

Hearts Strangely Warmed:
Our United Methodist Heritage

Foundational Documents

Biographical Sketches

Excerpts From Wesley's Sermons

Excerpts From Wesley's Writings

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John Wesley's Conversion Testimony, 1738

“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.”

All the World As My Parish, 1739

Suffer me now to tell you my principles in this matter. I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation.

The Large Minutes, 1744

Q. What may we reasonably believe to be God's design
in raising up the Preachers called Methodists?

A. To reform the nation, particularly the Church;
and to spread Scriptural holiness over the land.

John Wesley's Covenant Prayer, 1755

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt,
rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things
to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

Wesley's Charge to Coke Leaving for America, 1784

“Offer them Christ.”

Wesley's Thoughts Upon Methodism, 1786

1. I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this will undoubtedly be the case, unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit and discipline with which they first set out.

2. What was their fundamental doctrine? That the Bible is the whole and sole truth both of Christian faith and practice.

Wesley's Last Words, 1791

“The best of all is, God is with us.”

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[Notes on the Bible – visit wesley.nnu.edu]	

United Methodist Foundational Documents

Just as creeds such as the Apostles' Creed summarize the belief of all Christians, the Articles of Religion of The Methodist Church and the Confessions of Faith of The Evangelical United Brethren Church form a foundation of doctrine for United Methodists. They, along with Wesley's Sermons on Several Occasions and Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament, are "standards" of doctrine for United Methodists.

The Articles of Religion

When the Methodist movement in America became a church in 1784, John Wesley provided the American Methodists with a liturgy and a doctrinal statement, which contained twenty-four "Articles of Religion" or basic statements of belief. These Articles of Religion were taken from the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England—the church out of which the Methodist movement began—and had been the standards for preaching within the Methodist movement. When these articles were voted on by the American conference, an additional article was added regarding the American context, bringing the total number of articles to 25.

These articles became the basic standards for Christian belief in the Methodist church in North America. First published in the church's Book of Discipline in 1790, the Articles of Religion have continued to be part of the church's official statement of belief.

The Confession of Faith

The Confession of Faith is the statement of belief from The Evangelical United Brethren Church. Consisting of 16 articles, the current form of this statement of faith was presented and adopted by the 1962 General Conference.

When The United Methodist Church was formed in 1968 from the union of several branches of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church, both The Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith were adopted as basic statements of the Christian faith.

The General Rules of the Methodist Church

Wesley knew how difficult it would be for his followers, particularly those recently converted, to live a holy life. To this end, he created structures and practices that would help foster faithful living in the members of the Methodist Societies. In 1743 he outlined these practices in the "General Rules," which functioned as a sort of contract by which group members held one another accountable.

These rules are organized into these three basic categories:

- Do no harm, "avoiding evil of all kinds";
- Do good, "of every possible sort, and as far as possible, to all;"
- Practice "the ordinances of God," or engage in individual and communal spiritual practices such as prayer, Bible reading, worship and the Lord's Supper.

Wesley's Sermons and Notes on the New Testament

Wesley's sermons contain his basic understanding of the Christian faith and his thinking about how we are to live out this faith both personally and corporately. His written sermons were intended to teach the basic beliefs of the faith as well as nurture and encourage his followers in their discipleship. Wesley's Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament provided his followers with tools for interpreting the Bible. These notes contained both Wesley's own ideas as well as insights borrowed from other interpreters – **Wesley's Notes on the Bible are available at wesley.nnu.edu.**

The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church

Article I — Of Faith in the Holy Trinity

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Article II — Of the Word, or Son of God, Who Was Made Very Man

The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.

Article III — Of the Resurrection of Christ

Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day.

Article IV — Of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

Article V — Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament of whose authority was never any doubt in the church. The names of the canonical books are:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The Book of Ezra, The Book of Nehemiah, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or the Preacher, Cantica or Songs of Solomon, Four Prophets the Greater, Twelve Prophets the Less.

All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical.

Article VI — Of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.

Article VII — Of Original or Birth Sin

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.

Article VIII — Of Free Will

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

Article IX — Of the Justification of Man

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith, only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.

Article X — Of Good Works

Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

Article XI — Of Works of Supererogation

Voluntary works—besides, over and above God's commandments—which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as

much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required; whereas Christ saith plainly: When you have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

Article XII — Of Sin After Justification

Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here; or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

Article XIII — Of the Church

The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

Article XIV — Of Purgatory

The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardon, worshiping, and adoration, as well of images as of relics, and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the Word of God.

Article XV — Of Speaking in the Congregation in Such a Tongue as the People Understand

It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the primitive church, to have public prayer in the church, or to minister the Sacraments, in a tongue not understood by the people.

Article XVI — Of the Sacraments

Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm, our faith in him.

There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

Those five commonly called sacraments, that is to say, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel; being such as have partly grown out of the corrupt following of the apostles, and partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not the like nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, because they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about; but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect or operation; but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves condemnation, as St. Paul saith.

Article XVII — Of Baptism

Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The Baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church.

Article XVIII — Of the Lord's Supper

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another,

but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of our Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped.

Article XIX — Of Both Kinds

The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people; for both the parts of the Lord's Supper, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be administered to all Christians alike.

Article XX — Of the One Oblation of Christ, Finished upon the Cross

The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of masses, in the which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit.

Article XXI — Of the Marriage of Ministers

The ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage; therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christians, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve best to godliness.

Article XXII — Of the Rites and Ceremonies of Churches

It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike; for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the rites and ceremonies of the church to which he belongs, which are not repugnant to the Word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, that others may fear to do the like, as one that offendeth against the common order of the church, and woundeth the consciences of weak brethren.

Every particular church may ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification.

Article XXIII — Of the Rulers of the United States of America

The President, the Congress, the general assemblies, the governors, and the councils of state, as the delegates of the people, are the rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the Constitution of the United States and by the constitutions of their respective states. And the said states are a sovereign and independent nation, and ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

Article XXIV — Of Christian Men's Goods

The riches and goods of Christians are not common as

touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.

Article XXV — Of a Christian Man's Oath

As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ and James his apostle, so we judge that the Christian religion doth not prohibit, but that a man may swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth.

[The following Article from the *Methodist Protestant Discipline* is placed here by the Uniting Conference (1939).

Of Sanctification

Sanctification is that renewal of our fallen nature by the Holy Ghost, received through faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood of atonement cleanseth from all sin; whereby we are not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but are washed from its pollution, saved from its power, and are enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts and to walk in his holy commandments blameless.

[The following provision was adopted by the Uniting Conference (1939).

Of the Duty of Christians to the Civil Authority

It is the duty of all Christians, and especially of all Christian ministers, to observe and obey the laws and commands of the governing or supreme authority of the country of which they are citizens or subjects or in which they reside, and to use all laudable means to encourage and enjoin obedience to the powers that be.

Confession of Faith of the **Evangelical United Brethren Church**

Article I — God

We believe in the one true, holy and living God, Eternal Spirit, who is Creator, Sovereign and Preserver of all things visible and invisible. He is infinite in power, wisdom, justice, goodness and love, and rules with gracious regard for the well-being and salvation of men, to the glory of his name. We believe the one God reveals himself as the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, distinct but inseparable, eternally one in essence and power.

Article II — Jesus Christ

We believe in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. As ministering Servant he lived, suffered and died on the cross. He was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, from whence he shall return. He is eternal Savior and Mediator, who intercedes for us, and by him all men will be judged.

Article III — The Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from and is one in being with the Father and the Son. He convinces the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He leads men through faithful response to the gospel into the fellowship of the Church. He comforts, sustains and empowers the faithful and guides them into all truth.

Article IV — The Holy Bible

We believe the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, reveals the Word of God so far as it is necessary for our salvation. It is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and

guide for faith and practice. Whatever is not revealed in or established by the Holy Scriptures is not to be made an article of faith nor is it to be taught as essential to salvation.

Article V — The Church

We believe the Christian Church is the community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. We believe it is one, holy, apostolic and catholic. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by men divinely called, and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit the Church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers and the redemption of the world.

Article VI — The Sacraments

We believe the Sacraments, ordained by Christ, are symbols and pledges of the Christian's profession and of God's love toward us. They are means of grace by which God works invisibly in us, quickening, strengthening and confirming our faith in him. Two Sacraments are ordained by Christ our Lord, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

We believe Baptism signifies entrance into the household of faith, and is a symbol of repentance and inner cleansing from sin, a representation of the new birth in Christ Jesus and a mark of Christian discipleship.

We believe children are under the atonement of Christ and as heirs of the Kingdom of God are acceptable subjects for Christian Baptism. Children of believing parents through Baptism become the special responsibility of the Church. They should be nurtured and led to personal acceptance of Christ, and by profession of faith confirm their Baptism.

We believe the Lord's Supper is a representation of our redemption, a memorial of the sufferings and death of Christ, and a token of love and union which Christians have with

Christ and with one another. Those who rightly, worthily and in faith eat the broken bread and drink the blessed cup partake of the body and blood of Christ in a spiritual manner until he comes.

Article VII — Sin and Free Will

We believe man is fallen from righteousness and, apart from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, is destitute of holiness and inclined to evil. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. In his own strength, without divine grace, man cannot do good works pleasing and acceptable to God. We believe, however, man influenced and empowered by the Holy Spirit is responsible in freedom to exercise his will for good.

Article VIII — Reconciliation Through Christ

We believe God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. The offering Christ freely made on the cross is the perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, redeeming man from all sin, so that no other satisfaction is required.

Article IX — Justification and Regeneration

We believe we are never accounted righteous before God through our works or merit, but that penitent sinners are justified or accounted righteous before God only by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe regeneration is the renewal of man in righteousness through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature and experience newness of life. By this new birth the believer becomes reconciled to God and is enabled to serve him with the will and the affections.

We believe, although we have experienced regeneration, it is possible to depart from grace and fall into sin; and we may

even then, by the grace of God, be renewed in righteousness.

Article X — Good Works

We believe good works are the necessary fruits of faith and follow regeneration but they do not have the virtue to remove our sins or to avert divine judgment. We believe good works, pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, spring from a true and living faith, for through and by them faith is made evident.

Article XI — Sanctification and Christian Perfection

We believe sanctification is the work of God's grace through the Word and the Spirit, by which those who have been born again are cleansed from sin in their thoughts, words and acts, and are enabled to live in accordance with God's will, and to strive for holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Entire sanctification is a state of perfect love, righteousness and true holiness which every regenerate believer may obtain by being delivered from the power of sin, by loving God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and by loving one's neighbor as one's self. Through faith in Jesus Christ this gracious gift may be received in this life both gradually and instantaneously, and should be sought earnestly by every child of God.

We believe this experience does not deliver us from the infirmities, ignorance, and mistakes common to man, nor from the possibilities of further sin. The Christian must continue on guard against spiritual pride and seek to gain victory over every temptation to sin. He must respond wholly to the will of God so that sin will lose its power over him; and the world, the flesh, and the devil are put under his feet. Thus he rules over these enemies with watchfulness through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Article XII — The Judgment and the Future State

We believe all men stand under the righteous judgment of Jesus Christ, both now and in the last day. We believe in the resurrection of the dead; the righteous to life eternal and the wicked to endless condemnation.

Article XIII — Public Worship

We believe divine worship is the duty and privilege of man who, in the presence of God, bows in adoration, humility and dedication. We believe divine worship is essential to the life of the Church, and that the assembling of the people of God for such worship is necessary to Christian fellowship and spiritual growth.

We believe the order of public worship need not be the same in all places but may be modified by the church according to circumstances and the needs of men. It should be in a language and form understood by the people, consistent with the Holy Scriptures to the edification of all, and in accordance with the order and Discipline of the Church.

Article XIV — The Lord's Day

We believe the Lord's Day is divinely ordained for private and public worship, for rest from unnecessary work, and should be devoted to spiritual improvement, Christian fellowship and service. It is commemorative of our Lord's resurrection and is an emblem of our eternal rest. It is essential to the permanence and growth of the Christian Church, and important to the welfare of the civil community.

Article XV — The Christian and Property

We believe God is the owner of all things and that the individual holding of property is lawful and is a sacred trust under God. Private property is to be used for the manifestation of Christian love and liberality, and to support the Church's mission in the world. All forms of property, whether private, corporate or public, are to be held in solemn

trust and used responsibly for human good under the sovereignty of God.

Article XVI — Civil Government

We believe civil government derives its just powers from the sovereign God. As Christians we recognize the governments under whose protection we reside and believe such governments should be based on, and be responsible for, the recognition of human rights under God. We believe war and bloodshed are contrary to the gospel and spirit of Christ. We believe it is the duty of Christian citizens to give moral strength and purpose to their respective governments through sober, righteous and godly living.

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The General Rules of the Methodist Church

The Nature, Design, and General Rules of Our United Societies

In the latter end of the year 1739 eight or ten persons came to Mr. Wesley, in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired, as did two or three more the next day, that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That he might have more time for this great work, he appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), he gave those advices from time to time which he judged most needful for them, and they always concluded their meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.

This was the rise of the **United Society**, first in Europe, and then in America. Such a society is no other than "a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."

That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies, called **classes**, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in a class, one of whom is styled the **leader**. It is his duty:

1. To see each person in his class once a week at least, in order: (1) to inquire how their souls prosper; (2) to advise, reprove, comfort or exhort, as occasion may

require; (3) to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the preachers, church, and poor.

2. To meet the ministers and the stewards of the society once a week, in order: (1) to inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly and will not be reprov'd; (2) to pay the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding.

There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies: "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins." But wherever this is really fixed in the soul it will be shown by its fruits.

It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced, such as:

- The taking of the name of God in vain.
- The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein or by buying or selling.
- Drunkenness: buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity.
- Slaveholding; buying or selling slaves.
- Fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; the using many words in buying or selling.
- The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty.
- The giving or taking things on usury—i.e., unlawful interest.
- Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation; particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers.

- Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us.
- Doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as:
- The putting on of gold and costly apparel.
- The taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.
- The singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God.
- Softness and needless self-indulgence.
- Laying up treasure upon earth.
- Borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

It is expected of all who continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Secondly: By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men:

- To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison.
- To their souls, by instructing, reproofing, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine that "we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to it."
- By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others; buying one of another, helping each other in business, and so much the more because the world will love its own and them only.
- By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed.

- By running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them falsely, for the Lord's sake.

It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are:

- The public worship of God.
- The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded.
- The Supper of the Lord.
- Family and private prayer.
- Searching the Scriptures.
- Fasting or abstinence.

