirit, or the testimony of a good conscience.”<sup>609</sup> Thus, the Giver of God’s gift is given to the faithful by the giving of God the Holy Spirit. By the work of the Holy Spirit, which is Giving, God as the Giver who gave himself up for us completes the love of the Triune God.<sup>610</sup>

This Spirit-filled Christian life is what Wesley focuses on in preaching on Acts 4:11, a sermon entitled “Scriptural Christianity.” Oden summarizes Wesley’s focus in this sermon in these words:

The gifts given with and following Pentecost are given for all and are ‘essential to all Christians in all ages’<sup>611</sup>: the mind of Christ, the fruits of the Spirit, the life Christ lived. It is typical for the life of the believer to be filled with the Holy Spirit. That is scriptural Christianity in all ages.<sup>612</sup>

<sup>605</sup> “The Witness of the Spirit, I,” *The Works*, I: 269-284. For further explanation on this sermon, see Oden, 230-35.

<sup>606</sup> 1 Cor. 15:58; “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” iii.5, *The Works*, I: 262.

<sup>607</sup> “The First-fruits of the Spirit,” iii.2, *The Works*, I: 244.

<sup>608</sup> “The First-fruits of the Spirit,” ii.6, *The Works*, I: 240.

<sup>609</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 548; MacCormack, 103. Italics are in the original.

<sup>610</sup> The “Giving” Spirit is my emphasis, parallel to the expressions God as “the Giver” and “the Given.”

<sup>611</sup> “Scriptural Christianity,” §4, *The Works*, I: 160.

<sup>612</sup> Oden, 222. See also the Letter to Conyers Middleton, Jan. 4, 1749. This was an issue between Wesley and Fletcher with regard to whether or not a Christian becomes filled with the Spirit at the new birth. Though this is a significant topic to Wesleyan scholars, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For further reading, see Laurence W. Wood, “John Fletcher and the Rediscovery of Pentecost in Methodism,” *The Asbury Theological Journal* 53, no. 1 (Spring, 1998): 7-34.

God the Giver of life gives us new life in faith only through the life-giving Spirit:

the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. ... those who receive God's love, love each other in word, deed, and truth. They are not puffed up. They are meek and long-suffering. With this love shaping their lives, they would knowingly harm no one. One who receives this Spirit knows that it is not enough merely to abstain from doing evil, but one must do good continually.<sup>613</sup>

In this way, another aspect of humility is introduced, one that we have touched upon in section A.3 of this chapter. Humility as knowledge of ourselves as sinners directs us always to an awareness of our nothingness and therefore could, by itself, lead to a pessimistic sense of sheer helplessness, but humility has another aspect in that it makes one aware that through the Holy Spirit's aid a "helpless" Christian can in fact do all good things. When there is a balance between these two aspects of humility, Christians are conscious of all the good they can do actively, while at the same time they humbly glorify God for whatever it is that they do in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, humility characterizes this journey of sanctification as Christians confess that all things are done because of the Holy Spirit:

I rejoice because I both see and feel, through the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, that all my works are wrought in him, yea, and that it is he who worketh all my works in me. I rejoice in seeing, through the light of God which shines in my heart, that I have power to walk in his ways, and that through his grace I turn not therefrom, to the right hand or to the left.<sup>614</sup>

Therefore, the spirituality of John Wesley as lived experience may rightly be described as a pneumatic spirituality, that is, what Haughey calls living according to a "felt

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<sup>613</sup> Oden, 223. Cf. Romans 5:5.

<sup>614</sup> "The Witness of Our Own Spirit," §16, *The Works*, I: 310.

knowledge, an inner unction the Spirit provides” and experiencing “not the Christ who lived but who lives now and acts in him through the Spirit.”<sup>615</sup> Through the Holy Spirit, a Christian’s life is lived in accordance with the mind of Christ, that is, love: through the Holy Spirit, the love of God is shed on the heart of a Christian.<sup>616</sup> Thence, the holy fruits of the Spirit are given to Christians as the evidence of love within, these fruits or gifts of the Holy Spirit being

‘love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness’; to endue them with ‘faith’ (perhaps it might be rendered ‘fidelity’), with ‘meekness and temperance’; to enable them to ‘crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts,’ its passions and desires; and, in consequence of that *inward change*, to fulfill all *outward* righteousness, ‘to walk as Christ also walked,’ in the ‘walk of faith, the patience of hope, the labour of love’ are *ordinary* fruits of the Spirit.<sup>617</sup>

Those enlightened by faith or forgiven by faith are “made partakers of the Holy Ghost—of lowliness, of meekness, and of the love of God and man shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost which was given unto them”<sup>618</sup> This journey of salvation, or of restoration of the *imago Dei*, is not possible through human efforts alone. It is the journey with the Holy Spirit, abiding in the forgiven. When a Christian knows the things of God, and lives according to what is known, it is through the Spirit<sup>619</sup> who “acts on the wills and affections of men”<sup>620</sup>

Living with “the mind that was in Christ” is therefore not possible without the help of the Spirit of the living God. Knowing that “we are called to be a ‘habitation of God

<sup>615</sup> Haughey, 103. Cf. above, p.74.

<sup>616</sup> “The Witness of the Spirit, II,” iii.5, *The Works*, I: 290. Italics are in the original; *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 754 (1Thess. 1:5), 825 (Heb.6:11), 914 (1John 4:7).

<sup>617</sup> “Scriptural Christianity,” §§4-5, *The Works*, I: 161-62. Italics are in the original.

<sup>618</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, IV,” i.9, *The Works*, I: 538.

<sup>619</sup> “The First-fruits of the Spirit,” §1, *The Works*, I: 234.

<sup>620</sup> “A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,” Pt. I, i.6, *The Works*, XI:108.

through his Spirit'; ... 'and partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,'"<sup>621</sup> we can live in the knowledge of the abiding Spirit of God, who not only stirs us up for striving in faith but also aids us in the pursuit of the imitation of Christ's love.

The works of the Holy Spirit are the works of divine grace that we have already discussed: prevenient, convincing (convicting), justifying, and sanctifying grace. In the knowledge of the Holy Spirit's work that awakens people to see themselves, stirs their consciences, and leads them to the Savior, Christians humbly receive the justifying grace of God and so continue their journey toward Christian perfection, knowing that the Holy Spirit now enables believers to do God's will and grow in faith toward the full restoration of the image of God. Regarding this vital presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the work of salvation, Oden describes the Holy Spirit as the "inception" of Christianity: through the power of the Spirit, a new-born convert becomes a member of the faithful community of the Church, whose members live "in one accord, with one heart and mind, crucified to the world, feeding upon apostolic teaching, breaking bread, praying, sharing and lacking nothing."<sup>622</sup>

Because of this knowledge of the Holy Spirit's bestowal of grace upon their works, Christians become more dependent on God as they hope for the fullness of sanctification. In this way, such knowledge makes Christians more humble as they become aware that the empowering Spirit of the living God is essential if their works are to be acceptable to God. Therefore, humility is brought to the hearts of those who know and depend on the Holy Spirit's help in their journey of sanctification.

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<sup>621</sup> "Awake, Thou That Sleepest," iii.3, *The Works*, I: 153.

<sup>622</sup> Oden, 224-25.

Moreover, empowered by the witness of the Spirit that “we are children of God,”<sup>623</sup> Christians experience “humble rejoicing in God, through Christ”<sup>624</sup> while living as coworkers with the Spirit: “in the whole course of their words and actions, [they bear] the genuine fruits of the Spirit of God, both inward and outward”<sup>625</sup>:

The immediate fruits of the Spirit ruling in the heart are ‘love, joy, peace’; ‘bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering.’ And the outward fruits are the doing good to all men, the doing no evil to any, and the walking in the light—a zealous, uniform obedience to all the commandments of God.<sup>626</sup>

These fruits do not come automatically, rather they are brought forth through the necessary aid of the Spirit of God. That the fruits, simply as attitudes, have no power means that without the Holy Spirit they “cannot conduce in any degree either to the knowledge or love of God.”<sup>627</sup> God is “the giver of every good gift, the author of all grace; that the whole power is of him, whereby through any of these there is any blessing conveyed to our soul.”<sup>628</sup>

To sum up, according to Wesley the Holy Spirit is the spiritual environment of Christian life, “the immediate cause of all holiness in us.”<sup>629</sup> Without this indwelling Spirit of God, scriptural Christianity is not possible, but if Christians live and act in total dependence on the Holy Spirit’s work, then they become capable of doing the very works

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<sup>623</sup> “The Witness of the Spirit, I,” *The Works*, I: 267-84. Oden, 229.

<sup>624</sup> “The Way to the Kingdom,” i.11, *The Works*, I: 223.

<sup>625</sup> “The First-fruits of the Spirit,” i.6, *The Works*, I: 237.

<sup>626</sup> “The Witness of the Spirit, I,” ii.12, *The Works*, I: 283.

<sup>627</sup> “The Means of Grace,” ii.3, *The Works*, I: 382.

<sup>628</sup> “The Means of Grace,” ii.3, *The Works*, I: 382. The means of grace cannot be confused with “the only meritorious *cause*” of salvation, i.e., the blood of Christ alone. Wesley continues that God’s grace can also be *conveyed* without any means. See also Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae*, III, Q. 61, art. 1.

<sup>629</sup> “Letter to a Roman Catholic,” *John Wesley*, 495 (§8).

of God. Knowing that it is the Holy Spirit who empowers Christians to continue the journey of sanctification makes us humble, for nothing is achieved on our own, but only in the power of the Spirit.<sup>630</sup> Therefore, Wesley speaks of sanctification as “a distinct gift of God” for good works, made possible by the Holy Spirit.<sup>631</sup> The final section of this chapter will consider two particular good works that Wesley deemed especially important.

### **C. Humility and Sanctifying Grace: Two Especially Important Works**

#### *1. Generosity in Giving to the Poor*

We have already seen that the self-emptying of a Christian involves giving away what does not belong to us in the first place instead of clinging to possessions as though they were our own. Reflecting on this point allows us to see the very practical side of Wesley’s thought. As he said in the preface to his sermons in 1746, “I design plain truth for plain people; therefore, of set purpose, I abstain from all nice and philosophical speculations; from all perplexed and intricate reasonings; and, as far as possible, from even the show of learning, unless in sometimes citing the original Scripture.... I have accordingly set down in the following sermons what I find in the Bible concerning the way to heaven.”<sup>632</sup>

Having seen firsthand the great disparity in wealth that came with the rise of the Industrial Age in England, Wesley frequently preached about the danger in the love of money and the need for genuine disciples of Christ to be generous in giving to the poor.

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<sup>630</sup> “Christian Perfection,” ii.11, *The Works*, II: 110.

