

Wesley's paradox of love and depravity :  
an anthropological approach to social ethics and human trafficking

by  
Scott-William D. Martens

Houghton College, Houghton, New York  
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## PREFACE

Throughout the process of writing my honors project I had the guidance and support of many people. I would like to briefly highlight a few. Dr. Eckley spent countless hours advising me. He prompted me to study deeper and harder than I had on any other project. His insight and guidance with sources and understanding Wesley was invaluable. I want to thank Dr. Walters for allowing me to look through his master's thesis and for being a reader. Along with being a reader, Dr. Kiiti's insight into human trafficking provided me with a profound foundation to build off. Lastly I would like to thank Briana Donahue for all her help and support. Her constant listening ear helped refine my project and keep me motivated.

## Introduction

### *Understanding Wesley*

The rationale behind this paper lies within the paradox of God's grace for humanity and depravity. God embedded humanity with his image and declared humans to be very good. This gives intrinsic value to every human life. Each human being is created with certain attributes and unalienable rights. We live in a world that is constantly infringing on these rights. It is my intention to describe how John Wesley viewed the human being in order to understand their God given rights. I hope to show how these fundamental human rights are being infringed upon through the market of human trafficking. I chose human trafficking, as a case study, because of Wesley's involvement in the abolition of the slave trade in 18<sup>th</sup> century Great Britain. We can draw connections between Wesley's response to the slave trade, to shed light on human trafficking and apply Wesleyan social ethics to the modern context.

Although Wesley lived during the Enlightenment, I believe he should be considered a Renaissance man, in the sense that he was well versed in numerous fields. He wrote meticulous journals, recorded many of his sermons, and wrote many books about a vast number of topics and fields. Doing a methodological study on any of Wesley's views is difficult because of the amount of material he wrote, the fact that he never wrote a systematic theology, and that his writings span a greater part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Wesley was influenced by Enlightenment philosophy, which deals with many of the same questions of human dignity and liberty. Due to the experiential nature of Wesley's theology we must approach it with a dynamic frame-work that is open to

experience. Like any theologian his views are refined over time and changed as his experiences changed; however, this should not stop scholars from attempting to apply Wesley's theology to our present day. There are many denominations that claim Wesley and his theology as predecessors to their beliefs. Each denomination has written extensively on Wesley and what they believe to be his views. In most cases these views are similar with small distinctions, but there are some that are different. My own background is within the Wesleyan denomination, so I am approaching Wesley through that lens.

One of the most intriguing concepts of any theologian is their view of the human being. By studying anthropology through the lens of Wesley I hope to address the atrocities of human trafficking. The purpose of this project is to look at Wesley's social ethics and then apply them to the 21<sup>st</sup> century context. In Wesley's mind, Christianity was a social religion. We have a personal relationship with God, but we live in community with each other. The two are inseparable because people cannot truly love God with all their hearts, souls, and minds without loving their neighbors as themselves. It is impossible to understand Wesleyan theology without emphasizing the importance of communal love. This concept can be difficult to grasp in our Western, individualistic context. As Americans, we live in a country of privilege and luxury, especially when compared to the rest of the world. While we fight over what we are going to eat for dinner, much of the rest of the world fights to have any dinner. The prevalent mindset of the day does not see problems with this ideology and many other atrocities that Americans choose to be blind to; however, there are many theological, ontological, and sociological problems that are evident with this ignorant approach to the world. God

created humanity to live in perfect love with God and each other. The two are interdependent not separable. In order to love God we must love each other. We cannot ignore the fact that God created humans with a social obligation to look after each other that defies individualism.

One thing to keep in mind when reflecting on a Wesleyan Theology is that Wesley was a theologian for the common person. He did not curtail to the rich, powerful, educated, and wealthy. He was just as much for the common person as he was for the educated. In one of his sermons, Wesley confessed this to all present: “I desire plain truth for plain people: therefore, of set purpose, I abstain from all nice and philosophical speculations from all perplexed and intricate reasoning.”<sup>1</sup> Clearly Wesley was looking for a practical theology that would relate to the common person. With that in mind while we explore his theology of holiness and perfect love we must remember that Wesley believed that it was possible for those to be manifested in the lives of every mature Christian. These are not lofty goals or unattainable states of humanity, but the *telos* that we must daily strive toward.<sup>2</sup> As much as possible, Wesley tried not to speculate about God. He believed that God provided everything we need to understand how to live the Christian life. Wesley placed a large emphasis on the life of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives.<sup>3</sup>