These are the General Rules of our societies; all of which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written Word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know his Spirit writes on truly awakened hearts. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul as they who must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways. We will bear with him for a season. But then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.

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Susanna Wesley
1700

One of the most remarkable women who ever lived was Susanna Wesley, who is often lovingly referred to as the “**Mother of Methodism.**” She was the gifted wife of Samuel Wesley, who was a Rector (pastor) in the Church of England, and she was the mother of nineteen children, including both **John and Charles Wesley**, the leaders of the 18th century Methodist revival in England which came to America.

Susanna taught her young children at home. Each child on his or her fifth birthday was taught the alphabet – she considered one day quite sufficient time for them to learn the alphabet. And by the age of ten, she expected all the children, both boys and girls, to be able to read and write in Greek, the language of the New Testament!

One of the most significant commitments Susanna made was to give each of the children one day in the week when she spent time alone with them, teaching them about the love of God. John was never to forget his own Thursday sessions with his mother. Here is an example of Susanna’s wisdom passed on to her children: “There are two things we must do with the Gospel – we must *believe* it and we must *behave* it.”

On February 9, 1709, while all the Wesley children were asleep, someone set fire to the rectory (parsonage). All escaped safely, although Susanna was slightly burned as she ran through the blazing doorway. But John had been left behind, and was only miraculously rescued just before the roof caved in. Susanna was convinced that God must have saved her son for some special purpose, and she said, “**Is this not a brand plucked out of the burning?**” This remark meant much to John later in life, in his work with the Methodist revival.

John Wesley 1738

John Wesley was born in Epworth, England in 1703, the 11th of 19 children of Susanna and Samuel Wesley. At the age of five, he was miraculously rescued from his burning house, and his mother believed he had been set apart by God for some special purpose. At ten years of age he was off to the Charterhouse School in London, after which he was educated at Oxford University, receiving his Masters degree and becoming ordained a priest in the Church of England.

Always in quest of an assurance of his salvation, Wesley organized the “**Holy Club**” which met regularly and whose members were derisively labeled “**Methodists.**” He sailed to America to serve as a missionary in Georgia and, influenced by the Moravians, he returned to London and received this assurance on **Aldersgate Street** on **May 24, 1738**. He wrote in his journal: “**I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation:** And an assurance was given me that Christ had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”

From this evangelical conversion experience, the mighty **Methodist revival** swept across England, fueled by John’s **open-air preaching** to massive crowds of thousands, and led by the **fervent hymns of his brother Charles**. By the time Wesley died in 1791, Methodism had become established as the fastest-growing church in the newly-formed United States.

Today millions of Christians trace their roots to Wesley, embracing his “**holistic understanding of the Gospel**” – uniting both divine sovereignty and human responsibility, faith and works, head and heart, justification and sanctification, personal holiness and social engagement, revelation and reason, the sacramental and the evangelical.

Charles Wesley

1739

Charles Wesley, the “**Sweet Singer of Methodism**,” is widely regarded as one of the greatest hymn writers of all time. He was the younger brother of John, and it can be argued that the Methodist revival was fueled as much by his hymns as by John’s preaching.

Charles shared much in common with his older brother John. Both were educated at Oxford University and were active in the famous “Holy Club” there; both sailed to America as missionaries in Georgia; both were strongly influenced by the Moravians; both had a vital and personal conversion experience – within three days of each other! – and both led the Methodist revival.

Charles testified after his own evangelical conversion: “I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ.” He became one of the most gifted and untiring hymn writers the world has ever known – all told, he **wrote well over seven thousand hymns!**

Hymn singing, which often boldly took over the tunes used in the taverns as drinking songs, made an enormous contribution to the Methodist revival. The hymns not only expressed the joys of Christian experience, but also taught the truths of Scripture. **Pick up a hymnal and sing some of Wesley’s hymns with their rich Biblical teachings:**

*O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing
Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus
Hark! the Herald Angels Sing
Christ the Lord is Risen Today
Ye Servants of God
And Can It Be*

Francis Asbury

1784

Francis Asbury was born and raised near Birmingham, England, in a strong Christian home. At the age of fourteen, he experienced a religious awakening, and soon joined the Methodists. Since he had only limited schooling, he was apprenticed to an iron smelter for about six years. Then for about five years, he worked as a Methodist preacher, serving as an itinerant minister under the direction of John Wesley.

In 1771, in response to an appeal by John Wesley, Asbury volunteered to **serve in America**. During the Revolutionary War which came just a few years later, Asbury was the only one of Wesley's appointees to stay in America, and after some internal struggle, he chose to identify with the newly emerging nation.

In 1784, Wesley appointed Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke as joint Superintendents for America. At the famous **Christmas Conference in 1784** in Baltimore, against Wesley's wishes, Asbury along with Coke was ordained as **bishop** of the new Methodist Episcopal Church.

Francis Asbury became the major figure shaping American Methodism. Even though he was never of strong health and was constantly beset by numerous maladies, he traveled **300,000 miles on horseback** and endured the rigors of the American frontier to nurture the emerging denomination. He was a strong leader and was fervently committed to evangelism, sending out the Methodist "**circuit riders**" to preach the Gospel at **camp meetings along the frontier** as the country moved west. Under his guidance, membership grew from just a few hundred to over 200,000 – the Methodist Church became one of America's largest.

Thomas Coke 1784

Thomas Coke was born at Brecon, England, and was educated at Oxford University. Called by God into the Christian ministry, he was made a deacon and served as curate (pastor) at South Petheron, becoming a doctor of civil law during that time.

In 1777 he became associated with John Wesley and the Methodist revival. He worked tirelessly as an itinerant preacher, and increasingly served as Wesley's right-hand man. He was set apart by Wesley as Superintendent for America. Wesley sent him off to America with the silver Communion chalice and the large Bible which is now at Old St. George's Church in Philadelphia, and gave him the famous charge: **"Offer them Christ."** Thomas Coke presided as Superintendent over the **1784 Christmas Conference** in Baltimore which created the Methodist Episcopal Church of America; **he and Asbury were ordained as the first bishops** at that Conference.

Thomas Coke maintained links with the Methodist Church in England and America, often presiding over the Methodist Annual Conferences in both countries. In doing all this, he crossed the Atlantic Ocean no less than eighteen times, which in itself was an incredible feat for those days. He was a staunch opponent of slavery, and a vigorous promoter of overseas missions. He worked tirelessly to send out missionaries, organizing the Negro Mission in the West Indies, and developing missionary activity in Gibraltar, Sierra Leone, and Cape of Good Hope. For these reasons, Coke has been called **"the Foreign Minister of Methodism."** Appropriately enough, he died at sea, on his way to Ceylon with a party of missionaries.

Richard Allen 1794

Richard Allen, a black man, was born a slave, and was sold to a farmer near Dover, Delaware. Then when this farmer had financial problems, he sold Richard's mother and three of his siblings, leaving him with only one older brother and sister. The three of them began to attend meetings of the local Methodist Society. Richard was converted to Christ under this Methodist influence, and having taught himself to read and write, he was permitted to hold services in master's home. Allen's preaching services resulted in the conversion of his master – and freedom for Allen and his family! Even after winning his freedom, however, life was not easy – Allen worked at woodcutting and hauling, while at the same time educating himself and preaching.

Allen was accepted as a Methodist preacher at the famous “Christmas Conference” in Baltimore in 1784 – the same Conference which marked the founding of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the ordination of Coke and Asbury as the first bishops. Following this, he made a number of preaching journeys with Francis Asbury. He preached occasionally at St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia, where his forceful approach attracted many Negroes, resulting in white protests.

In the face of these white protests, the blacks withdrew from St. George's and formed the “**Free African Society**” in 1787. From this body, Allen influenced the majority to form the **African Methodist Episcopal Church**, which Bishop Asbury dedicated in 1794. Fifteen other Negro churches joined them, including the historic Zoar Church in Philadelphia. Allen was ordained in 1799 and became the **first bishop in 1816**. Before his death in 1831, he won national standing for the new denomination.

Phoebe Palmer

1837

Phoebe Palmer, the “**Mother of the Holiness Movement**,” was born in New York City in 1807 to devout Methodist parents; her father had been converted during the Wesleyan Revival in England before emigrating to the United States. Phoebe and her husband Walter, a homeopathic physician and also a devout Methodist, began reading the writings of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, and developed a keen interest in Wesley’s doctrine of **Christian Perfection** – the belief that a Christian can live a life free of serious sin.

In 1837, while holding weekly prayer meetings with other Methodist women, Phoebe experienced what she called “**Entire Sanctification**.” The Tuesday Meetings for the Promotion of Holiness were held in her home, and as she ministered at churches, conferences and camp meetings, the concept of **Christian Holiness** spread throughout the United States. **The Way of Holiness**, which she wrote in 1843, was a foundational book in the **Holiness Movement**, and in 1864, she began editing the monthly **Guide to Holiness** magazine.

Reading Jesus’s words that “the altar sanctified the gift,” she believed that God would make her holy if she “laid her all upon the altar.” She divided Wesley’s perfectionism into a three-step process: consecrating oneself totally to God, believing God will sanctify what is consecrated, and telling others about it. She said, “God’s time is now. The question is not, What have I been? or What do I expect to be? But, Am I now trusting Jesus to save to the uttermost? If so, I am now saved from all sin.” Her “**Altar Covenant**” impacted Catherine Booth (Salvation Army) and Frances Willard (Women’s Christian Temperance Union), and gave rise to the **Church of the Nazarene**, the **Salvation Army**, the **Church of God**, and the **Pentecostal Holiness Church**.

Fanny Crosby
1858

Fanny Crosby, the great American Methodist hymn writer, was born in Putnam County, New York in 1820. While she was **just six weeks old, she lost her sight due to a fever and a mistake in medication.** Despite her blindness, however, Fanny began writing verse at the age of eight, and published her first poems three years later.

At twelve years of age, she entered the New York City School for the Blind, where she later taught grammar, rhetoric, and Roman and American history. In 1858, she married a blind musician, Alexander Van Alstyne, and shortly afterwards began her amazing hymn writing career.

The total number of her religious verse has been estimated at 8,500! From 1864 she published **more than 2,000 hymns**, many of which are still commonly used. She popularized the writing of “**Gospel Hymns.**” Her songs spread throughout America and England by way of great evangelistic revivals led by **Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey.**

Much of her writing was published under various pen names, including Ella Dale, Kate Grinley, and Miss Viola VA. She remained a life-long Methodist, spending most of her life in New York City until her death in Connecticut in 1915. Among her many hymns are:

***All the Way My Savior Leads Me
Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine
Close to Thee
I Am Thine, O Lord
Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross
Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior
To God Be the Glory***

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From Preface to the Sermons
Homo Unius Libri – A Man of One Book

To candid, reasonable men, I am not afraid to lay open what have been the inmost thoughts of my heart. I have thought, I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf; till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing,—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore.

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

Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone; only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of Lights:—"Lord, is it not Thy word, 'if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God?' Thou givest liberally, and upbraidest not. Thou hast said, 'if any be willing to do Thy will, he shall know.' I am willing to do, let me know Thy will."

I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God: and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach.

The Sermons of John Wesley - Sermon 1

Salvation By Faith

Preached at St. Mary's Oxford, before the university,
on June 18, 1738

"By Grace are ye saved through faith." Ephesians 2.8

1. All the blessings which God hath bestowed upon man are of his mere grace, bounty, or favour; his free, undeserved favour; favour altogether undeserved; man having no claim to the least of his mercies. It was free grace that "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into him a living soul," and stamped on that soul the image of God, and "put all things under his feet." The same free grace continues to us, at this day, life, and breath, and all things.

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

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

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

4. What faith is it then through which we are saved? It may be answered, first, in general, it is a faith in Christ: Christ, and God through Christ, are the proper objects of it. Herein, therefore, it is sufficiently, absolutely distinguished from the faith either of ancient or modern heathens. And from the faith of a devil it is fully distinguished by this: it is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head; but also a disposition of the heart. For thus saith the Scripture, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" and, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

5. And herein does it differ from that faith which the Apostles themselves had while our Lord was on earth, that it acknowledges the necessity and merit of his death, and the power of his resurrection. It acknowledges his death as the only sufficient means of redeeming man from death eternal, and his resurrection as the restoration of us all to life and immortality; inasmuch as he "was delivered for our sins, and rose again for our justification."

Christian faith is then, not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life, as given for us, and living in us; and, in consequence hereof, a closing with him, and cleaving to him, as our "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," or, in one word, our salvation.

II. What is the salvation which is through faith.

1. And, First, whatsoever else it imply, it is a present salvation.
2. Ye are saved (to comprise all in one word) from sin.
3. First. From the guilt of all past sin:

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

4. And being saved from guilt, they are saved from fear. Not indeed from a filial fear of offending; but from all servile fear; from that fear which hath torment; from fear of punishment; from fear of the wrath of God,

5. Again: through this faith they are saved from the power of sin, as well as from the guilt of it.

6. He that is, by faith, born of God sinneth not by any habitual sin; for all habitual sin is sin reigning: But sin cannot reign in any that believeth.

III. How we may answer some objections.

1. That to preach salvation or justification, by faith only, is to preach against holiness and good works. To which a short answer might be given: "It would be so, if we spake, as some do, of a faith which was separate from these; but we speak of a faith which is not so, but productive of all good works, and all holiness."

3. Of yourselves cometh neither your faith nor your salvation: "it is the gift of God;" the free, undeserved gift; the faith through which ye are saved, as well as the salvation which he of his own good pleasure, his mere favour, annexes thereto. That ye believe, is one instance of his grace; that believing ye are saved, another.

5. Yet to the same truth, placed in another view, a quite contrary objection is made: "If a man cannot be saved by all that he can do, this will drive men to despair." True, to despair of being saved by their own works, their own merits, or righteousness. And so it ought; for none can trust in the merits of Christ, till he has utterly renounced his own.

6. That "whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed that the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him": here is comfort, high as heaven, stronger than death! What! Mercy for all? For Zacchaeus, a public robber? For Mary Magdalene, a common harlot? Methinks I hear one say "Then I, even I, may hope for mercy!" And so thou mayest, thou afflicted one, whom none hath comforted! God will not cast out thy prayer. Nay, perhaps he may say the next hour, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" so forgiven, that they shall reign over thee no more; yea, and that "the Holy Spirit shall bear witness with thy spirit that thou art a child of God." **O glad tidings! tidings of great joy, which are sent unto all people! "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: Come ye, and buy, without money and without price." Whatsoever your sins be, "though red like crimson," though more than the hairs of your head, "return ye unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."**

8. But salvation by faith strikes at the root, and all fall at once where this is established. It was this doctrine, which our Church justly calls the strong rock and foundation of the Christian religion...