<sup>631</sup> “Justification by Faith,” ii.1, *The Works*, I: 187.

<sup>632</sup> Wesley’s preface to his *Sermons*, §5, *The Works*, I: 106.

Before considering his own teaching, it is worth noting Outler's description of English society at that time:

*That world, in Wesley's day, was largely the creation of an alliance between the new plutocrats of London, Bristol, etc., and the great Whig landed gentry. In ways distortedly described by its anti-bourgeois critics (Max Weber, Werner Sombart, Ernst Troeltsch, R. H. Tawney), this new capitalism had expropriated the so-called 'Calvinist work ethic' and had exploited it to advantages that no good Calvinist would ever have approved. As a result there was a steady accumulation of venture capital in Britain and, correspondingly, a shocking contrast between the Georgian splendours of the newly rich and the grinding misery of the perennial poor (not least, those lately uprooted from ancestral villages and now huddled in and around the cities and pitheads). These masses were Wesley's self-chosen constituency: 'Christ's poor.'*<sup>633</sup>

Distinguishing grace from money, Wesley finds the danger of losing "a single eye" when one chooses money over grace. To have a single eye is nothing but "to trust in God as our end; to have an eye on him in all things; to use all things only as means of enjoying him; wheresoever we are, or whatsoever we do, to see him that is invisible looking on us well-pleased, and to refer all things to him in Christ Jesus."<sup>634</sup> When one's eyes are on money, a person who was once characterized as having a single eye focused on God easily turns into someone with "the desire of the eyes," which is nothing but "foolish and hurtful desires."<sup>635</sup> Wesley did not see money itself as evil.<sup>636</sup> Influenced by the Puritan idea that

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<sup>633</sup> Outler, introduction to "The Use of Money," *The Works*, II: 263. Outler's introductory comment is written in italics. See also "National Sins and Miseries," i.1. In this sermon, Wesley contemplates national poverty. To overcome national sins, Wesley calls his hearers to "purify your hearts from pride, humbling yourselves under the mighty hand of God," ii.9, <http://new.gbqm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/130> (accessed February 10, 2011).

<sup>634</sup> "Sermon on the Mount, IX," §4, *The Works*, I: 635.

<sup>635</sup> "The Danger of Riches," i.18, *The Works*, III: 236.

<sup>636</sup> Outler, introduction to "The Danger of Riches," *The Works*, III: 228. Wesley also indicates the influence of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776) with regard to people's interest in their affluence. However, Kisker argues that Wesley was much harsher than Outler's understanding with regard to monetary issues. Interview with Kisker on Feb. 9, 2011.

the accumulation of riches by means of honest earning is a sign of God's blessing, Wesley, Outler observes, was well aware of the necessity of money: "It is true, riches and the increase of them are the gift of God. Yet great care is to be taken that what is intended for a blessing does not turn into a curse."<sup>637</sup> The gift of God needs to be used in our love for God and neighbor, not misused or abused in our desire for things of the world.

The reason Wesley warns about the danger of riches with regard to the love of money is, then, to be located in the misuse or abuse of money and temptation caused by money, which in itself is a gift from God. It is dangerous, according to Wesley, for he sees the danger of temptation in one's desire to always have more and more. He defines a properly rich person as "whoever has the necessaries and conveniences of life for himself and his family, and a little to spare for them that have not."<sup>638</sup> Whoever has the desire of having more than necessary is in danger, because temptation comes with such a desire: envy and covetousness come into one's heart; and the gift becomes an obstacle for seeing with the single eye of love.

The problem, therefore, is not in money itself but in "*possessing* more than we employ according to the will of the Donor,"<sup>639</sup> who is God. Wesley quotes and comments upon à Kempis' words:

*Cave ne inhereas* [says pious Kempis,] *ne capiaris et pereas* – 'Beware thou cleave not unto them, lest thou be entangled and perish.' Do not make them thy end, thy chief delight; thy happiness, thy God! See that thou expect not happiness in money,

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<sup>637</sup> "The Danger of Increasing Riches," §1, *The Works*, IV: 178.

<sup>638</sup> "The Danger of Increasing Riches," i.1, *The Works*, IV: 179.

<sup>639</sup> "The Danger of Riches," ii.7, *The Works*, III: 238. Italics are in the original. Wesley journal on Sept. 3, 1756 reads, "I never put sixpence out to interest since I was born; nor had I ever an hundred pounds together my own since I came into the world." See, Henry Moore, *Life of the Rev. John Wesley*, II (London, Kershaw, 1824-25), 433-34.

nor anything that is purchasable thereby – in gratifying either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, or the pride of life.<sup>640</sup>

By the gratification of such desire for the world, people may “fall into a snare.”<sup>641</sup> He underlines St. Paul’s words<sup>642</sup>: temptation comes into the heart through the desire to be rich. For example, when the pride of life occupies one’s heart,

[It] seems to imply chiefly the *desire of honour*, of the esteem, admiration, and applause of men; as nothing more directly tends both to beget and cherish pride than the honour that cometh of men. And as *riches* attract much admiration, and occasion much applause, they proportionately minister food for pride, and so may also be referred to this head.<sup>643</sup>

There is even more danger in the love of money, as Wesley finds the close link between unholy desire and unholy passion and temper. In Collins’s analysis, the comparison between the rich and the poor is clear, as well as that between pride and humility:

Wesley discerned a close connection between the accumulation of wealth, on the one hand, and the inculcation of unholy tempers in the human heart, on the other. ... [he] did indeed associate the graces of humility, meekness, and kindness with the poor; and pride, haughtiness, and arrogance with the rich.<sup>644</sup>

Thus, the rich are described as those who tend to be “an easy prey to all evil ones.”<sup>645</sup> In the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), Wesley even confirms that the love of

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<sup>640</sup> “The Danger of Increasing Riches,” i.9, *The Works*, IV: 182. Wesley’s own translation from à Kempis, *Imitation*, I.i.4. Cf. 1John 2:16. Italics are in the original.

<sup>641</sup> “The Danger of Increasing Riches,” ii.16, *The Works*, IV: 185. Therefore, Outler describes riches as a “fatal inlet to sin” in his introduction to “The Danger of Riches,” *The Works*, III: 227.

<sup>642</sup> 1.Tim. 6:9, 17.

<sup>643</sup> “The Danger of Riches,” i.16, *The Works*, III: 235. Italics are in the original.

<sup>644</sup> Kenneth J. Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 239.

<sup>645</sup> “On Riches,” *The Works*, III: 527.

money is “the root of all evil,”<sup>646</sup> which greatly hinders Christians from continuously moving forward in the journey of sanctification. Therefore, the rich, or those who are interested in accumulating ever more wealth, have a proclivity to lose humility before God.

Moreover, when we consider that atheism can cause us to think ourselves higher than we ought, to gratify the desire of the world in pride, and to seek happiness in creatures, the love of money becomes totally opposite to the love of God.<sup>647</sup> Put plainly, the love of money is idolatry. Therefore, Wesley considers the love of money as a main cause of falling back from faith (knowledge of God) into atheism (forgetfulness of God). Pride, or “hurt in your humility,” arises from riches:

Are not you hurt with regard to *humility*? If you are increased in goods, it cannot well be otherwise. Many will think you a better, because you are a richer man; and how can you help thinking so your self? Especially considering the commendations which some will give you in simplicity, and many with a design to serve themselves of you.

If you are hurt in your humility it will appear by this token: you are not so teachable as you were, not so advisable; you are not so easy to be convinced, not so easy to be persuaded. You have a much better opinion of your own judgment, and are more attached to your own will.<sup>648</sup>

Wesley’s denunciation of greed and surplus accumulation is provocative in his admonishment not to be proud among people, but to be humble before God. Concerning riches beyond what is really necessary for one’s life, Wesley laments about the rich:

How hard for them not to think themselves better than the poor, base, uneducated herd of men! How hard not to seek happiness in their riches, or in things dependent upon them; in gratifying the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of

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<sup>646</sup> “The Wisdom of God’s Counsels,” §8, *The Works*, II: 555. Cf. 1Tim. 6:10.

<sup>647</sup> “The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart,” §4, *The Works*, IV: 154.

<sup>648</sup> “The Danger of Riches,” ii.14, *The Works*, III: 242. Italics are in the original.

life! O ye rich, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Only, with God all things are possible.<sup>649</sup>

Also, Wesley equates seeking more than necessary with living “in an open habitual denial of the Lord that bought him.”<sup>650</sup>

‘For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.’ Your heart is sunk into the dust; your soul cleaveth to the ground. Your affections are set, not on things above, but on things of the earth; on poor husks that may poison, but cannot satisfy an everlasting spirit made for God... You have gained riches, and hell-fire.”<sup>651</sup>

Concerned over the fact that contemporary Englishmen were using “the words ‘rich’ and ‘good’ as equivalent terms,”<sup>652</sup> Wesley clearly describes the accumulation of riches, the love of money, as “spiritual infatuation in the world,”<sup>653</sup> by which one proves that one’s “eye is evil; it is not singly fixed on God.”<sup>654</sup> When one’s eye is not singly on God, it is evident that riches are a hindrance “to the very first fruit of faith, namely, the love of God!”<sup>655</sup> from which humility flows. Therefore, hindrance to the love of God (due to the love of money) is a hindrance to humility, and hence to sanctification.<sup>656</sup>

Having considered the close link between riches and pride, Wesley suggests a remedy against this temptation caused by the love of money. He counsels saving money,

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<sup>649</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, VIII,” §14, *The Works*, I: 621.

<sup>650</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, VIII,” §12, *The Works*, I: 620.

<sup>651</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, VIII,” §13, *The Works*, I: 620.

<sup>652</sup> “On Riches,” ii.4, *The Works*, III: 525.

<sup>653</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, VIII,” §10, *The Works*, I: 618. To love the creature not the Creator is idolatry, therefore, the love of money is a branch of idolatry. “On Riches,” ii.2, *The Works*, III: 524.

<sup>654</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, VIII,” §9, *The Works*, I: 616.

<sup>655</sup> “On Riches,” i.2, *The Works*, III: 521.