It is impossible to understand a Wesleyan anthropology without understanding Wesley’s view of love. Love is the purpose, driving force, and reason that social ethics exists and is practical in our everyday lives. Love is linked to Wesley’s view of

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<sup>1</sup> Wynkoop, Mildred. *A Theology of Love*. Kansas City, Kansas: Beacon Hill Press, 1972. p. 41

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79



perfection, in the sense that perfection for Wesley is the ability for one to truly love God with all one's heart, soul, and mind and to love one's neighbor as one self. This statement and Jesus' sacrifice function as guides for how God has called us to live. Every human being is made in the image of God and deserves to be treated ethically. Love is the motivation and vehicle for a practical approach to social ethics.<sup>4</sup> It is because of love for our neighbors that Christians must participate in fellowship with each other and reach out to non-believers.<sup>5</sup> For Wesley, love is the fruit of the sanctified life.<sup>6</sup> Love is inseparable from ethics and is a driving force behind the discussion. It is something that should not be learned, forged, or taught but rather the natural results of being in a right relationship with God and Christian believers.

### *Optimistic and Pessimistic*

There are good and evil events that occur daily. At times it can be difficult to see God working in the world, but this does not mean that he is not. God's grace is at all times working in the world. A concept that is prevalent in modern Evangelicals, that I wish to counteract, is the idea that we can blame sin on living in a fallen world. We cannot reduce human nature to it either. It is illogical to think that God created humanity with sin as something that is innate within us; therefore, if sin is something that is not innate within humanity it is an outside force that is learned. It is true that Wesley believed in total depravity, but he believed that we never feel the effects of total depravity because of God's grace. We live in a world that is riddled with sin and corruption, but as humans we all can choose to live in that sin. I have the same opinion about God's grace. It is not

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<sup>4</sup> Hynson, Leon O. *To reform the nation: theological foundations of Wesley's ethics*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Francis Asbury Press, 1984. p. 95.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

something that is innate within us, but it is something we feel the effects of. God has provided a way for us to live in holiness with him through his love and grace. I thoroughly disagree with the common evasion of sin's dominance in the world being reduced to the actions of Adam and Eve.

Christians for thousands of years have debated about what role we should have in society. In every age there were Christians who chose to withdraw and form their own utopian communities. Rather than withdrawing from society, it should be the role of Christians to shape society. If Christians withdraw, who will be the ethical presence within society? As members of the Wesleyan tradition we need to stay true to our roots by being outspoken on social issues. The answer is not to retreat but to be confident that God's grace is at all times working in the world. We need to respond to that grace individually and socially.

This paper will at times highlight optimistic approaches and pessimistic approaches to understanding humanity. Before diving in any further, we need to briefly touch on why there is the paradox of optimism and pessimism within a Wesleyan anthropology. We also need to understand why or what makes a human being worthy to be the recipient of ethical behavior. As humans we were created separate from the rest of the creation. God created us differently and breathed life into us. An important concept that will be explored later is that humanity was created in the image of God. To introduce the reader to some common terminology and generally accepted theories about Wesley's social ethics I have chosen two books on the topic to briefly analyze and critique. The books are *To Reform the Nation: Theological Foundations of Wesley's Ethics* by Leon Hynson and Irv Brendlinger's *Social Justice through the Eyes of Wesley*.

Perhaps the most obvious and overlooked keys to understanding social ethics and a Wesleyan stance are sanctification and prevenient grace. Both of these doctrines clearly exhibit optimism when combined with the work of the Holy Spirit. This creates a foundation for why ethics are an integral part of the Christian faith and life in general. It is out of the sanctified life that Christian's should care, love everyone, and should be a positive force in culture. The sanctified life is lived through God's grace and reflects God's desires.<sup>7</sup> Hynson believes that prevenient grace makes people "morally aware" and that even the life of a non-Christian has the potential to influence society in a positive way.<sup>8</sup> This optimism of grace is highlighted throughout the works of Hynson and other Wesleyan theologians; however, some theologians, such as Brendlinger focus on the depravity of humans.