The Sermons of John Wesley - Sermon 2

The Almost Christian

Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford,
before the university, on July 25, 1741.

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Acts 26.28.

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

1. Almost a Christian

I. (I.) 1. Now, in the being almost a Christian is implied, First, heathen **honesty**. No one, I suppose, will make any question of this; especially, since by heathen honesty here, I mean, not that which is recommended in the writings of their philosophers only, but such as the common heathens expected one of another, and many of them actually practised. By the rules of this they were taught that they ought not to be unjust; not to take away their neighbour's goods, either by robbery or theft; not to oppress the poor, neither to use extortion toward any; not to cheat or overreach either the poor or rich, in whatsoever commerce they had with them; to defraud no man of his right; and, if it were possible, to owe no man anything.

2. Again: the common heathens allowed, that some regard was to be paid to **truth**, as well as to **justice**. And, accordingly, they not only held him in abomination who was forsworn, who called God to witness to a lie; but him also who was known to be a slanderer of his neighbour, who falsely accused any man. And indeed, little better did they esteem wilful liars of any sort, accounting them the disgrace of human kind, and the pests of society.

3. Yet again: there was a sort of **love and assistance** which they expected one from another. They expected whatever assistance any one could give another, without prejudice to himself. And this they extended not only to those little offices of humanity which are performed without any expense or labour, but likewise to the feeding the hungry, if they had food to spare; the clothing the naked with their own superfluous raiment; and, in general, the giving, to any that needed, such things as they needed not themselves. Thus far, in the lowest account of it, heathen honesty went; the first thing implied in the being almost a Christian.

(II.) 4. A second thing implied in the being almost a Christian, is, the **having a form of godliness**; of that godliness which is prescribed in the gospel of Christ; the having the outside of a real Christian. Accordingly, the almost Christian does nothing which the gospel forbids.

7. He that hath the form of godliness uses also the means of grace; yea, all of them, and at all opportunities. he constantly frequents the house of God

8. To this, if we add the constant use of family prayer, by those who are masters of families, and the setting times apart for private addresses to God, with a daily seriousness of behaviour; he who uniformly practises this outward religion, has the form of godliness. There needs but one thing more in order to his being almost a Christian, and that is, sincerity.

11. But here it will probably be inquired, "Is it possible that any man living should go so far as this, and, nevertheless, be only almost a Christian? What more than this, can be implied in the being a Christian altogether? I answer, First, that it is possible to go thus far, and yet be but almost a Christian, I learn, not only from the oracles of God, but also from the sure testimony of experience.

II. Altogether a Christian

II. If it be inquired, "What more than this is implied in the being altogether a Christian?" I answer,

(I.) 1. First. **The love of God.** For thus saith his word, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Such a love is this, as engrosses the whole heart, as rakes up all the affections, as fills the entire capacity of the soul and employs the utmost extent of all its faculties. He that thus loves the Lord his God, his spirit continually "rejoiceth in God his Saviour." His delight is in the Lord, his Lord and his All, to whom "in everything he giveth thanks. All his desire is unto God, and to the remembrance of his name." His heart is ever crying out, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Indeed, what can he desire beside God? Not the world, or the things of the world: for he is "crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him." He is crucified to "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life."

(II.) 2. The Second thing implied in the being altogether a Christian is, **the love of our neighbour.** For thus said our Lord in the following words, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" If any man ask, "Who is my neighbour" we reply, Every man in the world;

(III.) 3. There is yet one thing more that may be separately considered, though it cannot actually be separate from the preceding, which is implied in the being altogether a Christian; and that is the ground of all, even **faith.** Very excellent things are spoken of this throughout the oracles of God. "Every one, saith the beloved disciple, "that believeth is born of God." "To as many as received him, gave he power to become the sons of God. even to them that believe on his name." And "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Yea, our Lord himself declares, "He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life; and cometh not into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

5. **"The right and true Christian faith is** (to go on in the words of our own Church), "not only to believe that Holy Scripture and the Articles of our Faith are true, but also **to have a sure trust and confidence to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ. It is a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that, by the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God; whereof doth follow a loving heart, to obey his commandments."**

9. But, supposing you had, do good designs and good desires make a Christian? By no means, unless they are brought to good effect. "Hell is paved," saith one, "with good intentions." The great question of all, then, still remains. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Can you cry out, "My God, and my All"? Do you desire nothing but him? Are you happy in God? Is he your glory, your delight, your crown of rejoicing? And is this commandment written in your heart, "That he who loveth God love his brother also"? Do you then love your neighbour as yourself? Do you love every man, even your enemies, even the enemies of God, as your own soul, as Christ loved you? Yea, dost thou believe that Christ loved thee, and gave himself for thee? Hast thou faith in his blood? Believest thou the Lamb of God hath taken away thy sins, and cast them as a stone into the depth of the sea, that he hath blotted out the handwriting that was against thee, taking it out of the way, nailing it to his cross? Hast thou indeed redemption through his blood, even the remission of thy sins? And doth his Spirit bear witness with thy spirit, that thou art a child of God?

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

The Sermons of John Wesley - Sermon 5

Justification By Faith

*"To him that worketh not,
but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly,
his faith is counted for righteousness."
Romans 4:5.*

1. How a sinner may be justified before God, the Lord and Judge of all, is a question of no common importance to every child of man. It contains the foundation of all our hope, inasmuch as while we are at enmity with God, there can be no true peace, no solid joy, either in time or in eternity.

I. The general ground of the doctrine of justification

1. In the image of God was man made, holy as he that created him is holy.

2. To man thus upright and perfect, God gave a perfect law, to which he required full and perfect obedience.

5. Man did disobey God.

6. Thus "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. And so death passed upon all men," as being contained in him who was the common father and representative of us all. Thus, "through the offence of one," all are dead, dead to God,

7. In this state we were, even all mankind, when "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end we might not perish, but have everlasting life." In the fullness of time he was made Man, another common Head of mankind, a second general Parent and Representative of the whole human race. And as such it was that "he bore our griefs," "the Lord laying upon him the iniquities of us all." Then was he "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." "He made his soul an offering for

sin:" He poured out his blood for the transgressors: He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree," that by his stripes we might be healed: And by that one oblation of himself, once offered, he hath redeemed me and all mankind; having thereby "made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world."

II. What justification is

5. The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins. It is that act of God the Father, hereby, for the sake of the propitiation made by the blood of his Son, he "showeth forth his righteousness (or mercy) by the remission of the sins that are past." This is the easy, natural account of it given by St. Paul, throughout this whole epistle. So he explains it himself, more particularly in this and in the following chapter. Thus, in the next verses but one to the text, "Blessed are they," saith he, "whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." To him that is justified or forgiven, God "will not impute sin" to his condemnation. He will not condemn him on that account, either in this world or in that which is to come. His sins, all his past sins, in thought, word, and deed, are covered, are blotted out, shall not be remembered or mentioned against him, any more than if they had not been. God will not inflict on that sinner what he deserved to suffer, because the Son of his love hath suffered for him. And from the time we are "accepted through the Beloved," "reconciled to God through his blood," he loves, and blesses, and watches over us for good, even as if we had never sinned.

III. Who they are that are justified

1. And the Apostle tells us expressly, **the ungodly:** "He (that is, God) justifieth the ungodly;" the ungodly of every kind and degree; and none but the ungodly.

3. Does then the good Shepherd seek and save only those that are found already? No: **He seeks and saves that which is lost.** He pardons those who need his pardoning mercy. He saves from the guilt of sin, (and, at the same time, from the power,) sinners of every kind, of every degree: men who, till then, were altogether ungodly;

5. All truly "good works" (to use the words of our Church) "follow after justification;" and they are therefore good and "acceptable to God in Christ," because they "spring out of a true and living faith." By a parity of reason, all "works done before justification are not good," in the Christian sense, "forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ;"

IV. On what terms they are justified

1. **On one alone; which is faith:** He "believeth in Him that justifieth the ungodly." And "he that believeth is not condemned;" yea, he is "passed from death unto life." "For the righteousness (or mercy) of God is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: --Whom God hath set forth for a propitiation, through faith in his blood; that he might be just, and" (consistently with his justice) "the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus:"

What law do we establish by faith? Not the ritual law: Not the ceremonial law of Moses. In nowise; but the great, unchangeable law of love, the holy love of God and of our neighbour."

2. Faith in general is a divine, supernatural "elegchos," "evidence" or "conviction," "of things not seen," not discoverable by our bodily senses, as being either past, future, or spiritual. **Justifying faith implies, not only a divine 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*.**

3. "The only instrument of salvation" (whereof justification is one branch) "is faith; that is, a sure trust and confidence that God both hath and will forgive our sins, that he hath accepted us again into His favour, for the merits of Christ's death and passion.

Therefore, have a sure and constant faith, not only that the death of Christ is available for all the world, but that he hath made a full and sufficient sacrifice for **thee**, a perfect cleansing of **thy** sins, so that thou mayest say, with the Apostle, he loved **thee**, and gave himself for **thee**. For this is to make Christ **thine own**, and to apply his merits unto **thyself**.

4. By affirming that this faith is the term or "condition of justification," I mean, First, that there is no justification without it.

5. Faith, therefore, is the "necessary" condition of justification; yea, and the "only necessary" condition thereof.

8. One reason, however, we may humbly conceive, of God's fixing this condition of justification, "If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, thou shalt be saved," was to "**hide pride from man.**" Pride had already destroyed the very angels of God, had cast down "a third part of the stars of heaven." 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.

The Sermons of John Wesley - Sermon 16

The Means of Grace

***"Ye are gone away from mine ordinances,
and have not kept them." Mal. 3:7.***

I. 1. But are there any ordinances now, since life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel? Are there, under the Christian dispensation, any means ordained of God, as the usual channels of his grace?

II. 1. In the following discourse, I propose to examine at large, whether there are any means of grace.

By "means of grace" I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace.

The chief of these means are prayer, whether in secret or with the great congregation; searching the Scriptures; (which implies reading, hearing, and meditating thereon;) and receiving the Lord's Supper, eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Him: And these we believe to be ordained of God, as the ordinary channels of conveying his grace to the souls of men.

2. But we allow, that the whole value of the means depends on their actual subservience to the end of religion; that, consequently, all these means, when separate from the end, are less than nothing and vanity; that if they do not actually conduce to the knowledge and love of God, they are not acceptable in his sight; yea, rather, they are an abomination before him, a stink in his nostrils; he is weary to bear them.

3. We allow, likewise, that all outward means whatever, if separate from the Spirit of God, cannot profit at all, cannot conduce, in any degree, either to the knowledge or love of God.

4. We allow farther, that the use of all means whatever will never atone for one sin; that it is the blood of Christ alone, whereby any sinner can be reconciled to God; there being no other propitiation for our sins, no other fountain for sin and uncleanness.

6. So little do they understand that great foundation of the whole Christian building, "By grace are ye saved:"

7. But the main question remains: "We know this salvation is the gift and the work of God; but how (may one say who is convinced he hath it not) may I attain thereto?"

III. 1. According to this, **according to the decision of holy writ all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the means which he hath ordained; in using, not in laying them aside.**

And, First, all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the way of prayer. This is the express direction of our Lord himself.

7. Secondly. All who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in searching the Scriptures.

Our Lord's direction, with regard to the use of this means, is likewise plain and clear. "Search the Scriptures," saith he to the unbelieving Jews, "for they testify of me." (John 5:39.) And for this very end did he direct them to search the Scriptures, that they might believe in him.

11. Thirdly. All who desire an increase of the grace of God are to wait for it in partaking of the Lord's Supper: For this also is a direction himself hath given.

Is not the eating of that bread, and the drinking of that cup, the outward, visible means, whereby God conveys into our souls all that spiritual grace, that righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which were purchased by the body of Christ once broken and the blood of Christ once shed for us? Let all, therefore, who truly desire the grace of God, eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

IV. 2. It has been, Secondly, objected, "This is seeking salvation by works." Do you know the meaning of the expression you use? What is seeking salvation by works? In the writings of St. Paul, it means, either seeking to be saved by observing the ritual works of the Mosaic law; or expecting salvation for the sake of our own works, by the merit of our own righteousness. But how is either of these implied in my waiting in the way God has ordained, and expecting that he will meet me there, because he has promised so to do?

I do expect that he will fulfil his word, that he will meet and bless me in this way. Yet not for the sake of any works which I have done, nor for the merit of my righteousness; but merely through the merits, and sufferings, and love of his Son, in whom he is always well pleased.

3. It has been vehemently objected, Thirdly, "that Christ is the only means of grace." I answer, this is mere playing upon words. Explain your term, and the objection vanishes away.

V. 3. Yet, as we find no command in holy writ for any particular order to be observed herein, so neither do the providence and the Spirit of God adhere to any without variation; but the means into which different men are led, and in which they find the blessing of God, are varied, transposed, and combined together, a thousand

different ways. Yet still our wisdom is to follow the leadings of his providence and his Spirit; to be guided herein, (more especially as to the means wherein we ourselves seek the grace of God,) partly by his outward providence, giving us the opportunity of using sometimes one means, sometimes another, partly by our experience, which it is whereby his free Spirit is pleased most to work in our heart. And in the mean time, the sure and general rule for all who groan for the salvation of God is this, -- **whenever opportunity serves, use all the means which God has ordained; for who knows in which God will meet thee with the grace that bringeth salvation?**

4. As to the manner of using them, whereon indeed it wholly depends whether they should convey any grace at all to the user; it behoves us, First, always to retain a lively sense, that God is above all means.

Settle this in your heart, that the *opus operatum*, the mere work done, profiteth nothing; that there is no power to save, but in the Spirit of God; no merit, but in the blood of Christ; that, consequently, even what God ordains, conveys no grace to the soul, if you trust not in Him alone. On the other hand, he that does truly trust in Him, cannot fall short of the grace of God, even though he were cut off from every outward ordinance, though he were shut up in the centre of the earth.

Thirdly. **In using all means, seek God alone.** In and through every outward thing, look singly to the power of his Spirit; and the merits of his Son. Beware you do not stick in the work itself; if you do, it is all lost labour. Nothing short of God can satisfy your soul. Therefore, eye him in all, through all, and above all.

Remember also, to use all means, as means; as ordained, not for their own sake, but in order to the renewal of your soul in righteousness and true holiness. If, therefore, they actually tend to this, well; but if not, they are dung and dross.

The Sermons of John Wesley - Sermon 18

The Marks of the New Birth

"So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

John 3:8.