<sup>656</sup> “On Riches,” i.4, *The Works*, III: 522.

after having gained it with all honesty, in order to “*hoard nothing*”<sup>657</sup>: saving money is not for storing money. To gain is not to lay up treasure on earth, but to share: “‘give all you can,’ that is, all you have.”<sup>658</sup> It is to lay up treasure in heaven, by giving it “to the poor with a single eye, with an upright heart.”<sup>659</sup> If the rich do not share what is given with others in need, according to Wesley, they are “not only robbing God continually, embezzling and wasting their Lord’s goods, and by that very means corrupting their own souls; but also robbing the poor, the hungry, the naked.”<sup>660</sup>

Wesley sees the love of money as a cause of pride. Likewise, he regards giving money away as the remedy to the danger in riches (pride). In this connection, he regularly uses the scriptural term “steward” (or “stewardship”) to encapsulate his teaching about the proper use of wealth, as when he distinguishes between “a debtor” and “a steward” in his sermon “The Good Steward”:

We are to inquire in what respects we are now God’s stewards. We are now indebted to him for all we have; but although a debtor is obliged to return what he has received, yet until the time of payment comes he is at liberty to use it as he pleases. It is not so with a steward: he is not at liberty to use what is lodged in his hands as *he* pleases, but as his master pleases. He has no right to dispose of anything which is in his hands but according to the will of his lord. For he is not the proprietor of any of these things, but barely entrusted with them by another.<sup>661</sup>

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<sup>657</sup> “The Danger of Increasing Riches,” ii.15, *The Works*, IV: 185. Italics are in the original. According to Wesley, “You who receive five hundred pounds a year, and spend only two hundred, do you give three hundred back to God? If not, you certainly rob God of that three hundred.” ii.17, *The Works*, IV: 186.

<sup>658</sup> “The Danger of Increasing Riches,” ii.15, *The Works*, IV: 185.

<sup>659</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, VIII,” §26, *The Works*, I: 629. M. Douglas Meeks finds Wesley’s claim concerning economy in relation to the Torah rule, e.g., “gleaning rights are not voluntary acts of charity of the rich toward the poor; gleaning rights are the poor’s right to livelihood... This Torah rule is the ground for Wesley’s teaching that what one does not need for life... *already belongs to God, and by God’s decree –to the poor.*” Douglas Meeks, “Sanctification and Economy,” in *Rethinking Wesley’s Theology*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1998), 91. Italics are in the original.

<sup>660</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, VIII,” §25, *The Works*, I: 628-29. Outler finds William Law’s influence in this conception. See Law, *Serious Call* (*Works*, IV. 33, 50-51), quoted in “Sermon on the Mount, VIII,” §23, *The Works*, I: 627-28; “On Riches,” ii.3, *The Works*, III: 525.

<sup>661</sup> “The Good Steward,” i.1, *The Works*, II: 283.

In this idea of being stewards, there is nothing that we can claim as ours; our whole being, including our souls, our bodies, our goods, and whatever other talents we have received, is entrusted to us by God. Hence, Wesley describes God as “Proprietor,” “Disposer and Lord of all,” and us as stewards.<sup>662</sup> Everything that is given is not at our own disposal. In dealing with worldly goods and money, Wesley states, “it is unspeakably precious if we are ‘wise and faithful stewards’ of it; if we employ every part of it for such purposes as our blessed Lord has commanded us to do.”<sup>663</sup>

To say that God is Proprietor, while we are stewards, is to acknowledge God as Creator and Giver. In this knowledge, Wesley affirms, our stewardship regarding the use of money is not just an expression of benevolence, but of a “Christian’s accountability to God” because God will require an accounting from us:

How didst thou employ the *worldly goods* which I lodged in thy hands? Didst thou use thy food, not so as to seek or place thy happiness therein, but so as to preserve thy body in health, in strength and vigour, a fit instrument for the soul? Didst thou use apparel, not to nourish pride or vanity, much less to tempt others to sin, but conveniently and decently to defend thyself from the injuries of the weather? Didst thou prepare and use thy house and all other conveniences with a single eye to my glory? In every point seeking not thy own honour, but mine; studying to please, not thyself, but me? Once more: in what manner didst thou employ that comprehensive talent, *money*? Not in gratifying the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life? Not squandering it away in vain expenses, the same as throwing it into the sea? Not hoarding it up to leave behind thee, the same as burying it in the earth?<sup>664</sup>

Thus, we are to be accountable for our stewardship in the use of God’s manifold gifts. Wesley recommends that we become good stewards by being attached not to gifts,

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<sup>662</sup> “The Good Steward,” i.1, *The Works*, II: 284.

<sup>663</sup> “The Good Steward,” i.7, *The Works*, II: 286.

<sup>664</sup> “The Good Steward,” iii.5, *The Works*, II: 295. Italics are in the original.

but to the Giver in whom alone is happiness: “*use* the world, and *enjoy* God. Sit as loose to all things here below as if you [were] a poor beggar.”<sup>665</sup> Wesley’s understanding of good stewardship with regard to the use of money and other worldly goods clearly relates to glorifying God alone through love for God alone, and thus to humbling ourselves.

This also concerns our relationship with other people in the use of money.

According to Wesley, we should *gain* all we can, *save* all we can, in order to *give* all we can. In this way, we can earn through honestly and diligently working, without harming neighbors; we can save all we can by not wasting money “to gratify the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life.”<sup>666</sup> As noted earlier, it is necessary to be watchful in saving money lest the journey of sanctification be hindered by pride:

No doubt many will applaud thy elegance of taste, thy generosity and hospitality. But do not buy their applause so dear. Rather be content with the honour that cometh from God. . . .

Whenever therefore you expend anything to please your taste or other senses, you pay so much for sensuality. When you lay out money to please your eye, you give so much for an increase of curiosity, for a stronger attachment to these pleasures, which perish in the using. While you are purchasing anything which men use to applaud, you are purchasing more vanity.<sup>667</sup>

Wesley understands that becoming rich is very natural to Christians, because their lives are frugal and they are diligent in gaining money. However, becoming wealthy is not the goal. Genuine Christians resist the temptation to become ever richer by following Wesley’s admonitions to give away whatever they do not really need: we should gain and save all that we can only in order to give away all that we can:

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<sup>665</sup> “On Riches,” ii.12, *The Works*, III: 528. Italics are in the original.

<sup>666</sup> “The Use of Money,” ii.2, *The Works*, II: 274.

<sup>667</sup> “The Use of Money,” ii.5, *The Works*, II: 275.

You may find [a few] that observe the first rule, namely, ‘Gain all you can.’ You may find a few that observed the second, ‘Save all you can.’ But how many have you found that observe the third rule, ‘Give all you can’? ...nothing can be more plain than that all who observe the two first rules without the third will be twofold more the children of hell than ever they were before.<sup>668</sup>

When Christians consider saving money for storage instead of giving it away, the love of money undermines Christianity and prevents it from spreading. Urging that we should use money for the glory of God, Wesley firmly states, “All this is nothing if a man go not forward, if he does not point all this at a farther end. Nor indeed can a man properly be said to save anything if he only lays it up.”<sup>669</sup> A faithful steward does not hold back whatever remains after using goods for necessary conveniences for family members and the self; rather, he restores “the remainder to [God], through the poor, whom [God] had appointed to receive it.”<sup>670</sup>

With regard to his urging that we should give the rest to the poor, Wesley provides the standard of faithful stewardship: “Give all ye have, as well as all ye are, a spiritual sacrifice to him who withheld not from you his Son, his only Son.”<sup>671</sup> Good stewardship begins with the knowledge that everything, even one’s self (including one’s body and soul), is not one’s own; God is the Proprietor and we are stewards.<sup>672</sup> He exhorts, “Try whether you can say to the Searcher of hearts, your conscience not condemning you: ‘Lord, thou seest I am going to expend this sum on that food, apparel, furniture. And thou knowest I

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<sup>668</sup> “Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity,” §8, *The Works*, IV: 91. Wesley indicates the spiritual health of Christians in this problem of “the mammon of unrighteousness.”

<sup>669</sup> “The Use of Money,” iii.1, *The Works*, II: 277.

<sup>670</sup> “The Good Steward,” iii.5, *The Works*, II: 295.

<sup>671</sup> “The Use of Money,” iii.7, *The Works*, II: 280.

<sup>672</sup> “The Use of Money,” iii, 2, *The Works*, II: 277.

act herein with a single eye as a steward of thy goods, expending this portion of them thus in pursuance of the design thou hadst in entrusting me with them.”<sup>673</sup>

There should not be pride in giving to the poor, because what is shared is from God the Giver, Donor, or Proprietor who *lends* the goods to us. God “*entrusts* them to us as stewards, reserving the property of them to himself.”<sup>674</sup> If the giving is unwilling, it is usurping the proprietorship of God the Giver. Therefore, we are only to be conveyors of what is given, not possessors. The gift, which is given by God, needs to be used faithfully:<sup>675</sup>

To speak more properly still, who lodged it for a time in your hands as his *stewards*? Informing you, at the same time, for what purposes he entrusted you with it? And can you *afford* to waste your Lord’s goods, for every part of which you are to give an account, or explain them in any other way than that which he hath expressly appointed? ... This ‘affording’ to rob God is the very cant of hell. Do not you know that God *entrusted* you with that money (all above what buys necessaries for your families) to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to help the stranger, the widow, the fatherless; and indeed, as far as it will go, to relieve the wants of all mankind.<sup>676</sup>

If gaining and saving are not for the purpose of giving away all that one can, it grieves the Holy Spirit, according to Wesley. In this connection Wesley also uses the language of the sin of “detaining” when he writes: “*you* impiously, unjustly, and cruelly detain from them what your Master and theirs lodges in *your* hands on purpose to supply *their* wants!”<sup>677</sup>

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<sup>673</sup> “The Use of Money,” iii.5, *The Works*, II: 278.

<sup>674</sup> “The Danger of Riches,” i.5, *The Works*, III: 231. Italics are in the original.

<sup>675</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, IX,” §27, *The Works*, I: 647.

<sup>676</sup> “The Danger of Increasing Riches,” ii.12, *The Works*, IV: 183-84. Italics are in the original.

<sup>677</sup> “Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity,” §9, *The Works*, IV: 91. Italics are in the original.

We can have a glimpse of Wesley's hope for an egalitarian, non-competitive society through his conception of the stewardship of money or material goods.<sup>678</sup> In our love for God expressed through our love for our neighbors by giving all we can, there should be no comparison with others, because nothing can be claimed as our own; not only money or other goods but also health, knowledge, influence, capability, time, and the like. If we avoid comparisons of ourselves with others, humility becomes the very attitude of stewardship.

In light of the proprietorship of God, all of us are creatures, all are sinners, and all are stewards. When we as stewards do not appropriate things to ourselves, when we glorify the Proprietor, God becomes the center, not ourselves. Thus, true self-knowledge as a steward before God instills humility and grateful love of God.<sup>679</sup>

## 2. *Visiting the Sick*

Although Wesley did not treat this second kind of good work as frequently as he treated giving generously to the poor, he nevertheless considered visiting the sick one of the most important ways of humbly serving one's neighbor. This is evident in his sermon on this topic, where he explains that love for neighbor is not limited to the sharing of money, but extends to imitating the divine Emmanuel who is relational not only within the Trinity but also with respect to creatures like us. Concerning those who are "in a state of

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<sup>678</sup> According to Marquardt, during the eighteenth century the poverty rate increased, as the Industrial Revolution stimulated the polarization between the poor and the rich. Concerning the misery of the lower classes, see Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles*, trans. John E. Steely and W. Stephen Gunter (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 19-20.