Brendlinger describes distinctions between three states of humanity. The three states are humankind before the fall, fallen humanity, and humanity restored by grace. In its prelapsarian form humanity "completely reflected the image of God." Wesley wrote, "God knew not evil of any kind or degree but was inwardly sinless and undefiled."<sup>9</sup> When dealing with the state of fallen humanity, Brendlinger emphasizes Wesley's view of total depravity. He says that after the fall humanity lost aspects of the image of God, particularly with regard to the political and moral images. Humanity no longer possessed its liberty, virtue, or ability to do anything other than sin.<sup>10</sup> Similar to the way in which humans interact with each, the postlapsarian world is condemned to chaos, which

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<sup>7</sup> Hynson, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

<sup>9</sup> Wesley, John. "Sermon 5: Justification by Faith." In *The Sermons of John Wesley*. Ed. Thomas Jackson. Wesley Center Online <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-5-justification-by-faith/>.

<sup>10</sup> Brendlinger, Irv A. *Social justice through the eyes of Wesley: John Wesley's theological challenge to slavery*. Guelph, Ontario: Joshua Press, 2006. p. 77.

exemplifies the loss of the political aspect of the image of God. Because of God's grace alone, humanity has hope of being reunited in a righteous relationship with God.

Brendlinger argues that Wesley believed God's grace was so abounding that humanity is restored above and beyond what it was in the fall; however, Brendlinger is pessimistic that this is often the case. He sees society as having more of a negative impact on the world than Christians having a positive one. It is only in this last state that we can hope to fulfill Jesus' commandment to love God and our neighbor completely which is quintessential to understanding Wesley's ethics.<sup>11</sup>

Social ethics is essentially about equality for all people. It is not just about the right to work, but the right to live life with the basic necessities. It is about the right to be able to make your own choices and build a future. Wesley's time in America influenced or reinforced his views of equality for humankind. He worked first hand with slaves and Native Americans, both of which were often considered sub-human by most of his contemporaries. When other men were ignoring, writing against, and encouraging discrimination, Wesley was out ministering and witnessing against the atrocities that accompanied these people groups. Wesley's firm foundations and views of equality, which were strengthened during his time in America, helped him stay true to his convictions. His experiences gave him firsthand knowledge that he would write about later.<sup>12</sup> At its fundamental level, a study of Wesleyan Social Ethics is inclusive. All people groups, cultures, and sexes should be treated equally with respect, dignity, and liberty. This was not the case in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and implicitly it is still not the case in the 21<sup>st</sup>. By looking at everyone as rational and spiritual beings, Wesley creates a case

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<sup>11</sup> Brendlinger, p. 78.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, pp. 64-66.

against the proponents of negro-inferiorism. This understanding is important to his view of a collective human identity, rather than seeing Europeans as superior. All human beings are created in the image of God. A denial or rejection of this statement leads to denigration, humiliation, and abuse. If we can get Christians to accept that everyone is created in the image of God, we should be able to then show them that all human life has value.

Now that we have explored some of the commonalities between Hyson and Brendlinger, we can explore a few of their points of contention. It seems only natural to start with their views of creation. Both affirm that as humans we learn right from wrong by being created in the moral image of God, but Hyson allows for another area. Hyson accounts for natural law, which allows for humanity to learn about God's character through his creation. Natural law allows for humanity to learn about morality through the "law that God wrote for the angels."<sup>13</sup> As humans we still encounter and experience this law despite being in our fallen state. Hyson believes that it is out of religious liberty that humans encounter this natural law and can choose to be obedient. Despite human corruption and a fallen state this law has remained unaffected. It cannot be changed, altered, or touched by humans except to learn right from wrong and choose out of religious liberty.<sup>14</sup>

Brendlinger chooses to emphasize Wesley's view of total depravity when he writes about the liberty of the self. In fact he goes as far to say that there is no true liberty of the self. Humanity is at all times either a slave to sin or has given up their will for freedom to serve God. He rejects religious liberty and replaces it with devotion to the

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<sup>13</sup> Brendlinger, p. 73.