1. How is every one that is "born of the Spirit," -- that is, born again, -- born of God? What is meant by the being born again, the being born of God, or being born of the Spirit? What is implied in the being a son or a child of God, or having the Spirit of adoption? That these privileges, by the free mercy of God, are ordinarily annexed to baptism (which is thence termed by our Lord in a preceding verse, the being "born of water and of the Spirit") we know; but we would know what these privileges are: What is the new birth?

2. Perhaps it is not needful to give a definition of this, seeing the Scripture gives none. But as the question is of the deepest concern to every child of man; since, "except a man be born again," born of the Spirit, "he cannot see the kingdom of God;" I propose to lay down the marks of it in the plainest manner, just as I find them laid down in Scripture.

I. 1. The First of these, and the foundation of all the rest, is **faith**. So St. Paul, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:26.) So St. John, "To them gave he power" (exousian, right or privilege, it might rather be translated) "to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born," when they believed, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh," not by natural generation, "nor of the will of man," like those children adopted by men, in whom no inward change is thereby wrought, "but of God." (John 1:12,13.) And again in his General Epistle, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." (1 John 5:1.)

2. But it is not a barely notional or speculative faith that is here spoken of by the Apostles. It is not a bare assent to this proposition, Jesus is the Christ; nor indeed to all the propositions contained in our creed, or in the Old and New Testament.

3. For all this is no more than a dead faith. **The true, living, Christian faith, which whosoever hath, is born of God, is not only an assent, an act of the understanding; but a disposition, which God hath wrought in his heart; "a sure trust and confidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God."** This faith then, whereby we are born of God, is "not only a belief of all the articles of our faith, but also a true confidence of the mercy of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

4. An immediate and constant fruit of this faith whereby we are born of God, a fruit which can in no wise be separated from it, no, not for an hour, is **power over sin**; -- power over outward sin of every kind; over every evil word and work; for wheresoever the blood of Christ is thus applied, it "purgeth the conscience from dead works;" -- and over inward sin; for it purifieth the heart from every unholiness and temper.

7. Another fruit of this living faith is **peace**. And it is a peace which all the powers of earth and hell are unable to take from him. Waves and storms beat upon it, but they shake it not; for it is founded upon a rock. It keepeth the hearts and minds of the children of God, at all times and in all places. Whether they are in ease or in pain, in sickness or health, in abundance or want, they are happy in God. So that in all the vicissitudes of life their "heart standeth fast, believing in the Lord."

II. 1. A Second scriptural mark of those who are born of God, is **hope**. Thus St. Peter, speaking to all the children of God who were then scattered abroad, saith, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope." (1 Peter 1:3.)

III. 1. A Third scriptural mark of those who are born of God, and the greatest of all, is **love**; even "the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them." (Rom. 5:5.) "Because they are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son in their hearts, crying, Abba, Father!" (Gal. 4:6.) By this Spirit, continually looking up to God as their reconciled and loving Father, they cry to him for their daily bread, for all things needful, whether for their souls or bodies. They continually pour out their hearts before him, knowing "they have the petitions which they ask of him." (1 John 5:15.) Their delight is in him. He is the joy of their heart; their "shield," and their "exceeding great reward." The desire of their soul is toward him; it is their "meat and drink to do his will;" and they are "satisfied as with marrow and fatness, while their mouth praiseth him with joyful lips." (Psalm 63:5.)

3. The necessary fruit of this love of God is the love of our neighbour; of every soul which God hath made; not excepting our enemies; not excepting those who are now "despitefully using and persecuting us;" -- a love whereby we love every man as ourselves; as we love our own souls. Nay, our Lord has expressed it still more strongly, teaching us to "love one another even as He hath loved us."

5. A Second fruit then of the love of God (so far as it can be distinguished from it) is universal **obedience** to him we love, and conformity to his will; obedience to all the commands of God, internal and external; obedience of the heart and of the life; in every temper, and in all manner of conversation. And one of the tempers most obviously implied herein, is, the being "zealous of good works;" the hungering and thirsting to do good, in every possible kind, unto all men; the rejoicing to "spend and be spent for them," for every child of man; not looking for any recompence in this world, but only in the resurrection of the just.

IV. 1. Thus have I plainly laid down those marks of the new birth which I find laid down in Scripture. Thus doth God himself answer

that weighty question, What is it to be born of God? Such, if the appeal be made to the oracles of God, is "every one that is born of the Spirit." This it is, in the judgment of the Spirit of God, to be a son or a child of God: It is, so to **believe** in God, through Christ, as "not to commit sin," and to enjoy at all times, and in all places, that "**peace** of God which passeth all understanding." It is, so to **hope** in God through the Son of his love, as to have not only the "testimony of a good conscience," but also the Spirit of God "bearing witness with your spirits, that ye are the children of God;" whence cannot but spring the rejoicing in Him, through whom ye "have received the atonement." It is, so to **love** God, who hath thus loved you, as you never did love any creature: So that ye are constrained to love all men as yourselves; with a love not only ever burning in your hearts, but flaming out in all your actions and conversations, and making your whole life one "labour of love," one continued **obedience** to those commands, "Be ye merciful, as God is merciful;" "Be ye holy, as I the Lord am holy:" "Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

3 . Say not then in your heart, "I was once baptized, therefore I am now a child of God." Alas, that consequence will by no means hold. How many are the baptized gluttons and drunkards, the baptized liars and common swearers, the baptized railers and evil-speakers, the baptized whoremongers, thieves, extortioners? What think you? Are these now the children of God? Verily, I say unto you, whosoever you are, unto whom any one of the preceding characters belongs, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye do." Unto you I call, in the name of Him whom you crucify afresh, and in his words to your circumcised predecessors, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

5. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye" also "must be born again." "Except ye" also "be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of God." Lean no more on the staff of that broken reed, that ye were born again in baptism.

The Sermons of John Wesley - Sermon 43

The Scripture Way of Salvation

"Ye are saved through faith." -- Ephesians 2:8.

1. Nothing can be more intricate, complex, and hard to be understood, than religion, as it has been often described. And this is not only true concerning the religion of the Heathens, even many of the wisest of them, but concerning the religion of those also who were, in some sense, Christians; yea, and men of great name in the Christian world; men who seemed to be pillars thereof. Yet how easy to be understood, how plain and simple a thing, is the genuine religion of Jesus Christ; provided only that we take it in its native form, just as it is described in the oracles of God! It is exactly suited, by the wise Creator and Governor of the world, to the weak understanding and narrow capacity of man in his present state. How observable is this, both with regard to the end it proposes, and the means to attain that end! **The end is, in one word, salvation; the means to attain it, faith.**

1. What is salvation?

1. The very words of the text itself put this beyond all question: "Ye are saved." It is not something at a distance: it is a present thing; a blessing which, through the free mercy of God, ye are now in possession of. Nay, the words may be rendered, and that with equal propriety, "Ye have been saved": so that the salvation which is here spoken of might be extended to the entire work of God, from the first dawning of grace in the soul, till it is consummated in glory.

2. If we take this in its utmost extent, it will include all that is wrought in the soul by what is frequently termed "natural conscience," but more properly, "**preventing grace**"; --all the drawings of the Father; the desires after God, which, if we yield to them, increase more and more; --all that light wherewith the Son

of God "enlighteneth every one that cometh into the world;" showing every man "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God"; --all the convictions which His Spirit, from time to time, works in every child of man--although it is true, the generality of men stifle them as soon as possible, and after a while forget, or at least deny, that they ever had them at all.

3. But we are at present concerned only with that salvation which the Apostle is directly speaking of. And this consists of two general parts, **justification and sanctification.**

Justification is another word for pardon. It is the forgiveness of all our sins; and , what is necessarily implied therein, our acceptance with God. The price whereby this hath been procured for us (commonly termed "the meritorious cause of our justification"), is the blood and righteousness of Christ; or, to express it a little more clearly, all that Christ hath done and suffered for us, till He "poured out His soul for the transgressors." The immediate effects of justification are, the peace of God, a "peace that passeth all understanding," and a "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God" "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

4. **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."

8. **From the time of our being born again, the gradual work of sanctification takes place.** We are enabled "by the Spirit" to "mortify the deeds of the body," of our evil nature; and as we are

more and more dead to sin, we are more and more alive to God. We go on from grace to grace, while we are careful to "abstain from all appearance of evil," and are "zealous of good works," as we have opportunity, doing good to all men; while we walk in all His ordinances blameless, therein worshipping Him in spirit and in truth; while we take up our cross, and deny ourselves every pleasure that does not lead us to God.

9. It is thus that we wait for entire sanctification; for a full salvation from all our sins, --from pride, self-will, anger, unbelief; or, as the Apostle expresses it, "go unto perfection." But what is perfection? The word has various senses: here it means perfect love. It is love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul. It is love "rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, in everything giving thanks."

II. What is that faith whereby we are saved?

1. Faith, in general, is defined by the Apostle, *elegcos pragmatvnu ou blepomenvnu*. An evidence, a divine evidence and conviction (the word means both) of things not seen; not visible, not perceivable either by sight, or by any other of the external senses.

2. Taking the word in a more particular sense, faith is a divine evidence and conviction not only that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself," but also **that Christ loved me, and gave Himself for me**. It is by this faith (whether we term it the essence, or rather a property thereof) that we receive Christ; that we receive Him in all His offices, as our Prophet, Priest, and King. It is by this that He is "made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

4. It is by this faith we are saved, justified, and sanctified; taking that word in its highest sense. But how are we justified and

sanctified by faith? This is our third head of inquiry. And this being the main point in question, and a point of no ordinary importance, it will not be improper to give it a more distinct and particular consideration.

III. How are we saved by faith?

1. And, first, how are we justified by faith? In what sense is this to be understood? I answer, **Faith is the condition, and the only condition, of justification.** It is the condition: none is justified but he that believes: without faith no man is justified. And it is the only condition: this alone is sufficient for justification. Every one that believes is justified, whatever else he has or has not. In other words: no man is justified till he believes; every man when he believes is justified.

3. I have continually testified in private and in public, that we are sanctified as well as justified by faith. And indeed the one of those great truths does exceedingly illustrate the other. Exactly as we are justified by faith, so are we sanctified by faith. **Faith is the condition, and the only condition, of sanctification, exactly as it is of justification.** It is the condition: none is sanctified but he that believes; with out faith no man is sanctified. And it is the only condition: this alone is sufficient for sanctification. Every one that believes is sanctified, whatever else he has or has not. In other words, no man is sanctified till he believes: every man when he believes is sanctified.

16. It is a divine evidence and conviction that He is able and willing to do it now. And why not? Is not a moment to Him the same as a thousand years? He cannot want more time to accomplish whatever is His will. And He cannot want or stay for any more worthiness or fitness in the persons He is pleased to honour. **We may therefore boldly say, at any point of time, "Now is the day of salvation!" "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts!" "Behold, all things are now ready; come unto the marriage!"**

The Sermons of John Wesley - Sermon 45

The New Birth

"Ye must be born again." John 3:7.

1. If any doctrines within the whole compass of Christianity may be properly termed fundamental, they are doubtless these two, -- the doctrine of justification, and that of the new birth: The former relating to that great work which God does for us, in forgiving our sins; the latter, to the great work which God does in us, in renewing our fallen nature. In order of time, neither of these is before the other: in the moment we are justified by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus, we are also "born of the Spirit;" but in order of thinking, as it is termed, justification precedes the new birth. We first conceive his wrath to be turned away, and then his Spirit to work in our hearts.

I. Why must we be born again?

2. Now, God had told him before, "In the day that thou eatest" of that fruit, "thou shalt surely die." And the word of the Lord cannot be broken. Accordingly, in that day he did die: He died to God, -- the most dreadful of all deaths. He lost the life of God: He was separated from Him, in union with whom his spiritual life consisted. The body dies when it is separated from the soul; the soul, when it is separated from God.

4. And in Adam all died, all human kind, all the children of men who were then in Adam's loins. The natural consequence of this is, that every one descended from him comes into the world spiritually dead, dead to God, wholly dead in sin; entirely void of the life of God; void of the image of God, of all that righteousness and holiness wherein Adam was created. Instead of this, every man born into the world now bears the image of the devil in pride and self-will; the image of the beast, in sensual appetites and

desires. This, then, is the foundation of the new birth, -- the entire corruption of our nature. Hence it is, that, being born in sin, we must be "born again." Hence every one that is born of a woman must be born of the Spirit of God.

II. How must a man be born again?

4. While a man is in a mere natural state, before he is born of God, he has, in a spiritual sense, eyes and sees not; a thick impenetrable veil lies upon them; he has ears, but hears not; he is utterly deaf to what he is most of all concerned to hear. His other spiritual senses are all locked up: He is in the same condition as if he had them not. Hence he has no knowledge of God; no intercourse with him; he is not at all acquainted with him. He has no true knowledge of the things of God, either of spiritual or eternal things; therefore, though he is a living man, he is a dead Christian.

But as soon as he is born of God, there is a total change in all these particulars. The "eyes of his understanding are opened;" (such is the language of the great Apostle;) and, He who of old "commanded light to shine out of darkness shining on his heart, he sees the light of the glory of God," his glorious love, "in the face of Jesus Christ." His ears being opened, he is now capable of hearing the inward voice of God, saying, "Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee;" "go and sin no more." He "feels in his heart," to use the language of our Church, "the mighty working of the Spirit of God;": He feels, is inwardly sensible of, the graces which the Spirit of God works in his heart. He feels, he is conscious of, a "peace which passeth all understanding." He many times feels such a joy in God as is "unspeakable, and full of glory." He feels "the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him;" and all his spiritual senses are then exercised to discern spiritual good and evil. By the use of these, he is daily increasing in the knowledge of God, of Jesus

Christ whom he hath sent and to all the things pertaining to his inward kingdom.

And now he may be properly said to live: God having quickened him by his Spirit, he is alive to God through Jesus Christ. He lives a life which the world knoweth not of, a "life which is hid with Christ in God." God is continually breathing, as it were, upon the soul; and his soul is breathing unto God. Grace is descending into his heart; and prayer and praise ascending to heaven: And by this intercourse between God and man, this fellowship with the Father and the Son, as by a kind of spiritual respiration, the life of God in the soul is sustained; and the child of God grows up, till he comes to the "full measure of the stature of Christ."

5. From hence it manifestly appears, what is the nature of the new birth. It is that great change which God works in the soul when he brings it into life; when he raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit of God when it is "created anew in Christ Jesus;" when it is "renewed after the image of God, 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 love for all mankind. In a word, it is that change whereby the earthly, sensual, devilish mind is turned into the "mind which was in Christ Jesus." This is the nature of the new birth: "So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

III. Wherefore is it necessary that we should be born again?

1. First, in order to holiness. Gospel holiness is no less than the image of God stamped upon the heart; it is no other than the whole mind which was in Christ Jesus; it consists of all heavenly affections and tempers mingled together in one.