<sup>679</sup> According to Wesley, faithful stewardship extends beyond the human boundary to nature. When he exclaims, "O earth, earth, earth! How dost thou groan under that villainies of thy *Christian* inhabitants!" we can infer that love given by God is to extend to the whole creation. "The Mystery of Iniquity," §33, *The Works*, II: 468.

affliction, whether of mind or body; and [without judging] whether they are good or bad, whether they fear God or not,”<sup>680</sup> Wesley exhorts his hearers and readers to be zealous in visiting the sick. By the term “visiting” he means the ministry of presence: “we render ‘visit’ in its literal acceptation [which] means to ‘look upon’ [which] cannot be done unless you are present with them.”<sup>681</sup> Hence, Wesley clearly distinguishes between visiting the sick in person and merely sending them assistance. Because Wesley considered genuine personal presence to be beyond what simple human effort could accomplish, one of his most inspiring reflections on humility comes in his admonition about what one ought to do even before entering the home of a sick person:

Before ever you enter upon the work you should be deeply convinced that you are by no means sufficient for it; you have neither sufficient grace, nor sufficient understanding, to perform it in the most excellent manner. And this will convince you of the necessity of applying to the Strong for strength, and of flying to the Father of lights, the Giver of every good gift. ... Whenever therefore you are about to enter upon the work, seek his help by earnest prayer. Cry to him for the whole spirit of humility, lest if pride steal into your heart, if you ascribe anything to yourself, while you strive to save others you destroy your own soul.<sup>682</sup>

Because being present with the sick is an opportunity to lean on God, to seek God’s grace, and to pray for help, visiting the sick can “increase in lowliness, in patience, in tenderness of spirit, in sympathy with the afflicted.”<sup>683</sup> In addition, being with someone usually leads the visitor to inquire about the other’s condition, thereby fostering a relationship of mutual knowing and understanding. “Prayer joins us not only to God but to the one for whom we

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<sup>680</sup> “On Visiting the Sick,” i.1, *The Works*, III: 387.

<sup>681</sup> “On Visiting the Sick,” i.2, *The Works*, III: 387.

<sup>682</sup> “On Visiting the Sick,” ii.1, *The Works*, III: 389-90.

<sup>683</sup> “On Visiting the Sick,” ii.1, *The Works*, III: 389.

pray.”<sup>684</sup> In building this kind of relationship, inquiries can extend to spiritual matters, beyond the physical needs of the one who is ill.<sup>685</sup>

One advantage of this work of mercy over that of generously giving to the poor is that even the poor can practice it, despite the fact that they have no superfluous material possessions to share with others. Wesley accordingly exhorts the poor in these words:

Go on! Go on! Thou poor disciple of a poor Master! Do as he did in the days of his flesh! Whenever thou hast an opportunity, go about doing good, and healing all that are oppressed of the devil; encouraging them to shake off his chains, and fly immediately to him

Who sets the prisoners free, and breaks  
The iron bondage from their necks.

Above all, give them your prayers. Pray with them; pray for them! And who knows but you may save their souls alive?<sup>686</sup>

It is obvious not just from this passage but from all we have seen of Wesley’s preaching and practice in the course of this dissertation that for him a life of humble, loving service is not limited to some individuals alone. As Marquardt writes, “Wesley considered the religion of love to be the remedy for all the world’s evil, and he was not satisfied with the conversion of some, nor indeed many, individuals. Instead, he added: ‘This religion we long to see established in the world.’”<sup>687</sup> Wesley’s active involvement in

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<sup>684</sup> Marjorie Suchocki, “The Perfection of Prayer,” in *Rethinking Wesley’s Theology: For Contemporary Methodism*. ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 52.

<sup>685</sup> “On Visiting the Sick,” i.3, *The Works*, III: 387. The reason “the rich in general have so little sympathy for the poor is because they so seldom visit them.”

<sup>686</sup> “On Visiting the Sick,” iii.4, *The Works*, III: 394. Even the old and the young are not excluded from this work of mercy. This life of imitating Christ also can be found Wesley’s emphasis on the communication of the Eucharist (Holy Communion); however, this is not within the scope of this dissertation. For further reference, see “The Duty of Constant Communion,” “Means of Grace.” Also see Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996); *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

<sup>687</sup> Marquardt, 123 (quoted from *Works*, 8:3).

the renewal of society with regard to prisons, slavery, and education are intimately related to his understanding of the religion of love. Even though such matters are beyond the scope of this dissertation, Collins' statement is worth noting:<sup>688</sup>

In the Methodist society, the poor, so neglected in eighteenth-century England, learned of their high dignity and calling as men and women created in the image and likeness of the Three-One God, a God of satisfying and abiding love. They understood, perhaps for the first time, that their identity was rooted not in themselves, nor in the groups to which they belonged, nor even in the circumstances of their lives, but in the Three-One God who had called them to participate in nothing less than the divine life and who continued to love them in Jesus Christ. This transvaluation, so readily perceived by the poor, is no doubt one of the chief reasons why the common people often heard John Wesley gladly.<sup>689</sup>

Wesley considered everyone, rich or poor, to be called to this kind of transvaluation, and in his eyes this included the presence of genuine humility, as he says so clearly in one of his discourses on the Sermon on the Mount: a Christian who continually loves God and does the work of faith is a person “so full of genuine humility, so unaffectedly serious, so mild and gentle, so free from all selfish design, so [devoted] to God, and such an active lover of men, [that he] should be the darling of mankind.”<sup>690</sup>

In this way of fulfilling the commandments, a Christian's journey of sanctification truly becomes a journey toward Christian perfection, i.e., a journey toward “perfect love,” whereby one is being restored to the fullness of the *imago Dei*.<sup>691</sup> Especially by fulfilling

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<sup>688</sup> For further research, see Marquardt's *John Wesley's Social Ethics*.

<sup>689</sup> Collins, “A Reconfiguration of Power: The Basic Trajectory of John Wesley's Practical Theology,” 183.

<sup>690</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, III,” iii.1, *The Works*, I: 520.

<sup>691</sup> “On Sin in Believers,” intro., *The Works*, I: 316. In his notes on 1 John 2:4-6, Wesley explains the close connection between knowing God and keeping God's commandments (love) in that “to ‘know him,’ to be ‘in him,’ to ‘abide in him,’ are nearly synonymous terms; only with a gradation—knowledge, communion, constancy.”

the great commandments to love God and neighbor, a Christian recovers the image of God, which is righteousness and holiness.<sup>692</sup>

Even though the journey of sanctification is pointed toward entire sanctification or the full restoration of the *imago Dei*, Wesley was keenly aware of the possibility of backsliding, as we have seen at many points in this dissertation. Therefore, he continually reminds us of the necessity of humility, as is evident when he quotes from one of his brother Charles's hymns in his sermon "Christian Perfection":

Give me the meek and lowly mind,  
And lay my spirit in the dust.  
Show me how foul my heart hath been,  
When all renewed by grace I am;  
When thou hast emptied me of sin,  
Show me the fullness of my shame.  
Open my faith's interior eye,  
Display thy glory from above<sup>693</sup>

That hymn, of course, is itself a prayer, and for Wesley prayer was one of the principal ways for a Christian to remain aware of one's true standing before God, which itself is another way of describing genuine humility. In his sermon on the privilege of those who have been born of God, Wesley writes of prayer as a form of spiritual breathing:

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<sup>692</sup> "The End of Christ's Coming," i.7, *The Works*, II: 475. According to Wesley, "as a free agent [one] steadily chose whatever was good, according to the direction of his understanding. In so doing he was unspeakably happy, dwelling in God and God in him, having an uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son through the eternal Spirit"; Wesley also claims, "the continuance in works of mercy is necessary to salvation" because "We are [God's] workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared, that we might walk therein." "On Visiting the Sick," §1-2, *The Works*, III: 385-86.

<sup>693</sup> "Christian Perfection," poem 24-26, *The Works*, II: 124. Outler characterizes Wesley's idea of Christian perfection as that of "the 'early Eastern tradition of *τελειότης* as a never ending aspiration for all of love's fullness (*perfecting perfection*)," not some sort of absolute "perfected perfection." Outler, introduction to "Christian Perfection," *The Works*, II: 98.

From what has been said, we may learn ... what the life of God in the soul of a believer is, wherein it properly consists, and what is immediately and necessarily implied therein. It immediately and necessarily implies the continual inspiration of God's Holy Spirit: God's breathing into the soul, and the soul's breathing back what it first receives from God; a continual action of God upon the soul, the reaction of the soul upon God; and unceasing presence of God, the loving, pardoning God, manifested to the heart, and perceived by faith; and an unceasing return of love, praise, and prayer, offering up all the thoughts of our hearts, all the words of our tongues, all the works of our hands, all our body, soul, and spirit, to be an holy sacrifice, acceptable unto God in Christ Jesus.<sup>694</sup>

Just as one who does not breathe is lifeless, one who does not pray is unable to bring forth fruit, especially the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Prayer, "the breath of our spiritual life," is crucial, for "He that lives cannot possibly cease breathing. So much as we really enjoy of the presence of God, so much prayer and praise do we offer up *without ceasing*; else our rejoicing is but delusion."<sup>695</sup>

While praying, one communes with God through this kind of "spiritual breathing," remains mindful of God, and knows one's true status before the divine Proprietor. In that knowledge of self before God, humility in love can continue up to entire sanctification as we journey toward the goal where God wants us to be. This is why Wesley could, with St. Paul, speak of joy, prayer, and gratitude for the goodness of God even while the journey is ongoing:

Rejoice evermore: Pray without ceasing: In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit... And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may the whole of you, the spirit and the

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<sup>694</sup> "The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God," iii.2, *The Works*, I: 442.

<sup>695</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 762 (1Thessalonians 5:17). We ought to be totally dependent on God for our lives through prayer. Wesley's first advice with regard to Christian perfection is "Watch and pray continually against pride." *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 95. Italics are in the original.

soul and the body, be preserved blameless unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>696</sup>

## Conclusion

According to Wesley, Christians who are in the process of restoring the *imago Dei* are sojourners toward Christian perfection. By perfection, Wesley means that Christians become like God through their journey of sanctification by faith. Even though the word “perfection” does not mean “perfected perfection” but rather “*perfecting perfection*,” sanctification or holiness is an endless journey in faith through grace.<sup>697</sup> Therefore, Christians’ journeys toward perfection are toward the fullness of the image of God, i.e., entire sanctification. The journey of sanctification could be seen as a journey of holiness (inward and outward) or a journey of love (for God and neighbors). However, in this chapter the journey has been viewed from the perspective of the role of humility.