<sup>14</sup> Hyson, p.73.

ways of the world or the Kingdom of God. In his emphasis on Wesley's view of total depravity he in turn rejects the notion of natural law. Humanity cannot experience any facet of God except by God's grace. We have fallen so far that if a natural law does exist we would utterly reject it. Nowhere does Brendlinger's view allow for Creation to interact with its maker outside of the maker's grace. With this view in mind, there is no optimism of humanity outside of grace. Brendlinger writes that humans are incapable of doing anything good except that which God is extending through them.<sup>15</sup> This puts the emphasis on total depravity, rather than viewing humans as responsible agents of God's grace.

With regard to anthropology both Hynson and Brendlinger contribute to my overall understanding. Both scholars quote and write traditional views of Wesley but they choose certain points to emphasize and other to leave out. I think that Brendlinger focuses on the passages of Wesley that align with a Calvinistic reading, and Hynson may be too optimistic even for an Arminian approach. In my experience with Wesley, I think he is generally optimistic in his theology. In his pastoral setting, he gives hope to people, but does not ignore the atrocities of society and is quick to condemn them. I have little doubt that Wesley held a high view of the effects of the fall, but I think he had a greater view of God's redemptive plan for humanity. In Hynson's view, he saw natural law as a way that God relates to humankind both after and before the law in a salvific way outside of the cross. The source of this law is God's holiness which is unchangeable by human actions; therefore, it is still present after the fall. Hynson believes that no one has to teach humans these laws because they are woven into creation. By interacting with God's

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<sup>15</sup> Brendlinger, pp. 92-95.

creation we can learn how to interact with God. While this may be true, I do not think that we can define morality by natural law. The point of this paper is not to debate whether Wesley believed in natural law, but to show how people can read Wesley as having a positive or negative approach to anthropology.

Wesley's theology was heavily influenced by the Sermon on the Mount. He used this sermon from the life of Jesus to exemplify how to love your neighbor as yourself. By using the commonly accepted definition of neighbor, we can see how Jesus' command to love your neighbor along with the Sermon on the Mount influenced his daily actions. Wesley's life showed an attempt to love everyone regardless of race, gender, and class. One's interpretation of the role of the Holy Spirit has a profound impact on a Wesleyan anthropology. Not only does it help show us how we relate to God, but one's pneumatology can tell a lot about the human condition. Both Brendlinger and Hynson write strong views of pneumatology but they try to accomplish different theological concepts. Brendlinger emphasizes the fact that without the Spirit, humans can do nothing inherently Christian. By applying Hynson's view of natural law and an optimistic approach to humanity, the Spirit assists rather than drives good works.<sup>16</sup>

Brendlinger's rejection of human religious liberty makes logical since but is not practical. If we as humans are completely bound to sin, how can we ever escape it? If it is only by God's salvific works then it leads to predestination, which Wesley would not stand for. There must be religious liberty in the sense that humans must choose to follow God rather than sin. We are at all times bound to one or the other, but human liberty allows us to choose which we are bound to. Brendlinger's view makes sense only

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<sup>16</sup> Hynson, p. 69.

because when we choose God we often use language that makes it seem like we have given up our will in order to follow God. In reality we have not given up our will. We have discovered order within the chaos. This liberty is a daily choice not a one-time decision. If we were to not have any liberty as Brendlinger suggests we are confined to whatever side God has chosen for us.

### *Quadrilateral*

In order to understand how the Wesleyan movement utilizes Wesley and some of the methods that Wesley used himself, we need to talk about the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience are known today as the Wesleyan quadrilateral; although they are equal, scripture should be the “primary” lens that all things are looked through. Wesley never used the term quadrilateral or even wrote extensively about the four lenses together, but his systematic approach to understand anything can be viewed through the quadrilateral.<sup>17</sup> Where Wesley truly differs from many of the Enlightenment thinkers is his allowance of “definitive Christian revelation.” This would be a revelation that comes directly from God. The Spirit is active in our lives but in order to better discern the Spirit’s prompting it should be viewed in the light of scripture. In order to prevent “enthusiasm” and people misusing his views on revelation, Wesley was careful to add the caveat that all revelation should be tested by scripture. He holds scripture in high regard and asserts its authority in revealing grace.<sup>18</sup>

I do not want to dwell on the quadrilateral but I think it is important we understand some of the methods that Wesley used to write his theology. It is easy to

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<sup>17</sup> Maddox, Randy L. *Responsible grace: John Wesley's practical theology*. Nashville, Tennessee: Kingswood Books, 1994. p. 36

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 33



understand why Wesley placed a primary importance on scripture. Wesley found four common themes in scripture that gave the Bible continuity and unity, even among passages that seem to contradict one another. The four themes are “the corruption of sin, justification by faith, the new birth, and present inward and outward holiness.” In his sermon titled “Free Grace,” Wesley said that “No Scripture can mean that God is not love, or that his mercy is over all of his works.”<sup>19</sup> We will explore the extent of Wesley’s theology of love later, as love is deserving of its own section.