2. But "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," shall see the face of God in glory. Of consequence, the new birth is absolutely necessary in order to eternal salvation.

3. For the same reason, except he be born again, none can be happy even in this world. For it is not possible, in the nature of things, that a man should be happy who is not holy.

IV. I proposed in the Last place to subjoin a few inferences

4. **Still, "you must be born again."** Do you add, "I do go farther yet; for I not only do no harm, but do all the good I can"? I doubt that fact; I fear you have had a thousand opportunities of doing good which you have suffered to pass by unimproved, and for which therefore you are accountable to God. But if you had improved them all, if you really had done all the good you possibly could to all men, yet this does not at all alter the case; still, "you must be born again." Without this nothing will do any good to your poor, sinful, polluted soul. "Nay, but I constantly attend all the ordinances of God: I keep to my church and sacrament." It is well you do: But all this will not keep you from hell, except you be born again. **Go to church twice a day; go to the Lord's table every week; say ever so many prayers in private; hear ever so many good sermons; read ever so many good books; still, "you must be born again:" None of these things will stand in the place of the new birth; no, nor any thing under heaven.** Let this therefore, if you have not already experienced this inward work of God, be your continual prayer: "Lord, add this to all thy blessings, -- let me be born again! Deny whatever thou pleasest, but deny not this; let me be 'born from above!' Take away whatsoever seemeth thee good, -- reputation, fortune, friends, health, -- only give me this, to be born of the Spirit, to be received among the children of God! Let me be born, 'not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever;' and then let me daily 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!'"

The Sermons of John Wesley - Sermon 50

The Use Of Money

"I say unto you, Make unto yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into the everlasting habitations." Luke 16:9.

"The love of money," we know, "is the root of all evil;" but not the thing itself. The fault does not lie in the money, but in them that use it. It may be used ill: and what may not? But it may likewise be used well: It is full as applicable to the best, as to the worst uses.

3. It is therefore of the highest concern that all who fear God know how to employ this valuable talent; that they be instructed how it may answer these glorious ends, and in the highest degree. And, perhaps, all the instructions which are necessary for this may be reduced to three plain rules, by the exact observance whereof we may approve ourselves faithful stewards of "the mammon of unrighteousness."

I. Gain All You Can

1. The first of these is (he that heareth, let him understand!) "Gain all you can." Here we may speak like the children of the world: We meet them on their own ground. And it is our bounden duty to do this: We ought to gain all we can gain, without buying gold too dear, without paying more for it than it is worth. But this it is certain we ought not to do; we ought not to gain money at the expense of life, nor (which is in effect the same thing) at the expense of our health.

2. We are, Secondly, to gain all we can without hurting our mind any more than our body. For neither may we hurt this. We must preserve, at all events, the spirit of an healthful mind. Therefore we may not engage or continue in any sinful trade, any that is contrary to the law of God, or of our country.

3. We are, Thirdly, to gain all we can without hurting our neighbour. But this we may not, cannot do, if we love our neighbour as ourselves. We cannot, if we love everyone as ourselves, hurt anyone in his substance.

4. Neither may we gain by hurting our neighbour in his body. Therefore we may not sell anything which tends to impair health. Such is, eminently, all that liquid fire, commonly called drams or spirituous liquors.

7. These cautions and restrictions being observed, it is the bounden duty of all who are engaged in worldly business to observe that first and great rule of Christian wisdom with respect to money, "Gain all you can." Gain all you can by honest industry. Use all possible diligence in your calling. Lose no time.

8. Gain all you can, by common sense, by using in your business all the understanding which God has given you. It is amazing to observe, how few do this;

II. Save All You Can

1. Having gained all you can, by honest wisdom and unwearied diligence, the second rule of Christian prudence is, "Save all you can." Do not throw the precious talent into the sea:

2. Do not waste any part of so precious a talent merely in gratifying the desires of the flesh; in procuring the pleasures of sense of whatever kind; particularly, in enlarging the pleasure of tasting. I do not mean, avoid gluttony and drunkenness only: An honest heathen would condemn these. But there is a regular, reputable kind of sensuality, an elegant epicurism, which does not immediately disorder the stomach, nor (sensibly, at least) impair the understanding. And yet (to mention no other effects of it now) it cannot be maintained without considerable expense. Cut off all this expense! Despise delicacy and variety, and be content with what plain nature requires.

III. Give all you can

Having, First, gained all you can, and, Secondly saved all you can, Then "give all you can."

2. In order to see the ground and reason of this, consider, when the Possessor of heaven and earth brought you into being, and placed you in this world, **he placed you here not as a proprietor, but a steward:** As such he entrusted you, for a season, with goods of various kinds; but the sole property of these still rests in him, nor can be alienated from him. As you yourself are not your own, but his, such is, likewise, all that you enjoy. Such is your soul and your body, not your own, but God's. And so is your substance in particular. And he has told you, in the most clear and express terms, how you are to employ it for him, in such a manner, that it may be all an holy sacrifice, acceptable through Christ Jesus. And this light, easy service, he has promised to reward with an eternal weight of glory.

3. The directions which God has given us, touching the use of our worldly substance, may be comprised in the following particulars. If you desire to be a faithful and a wise steward, out of that portion of your Lord's goods which he has for the present lodged in your hands, but with the right of resuming whenever it pleases him, First, provide things needful for yourself; food to eat, raiment to put on, whatever nature moderately requires for preserving the body in health and strength. Secondly, provide these for your wife, your children, your servants, or any others who pertain to your household. If when this is done there be an overplus left, then "do good to them that are of the household of faith." If there be an overplus still, "as you have opportunity, do good unto all men." In so doing, you give all you can; nay, in a sound sense, all you have: For all that is laid out in this manner is really given to God. You "render unto God the things that are God's," not only by what you give to the poor, but also by that which you expend in providing things needful for yourself and your household.

6. You see the nature and extent of truly Christian prudence so far as it relates to the use of that great talent, money. **Gain all you can**, without hurting either yourself or your neighbour, in soul or body, by applying hereto with unintermitted diligence, and with all the understanding which God has given you; -- **save all you can**, by cutting off every expense which serves only to indulge foolish desire; to gratify either the desire of flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life; waste nothing, living or dying, on sin or folly, whether for yourself or your children; -- and then, **give all you can**, or, in other words, give all you have to God. Do not stint yourself, like a Jew rather than a Christian, to this or that proportion. "Render unto God," not a tenth, not a third, not half, but all that is God's, be it more or less; by employing all on yourself, your household, the household of faith, and all mankind, in such a manner, that you may give a good account of your stewardship when ye can be no longer stewards;

7. Brethren, can we be either wise or faithful stewards unless we thus manage our Lord's goods? We cannot, as not only the oracles of God, but our own conscience beareth witness. **Then why should we delay?** Our kingdom, our wisdom is not of this world: Heathen custom is nothing to us. We follow no men any farther than they are followers of Christ. **Hear ye him. Yea, to-day, while it is called to-day, hear and obey his voice! At this hour, and from this hour, do his will:** Fulfil his word, in this and in all things! I entreat you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, act up to the dignity of your calling! No more sloth! Whatsoever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might! No more waste! Cut off every expense which fashion, caprice, or flesh and blood demand! No more covetousness! But employ whatever God has entrusted you with, in doing good, all possible good, in every possible kind and degree to the household of faith, to all men! This is no small part of "the wisdom of the just." 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: So "laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may attain eternal life!"

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Excerpts From

John Wesley's Journal

Sunday, January 25, 1736. – Sailing to Georgia.

At noon our third storm began. At four it was more violent than before. At seven I went to the Germans. I had long before observed the great seriousness of their behavior. Of their humility they had given a continual proof by performing those servile offices for the other passengers, which none of the English would undertake; for which they desired and would receive no pay, saying, "it was good for their proud hearts," and "their loving Saviour had done more for them." And every day had given them an occasion of showing a meekness which no injury could move. If they were pushed, struck, or thrown down, they rose again and went away; but no complaint was found in their mouth. There was now an opportunity of trying whether they were delivered from the spirit of fear, as well as from that of pride, anger and revenge. 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 sang on. I asked one of them afterward, "**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.**"

Saturday, February 7, 1736. – Arriving in Georgia.

Mr. Oglethorpe returned from Savannah with Mr. Spangenburg, one of the Pastors of the Germans. I soon found what spirit he was of; and asked his advice with regard to my own conduct. He said, "My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit, that you are a child of God?" I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it, and

asked, “Do you know Jesus Christ?” I paused, and said, “I know he is the Savior 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.

Sunday, January 29, 1738. – Back in London.

It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity. But what have I learned myself in the meantime? Why (what I the least of all suspected), that I who went to America to convert others was never myself converted to God. “I am not mad,” though I thus speak; but “I speak the words of truth and soberness”; if haply some of those who still dream may awake and see that as I am, so are they.

Saturday, March 4.

I found my brother at Oxford, recovering from his pleurisy; and with him Peter Bohler; by whom, in the hand of the great God, I was, on Sunday, the fifth, clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved. Immediately it struck into my mind, “Leave off preaching. How can you preach to others, who have not faith yourself?” I asked Bohler whether he thought I should leave it off or not. He answered, “By no means.” I asked, “But what can I preach?” He said, “Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith.”

Thursday, March 23.

I met Peter Bohler again, who now amazed me more and more by the account he gave of the fruits of living faith—the holiness and happiness which he affirmed to attend it. The next morning I began the Greek Testament again, resolving to abide by “the law and the

testimony”; I was confident that God would hereby show me whether this doctrine was of God.

Sunday, April 2.

Being Easter day, I preached in our college chapel on “The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God: and they that hear shall live” [John 5:25]. I preached in the afternoon, first at the castle, and then at Carfax, on the same words. I see the promise, but it is afar off.

Saturday, April 22.

I met Peter Bohler once more. I had now no objection to what he said of the nature of faith; namely, that it is (to use the words of our Church) “a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God.”

But I could not comprehend what he spoke of an *instantaneous work*. I could not understand how this faith should be given in a moment: How a man could at once be thus turned from darkness to light, from sin and misery to righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost. I searched the Scriptures again, touching this very thing, particularly the Acts of the Apostles: But, to my utter astonishment, found scarce any instances there of other than *instantaneous conversions*;

But on Sunday, 23, I was beat out of this retreat too, by the concurring evidence of several living witnesses; who testified, God had thus wrought in themselves; giving them in a moment such a faith in the blood of his Son, as translated them out of darkness into light, out of sin and fear into holiness and happiness. Here ended my disputing. I could now only cry out, “Lord, help thou my unbelief!”

Wednesday, April 26.

P. Bohler walked with me a few miles, and exhorted me not to stop short of the grace of God.

Wednesday, May 3.

My brother had a long and particular conversation with Peter Bohler. And it now pleased God to open his eyes so that he also saw clearly what was the nature of that one true living faith, whereby alone, “through grace, we are saved.”

Wednesday, May 10.

From this time till Saturday, 13, I was sorrowful and very heavy; being neither able to read, nor meditate, nor sing, nor pray, nor do any thing.

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, May 22-24.

I had continual sorrow and heaviness in my heart:

I see that the whole law of God is holy, just, and good. I know every thought, every temper of my soul, ought to bear God’s image and superscription. But how am I fallen from the glory of God! I feel that ‘I am sold under sin.’ I know, that I too deserve nothing but wrath, being full of abominations: And having no good thing in me, to atone for them, or to remove the wrath of God. All my works, all my righteousness, my prayers, need an atonement for themselves. So that my mouth is stopped. I have nothing to plead. God is holy, I am unholy. God is a consuming fire: I am altogether a sinner, meet to be consumed.

Yet I hear a voice (and is it not the voice of God?) saying, ‘Believe, and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth is passed from death unto life. God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’

O let no one deceive us by vain words, as if we had already attained this faith! By its fruits we shall know. Do we already feel ‘peace with God,’ and ‘joy in the Holy Ghost?’ Does ‘his Spirit bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God?’ Alas, with mine He does not.

What occurred on Wednesday, May 24, I think best to relate at large, after premising what may make it the better understood.

1. 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. And those instructions, so far as they respected outward duties and sins, I gladly received, and often thought of. But all that was said to me of inward obedience, I neither understood nor remembered. So that I was indeed as ignorant of the true meaning of the Law, as I was of the Gospel of Christ.

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

3. Being removed to the University for five years, I still said my prayers both in public and in private, and read, with the Scriptures, several other books of religion, especially comments on the New Testament. Yet I had not all this while so much as a notion of inward holiness; nay, went on habitually, and, for the most part, very contentedly, in some or other known sin: Indeed, with some intermission and short struggles, especially before and after the

holy communion, which I was obliged to receive thrice a year. I cannot well tell what I hoped to be saved by now, when I was continually sinning against that little light I had; unless by those transient fits of what many Divines taught me to call repentance.

4. When I was about twenty-two, my father pressed me to enter into holy orders. At the same time, the providence of God directing me to Kempis's "Christian Pattern," I began to see, that true religion was seated in the heart, and that God's law extended to all our thoughts as well as words and actions. I was, however, very angry at Kempis, for being too strict. Yet I had frequently much sensible comfort in reading him, such as I was an utter stranger to before: And meeting likewise with a religious friend, which I never had till now, 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.

5. Removing soon after to another College, I executed a resolution which I was before convinced was of the utmost importance, — shaking off at once all my trifling acquaintance. I began to see more and more the value of time. I applied myself closer to study. I watched more carefully against actual sins; I advised others to be religious, according to that scheme of religion by which I modelled my own life. But meeting now with Mr. Law's "Christian Perfection" and "Serious Call," although I was much offended at many parts of both, yet they convinced me more than ever of the exceeding height and breadth and depth of the law of God. The light flowed in so mightily upon my soul, that every thing appeared in a new view. I cried to God for help, and resolved not to prolong the time of obeying Him as I had never done before. And by my continued endeavor to keep His whole law, inward and outward, to

the utmost of my power, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of Him, and that I was even then in a state of salvation.

6. In 1730 I began visiting the prisons; assisting the poor and sick in town; and doing what other good I could, by my presence, or my little fortune, to the bodies and souls of all men. To this end I abridged myself of all superfluities, and many that are called necessaries of life. I soon became a byword for so doing, and I rejoiced that my name was cast out as evil. The next spring I began observing the Wednesday and Friday Fasts, commonly observed in the ancient Church; tasting no food till three in the afternoon.