Humility in the form of self-knowledge has been dealt with in the context of the sin that remains in believers and of the repentance to which they are called. A keen awareness of sin after justification could become a trap for Christians to fall into despair, but Wesley observes that when the justified grow in their knowledge of the Three-One God, they become empowered by the refreshing power of the Holy Spirit. The repentance of believers overpowers their inbred sin through the Spirit’s aid. Hence, humility in the self-knowledge of inbred sin in believers and humility in the knowledge of God who empowers believers converge in the Christian journey of sanctification. A mysterious interaction

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<sup>696</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 762-63 (1 Thessalonians 5:16-19, 23). For further reference to the necessity of prayer, see Suchocki, 49-63.

<sup>697</sup> “Christian Perfection,” Outler, introduction to “Christian Perfection,” *The Works*, II: 98. Italics are in the original.

between being known by God and knowing God is found in the justified, without which one is always liable to fall back into forgetfulness of the divine presence.<sup>698</sup> Wesley presents humility derived from the knowledge of God when he writes that “[I] can do something, through Christ strengthening [me],” even as Paul once wrote, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil.4:13).<sup>699</sup>

The journey of sanctification in humility is also a journey of loving God and neighbor. By keeping a single eye on God, one does not lose the focus of her or his love for God, while the humility that flows from the love of God accompanies one’s meekness, resignation, and patience. These holy tempers witness to the fruits of the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of those who love God.<sup>700</sup>

In our willingness to love God with a single intention, the Holy Spirit helps preserve us from yielding to the temptations of a proud imagination: “When the temptation comes the grace will come. In great trials you will have greater strength.”<sup>701</sup> Again, when the love of money tempts the faithful, humility becomes an antidote. Love for the world causes pride and atheism, whereas humble love for God heals pride and atheism. As we have seen, in his serious warnings against the love of money, Wesley emphasizes the necessity of humility if a Christian is properly to discipline herself or himself. But he was not content in his sermons on riches simply to give pious exhortations; he also provided rules: earn all you can, save all you can, and give all you can. As he elicits the reason why we should give all we can, Wesley says, “Let us render unto God the things that are God’s,

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<sup>698</sup> Concerning the relationship between knowing and being known, see Parker Palmer’s *To Know As We Are Known* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993).

<sup>699</sup> “On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” iii.5-6, *The Works*, III: 208.

<sup>700</sup> “On Riches,” i.4, *The Works*, III: 522.

<sup>701</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, IX,” §27, *The Works*, I: 647.

even all we are and all we have!”<sup>702</sup> Here is the concept of stewardship that can embrace all forms of humility before God. There is nothing we can appropriate to ourselves as our own, for everything is given by God, and in following God’s will, along with the Spirit’s guidance, we can give all we can and so provide evidence of our love for God through our love for neighbors, including in a special way our loving presence to those who are sick.

It is clear, then, that humility and love belong together in the journey of sanctification. Such is the life of having the mind of Christ, which is not something static, for it moves us toward the fullness of the *Imago Dei*. The seed of righteousness planted at the moment of being justified and born again continues to grow,<sup>703</sup> and will keep growing if only we “walk humbly and closely with our God,”<sup>704</sup> as Wesley says in this passage from his sermon “Salvation by Faith”:

Meantime we should take the utmost care to walk humbly and closely with our God. Walk humbly: for if you in any wise rob God of his honour, if you ascribe anything to yourself, the things which should have been for your wealth will prove to you ‘an occasion of falling.’<sup>705</sup>

Now that we have seen in some detail the place of humility in the various stages of the journey toward entire sanctification, the final chapter of this dissertation will briefly summarize our principal findings.

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<sup>702</sup> “The Danger of Increasing Riches,” ii.13, *The Works*, IV: 184.

<sup>703</sup> “Salvation by Faith,” *Anthology*, 43; “Christian Perfection,” *Anthology*, 81. “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed [remains] in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil (1 John 3:7-10).” Wesley believes that salvation is attainable on earth as one partakes, by faith, in Christ’s death and resurrection.

<sup>704</sup> “On Divine Providence,” §27, *The Works*, II: 549.

<sup>705</sup> “On Divine Providence,” §29, *The Works*, II: 549.

## Chapter V: CONCLUDING SUMMARY

This dissertation is an attempt to view humility as a lens through which Wesley's understanding of the journey of salvation can be seen as a whole. With this goal in mind, contextual research preceded the examination of the role of humility in Wesley's account of justification and of sanctification, in chapters two, three, and four, respectively.

### A. *The Context of Wesley's Spirituality*

According to Sandra M. Schneider's definition of Christian spirituality—namely, that it is the “lived experience” of the Trinitarian God in the context of Christian community<sup>706</sup>—Wesley's life as an Anglican preacher and reformer was examined. The historical, anthropological, and theological contexts of his thought were dealt with in order to provide background for his understanding of Christian salvation and of the role of humility in the process of salvation. Since Wesley's work cannot be understood without considering the tradition of the Anglican Church, the history of the English Reformation was explored as a story of conflicts and turmoil centered around *The Book of Common Prayer*.

During this turmoil, Anglican, Catholic, and Protestant doctrinal positions were at various times in the ascendant, even as diverse Protestant denominations vied among themselves. Even though the *Book of Common Prayer* proposes Christ's own humility as

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<sup>706</sup> Schneiders, 6.

the great example to all,<sup>707</sup> the *Book* at times served to support political or ecclesiastical factions instead of promoting humility in the English people. When Elizabeth forced people under the Act of Uniformity to use the *Book of Common Prayer*, it became the cause of division among the English: some were willing to use it, while others dissented and became non-conformists.<sup>708</sup> Both of Wesley's parents were from non-conformist families.<sup>709</sup> Though his parents became Anglican before Wesley was born, the legacy of dissent remained in him.

This legacy that Wesley inherited was dealt with in the section of chapter two that examined the anthropological background of Wesley's thought. Above all, his mother Susanna's Puritan influence was considered, for Wesley's strict, disciplined way of life is a key factor for understanding him as a Methodist and as a follower of Christ in the process of holiness. Heitzenrater points out that Wesley's sense of discipline was pervasive in the "Holy Club" at Oxford.<sup>710</sup> It was during these Oxford years that Wesley read influential Christian authors such as Jeremy Taylor, Thomas à Kempis, and William Law, in addition to reading the Bible. Their writings greatly influenced his understanding of holiness, especially the life of humility. His desire to live with "simplicity of intention, and purity of affection" with entire devotion to God was born through the reading of these authors.<sup>711</sup> In particular, the daily self-examinations that marked this Oxford period were maintained

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<sup>707</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer*, 36, 63, 323.

<sup>708</sup> Peck, 154.

<sup>709</sup> They became dissenters with the restoration of the monarchy after the Commonwealth, not with Elizabeth. Cf. above, pp. 25-26.

<sup>710</sup> Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory*, 15.

<sup>711</sup> *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 9-10 (§3).

throughout his life. However, the works of Taylor, à Kempis, and Law did not bring him an inner peace or an assurance of salvation.

His encounter with the Moravians on the voyage to the American colony of Georgia challenged Wesley in such a way that he could eventually understand and experience the faith that saves. Divine conviction,<sup>712</sup> the conviction given by divine grace of the love of God in creation and salvation, the knowledge of God that awakens the blind eyes of the soul, and knowledge of himself as a sinful creature came to Wesley, who up till then had been pursuing the works of holiness as a path to salvation.<sup>713</sup> His experience at Aldersgate Street on the night of May 24, 1738 turned around his understanding of the order of salvation: he now saw that holiness or sanctification does not precede justification, and that one can be justified only by faith through God's justifying grace (*sola fide*). Wesley now eagerly learned from the Moravians, Calvinists, and Anglicans with regard to salvation by faith.

The section on Wesley's theological background focused on his understanding of theological anthropology. Wesley regularly understood the process of salvation in terms of the *imago Dei*: created, fallen, and restored. Restoration of the *imago Dei* is the goal of the journey of a Christian in the entire process. Wesley describes the *imago Dei* before the fall with reference to natural, political, and moral *imagines*. According to the natural image of God, humans were created as spiritual beings with perfect understanding and free will, through which a person, if not fallen, could have known God perfectly, loved God fully,

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<sup>712</sup> For the reference to "divine conviction" in terms of faith, see above, pp. 96-98 (Chapter III. C.1).

<sup>713</sup> Cannon, 48-50.

and freely done what she or he willed according to that knowledge.<sup>714</sup> According to the political image of God, humans were endowed with a governing power over other creatures, while according to the moral image, that is, righteousness and true holiness, a person could have followed the divine rectitude in the order of creation in tune with God's will and thereby lived in happiness:<sup>715</sup> "Then indeed to live was to enjoy, when every faculty was in its perfection."<sup>716</sup> Where there is fullness of love for God, there is happiness.

However, such a perfect state in creation was lost when the representative of humanity forgot the Creator and gave in to the lustful desire of being higher. Forgetting his status as a creature, Adam wanted to be like God. Wesley sees this sin of pride as inseparable from *atheism*, which means *being without God*.<sup>717</sup> "Unbelief begot pride."<sup>718</sup> Hence, atheism and pride go together in this first sin of Adam and in all his descendants. This is a perverted desire to imitate God, by which the true image of God and the favor of God are lost.<sup>719</sup> Wesley understands pride in terms of self-will, the selfish desire to be like God, and the usurpation of the glory that belongs to God alone. This concept of usurpation makes sinners equivalent to robbers: "your sins are robbers, your pleasures are robbers, your companions in sin are robbers and thieves."<sup>720</sup>

As the *imago Dei* was lost by atheism and pride, the *imago Dei* can be recovered through faith and humility. The journey of faith and humility, therefore, becomes the

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<sup>714</sup> Cf. above, p. 49-50 (Chapter II. C.1).

<sup>715</sup> "The New Birth," §1-i.1, *The Works*, II: 187-88; "The End of Christ's Coming," i.10, *The Works*, II: 477. Cf. above, p.50 (Chapter II.C.1).

<sup>716</sup> "The Image of God," i.4, *The Works*, IV: 295.

<sup>717</sup> "Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith," §20, *The Works*, IV: 58. Cf. above, pp.54-56 (Chapter II.C.2).

<sup>718</sup> "The End of Christ's Coming," i.9, *The Works*, II: 477.

<sup>719</sup> "The Mystery of Iniquity," §2, *The Works*, II: 452.