Wesley’s role of reason is in some ways a rejection of the commonly accepted Western philosophy of his day. Instead of allowing reason to be a source of revelation, he believes that reason is the way in which we should interpret the revelations we have already received, rather than using reason and then scripture. We can use reason through the lens of scripture to discover what we are looking for. This makes sense in the Christian world, but downplays certain aspects of science and philosophy that dominated the 18<sup>th</sup> century culture.<sup>20</sup> Experience and tradition in some ways are considered secondary when compared to scripture. It is through the lens of scripture, and then reason, that we can hope to learn through tradition and experience.<sup>21</sup> As mentioned earlier, Wesleyan theology is dynamic and experienced based, but Wesley allowed for this experienced based methodology if it was rooted in scripture and reason. He also allowed for it because he has a high view of pneumatology. The Spirit is present and active in the daily lives of Christians. Wesley is not open to listening to people moved by the Spirit unless it is grounded in scripture and truth. He is open to people’s experiences

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<sup>19</sup> Maddox, p. 39

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 41

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 43

of the Spirit or experiences of grace such as justification, regeneration, and sanctification being different as long as they fit into the realm of scripture.

PART I. OVERVIEW OF WESLEYAN  
THEOLOGY

## Chapter 1. The Created Order

### *Original State of Creation*

In order to understand Wesley's view of the human, we need to understand how Creation, the Fall, and God's redemptive acts have affected humanity ontologically. When discussing some of Wesley's popular theological topics such as Creation, image of God, love, grace, and sanctification, it can be somewhat tempting to fall into semi-Pelagianism; however, this is not a proper reading of Wesley and does an injustice to his works. Whenever we reflect on theology that focuses on raising humanity out of total depravity, we need to remember that it is only because of God's role that this is possible. This profound anchor must be kept in mind while reflecting on Wesley's view of the human. This section will attempt to shed light on Creation, specifically with regards to God's original intention for humanity, humanity affected by the fall, and humanity redeemed by God. Understanding these three states help us to understand the problem of sin, total depravity, and the value of a human life.

Wesley did not believe that God created the world as it is now: "The world, at the beginning, was in a totally different state from that wherein we find it now."<sup>22</sup> Wesley describes the original state of Creation as one that is in preparation for humanity. Although it is impossible to definitively say what it was like, we have pieces of the puzzle from which we can make out some of the picture. Wesley saw that the fall makes

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<sup>22</sup> Wesley, John. "Sermon 56: God's Approbation of His Works." In *The Sermons of John Wesley*. Ed. Thomas Jackson. Wesley Center Online <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-56-gods-appr probation-of-his-works/>.

it impossible for us to understand fundamentally what the original humans were. Rather than trying to ontologically discover who they were, Wesley attempts to understand humanity through their original role. Wesley saw original humanity as being in balance with God and Creation. It was the job of the first humans to flow God's love and grace to Creation. God's original humanity was "endowed" with God's image in order to have a profound impact on the way humans related to God, Creation, and each other.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps one could say that the original role of the human was to allow God's Creation to remain in the "harmony" it was originally designed to reflect. The present state of things is not a good indicator of what things were like. In one of Wesley's sermons, he describes the original order as: "He himself made it better, unspeakably better, than it is at present. He made it without any blemish, yea, without any defect. He made no corruption, no destruction, in the inanimate creation. He made not death in the animal creation; neither its harbingers, sin nor pain."<sup>24</sup> It is useful to see that the evil, sin, and destruction of this world are not what God intended. God intended humanity to be in a relationship with him and reflect his perfect love/holiness; however, the Fall had ongoing consequences to humanity and Creation as a whole. The Wesleyan movement often refers to this state of humanity by saying it has "original righteousness."<sup>25</sup> Humanity was created to "express the image of God's goodness, lacking in nothing."<sup>26</sup> Wesley described humanity after the fall in more detail than God's original intention because it requires less speculation.