And now I knew not how to go any further. I diligently strove against all sin. I omitted no sort of self-denial which I thought lawful: I carefully used, both in public and in private, all the means of grace at all opportunities. I omitted no occasion of doing good: I for that reason suffered evil. And all this I knew to be nothing, unless as it was directed toward inward holiness. Accordingly this, the image of God, was what I aimed at in all, by doing his will, not my own. **Yet when, after continuing some years in this course, I apprehended myself to be near death, I could not find that all this gave me any comfort, or any assurance of acceptance with God.** At this I was then not a little surprised; not imagining that I had been all this time building on the sand, nor considering that “other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid” by God, “even Christ Jesus.”

8. In this refined way of trusting to my own works and my own righteousness, (so zealously inculcated by the mystic writers,) I dragged on heavily, finding no comfort or help therein, till the time of my leaving England. On shipboard, however, I was again active in outward works; where it pleased God of his free mercy to give me twenty-six of the Moravian brethren for companions, who endeavored to show me “a more excellent way.” But I understood it not at first. I was too learned and too wise. So that it seemed

foolishness unto me. And I continued preaching, and following after, and trusting it, that righteousness whereby no flesh can be justified.

9. All the time I was at Savannah I was thus beating the air. Being ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, which, by a living faith in Him, bringeth salvation “to every one that believeth,” I sought to establish my own righteousness; and so laboured in the fire all my days. I was now properly “under the law;” I knew that “the law” of God was “spiritual; I consented to it that it was good.” Yea, “I delighted in it, after the inner man.” Yet I was “carnal, sold under sin.” Every day was I constrained to cry out, “What I do, I allow not: For what I would, I do not; but what I hate, that I do. To will is” indeed “present with me: But how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good which I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me:” Even “the law in my members, warring against the law of my mind,” and “bringing me into captivity to the law of sin.”

10. In this vile, abject state of bondage to sin, I was indeed fighting continually, but not conquering. Before, I had willingly served sin; now it was unwillingly; but still I served it. I fell, and rose, and fell again. Sometimes I was overcome, and in heaviness: Sometimes I overcame, and was in joy. For as in the former state I had some foretastes of the terrors of the law, so had I in this, of the comforts of the Gospel. During this whole struggle between nature and grace, which had now continued above ten years, I had made many remarkable returns to prayer; especially when I was in trouble: I had many sensible comforts; which are indeed no other than short anticipations of the life of faith. But I was still “under the law,” not “under grace:” (The state most who are called Christians are content to live and die in:) For I was only striving with, not freed from, sin. Neither had I the witness of the Spirit with my spirit, and indeed could not; for I “sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.”

11. In my return to England, January, 1738, being in imminent danger of death, and very uneasy on that account, I was strongly convinced that the cause of that uneasiness was unbelief; and that the gaining a true, living faith was “one thing needful” for me. But still I fixed not this faith on its right object: I meant only faith in God, not faith in or through Christ. Again, I knew not that I was wholly void of this faith; but only thought, I had not enough of it. So that when Peter Bohler, whom God prepared for me as soon as I came to London, affirmed of true faith in Christ, (which is but one,) that it had those two fruits inseparably attending it, “Dominion over sin, and constant Peace from a sense of forgiveness,” I was quite amazed, and looked upon it as a new Gospel. If this was so, it was clear that I had not faith.

But I was not willing to be convinced of this. Therefore, I disputed with all my might, and laboured to prove that faith might be where these were not; especially where the sense of forgiveness was not: For all the Scriptures relating to this I had been long since taught to construe away; and to call all Presbyterians who spoke otherwise. Besides, I well saw, no one could, in the nature of things, have such a sense of forgiveness, and not *feel* it. But I felt it not. If then there was no faith without this, all my pretensions to faith dropped at once.

12. When I met Peter Bohler again, he consented to put the dispute upon the issue which I desired, namely, Scripture and experience. I first consulted the Scripture. But when I set aside the glosses of men, and simply considered the words of God, comparing them together, endeavouring to illustrate the obscure by the plainer passages; I found they all made against me, and was forced to retreat to my last hold, “that experience would never agree with the *literal interpretation* of these Scriptures. Nor could I therefore allow it to be true, till I found some living witnesses of it.”

He replied, he could show me such at any time; if I desired it, the next day. And accordingly, the next day he came again with three others, all of whom testified, of their own personal experience, that a true living faith in Christ is inseparable from a sense of pardon for all past, and freedom from all present, sins. They added with one mouth, that this faith was the gift, the free gift of God; and that he would surely bestow it upon every soul who earnestly and perseveringly sought it.

I was now thoroughly convinced; and, by the grace of God, I resolved to seek it unto the end, **1.** By absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or in part, upon *my own* works or righteousness; on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up. **2.** By adding to the constant use of all other means of grace, continual prayer for this very thing, justifying, saving faith, a full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for *me*; a trust in Him, as *my* Christ, as *my* sole justification, sanctification, and redemption.

13. I continued thus to seek it, (though with no strange indifference, dullness, and coldness, and unusually frequent relapses into sin,) till

Wednesday, May 24.

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” [II Peter 1:4]. Just as I went out, I opened it again on those words, “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God” [Mark 12:34]. In the 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. Oh, let Thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with Thee; therefore shalt Thou be feared. O Israel, trust in the Lord: for with the Lord

there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins.”

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

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

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

Thursday, May 25.

The moment I awakened, “Jesus, Master,” was in my heart and in my mouth; and I found all my strength lay in keeping my eye fixed

upon Him and my soul waiting on Him continually. Being again at St. Paul's in the afternoon, I could taste the good word of God in the anthem which began, "My song shall be always of the loving-kindness of the Lord: with my mouth will I ever be showing forth thy truth from one generation to another." Yet the enemy injected a fear, "If thou dost believe, why is there not a more sensible change? I answered (yet not I), "That I know not. But, this I know, I have 'now peace with God.' And I sin not today, and Jesus my Master has forbidden me to take thought for the morrow."

Saturday, May 27.

Believing one reason of my want of joy was want of time for prayer, I resolved to do no business till I went to church in the morning, but to continue pouring out my heart before Him. And this day my spirit was enlarged; so that though I was now also assaulted by many temptations, I was more than conqueror, gaining more power thereby to trust and to rejoice in God my Saviour.

Wednesday, June 7.

I determined, if God should permit, to retire for a short time into Germany. I had fully proposed, before I left Georgia, so to do if it should please God to bring me back to Europe. And I now clearly saw the time was come. My weak mind could not bear to be thus sawn asunder. And I hoped the conversing with those holy men who were themselves living witnesses of the full power of faith, and yet able to bear with those that are weak, would be a means, under God, of so establishing my soul that I might go on from faith to faith, and from "strength to strength." **[The next three months Wesley spent in Germany visiting the Moravians.]**

Saturday, March 31, 1739.

In the evening I reached Bristol and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarcely reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; I had been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church.

April 1.—In the evening (Mr. Whitefield being gone) I began expounding our Lord's Sermon on the Mount (one pretty remarkable precedent of field-preaching, though I suppose there were churches at that time also), to a little society which was accustomed to meet once or twice a week in Nicholas Street.

***Monday, 2.*—At four in the afternoon, I submitted to be more vile and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people.**

Monday June 11, 1739.

Yet during this whole time, I had many thoughts concerning the unusual manner of my ministering among them. But after frequently laying it before the Lord, and calmly weighing whatever objections I heard against it, I could not but adhere to what I had some time since wrote to a friend, who had freely spoken his sentiments concerning it. An extract of that letter I here subjoin; that the matter may be placed in a clear light.

DEAR SIR,

Permit me to speak plainly. If by catholic principles you mean any other than scriptural, they weigh nothing with me; I allow no other rule, whether of faith or practice, than the Holy Scriptures: But on scriptural principles, I do not think it hard to justify whatever I do. God in Scripture commands me, according to my power, to instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked, confirm the virtuous. Man forbids me to do this in another's parish; that is, in effect, to do it at all, seeing I have now no parish of my own, nor probably ever shall.

Whom then shall I hear, God or man? 'If it be just to obey man rather than God, judge you. A dispensation of the Gospel is committed to me; and woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel.' But where shall I preach it, upon the principles you mention? Why, not in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America; not in any of the Christian parts, at least, of the habitable earth. For all these are, after a sort, divided into parishes. If it be said, 'Go back, then, to the Heathens from whence you came:' Nay, but neither could I now (on your principles) preach to them; for all the Heathens in Georgia belong to the parish either of Savannah or Frederica.

Suffer me now to tell you my principles in this matter. I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work which I know God has called me to; and sure I am that His blessing attends it. Great encouragement have I, therefore, to be faithful in fulfilling the work He hath given me to do. His servant I am, and, as such, am employed according to the plain direction of His Word, 'As I have opportunity, doing good unto all men'; and His providence clearly concurs with his Word; which has disengaged me from all things else, that I might singly attend on this very thing, 'and go about doing good.'

Excerpts From
The Character of a Methodist

by John Wesley

1. The distinguishing marks of a Methodist are not his opinions of any sort ... **But as to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think.**

5. "What then is the mark? Who is a Methodist, according to your own account?" I answer: A Methodist is one who has "the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him;" one who "loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. God is the joy of his heart, and the desire of his soul; which is constantly crying out, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee! My God and my all! Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever!"

6. He is therefore happy in God, yea, always happy, as having in him "a well of water springing up into everlasting life," and overflowing his soul with peace and joy. "Perfect love" having now "cast out fear," he "rejoices evermore." He "rejoices in the Lord always," even "in God his Saviour;" and in the Father, "through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom he hath now received the atonement." "Having" found "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of his sins," he cannot but rejoice, whenever he looks back on the horrible pit out of which he is delivered; when he sees "all his transgressions blotted out as a cloud, and his iniquities as a thick cloud." He cannot but rejoice, whenever he looks on the state wherein he now is; "being justified freely, and having peace with

God through our Lord Jesus Christ." For "he that believeth, hath the witness" of this "in himself;" being now the son of God by faith. "Because he is a son, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into his heart, crying, Abba, Father!" And "the Spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit, that he is a child of God." He rejoiceth also, whenever he looks forward, "in hope of the glory that shall be revealed;" yea, this his joy is full, and all his bones cry out, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten me again to a living hope -- of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for me!"

7. And he who hath this hope, thus "full of immortality, in everything giveth thanks;" as knowing that this (whatsoever it is) "is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning him." From him, therefore, he cheerfully receives all, saying, "Good is the will of the Lord;" and whether the Lord giveth or taketh away, equally "blessing the name of the Lord." For he hath "learned, in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content." He knoweth "both how to be abased and how to abound. Everywhere and in all things he is instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and suffer need." Whether in ease or pain, whether in sickness or health, whether in life or death, he giveth thanks from the ground of his heart to Him who orders it for good; knowing that as "every good gift cometh from above," so none but good can come from the Father of Lights, into whose hand he has wholly committed his body and soul, as into the hands of a faithful Creator. He is therefore "careful for nothing;" as having "cast all his care on Him that careth for him," and "in all things" resting on him, after "making his request known to him with thanksgiving."

8. For indeed he "prays without ceasing." It is given him "always to pray, and not to faint." Not that he is always in the house of prayer; though he neglects no opportunity of being there. Neither is he always on his knees, although he often is, or on his face, before the Lord his God. Nor yet is he always crying aloud to God, or calling upon him in words: For many times "the Spirit maketh intercession for him with groans that cannot be uttered." But at all times the language of his heart is this: "Thou brightness of the eternal glory, unto thee is my heart, though without a voice, and my silence speaketh unto thee." And this is true prayer, and this alone. But his heart is ever lifted up to God, at all times and in all places. In this he is never hindered, much less interrupted, by any person or thing. In retirement or company, in leisure, business, or conversation, his heart is ever with the Lord. Whether he lie down or rise up, God is in all his thoughts; he walks with God continually, having the loving eye of his mind still fixed upon him, and everywhere "seeing Him that is invisible."

9. And while he thus always exercises his love to God, by praying without ceasing, rejoicing evermore, and in everything giving thanks, this commandment is written in his heart, "That he who loveth God, love his brother also." And he accordingly loves his neighbour as himself; he loves every man as his own soul. His heart is full of love to all mankind, to every child of "the Father of the spirits of all flesh." That a man is not personally known to him, is no bar to his love; no, nor that he is known to be such as he approves not, that he repays hatred for his good-will. For he "loves his enemies;" yea, and the enemies of God, "the evil and the unthankful." And if it be not in his power to "do good to them that hate him," yet he ceases not to pray for them, though they

continue to spurn his love, and still "despitefully use him and persecute him."

10. For he is "pure in heart." The love of God has purified his heart from all revengeful passions, from envy, malice, and wrath, from every unkind temper or malign affection. It hath cleansed him from pride and haughtiness of spirit, whereof alone cometh contention. And he hath now "put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering:" So that he "forbears and forgives, if he had a quarrel against any; even as God in Christ hath forgiven him." And indeed all possible ground for contention, on his part, is utterly cut off. For none can take from him what he desires; seeing he "loves not the world, nor" any of "the things of the world;" being now "crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him;" being dead to all that is in the world, both to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." For "all his desire is unto God, and to the remembrance of his name."

11. Agreeable to this his one desire, is the one design of his life, namely, "not to do his own will, but the will of Him that sent him." His one intention at all times and in all things is, not to please himself, but Him whom his soul loveth. He has a single eye. And because "his eye is single, his whole body is full of light." Indeed, where the loving eye of the soul is continually fixed upon God, there can be no darkness at all, "but the whole is light; as when the bright shining of a candle doth enlighten the house." God then reigns alone. All that is in the soul is holiness to the Lord. There is not a motion in his heart, but is according to his will. Every thought that arises points to Him, and is in obedience to the law of Christ.

12. And the tree is known by its fruits. For as he loves God, so he keeps his commandments; not only some, or most of them, but all, from the least to the greatest. He is not content to "keep the whole law, and offend in one point;" but has, in all points, "a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man." Whatever God has forbidden, he avoids; whatever God hath enjoined, he doeth; and that whether it be little or great, hard or easy, joyous or grievous to the flesh. He "runs the way of God's commandments," now he hath set his heart at liberty. It is his glory so to do; it is his daily crown of rejoicing, "to do the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven;" knowing it is the highest privilege of "the angels of God, of those that excel in strength, to fulfil his commandments, and hearken to the voice of his word."