<sup>720</sup> *Directions for Renewing Our Covenant with God*, 5. This image of robbers reminds me of the robbers on both sides of Christ on the cross. Christ with all sinners was hung on the cross, for the sake of all robbers.

content of the order of salvation toward the restoration of the *imago Dei*. Anything that has been done without God is idolatrous and atheistic, according to Wesley, and seeking happiness apart from God is nonsense. Wesley is in agreement with Augustine on ontological anxiety: one cannot be at rest until one is in God.<sup>721</sup> Therefore the journey of restoring the *imago Dei* cannot be made without God; it is a journey with God, a journey in faith.

However, the beginning of this journey by faith in God does not lie within the power of humans, whose eyes were darkened in the fall. It is the Creator God's love that takes the initiative in this journey of restoration or salvation. By prevenient grace, God has partially restored what was lost in the Fall. Wesley explains that this is what "prevented utter darkness" and restored some knowledge of God the Giver, though such knowledge is imperfect.<sup>722</sup> Reason, conscience, and free will (liberty) were partially recovered by prevenient grace, universally given to all humanity. Because of this divine work of prevenient grace, humans even after the Fall could see a glimpse of the reality of the self as sick, could see the helplessness of the self in healing and thereby seek the Healer.

### B. *Humility on the way toward Justification*

Given the lack of previous research on humility among Wesley scholars, humility in its diverse meanings was explored at some length in chapter three, in particular, humility in the form of self-examination or self-knowledge before God. The meanings of humility

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<sup>721</sup> "The Unity of Divine Being," §9; "The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart," i.4, *The Works*, IV: 64, 154. Also, see footnote 540 in chapter IV.

<sup>722</sup> "Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith," §§8-10, *The Works*, IV: 52; "[God] entrusts us with only an exceeding small share of knowledge in our present state, lest our knowledge should interfere with our humility, and we should again affect to be as gods." "The End of Christ's Coming," iii.3, *The Works*, II: 482.

in Greek (*tapeinotēs*) and the Latin (*humilitas*) carry both negative and positive connotations. Negatively, humility means being miserable, low, base, shabby, and unimportant, whereas the positive aspect of humility, as seen in some of Plato's works, connotes modesty and orderliness. The opposite of both aspects, however, is regularly called "pride" or "self-exaltation." Hence, humility can be understood as knowing oneself in order to avoid exalting or overestimating oneself.<sup>723</sup>

Humility as self-knowledge also relates to the idea of poverty of spirit in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. In the Old Testament, poverty was seen as meaning individual, material poverty as well as communal and spiritual poverty. The poor are the humble in the Old Testament, for they voluntarily bend before God in their lowly economic and social conditions. In the New Testament, poverty is often viewed from a moral perspective: in their expectation of the Messiah, who is envisaged as the ideal Judge, the poor seek righteous treatment and justice.<sup>724</sup> The plea for justice is linked with the prayer of the poor, even as the first of the Beatitudes is the proclamation of happiness for the poor. Jesus, however, does not only beatify the poor and humble; he is also an example for them, "the great mirror and exemplar of all humility,"<sup>725</sup> a notion found in Paul's letters to the Philippians and Romans.

Wesley also describes the poor in spirit as the humble because they know themselves as sinners. They are "those to whom God hath given that first repentance which is previous to faith in Christ."<sup>726</sup> Just as Augustine requires humility in a sinner if

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<sup>723</sup> Adnès, 1140.

<sup>724</sup> Adnès, 1142-44.

<sup>725</sup> Adnès, 1179.

<sup>726</sup> "Sermon on the Mount, I," i.4, *The Works*, I: 477.

she or he is to be converted and saved, so too does Wesley consider humility in the form of self-knowledge to be necessary prior to justification.

In this connection, the objection that—according to Wesley—justification by faith does not require any action that could be called “virtue” was considered. It was shown that Wesley, at least in his sermons on Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, does not regard humility as a virtue.<sup>727</sup> Self-knowledge as humility was there understood by him as a conviction of sin rather than a virtuous work, a conviction given by God and coming prior to the faith that justifies a sinner. This reluctance to call humility, prior to justification in particular, a virtue seems to have been due to several factors. One was Wesley’s great concern to avoid saying anything that might imply a doctrine of justification or salvation by works. In addition, he was concerned about the danger that if humility were to be considered a virtue and so could lead persons to be respected precisely for their humility, they might easily fall back into sin through pride. Thirdly, he well knew that his whole doctrine about the possibility of a person’s leading a sinless life—a life of “Christian perfection”—was a target for critics’ attacks, especially if they understood his teaching about such perfection to refer to an active life of good or virtuous works accomplished by one’s own effort. Accordingly, self-knowledge (humility) was seen exclusively in terms of prevenient grace, and conscience was said to be “implanted by God in every soul that comes into the world, [as a power] of perceiving what is right or wrong in his own heart or life.”<sup>728</sup>

One’s conscience correlates with the moral law, which Wesley describes as “the

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<sup>727</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, I,” i.7, *The Works*, I: 479.

<sup>728</sup> “The Witness of Our Own Spirit,” §5, *The Works*, I: 302.

mind of God,” the rightness and fitness of God, and he goes on to say that this law has three functions: those of convicting, converting, and sustaining.<sup>729</sup> The self-knowledge that leads one to a conviction of sin belongs to the convicting function of the moral law. In the conviction of sin, one may turn to God seeking healing and forgiveness, leading toward the second function of the moral law: converting. And since the moral law itself is a gift from God, conviction in self-knowledge is understood as a work of divine grace and not anything that humans do themselves (*sola gratia*).

The parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15 was then considered in detail as being one of Wesley’s favored ways of indicating a self-knowing person’s journey home, where the Father is waiting for him. Self-knowledge alone, however, cannot bridge the gap between conviction and conversion. Free will, itself another prevenient grace, is necessary for the continuation of the journey home.<sup>730</sup> Together and ideally, they bring one to the cusp of justification, which alone allows one to be called a Christian.

Wesley claims that “Christianity begins just where heathen morality ends,” meaning that justification is possible only through faith, not by any moral fulfillment.<sup>731</sup> Justification, that is, God’s work for our salvation, is what restores a person to the favor of God. Therefore, justifying grace can also be called forgiving grace, for being justified means being forgiven, freed from the guilt of sin. Self-knowledge deepens in the form of conviction and repentance, for there is no forgiveness for those who do not ask for forgiveness; and those who do not know themselves as sinners cannot ask for forgiveness.

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<sup>729</sup> “The scripture Way of Salvation,” i.2, *The Works*, II: 156. The moral law was also “in some measure re-inscribed.” “The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,” i.2, i.4, *The Works*, II; 7. Cf. above, pp. 81-84.

<sup>730</sup> Cf. above, pp.89-90 (Chapter III.B.3).

<sup>731</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, I,” i.9, *The Works*, I; 480.

Therefore, self-knowledge in justification is knowledge of oneself as a sinner—it is not enough simply to know oneself as a creature, for “it is not a *saint* but a *sinner* that is *forgiven*.”<sup>732</sup>

To receive justifying grace is to respond to God’s forgiving grace with humility in the forms of self-knowledge, conviction, and repentance, which are possible through prevenient grace. Knowing oneself as a “helpless, damned sinner” leads one to confess one’s helplessness before God and to be open to receive the justifying grace that is freely given when one turns to God’s mercy. Only then can one confess Christ as redeemer. As Wesley writes, “Christ died for *my* sins, loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*.”<sup>733</sup> In other words, being convinced of sinfulness in self-knowledge, one is repentant and thereby receives the divine grace of justification by faith. In section C.2 of chapter three, the necessity of repentance before justification was examined. In his sermon “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” Wesley states, “repentance and its fruits are only *remotely* necessary, ... to faith; whereas faith is *immediately* and *directly* necessary to justification.”<sup>734</sup>

Regarding the necessity of repentance before justification by faith, Wesley’s own words can be interpreted in two opposing ways. On the one hand, Collins interprets Wesley’s stance as implying that repentance is an unnecessary work. On the other hand, if one takes seriously Wesley’s use of the adverbs “remotely” and “immediately,” both repentance and faith will be seen as necessary, but the former only remotely, while the latter will be judged to be immediately necessary. Therefore, *pace* Collins, repentance can be regarded as necessary prior to justification.

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<sup>732</sup> “Justification by Faith,” iii.2, *The Works*, I; 191. Italics are in the original.

<sup>733</sup> “Justification by Faith,” iv.2, *The Works*, I; 194. Italics are in the original.

<sup>734</sup> “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” iii.2, *The Works*, II; 163. Italics are in the original.

Being set right with God, having one's sins forgiven, is not "justification by repentance" but "justification by faith," for there are major differences between repentance and justifying faith. Wesley explains the difference in terms of the spirit of bondage and the spirit of adoption. Prior to having humility or self-knowledge before God, one is in "the natural state," a state of ignorant darkness. Through self-knowledge before God and through convincing grace, one comes to "the legal state," where in conviction of sin one experiences the faith of a servant, also called the spirit of bondage. This legal state is characterized by fear of death and of the coming wrath of God the Judge.<sup>735</sup> Because of this divine gift of the spirit of servanthood, one repents in prayer until the spirit of adoption is given. Then, in faith, one's sins are forgiven "by the merits of Christ" and one is restored to God's favor. Seeing God as a loving Father, one's state also changes from "legal" to "evangelical," and this is a witness to the presence of the spirit of adoption.<sup>736</sup>

Wesley's understanding of faith is closely related to the five senses, the sense of sight in particular. The transition from the natural to the evangelical state is described as the restoring of eyesight or the opening of eyes, even as Wesley explains that faith "is the 'evidence of things not seen,' of the *invisible world*; of all those invisible things which are revealed in the oracles of God."<sup>737</sup> This divine evidence, i.e., faith, is

not discovered by our bodily senses as being either past, future, or spiritual. Justifying faith implies, not only a divine evidence or conviction that "God was in

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<sup>735</sup> "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption," ii.1-3, *The Works*, I: 255-56. As a partial perception of God, conviction is understood as a low species/degree of faith, but it is not saving faith. It does not have power to free one from sin and enable one to love God. Cf. above, pp. 96-97 (Chapter III.C.1).

<sup>736</sup> "The Witness of the Spirit, I," i.1, *The Works*, I: 270.

<sup>737</sup> "On Faith," §4, *The Works*, IV: 189.

Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,” but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for *my* sins, that he loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*.<sup>738</sup>

Therefore, true saving faith is not just an assent to a doctrinal statement; rather it is the conviction, divinely given to the humble (the repentant with self-knowledge), of the love of God. Within this faith, self-knowledge, conviction and repentance converge, and one’s “eyes are opened in quite another manner than before, even to see a loving, gracious God.”<sup>739</sup>

By faith in the love of God, one experiences the power of God’s deliverance. Now one confesses that everything is God’s gift, and in this confession one can only be humble. Such a love of God can be clearly understood in the Lucan parable of the prodigal son from the perspective of the prodigal, extravagant Father. The scene when the Father saw his son “returning, starved, naked” and ran to his son and embraced and kissed him conveys the image of the justifying grace of God, while the son’s response to his Father completes the embrace between them.<sup>740</sup>

When this extravagant love is seen and known to the faithful, one in humility becomes the recipient of justifying grace, which leads one to see God and the things of God at a deeper level. Just as a baby grows to become a mature adult,<sup>741</sup> or as a tree grows and yields many fruits, those who have the knowledge of God, i.e., faith, continue the journey of faith to become persons who are seen and known as being among the faithful. Wesley calls this continuing journey from justification *the journey of sanctification* or of

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<sup>738</sup> “On the Discoveries of Faith,” iv.2, *The Works*, I: 194.

<sup>739</sup> “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” iii.2, *The Works*, I: 260.

<sup>740</sup> Cf. above, p. 108 (Chapter III.C.2).

<sup>741</sup> “Christian Perfection,” ii.1, *The Works*, II: 105.

*holiness*. Through this continuous journey in faith, one becomes holy as God is holy and is thereby restored to the *imago Dei* in which one was created.

### C. *Humility after Justification: in Sanctification*

From the moment one is justified by faith through grace, the journey of sanctification begins, as examined in chapter four. It is a Christian's journey in faith and grace, the two wings of *sola fide* and *sola gratia*, with which a Christian moves forward to the full restoration of the *imago Dei*, i.e., "entire sanctification." This journey of sanctification, however, is not without humility. Humility through self-knowledge as well as through the knowledge of God is essential in the journey of sanctification, for it is always possible for one to fall back into sin unless one guards herself or himself by humble knowledge of self and of God. A Christian, even though having tasted the forgiving grace of God through justification, still finds inbred sin, that is, sin remaining in the justified. Wesley calls it "the root of evil," from which all other sins may spring when a Christian surrenders to it.

Inbred sin can be explained with regard to unbelief, pride, vanity, and the lust of the flesh, to name a few of the vices by which one may forget and depart from God.<sup>742</sup> However, when a Christian knows God's love in salvation, she or he becomes gratefully humble before God, and then no sin can spring forth. When a Christian is aware of the self's helplessness in doing away with this inbred sin, and at the same time perseveres in doing more good deeds, she becomes more dependent on God and humbly submits her will to God's will. Thus, in the knowledge of God and of self, humility remains a bulwark

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<sup>742</sup> "The Way to the Kingdom," ii.2, *Anthology*, 128.

against sin in believers. Humility based on the knowledge of God and the knowledge of self becomes essential in the journey of sanctification as an antidote to atheism and pride.

In his sermons on doing away with inbred sin, and thereby all possible sins of commission and omission, Wesley regularly treats the need of repentance in believers. Just as there are sins of commission and sins of omission, there must be repentance by not doing evil and repentance by doing good. Humility in this repentance of believers functions in two modes: passive and active. In knowing oneself as being prone to sin, a Christian becomes aware of how powerless and useless the self is in repenting of sins of commission and of omission. The humility elicited by self-examination encourages one to see only the impossibility of doing good by one's own efforts. However, when this self-knowledge is placed before God, this passive sense of helplessness turns into the opportunity of actively asking for God's help in the struggle. Thus, the more one is humbled in the knowledge that even being a mature Christian does not preclude the possibility of stumbling in the journey of sanctification, the more one humbly leans on the Spirit's help.

Wesley writes that the knowledge of God and self present in the heart of a believer provides a guard against inbred sin. Since Wesley's preaching was based thoroughly on the Bible and mainstream Christian tradition, he discusses knowledge of God not in an abstract way but in the fully Trinitarian terms of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Recovering the image of God, therefore, includes knowing this God of Trinitarian relations.

He writes of the Father as the Giver of life and love in creation as well as in salvation (new creation). As Creator, God is "the Father of the universe, of all the families

both in heaven and earth.”<sup>743</sup> This Giver of life made us “wonderfully and fearfully,” so that we can be happy in and with the God of creation.<sup>744</sup> God as Creator, Giver, and the Father of all beings is omnipresent, with sustaining, preserving love for creatures, a love that is shown to us through prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace and that draws us in turn to prayer.

Above all, this love for us is shown in the giving of God’s only Son for our salvation, for God the Giver of life wants us to be healed and restored to our original rectitude. The one who is given is “the image of the invisible God,” Emmanuel, Jesus Christ.<sup>745</sup> The Incarnation is the most sublime image of God’s humility, by which the omnipresent God is revealed as living among us in self-giving, self-emptying love. Wesley’s understanding of Jesus Christ as “God over all”<sup>746</sup> is underlined as he sees God’s self-giving love in the mind of Christ. God is given for our salvation. That the Giver becomes the Given is the summit not only of God’s love but of God’s humility, a truth that Wesley found above all in Philippians 2:5-8:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, counted it no act of robbery to be equal with God: Yet emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death.<sup>747</sup>

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<sup>743</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, V,” iii.5, *The Works*, I: 579. See also above p. 148.

<sup>744</sup> “On the Omnipresence of God,” *Anthology*, 523; “The Unity of the Divine Being,” §9, *The Works*, IV: 63.

<sup>745</sup> Col. 1:15. Cf. above, pp. 152-58.

<sup>746</sup> “On Knowing Christ after the Flesh,” §3, *The Works*, IV: 99.

<sup>747</sup> *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 730-31 (Philippians 2:5-8).

This kenotic humility of Christ is the humility that we as Christians are encouraged to follow on the journey of sanctification. In following this life of Christ's humility, we imitate Christ and become restored to the image of God:

Then thou learnest of him to be "lowly of heart," And this is the true, genuine, Christian humility, which flows from a sense of the love of God, reconciled to us in Christ Jesus. "Poverty of spirit," in this meaning of the word, begins where a sense of guilt and of the wrath of God ends; and is a continual sense of our total dependence on him for every good thought or word or work; of our utter inability to all good unless he "water us every moment."<sup>748</sup>

This imitation of Christ is the antidote to the sin remaining in the justified. The restoration takes a lifetime, and the Holy Spirit's help is essential to make this journey move forward to its completion. The prevenient, convincing, justifying, and sanctifying grace of God is poured upon us through God the Spirit so that we may become responsive to the love of God. Because of this ever-present work of the Spirit, Wesley calls the inception of salvation "the work of the Holy Spirit."<sup>749</sup>

Wesley sometimes speaks of this work as God's watering of divine grace over us, so that we Christians can grow into the fullness of the *imago Dei* and become bearers of the witness of the Spirit through love and humility in our daily lives.<sup>750</sup> This Spirit-led Christian life is a new life in faith: "a renewal of soul after [God's] likeness."<sup>751</sup> Only through the Holy Spirit can one's journey of sanctification continue, and through the work of the Spirit one who had been passively humble before God becomes active in God, a co-worker with the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>748</sup> "Sermon on the Mount, I," *The Works*, I: 482.

<sup>749</sup> "The Scripture Way of Salvation," i.1, *The Works*, II: 156.

<sup>750</sup> "The Witness of the Spirit, I," *The Works*, I: 269-84; "Sermon on the Mount, I," *The Works*, I: 482.

<sup>751</sup> "The Witness of Our Own Spirit," §16, *The Works*, I: 310.

Because of the work of God the Spirit, who is the Giving of love, the journey of sanctification becomes a journey of love: love of God and neighbor. Like humility, love too becomes an antidote to pride.<sup>752</sup> In this sense humility and love accompany each other in the journey of sanctification: doing good, avoiding evil, loving God and loving neighbors. The journey to become like God, having the mind of Christ, is relational because love is a language of relationships, and the God of love we imitate is a God of *perichoretic* relationship.<sup>753</sup>

Wesley also uses the terminology of “a single eye” to describe what it means for us to be in the right relationship with God.<sup>754</sup> As faith is envisaged as the opening of an eye to see who God is and to recognize the story of God’s love, the journey of sanctification requires keeping this eye singly fixed upon God: “if their eye was single, their whole body would be full of light.”<sup>755</sup> To have a single eye on God has nothing to do with having “‘the pride of life,’ the desire of wealth, of pomp, or of the honour that cometh of men.”<sup>756</sup> Indeed, Wesley identifies the love of pride in the world with having an evil eye, whereas having a single eye fixed upon God is a manifestation of humility.

Wesley, however, was well aware of the way in which various temptations can lead a person to abandon this single-minded focus on God. Some of his most powerful sermons warn against yielding to a desire for more and more wealth. The danger of the love of money, Wesley claims, is that it can transform one’s single eye on God into an evil eye

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<sup>752</sup> “Satan’s Devices,” §3, *The Works*, II: 140.

<sup>753</sup> Oden explains that Wesley affirms the classical term *περιχώρησις* (*perichoresis*) in his understanding of the Trinitarian God. Oden, 180. Cf. 1 John 5:7.

<sup>754</sup> The image of “single eye” is related to Wesley’s understanding of spiritual development: faith as opening of internal eyesight; growing in grace as looking up to Jesus Christ; and total dependence on God as having a single eye on God. Cf. above, pp. 105, 120, 153, 170.

<sup>755</sup> Mt. 6:22.

<sup>756</sup> “Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith,” §17, *The Works*, IV: 56-7.

fixated on the world. Out of this love of money, or serving mammon, arise typical symptoms of atheism, such as self-will, self-love, pride, and desire for praise rather than for doing the will of God.<sup>757</sup> Wesley strenuously warns against the danger of the love of money, for it can cause Christians to forget God (atheism) and become prideful of themselves, thereby becoming a stumbling block for others in our common journey of holiness, humility, love, and sanctification. In fact, the love of money or riches can be a hindrance “to the very first fruit of faith, namely, the love of God!”<sup>758</sup>

Wesley finds the remedy for the vice of greed in his understanding of our status as stewards of God’s creation. He writes at length of God as the Proprietor of all things. For us to exercise a responsible stewardship before the Proprietor, Wesley emphasizes, we must use the many gifts given us only according to the will of the Proprietor, for only when we use these manifold gifts, especially monetary gifts, in ways acceptable to God can we be happy. For this right usage, Wesley reminds us of the threefold requirement for being faithful stewards: earning all we can, saving all we can, and most importantly giving all we can.<sup>759</sup> An accountable steward earns and saves in order to give all she or he can. What is given is to be shared with others, not accumulated for oneself. If a steward accumulates money over and above what is needed for necessities, it is equivalent to robbing God, according to Wesley. He asks, “Do not you know that God *entrusted* you with that money... to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to help the stranger, the widow,

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<sup>757</sup> “Sermon on the Mount, IX,” §10, *The Works*, I: 637. Hence, having a single eye on God is compatible with perfecting free will in love. Cf. above, pp. 52, 90.