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<sup>23</sup> Runyon, Theodore. *The new creation: John Wesley's theology today*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1998 p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> "Sermon 56: God's Approbation of His Works."

<sup>25</sup> Wynkoop, p. 142.

<sup>26</sup> Collins, Kenneth J. *The theology of John Wesley: holy love and the shape of grace*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2007. p. 57.

Often theologians place the origination of evil with Adam and Eve in the garden, but Wesley goes further back. In “The End of Christ Coming,” he describes the origins of evil as:

It came from "Lucifer, son of the morning." It was the work of the devil. "For the devil," saith the Apostle, "sinneth from the beginning;" that is, was the first sinner in the universe, the author of sin, the first being who, by the abuse of his liberty, introduced evil into the creation.<sup>27</sup>

This is by no means an attempt to excuse humanity for the role it played in the denigration of creation. It is merely an explanation of the origin of sin. What I find particularly helpful about this view is that it does not place sin in human nature. Sin is a decision that every human chooses whether or not to engage. In God’s original intention for humanity sin was absent. The possibility of rebellion was there but humanity did not fall because of an intrinsic flaw. Lucifer’s sin is often described as being the result of pride and thinking too highly of himself. This sin was inward and “self-tempted,” it did not originate from another source, whereas humanity was externally tempted, which led to “unbelief.” Wesley saw unbelief as the “parent” of humanities sin rather than pride.<sup>28</sup> I am in no way attempting to minimize the effect or role that humanity contributed to the fall; I am merely attempting to show that sin is external. Humanity is constantly battling disbelief and its various effects with God’s grace.

### ***Fallen State***

Before allowing ourselves to be too optimistic about the state of humanity, perhaps it is time to look at the effects of the Fall. The Fall had effects on the soul and body that were not experienced in the prelapsarian world. The singular act of rebellion

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<sup>27</sup> Wesley, John. “Sermon 62: The End of Christ's Coming.” In *The Sermons of John Wesley*. Ed. Thomas Jackson. Wesley Center Online <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-62-the-end-of-christs-coming/>.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

against God allowed for a universal alteration to Creation. A basic understanding of this alteration is described in "God's Love to Fallen Man:"

Prior to the fall, humanity had freely received its life from the Creator; now with that relationship despoiled, death held sway such that the body became corruptible and mortal... After man, in utter defiance of his Maker, had eaten of the tree of knowledge, a whole army of evils, totally new, totally unknown till then, broke in upon rebel man, and all other creatures, and overspread the face of the earth... together with death, not only temporal, but spiritual.<sup>29</sup>

If humanity were to be left alone in this state we would be totally depraved. There is nothing we can do on our own to reach out of this state and be in a right relationship with God. The onslaught of evil brought into the world perpetuates the fallenness of society and thus humanity. In a practical way, the effects of the fall leave humanity as “depraved of the favor of God, but also of his image; of all virtue, righteousness, and true holiness; and sunk partly into the image of the devil, in pride, malice, and all other diabolical temper; partly into the image of the brute.”<sup>30</sup> As you can see, this pessimistic anthropology leaves one feeling that humanity is lost, but it makes God’s saving love and grace all the more powerful in Wesley’s eyes.

### ***Redeemed State***

The final state of humanity that I wish to describe is humanity as redeemed by God. It is only because of God’s love and grace that this state is achieved and maintained. In Wesley’s words, “the great end of religion is, to renew our hearts in the image of God, to repair that total loss of righteousness and true holiness which we sustained by the sin of our first parent.”<sup>31</sup> With that in mind we can see the goal of redeemed humanity is

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<sup>29</sup> Wesley, John. “Sermon 59: God's Love to Fallen Man.” In *The Sermons of John Wesley*. Ed. Thomas Jackson. Wesley Center Online <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-59-gods-love-to-fallen-man/>.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>31</sup> Wesley, John. “Sermon 44: Original Sin.” In *The Sermons of John Wesley*. Ed. Thomas Jackson. Wesley Center Online <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-44-original-sin/>

essentially to be in a right relationship with God and Creation. It is a restoration of the priceless gift of the image of God. This state of humanity is brought about because of God's grace, through justification, regeneration, and sanctification. This is the state that God calls and desires us to be in. It is in utter contrast to total depravity, but only because of God's actions. Much of the rest of this paper is an attempt to describe how redeemed humanity should live.