13. All the commandments of God he accordingly keeps, and that with all his might. For his obedience is in proportion to his love, the source from whence it flows. And therefore, loving God with all his heart, he serves him with all his strength. He continually presents his soul and body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God; entirely and without reserve devoting himself, all he has, and all he is, to his glory. All the talents he has received, he constantly employs according to his Master's will; every power and faculty of his soul, every member of his body. Once he "yielded" them "unto sin" and the devil, "as instruments of unrighteousness;" but now, "being alive from the dead, he yields" them all "as instruments of righteousness unto God."

14. By consequence, whatsoever he doeth, it is all to the glory of God. In all his employments of every kind, he not only aims at this, (which is implied in having a single eye,) but actually attains it. His

business and refreshments, as well as his prayers, all serve this great end. Whether he sit in his house or walk by the way, whether he lie down or rise up, he is promoting, in all he speaks or does, the one business of his life; whether he put on his apparel, or labour, or eat and drink, or divert himself from too wasting labour, it all tends to advance the glory of God, by peace and good-will among men. His one invariable rule is this, "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

15. Nor do the customs of the world at all hinder his "running the race that is set before him." He knows that vice does not lose its nature, though it becomes ever so fashionable; and remembers, that "every man is to give an account of himself to God." He cannot, therefore, "follow" even "a multitude to do evil." He cannot "fare sumptuously every day," or "make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." He cannot "lay up treasures upon earth," any more than he can take fire into his bosom. He cannot "adorn himself," on any pretence, "with gold or costly apparel." He cannot join in or countenance any diversion which has the least tendency to vice of any kind. He cannot "speak evil" of his neighbour, any more than he can lie either for God or man. He cannot utter an unkind word of any one; for love keeps the door of his lips. He cannot speak "idle words;" "no corrupt communication" ever "comes out of his mouth," as is all that "which is" not "good to the use of edifying," not "fit to minister grace to the hearers." But "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are" justly "of good report," he thinks, and speaks, and acts, "adorning the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in all things."

16. Lastly. As he has time, he "does good unto all men;" unto neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies: And that in every possible kind; not only to their bodies, by "feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those that are sick or in prison;" but much more does he labour to do good to their souls, as of the ability which God giveth; to awaken those that sleep in death; to bring those who are awakened to the atoning blood, that, "being justified by faith, they may have peace with God;" and to provoke those who have peace with God to abound more in love and in good works. And he is willing to "spend and be spent herein," even "to be offered up on the sacrifice and service of their faith," so they may "all come unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

17. These are the principles and practices of our sect; these are the marks of a true Methodist. By these alone do those who are in derision so called, desire to be distinguished from other men. If any man say, "Why, these are only the common fundamental principles of Christianity!" thou hast said; so I mean; this is the very truth; I know they are no other; and I would to God both thou and all men knew, that I, and all who follow my judgment, do vehemently refuse to be distinguished from other men, by any but the common principles of Christianity, -- the plain, old Christianity that I teach, renouncing and detesting all other marks of distinction. And whosoever is what I preach, (let him be called what he will, for names change not the nature of things,) he is a Christian, not in name only, but in heart and in life. He is inwardly and outwardly conformed to the will of God, as revealed in the written word. He thinks, speaks, and lives, according to the method laid down in the revelation of Jesus Christ. His soul is

renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and in all true holiness. And having the mind that was in Christ, he so walks as Christ also walked.

18. By these marks, by these fruits of a living faith, do we labour to distinguish ourselves from the unbelieving world from all those whose minds or lives are not according to the Gospel of Christ. But from real Christians, of whatsoever denomination they be, we earnestly desire not to be distinguished at all, not from any who sincerely follow after what they know they have not yet attained. No: "Whosoever doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." And I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that we be in no wise divided among ourselves. **Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thine? I ask no farther question. If it be, give me thy hand.** For opinions, or terms, let us not destroy the work of God. Dost thou love and serve God? It is enough. I give thee the right hand of fellowship. If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; let us strive together for the faith of the Gospel; walking worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called; with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; remembering, there is one body, and one Spirit, even as we are called with one hope of our calling; "one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Excerpts From
A Plain Account of Christian Perfection

As Believed and Taught by
The Reverend Mr. John Wesley,
From the Year 1725, to the Year 1777

1. What I purpose in the following papers is, to give a plain and distinct account of the steps by which I was led, during a course of many years, to embrace the doctrine of Christian perfection.

6. On January 1, 1733, I preached before the University in St. Mary's church, on "the Circumcision of the Heart." In the same sermon I observed, "Love is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment.' It is not only 'the first and great' command, but all the commandments in one. 'Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise,' they are all comprised in this one word, love. In this is perfection, and glory, and happiness: The royal law of heaven and earth is this, 'Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.' The one perfect good shall be your one ultimate end.

I concluded in these words: " Let your soul be filled with so entire a love to Him that you may love nothing but for his sake.' 'Have a pure intention of heart, a steadfast regard to his glory in all your actions.' For then, and not till then, is that 'mind in us, which was also in Christ Jesus,' when in every motion of our heart, in every word of our tongue, in every work of our hands, we 'pursue nothing but in relation to him, and in subordination to his pleasure;' when we too neither think, nor speak, nor act, to fulfil 'our own will, but the will of Him that sent us;'

12. I think it was in the latter end of the year 1740, that I had a conversation with Dr. Gibson, then Bishop of London, at Whitehall.

He asked me what I meant by perfection. In this I endeavoured to show, (1.) In what sense Christians are not, (2.) In what sense they are, perfect.

"(1.) In what sense they are not. They are not perfect in knowledge. They are not free from ignorance, no, nor from mistake. We are no more to expect any living man to be infallible, than to be omniscient. They are not free from infirmities, such as weakness or slowness of understanding, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination. Such in another kind are impropriety of language, ungracefulness of pronunciation; to which one might add a thousand nameless defects, either in conversation or behaviour. From such infirmities as these none are perfectly freed till their spirits return to God; neither can we expect till then to be wholly freed from temptation; for 'the servant is not above his master.' But neither in this sense is there any absolute perfection on earth. There is no perfection of degrees, none which does not admit of a continual increase.

"(2.) In what sense then are they perfect? A Christian is so far perfect, as not to commit sin ... to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers ... He is purified from pride ... He is pure from desire and self-will ...

"(4.) But whom then do you mean by 'one that is perfect?' We mean one in whom is 'the mind which was in Christ,' and who so 'walketh as Christ also walked;' a man 'that hath clean hands and a pure heart,' or that is 'cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit;' one in whom is 'no occasion of stumbling,' and who, accordingly, 'does not commit sin.' To declare this a little more particularly: We understand by that scriptural expression, 'a perfect man,' one in whom God hath fulfilled his faithful word, 'From all your filthiness and from all your idols I will cleanse you: I will also save you from all your uncleannesses.' We understand hereby, one whom God hath 'sanctified throughout in body, soul, and spirit;' one who 'walketh in the light as He is in the light, in

whom is no darkness at all; the blood of Jesus Christ his Son having cleansed him from all sin.'

"(5.) This man can now testify to all mankind, 'I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' He is 'holy as God who called' him 'is holy,' both in heart and 'in all manner of conversation.' He 'loveth the Lord his God with all his heart,' and serveth him 'with all his strength.' He 'loveth his neighbour,' every man, 'as himself;' yea, 'as Christ loveth us;' them, in particular, that 'despitefully use him and persecute him, because they know not the Son, neither the Father.' Indeed his soul is all love, filled with 'bowels of mercies, kindness, meekness, gentleness, longsuffering.' And his life agreeth thereto, full of 'the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labour of love.' 'And whatsoever' he 'doeth either in word or deed,' he 'doeth it all in the name,' in the love and power, 'of the Lord Jesus.' In a word, he doeth 'the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven.'

"(6.) This it is to be a perfect man, to be 'sanctified throughout;' even 'to have a heart so all-flaming with the love of God,' (to use Archbishop Usher's words,) 'as continually to offer up every thought, word, and work, as a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Christ.' In every thought of our hearts, in every word of our tongues, in every work of our hands, to 'show forth his praise, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.' O that both we, and all who seek the Lord Jesus in sincerity, may thus 'be made perfect in one!'"

This is the doctrine which we preached from the beginning, and which we preach at this day.

17. On Monday, June 25, 1744, our First Conference began; six Clergymen and all our Preachers being present. The next morning we seriously considered the doctrine of **sanctification, or perfection**. The questions asked concerning it, and the substance of the answers given, were as follows: --

"QUESTION. What is it to be sanctified?

"ANSWER. To be renewed in the image of God, `in righteousness and true holiness.'

"Q. What is implied in being a perfect Christian?"

**"A. The loving God with all our heart, and mind, and soul.
(Deut. 6:5.)"**

"Q. Does this imply, that all inward sin is taken away?

"A. Undoubtedly; or how can we be Said to be `saved from all `our uncleannesses?' (Ezek. 36:29.)"

19. At the Conference in the year 1759, perceiving some danger that a diversity of sentiments should insensibly steal in among us, we again largely considered this doctrine; and soon after I published "Thoughts on Christian Perfection," prefaced with the following advertisement: --

"The following tract is by no means designed to gratify the curiosity of any man. It is not intended to prove the doctrine at large, in opposition to those who explode and ridicule it; no, nor to answer the numerous objections against it, which may be raised even by serious men. All I intend here is, simply to declare what are my sentiments on this head; what Christian perfection does, according to my apprehension, include, and what it does not; and to add a few practical observations and directions relative to the subject.

"As these thoughts were at first thrown together by way of question and answer, I let them continue in the same form. They are just the same that I have entertained for above twenty years.

"QUESTION. What is Christian perfection?

"ANSWER. The loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies, that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by pure love.

"Q. Do you affirm, that this perfection excludes all infirmities, ignorance, and mistake?

"A. I continually affirm quite the contrary, and always have done so.

"Q. But how can every thought, word, and work, be governed by pure love, and the man be subject at the same time to ignorance and mistake?

"A. I see no contradiction here: `A man may be filled with pure love, and still be liable to mistake.' Indeed I do not expect to be freed from actual mistakes, till this mortal puts on immortality. I believe this to be a natural consequence of the soul's dwelling in flesh and blood. For we cannot now think at all, but by the mediation of those bodily organs which have suffered equally with the rest of our frame. And hence we cannot avoid sometimes thinking wrong, till this corruptible shall have put on incorruption.

"Q. But still, if they live without sin, does not this exclude the necessity of a Mediator? At least, is it not plain that they stand no longer in need of Christ in his priestly office?

"A. Far from it. None feel their need of Christ like these; none so entirely depend upon him.

(5.) The best of men still need Christ in his priestly office, to atone for their omissions, their short-comings, (as some not improperly speak,) their mistakes in judgment and practice, and their defects of various kinds. For these are all deviations from the perfect law, and consequently need an atonement. Yet that they are not

properly sins, we apprehend may appear from the words of St. Paul, 'He that loveth, hath fulfilled the law; for love is the fulfilling of the law.' (Rom. 13:10.) Now, mistakes, and whatever infirmities necessarily flow from the corruptible state of the body, are noway contrary to love; nor therefore, in the Scripture sense, sin.

(3.) Therefore sinless perfection is a phrase I never use, lest I should seem to contradict myself. (4.) I believe, a person filled with the love of God is still liable to these involuntary transgressions.

"Q. How shall we avoid setting perfection too high or too low?

"A. By keeping to the Bible, and setting it just as high as the Scripture does. It is nothing higher and nothing lower than this,--the pure love of God and man; the loving God with all our heart and soul, and our neighbour as ourselves. It is love governing the heart and life, running through all our tempers, words, and actions.

. Scripture perfection is, pure love filling the heart, and governing all the words and actions. If your idea includes anything more or anything else, it is not scriptural; and then no wonder, that a scripturally perfect Christian does not come up to it.

"The more care should we take to keep the simple, scriptural account continually in our eye. Pure love reigning alone in the heart and life, -- this is the whole of scriptural perfection.

BRIEF THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

Some thoughts occurred to my mind this morning concerning Christian perfection, and the manner and time of receiving it, which I believe may be useful to set down.

1. By perfection I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God, and our neighbour, ruling our tempers, words, and actions.

I do not include an impossibility of falling from it, either in part or in whole. Therefore, I retract several expressions in our Hymns, which partly express, partly imply, such an impossibility.

And I do not contend for the term *sinless*, though I do not object against it.

2. As to the manner. I believe this perfection is always wrought in the soul by a simple act of faith; consequently, in an instant.

But I believe a gradual work, both preceding and following that instant.

3. As to the time. I believe this instant generally is the instant of death, the moment before the soul leaves the body. But I believe it may be ten, twenty, or forty years before.

I believe it is usually many years after justification; but that it may be within five years or five months after it, I know no conclusive argument to the contrary.

If it must be many years after justification, I would be glad to know how many. *Pretium quotus arroget annus?* [This quotation from Horace is thus translated by Boscawen: -- "How many years give sanction to our lines?" -- Edit.]

And how many days or months, or even years, can any one allow to be between perfection and death? How far from justification must it be; and how near to death?

LONDON, Jan. 27, 1767.

Excerpts From
Letter to a Roman Catholic
Dublin, July 18, 1749.

1. You have heard ten thousand stories of us who are commonly called Protestants, of which, if you believe only one in a thousand, you must think very hardly of us. But this is quite contrary to our Lord's rule, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged'; and has many ill consequences, particularly this — it inclines us to think as hardly of you. Hence we are on both sides less willing to help one another, and more ready to hurt each other. Hence brotherly love is utterly destroyed; and each side, looking on the other as monsters, gives way to anger, hatred, malice, to every unkind affection, which have frequently broke out in such inhuman barbarities as are scarce named among the heathens.

2. Now, can nothing be done, even allowing us on both sides to retain our own opinions, for the softening our hearts towards each other, the giving a check to this flood of unkindness, and restoring at least some small degree of love among our neighbors and countrymen? Do not you wish for this? Are you not fully convinced that malice, hatred, revenge, bitterness, whether in us or in you, in our hearts or yours, are an abomination to the Lord? Be our opinions right, or be they wrong, these tempers are undeniably wrong. They are the broad road that leads to destruction, to the nethermost hell.

5. I shall therefore endeavor, as mildly and inoffensively as I can, to remove in some measure the ground of your unkindness, by plainly declaring what our belief and what our practice is; that you may see we are not altogether such monsters as perhaps you imagined us to be.

A true Protestant may express his belief in these or the like words:—

6. As I am assured that there is an infinite and independent Being, and that it is impossible there should be more than one; so I believe that this one God is the Father of all things, especially of angels and men; that He is in a peculiar manner the Father of those whom He regenerates by His Spirit, whom He adopts in His Son as co-heirs with Him, and crowns with an eternal inheritance; but in a still higher sense the Father of His only Son, whom He hath begotten from eternity.