<sup>758</sup> “On riches,” i.2, *The Works*, III: 521.

<sup>759</sup> By giving all as we can, we imitate God who is the Giver. Cf. above, p. 171-73 (Chapter IV.C.1).

the fatherless; and indeed, as far as it will go, to relieve the wants of all mankind”?<sup>760</sup> In this way, to love God with a single eye extends to loving neighbors in humility. It is “in humility” because all that we can share and give away is not ours but belongs to God the Proprietor, so there is no reason to be proud in giving what God has given to us. All of us—rich and poor—are sinners in need of a Savior.

In the knowledge of God as the Proprietor, the humble in poverty of spirit can extend their love for God to their neighbors in meekness, gentleness, and patience by putting on the mind of Christ. As one particular way to do this, Wesley preaches about the importance of visiting the sick in order to explain how a humble steward can love her or his neighbor in the love of God. This neighborly love happens in the open interaction between the visitor and the person who is sick, with the latter experiencing something of God’s grace through the gracious visit of a Christian (fellow creature).

Through his emphasis on love for neighbors by visiting the sick, Wesley also brings to light the significance of being present in one’s ministry.<sup>761</sup> As God is the omnipresent Creator, Preserver and the Giver of love, as God is Emmanuel who came to be with us, and as God is the Spirit abiding in the work of salvation in us, we who are on the journey of becoming like God learn the ministry of presence through the love of our neighbors. This is the active aspect of humility through which Christians become agents of love. This life of love for God and neighbor is our duty, for we were wonderfully made to glorify God, and God mercifully saved us to be eternally happy according to God’s purpose of creation.

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<sup>760</sup> “The Danger of Increasing Riches,” ii.12, *The Works*, IV: 183-84.

<sup>761</sup> Cf. above, pp.176-80 (Chapter IV.C.1-2).

In sum, for Wesley the journey of sanctification is a journey of becoming ever more like God through a life of love. Love always accompanies humility, whether it be love in our relationship with God as stewards with a single eye or in our relationship with neighbors as fellow creatures with whom we are to share our goods and whom we are to serve when they are ill or otherwise in need. Hence it is possible for Wesley to say that “knowing in divine grace” is linked to “becoming like God in divine grace.”<sup>762</sup> In knowing oneself, one turns in humility toward God through repentance and by prioritizing the will of God and the needs of our neighbor over any self-centered desires of our own.

#### D. *Final Remarks*

This dissertation has examined humility as a crucial element in John Wesley’s understanding of the entire process of spiritual development toward Christian perfection. Humility as knowledge of oneself as a created being (“human” out of *humus*) effects an essential enlightenment through the prevenient grace of God the Creator. Humility as knowledge of oneself as a sinner, helpless on one’s own to save oneself, enables one to seek salvation in God the Redeemer.<sup>763</sup> Humility as self-knowledge in being forgiven through freely given justifying grace leads one to be grateful for the love of God who is both Giver and Given. By humility in one’s knowledge of the God of love, one follows the will of God the Savior and Lord. By humility in the journey of following God’s will through the love of neighbor, one experiences the fruits of God the Spirit, God as Giving.

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<sup>762</sup> My emphasis: to know God is to love God. Only by loving, one can know God; to love God is to become like God. Love is to be lived and experienced rather than spoken. Therefore, to know God is linked to become like God.

<sup>763</sup> “The Way to the Kingdom,” ii.1, *Anthology*, 128.

Humility not only enlightens our understanding of self and God, but also directs the reformation of our will by charity.<sup>764</sup> Just as without love there is no happiness, so too without humility there is no love or charity.<sup>765</sup> Likewise, without humility, true happiness in God cannot be had. It is through loving God and every human creature that we fulfill the moral law.<sup>766</sup> According to Wesley, this divine law of love always accompanies humility, “for [love] necessarily implies ‘bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind’ (seeing ‘love is not puffed up’), ‘gentleness, meekness, long-suffering.’”<sup>767</sup>

The journey of sanctification in humility can be seen as the journey of Christians’ reparation of their relationship with God and neighbor. As God is the God of relationship (through God’s omnipresence in creation, through Emmanuel, and through the indwelling Spirit’s work in and among us), Christians who are in the process of having the image of God restored in them are also called to be relational. In this perspective, humility has a crucial role in each step of spiritual development. When our vertical relationship with God is restored, the favor of God is restored; and when the favor of God is upon us, our horizontal relationship with our neighbor may be fulfilled according to God’s will. Then we love our neighbor for the sake of God. When one is truly humble before God, the love of God in one’s life can be seen in the love of other people because all are equally in need

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<sup>764</sup> “The Love of God” iii.2, *The Works*, IV: 300; “The Circumcision of the Heart, ii.1; “On Charity,” i.1.

<sup>765</sup> “On Love, ii.4, 7, iii.3, *The Works*, IV: 383-86.

<sup>766</sup> Cf. above, p. 118.

<sup>767</sup> “The Way to the Kingdom,” i.9, *The Works*, I: 222. Cf. Col. 3:12, 1Cor. 13:4-7. Thus, humility is essential in the functions of the moral law (the mind of God: love). Cf. above, p.80-81. For the transition from the natural state to the legal state of humanity, humility through self-knowledge is the convicting role of the moral law, and humility through repentance is the converting role of the moral law. For the transition from the legal to evangelical state, humility through love for God and neighbor fulfills the sustaining role of the moral law. This life of humility in love is possible only by faith, as Wesley explains this evangelical state in his *Notes on Philippians 2:9* “not by my own strength, but *by faith* alone”; by faith, God engrafts in a Christian the righteousness of Christ, so that a Christian can do love not with “merely outward righteousness prescribed by the law, ... [but with] inward righteousness *which is through faith* – Which can flow from no other fountain.” *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament*, 734 (Philippians 3:9).

of God's grace. Thus, humility in the forms of the knowledge of God and of oneself before God is essential in the whole journey of salvation, without which one cannot recover the image of God, who is personal and relational.

The *imago Dei* under restoration in terms of our relationship was reviewed in Wesley's emphasis on *giving all we can* in our various ministries, such as the *ministry of presence* in visiting the sick. Just as God the Giver's love is shown through God the Given's *giving up himself*, Wesley's strong message to give all we can is a way for us to restore the image of God. Like the opening arms of the Father of the prodigal son, God the Son opened his arms on the cross toward all people. Thus, opening our arms toward our fellow creatures in the whole world is another way of becoming like God in the journey of restoration of the *imago Dei*.<sup>768</sup>

To become like God through this journey of faith is possible through the knowledge of God. To have the knowledge of God is to have relationship with God. In order to have such relationship, the knowledge of oneself before God needs to come first. We may become like God whom we know through deepening our relationship with God in love. In this sense, the way of knowing God can be understood as loving God, and thence becoming like God. Thus, humility based on both self-knowledge and our knowledge of God will deepen our relationship with God in restoring the *imago Dei* till we become like God and rest in God.

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<sup>768</sup> Regarding "fellow creatures" (neighbors), see "General Deliverance," ii.3, *The Works*, IV: 156; John Wesley, "Thoughts Upon Slavery," *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (New York: J. Collord, Printer, 1831), 5, [http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/wesley/thought\\_suppon\\_slavery.stm](http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/wesley/thought_suppon_slavery.stm) (accessed March 15, 2011).

However, the question may be asked: If humility is truly essential, is restoration of the *imago Dei* impossible without humility? Will the process of Christian salvation collapse should there be no presence of humility? This question may be approached and answered in two (incompatible) ways. On the one hand, viewed from the perspective of our contemporary culture, an absence of humility does not seem to seriously affect one's prospects for salvation. If one is humble, she or he may be praised for being so, but if one is not humble, this is not necessarily considered detrimental by most people today. In our cultural ambience, humility tends to be regarded as a matter of personal choice rather than something strictly required, and so it is commonly not seen as essential in the journey of salvation. On the other hand, while many of our contemporaries may regard humility as something more or less neutral—nice if one has it, but not harmful if lacking—Wesley certainly understood the lack of humility as truly evil, equivalent to the vice of pride that is so often castigated in the Bible.<sup>769</sup> For him, only when one is humble before God in self-knowledge is there hope of being restored to the favor of God, for without the humility of knowing oneself as a sinner, one will not be open to receiving God's justifying grace by faith through repentance: there is no process of justification without humility. Without the humility of depending on the Spirit's guidance, there is no process of sanctification, either. Only a truly humble person can love God and neighbor, is willing to pray always and to keep "a single eye" on God and so not forget God. Wesley had no doubt but that an

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<sup>769</sup> "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18); "The Lord will destroy the house of the proud" (Prov. 15:25); Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished" (Prov. 16:5); "the proud that are cursed" (Ps. 119:21).

absence of humility means an absence or negation of faith, love, and the will of God: there is no process of sanctification without humility.<sup>770</sup>

For Wesley, everything, including faith, is a gift from God, and since humility has so crucial a role in the entire journey of salvation, it too must be a gift from God, an utterly necessary one. Wesley warns, “if we do not ‘stir up the gift of God which is in us’; if we do not ‘agonize’ continually ‘to enter in at the strait gate’; if we do not earnestly ‘strive for the mastery,’ and ‘take the kingdom of heaven by violence,’”<sup>771</sup> we give way to sin. When a Christian is deprived of faith, and consequently, of the love of God, she or he loses the joy and peace of God. Only through prayer is a humble life (through knowing and being known in our relationship with God and neighbors) possible. Whenever we pray for the gift of humility, then the process of sanctification continues by God’s grace. In a Wesleyan spirit, it would be a right attitude for us to pray that God may give us the gift of humility, and at the same time keep us from knowing if we ever received that gift.

In light of Collins’s observation that Wesley scholars have never given extensive attention to the place of humility, whether in his sermons or his other works, this dissertation is a first attempt to explore Wesley’s understanding of the entire process of spiritual development through the lens of humility. Having focused almost exclusively on his sermons, this dissertation is inevitably an incomplete exploration. Nevertheless, it is intended to be an original contribution to Wesleyan scholarship by providing for the first time a thorough study of humility in the many sermons of the founder of Methodism.

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<sup>770</sup> Wesley’s understanding of the negation of humility (as real opposite to virtue, that is, the vice of pride) is compatible with Kant’s understanding of the negation of virtue. See, Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 148.

<sup>771</sup> “The Wilderness State,” ii.9, *The Works*, II: 211.

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