### ***God's revelation and attributes***

One of the difficulties in understanding Wesley's theology is that he often intertwined concepts from the Eastern and Western churches. Typical of a Western theologian, Wesley affirmed that humanity was originally designed in a state of complete perfection. With that perfection God created humans with the ability of self-determination. Humanity can make choices that will ultimately affect their future and somewhat the worlds. Adam and Eve used this self-determination to sin, which created the need for God's grace. Historically the Western church focused on this state of humanity. They have focused on the characteristics of the fallen human primarily that of guilt and powerlessness, rather than one that focuses on God's restoring grace. The Eastern influences come when Wesley emphasizes the restored human, because of God's grace, being in a state of perfection.<sup>32</sup> As you can see because of grace Wesley is optimistic about humanity. In order to live we need to interact with God through grace. Sin is rejecting that influence or presence in our lives to live as we please.

In order to understand how humans have learned about grace, we need to look at how God reveals himself to us. The first piece of that puzzle in to look at "initial

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<sup>32</sup> Maddox, pp. 66-67



universal revelation.” This is the first revelation that humans experience and can be experienced by everyone. It is through this initial universal revelation that Wesley believed God could teach even heathens, non-Christian groups of people, the essentials to following his will. He went as far as to say that God can teach heathens about holiness without them ever hearing of the Bible. With the broken image of God, humans do not have an innate knowledge of God beyond the possibility of his existence. What we know of God is discovered through creation and the spiritual senses.<sup>33</sup> This knowledge is clearly available to all regardless of location, race, and gender, but it is only a basic understanding. This basic understanding is enough to orient ourselves toward God.

When studying the Bible as a whole, scholars often use progressive revelation to explain what may seem to be differences between the Old and New Testaments. Why does God seem to allow polygamy in the Old Testament but is condemned in the New Testament? Questions like this can be explained through progressive revelation. God works within time and culture to reveal more of his nature, purpose, and will. Wesley saw the biblical narrative as “the gracious restoration of Divine self-revelation” and affirmed that we must use our spiritual senses to uncover what that means.<sup>34</sup> Essentially we can look at the Bible narrative as God attempting to create situations that would allow humanity to be restored to its original state. The pinnacle event of God’s self-revelation and restoration took place with the death of Christ. Christ’s love for humanity as expressed on the cross is what allows our spiritual senses to discover God’s grace.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Maddox, p. 29

<sup>34</sup> Ibid..

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 30

We have discussed how humans have experienced God, so now let's look at what we have learned through those experiences. The first is that God wants to enter into meaningful conversation with us. This is evident in the way we were created and by looking at the Bible for times in our history when God has interacted with humanity. For Wesley it was clear that God is above this world and our ability to fully comprehend. Wesley admitted that there are mysteries that we cannot understand, but he also emphasized that because of God's desire to enter into a meaningful relationship with us, there are some things that we can understand.<sup>36</sup> Because the Bible makes it clear that God wants to be in conversation with us, we can assume that God created us with everything we need to be in conversation with him.

The attributes Wesley asserted that belonged to God are split into the categories of natural and moral attributes. Without the natural attributes God would not be God. Many of these attributes are not necessary for the topic of this paper, but it is important to note the eternity of God. This eternity is used by Wesley to create a consistency among the current world and history. Within this category, Wesley affirmed the omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience of God. In a sermon titled "On Omnipresence" Wesley affirmed that "there is no situation that we are ever separated from God's and our accountability."<sup>37</sup> At all times humans are encased with the grace of God, but that does not exceed the punishment of our transgressions apart from the experience of justification. It is significant to note that God has the power and ability to be in relationship with us if he wants to be. We are always accountable for our rejection of God's grace, love, and desire for us to do good.