I believe this Father of all, not only to be able to do whatsoever pleaseth Him, but also to have an eternal right of making what and when and how He pleaseth, and of possessing and disposing of all that He has made; and that He of His own goodness created heaven and earth and all that is therein.

7. I believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Savior of the world, the Messiah so long foretold; that, being anointed with the Holy Ghost, He was a Prophet, revealing to us the whole will of God; that He was a Priest who gave Himself a sacrifice for sin, and still makes intercession for transgressors; that He is a King, who has all power in heaven and in earth, and will reign till He has subdued all things to Himself.

I believe He is the proper, natural Son of God, God of God, very God of very God; and that He is the Lord of all, having absolute

supreme universal dominion over all things; but more peculiarly our Lord, who believe in Him, both by conquest, purchase, and voluntary obligation.

I believe that He 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, who, as well after as before she brought Him forth, continued a pure and unspotted virgin.

I believe He suffered inexpressible pains both of body and soul, and at last death, even the death of the cross, at the time that Pontius Pilate governed Judaea under the Roman Emperor; that His body was then laid in the grave, and His soul went to the place of separate spirits; that the third day He rose again from the dead; that He ascended into heaven; where He remains in the midst of the throne of God, in the highest power and glory, as Mediator till the end of the world, as God to all eternity; that in the end He will come down from heaven to judge every man according to his works, both those who shall be then alive and all who have died before that day.

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

9. I believe that Christ by His Apostles gathered unto Himself a Church, to which He has continually added such as shall be saved; that this catholic (that is, universal) Church, extending to all nations and all ages, is holy in all its members, who have

fellowship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that they have fellowship with the holy angels, who constantly minister to these heirs of salvation; and with all the living members of Christ on earth, as well as all who are departed in His faith and fear.

10. I believe God forgives all the sins of them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe His holy gospel; and that at the last day all men shall rise again, every one with his own body.

I believe that, as the unjust shall after their resurrection be tormented in hell for ever, so the just shall enjoy inconceivable happiness in the presence of God to all eternity.

11. Now, is there anything wrong in this? Is there any one point which you do not believe as well as we?

But you think we ought to believe more. We will not now enter into the dispute. Only let me ask, If a man sincerely believes thus much, and practices accordingly, can any one possibly persuade you to think that such a man shall perish everlastingly?

12. 'But does he practice accordingly?' If he does not, we grant all his faith will not save him. And this leads me to show you in few and plain words what the practice of a true Protestant is.

I say, a true Protestant: for I disclaim all common swearers, Sabbath-breakers, drunkards; all whoremongers, liars, cheats, extortioners; in a word, all that live in open sin. These are no Protestants; they are no Christians at all. Give them their own name: they are open heathens. They are the curse of the nation, the bane of society, the shame of mankind, the scum of the earth.

13. A true Protestant believes in God, has a full confidence in His mercy, fears Him with a filial fear, and loves Him with all his

soul. He worships God in spirit and in truth, in everything gives Him thanks; calls upon Him with his heart as well as his lips at all times and in all places; honors His Holy name and His Word, and serves Him truly all the days of his life.

Now, do not you yourself approve of this? Is there any one point you can condemn? Do not you practice as well as approve of it? Can you ever be happy, if you do not? Can you ever expect true peace in this or glory in the world to come, if you do not believe in God through Christ? if you do not thus fear and love God? My dear friend, consider, I am not persuading you to leave or change your religion, but to follow after that fear and love of God without which all religion is vain. I say not a word to you about your opinions or outward manner of worship. But I say, all worship is an abomination to the Lord, unless you worship Him in spirit and in truth, with your heart as well as your lips, with your spirit and with your understanding also. Be your form of worship what it will, but in everything give Him thanks, else it is all but lost labor. Use whatever outward observances you please; but put your whole trust in Him, but honor His holy name and His Word, and serve Him truly all the days of your life.

14. Again: a true Protestant loves his neighbor — that is, every man, friend or enemy, good or bad — as himself, as he loves his own soul, as Christ loved us. And as Christ laid down His life for us, so is he ready to lay down his life for his brethren. He shows this love by doing to all men in all points as he would they should do unto him. He loves, honors and obeys his father and mother, and helps them to the uttermost of his power. He honors and obeys the King and all that are put in authority under him. He cheerfully submits to all his governors, teachers spiritual pastors, and masters. He behaves lowly and reverently to all his betters. He hurts nobody by word or deed. He is true and just in all his dealings. He bears no malice or hatred in his heart. He abstains

from all evil-speaking, lying and slandering; neither is guile found in his mouth. Knowing his body to be the temple of the Holy Ghost, he keeps it in sobriety, temperance, and chastity. He does not desire other men's goods; but is content with that he hath, labors to get his own living, and to do the whole will of God in that state of life unto which it has pleased God to call him.

15. Have you anything to reprove in this?

Come, my brother and let us reason together.

This, and this alone is the old religion. This is true, primitive Christianity. Oh, when shall it spread over all the earth? when shall it be found both in us and you? Without waiting for others, let each of us by the grace of God amend one.

16. Are we not thus far agreed? Let us thank God for this, and receive it as a fresh token of His love. But if God still loveth us, we ought also to love one another. We ought, without this endless jangling about opinions, to provoke one another to love and to good works. Let the points wherein we differ stand aside: here are enough wherein we agree enough to be the ground of every Christian temper and of every Christian action.

O brethren, let us not still fall out by the way! I hope to see you in heaven. And if I practice the religion above described, you dare not say I shall go to hell. You cannot think so. None can persuade you to it. Your own conscience tells you the contrary. Then, if we cannot as yet think alike in all things, at least we may love alike. Herein we cannot possibly do amiss. For of one point none can doubt a moment, — 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.'

17. In the name, then, and in the strength of God, let us resolve first, not to hurt one another; to do nothing unkind or unfriendly

to each other, nothing which we would not have done to ourselves. Rather let us endeavor after every instance of a kind, friendly, and Christian behavior towards each other.

Let us resolve secondly, God being our helper, to speak nothing harsh or unkind of each other. The sure way to avoid this is to say all the good we can both of and to one another; in all our conversation, either with or concerning each other, to use only the language of love to speak with all Softness and tenderness, with the most endearing expression which is consistent with truth and sincerity.

Let us, thirdly, resolve to harbor no unkind thought, no unfriendly temper, towards each other. Let us lay the axe to the root of the tree; let us examine all that rises in our heart, and suffer no disposition there which is contrary to tender affection. Then shall we easily refrain from unkind actions and words, when the very root of bitterness is cut up.

Let us, fourthly, endeavor to help each other on in whatever we are agreed leads to the kingdom. So far as we can, let us always rejoice to strengthen each other's hands in God. Above all, let us each take heed to himself (since each must give an account of himself to God) that he fall not short of the religion of love, that he be not condemned in that he himself approveth. O let you and I (whatever others do) press on to the prize of our high calling! that, being justified by faith, we may have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; that we may rejoice in God through Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement; that the love of God may be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Let us count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord; being ready for Him to suffer the loss of all things, and counting them but dung that we may win Christ.— I am, Your affectionate servant for Christ's sake.

Excerpts From
Letter on Preaching Christ
By Rev. John Wesley

London, December 20, 1751.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I mean by preaching the gospel, preaching the love of God to sinners, preaching the life, resurrection, and intercession of Christ, with all the blessings which, in consequence thereof, are freely given to true believers.

By preaching the law, I mean, explaining and enforcing the commands of Christ, briefly comprised in the Sermon on the Mount.

But what is the stated means of feeding and comforting believers? What is the means, as of begetting spiritual life where it is not, so of sustaining and increasing it where it is?

Here they divide. Some think, preaching the law only; others, preaching the gospel only. I think, neither the one nor the other; but duly mixing both, in every place, if not in every sermon.

I think, the right method of preaching is this: At our first beginning to preach at any place, after a general declaration of the love of God to sinners, and his willingness that they should be saved, to preach the law, in the strongest, the closest, the most searching manner possible; only intermixing the gospel here and there, and showing it, as it were, afar off.

After more and more persons are convinced of sin, we may mix more and more of the gospel, in order to "beget faith," to raise into spiritual life those whom the law hath slain; but this is not to be done too hastily neither. Therefore, it is not expedient wholly to omit the law; not only because we may well suppose that many of our hearers are still unconvinced; but because otherwise there is danger, that many who are convinced will heal their own wounds slightly; therefore, it is only in private converse with a thoroughly convinced sinner, that we should preach nothing but the gospel.

If, indeed, we could suppose a whole congregation to be thus convinced, we should need to preach only the gospel: And the same we might do, if our whole congregation were supposed to be newly justified. But when these grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, a wise builder would preach the law to them again; only taking particular care to place every part of it in a gospel light, as not only a command, but a privilege also, as a branch of the glorious liberty of the sons of God. He would take equal care to remind them, that this is not the cause, but the fruit, of their acceptance with God; that other cause, "other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ;" that we are still forgiven and accepted, only for the sake of what he hath done and suffered for us; and that all true obedience springs from love to him, grounded on his first loving us. He would labor, therefore, in preaching any part of the law, to keep the love of Christ continually before their eyes; that thence they might draw fresh life, vigor, and strength, to run the way of his commandments.

Thus would he preach the law even to those who were pressing on to the mark. But to those who were careless, or drawing back, he would preach it in another manner, nearly as he did before these were convinced of sin. To those, meanwhile, who were earnest, but feeble minded, he would preach the gospel chiefly; yet variously intermixing more or less of the law, according to their various necessities.

By preaching the law in the manner above described, he would teach them how to walk in Him whom they had received. Yea, and the same means (the main point wherein, it seems, your mistake lies) would both sustain and increase their spiritual life. For the commands are food, as well as the promises; food equally wholesome, equally substantial. These, also, duly applied, not only direct, but likewise nourish and strengthen, the soul.

Of this you appear not to have the least conception; therefore, I will endeavor to explain it. I ask, then, Do not all the children of God experience, that when God gives them to see deeper into his blessed law, whenever he gives a new degree of light, he gives, likewise, a new degree of strength? Now I see, he that loves me, bids me do this; and now I feel I can do it, through Christ strengthening me.

Thus light and strength are given by the same means, and frequently in the same moment; although sometimes there is a space between. For instance: I hear the command, "Let your communication be always in grace, meet to minister grace to the hearers." God gives me more light into this command. I see the exceeding height and depth of it. At the same time I see (by the same light from above) how far I have fallen short. I am ashamed; I am humbled before God. I earnestly desire to keep it better; I pray to him that hath loved me for more strength, and I have the petition I ask of him. Thus the law not only convicts the unbeliever, and enlightens the believing soul, but also conveys food to a believer; sustains and increases his spiritual life and strength.

And if it increases his spiritual life and strength, it cannot but increase his comfort also. For, doubtless, the more we are alive to God, the more we shall rejoice in him; the greater measure of his strength we receive, the greater will be our consolation also.

And all this, I conceive, is clearly declared in one single passage of Scripture: –

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb." They are both food and medicine; they both refresh, strengthen, and nourish the soul.

Not that I would advise to preach the law without the gospel, any more than the gospel without the law. Undoubtedly, both should be preached in their turns; yea, both at once, or both in one: All the conditional promises are instances of this. They are law and gospel mixed together.

According to this model, I should advise every Preacher continually to preach the law; the law grafted upon, tempered by, and animated with, the spirit of the gospel. I advise him to declare, explain, and enforce every command of God; but, meantime, to declare, in every sermon, (and the more explicitly the better,) that the first and great command to a Christian is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;" that Christ is all in all, our "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" that all life, love, strength, are from him alone, and all freely given to us through faith. And it will ever be found, that the law thus preached both enlightens and strengthens the soul; that it both nourishes and teaches; that it is the guide, "food, medicine, and stay," of the believing soul.

As to the fruit of this new manner of preaching, (entirely new to the Methodists,) speaking much of the promises, little of the commands; (even to unbelievers, and still less to believers;) you think it has done great good; I think it has done great harm.

Why, this is the very thing I assert: That the gospel Preachers, so called, corrupt their hearers; they vitiate their taste, so that they cannot relish sound doctrine; and spoil their appetite, so that they cannot turn it into nourishment; they, as it were, feed them with sweetmeats, till the genuine wine of the kingdom seems quite insipid to them. They give them cordial upon cordial, which make them all life and spirit for the present; but, meantime, their appetite is destroyed, so that they can neither retain nor digest the pure milk of the word.

From the beginning they had been taught both the law and the gospel. "God loves you; therefore, love and obey him. Christ died for you; therefore, die to sin. Christ is risen; therefore, rise in the image of God. Christ liveth evermore; therefore, live to God, till you live with him in glory."

So we preached; and so you believed. This is the scriptural way, the Methodist way, the true way. God grant we may never turn therefrom, to the right hand or to the left!

I am,
My dear friend,
Your ever affectionate brother,
JOHN WESLEY.

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Written by Pastor Paul R. Crikelair

Biographical Sketches

About the Wesley Center Online

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John Wesley Sermon Project General Editors:

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Pastor Paul R. Crikelair, Board of Ordained Ministry

Setting Up Wesley Chalice and Asbury Bible
For Ordination Service, June 17, 2016
First United Methodist Church of Lancaster
Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference

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Our United Methodist Heritage

Foundational Documents
Biographical Sketches
Excerpts from John Wesley's
Sermons & Writings

Compiled & Edited By
Pastor Paul R. Crikelair

Wesley's Last Letter, Written Six Days Before His Death
Words of Encouragement to William Wilberforce
In His Campaign for the Abolition of Slavery

24 February, 1791
Balam, England

Dear Sir:

Unless the divine power has raised you up to be as “Athanasius against the world,” I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy, which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them stronger than God? O be not weary of well-doing! Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.

Reading this morning a tract wrote by a poor African, I was particularly struck by the circumstance, that a man who has a black skin being wronged or outraged by a white man, can have no redress; it being a LAW in all of our Colonies that the OATH of a black man against a white goes for nothing. What villainy is this!

That He who has guided you from youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and all things is the prayer of, dear sir,

Your affectionate servant,
John Wesley

Rules for Christian Living
Attributed to John Wesley*

Do all the Good you can,

By all the Means you can,

In all the Ways you can,

In all the Places you can,

At all the Times you can,

To all the People you can,

As long as Ever you can!

* **NOTE:** While there is no evidence that Wesley ever wrote these exact words, they do serve as a great summary of Wesley's Second General Rule, which says, "By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power, as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men."