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<sup>36</sup> Maddox, p. 49

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 50-51

Those are some of the natural attributes, but now let's look at the moral attribute. These attributes do not necessarily make God divine, but they are integral to understanding the character of God. The fact that God has the natural attributes does not necessitate that he use them to be in relationship with us. It is his choice to give us grace, love, and even be present in the world. It is through the natural attributes that God universally shows his moral attributes or essentially his holy perfection. In his sermon on "The Unity of the Divine Being," Wesley said God is "a God of unblemished justice and truth; but above all is his mercy."<sup>38</sup> God was not forced or obligated to love humans and show them grace, but because God chose to do so he will for all of eternity.

Out of God's natural and moral attributes come God's roles. Rather than talking about the many individual roles or functions of God, I will instead focus on the result of those roles. God has remained the sustainer over creation and is at all times working to ensure justice reigns by "preserving order." It is out of this preservation and desire for justice that we can view God's universal grace. God's universal grace is given at all times to everyone but does not justify people before God. People are still held accountable for their actions, despite being under prevenient grace. It is through this grace that God allowed for parts of creation, such as the animals, to be restored after the fall. In his sermon "God's love for fallen man," Wesley argued that humans and animals will have "greater ability and blessing in redeemed creation than original creation."<sup>39</sup> It is in this hope that Wesley derives his doctrine of love.

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<sup>38</sup> Maddox, p. 53

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 62

## Chapter 2. Love as a Hermeneutic

### *All Theology Leads to Love*

Love is foundational to understanding the nature, purpose, and will of God.

Wesley believed love was the “hermeneutic” that all theology should be seen through.

Mildred Wynkoop believes that when studying Wesley, no matter where someone starts, he or she would inevitably end up at love. Love should not just be something that humans have for God; we are also supposed to love each other. Wesley highlighted many of Jesus teaching of Jesus such as, to love everybody as we love ourselves.<sup>40</sup> In Wesley’s eyes, love and its effect have no limit. He believed love to be the driving force of God and said that no theology, practice, or scripture could ever mean that God is not love.<sup>41</sup> Love should be our example and the goal that we as a Christian community strive for; however, Wesley’s love is not infatuation or “submissive avoidance of controversy.” If we view the purpose of love as creating unity among Christian believers then we can see how there is room for people to be challenged or pushed, if done with love.<sup>42</sup> Often people are afraid to challenge others because they would consider their action to be unloving. In reality we need to recognize that there is room for disagreement and critique, as long as it is done in order to bring unity.

God’s love is manifested to humanity in many ways, but the best example is through the life of Christ. Not only does the life of Christ stand out as the perfect example

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<sup>40</sup> This was not a revolutionary idea since it comes straight from the Bible.

<sup>41</sup> Wynkoop, p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

for how we ought to live, but his sacrifice displays that love is in the nature of God. Wesley saw love as central to the Gospel message and believed that we should use the Gospel to dispel perversions of love.<sup>43</sup> We learn how to truly love ourselves and our neighbors through loving God and following the Holy Spirit. This is starting to look like Wesley's view of sanctification, but as Wynkoop asserts, "it may be more accurate to call holiness a theology of love."<sup>44</sup> Holiness and love are different things, but according to Wynkoop, Wesley equated them. Love is the "essential character of holiness and holiness cannot exist without love."<sup>45</sup> Both love and holiness are defined by Wesley as perfection. Ultimately we cannot talk about love without talking about sanctification. As much as possible, I will try to separate the two as there will be a separate section for sanctification later.

### ***A Plain Account of Christian Perfection***

Wesley believed that the life of Christ was a good example of how to dispel the perverted love of this world, and that the highest form of love that humans can live out in this world is described in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13. In Wesley's Plain Account of Christian Perfection he wrote;

There is nothing higher in religion; there is, in effect, nothing else; if you look for anything more than love, you are looking wide of the mark... Settle it then in your heart from the moment God has saved you from all sin, you are to aim at nothing more than the love described in the thirteenth of Corinthians.<sup>46</sup>

As you can see it would be almost impossible to overemphasize the importance of love in Wesley's theology. One cannot understand God without attempting to understand his

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<sup>43</sup> Wynkoop, p. 18.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>46</sup> Wesley, John. "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection." In *The Works of John Wesley*. Ed. Thomas Jackson. 11.29 (1872): 366-446. <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/a-plain-account-of-christian-perfection/>.

perfect love for humanity. There is no group of people or state of humanity that is excluded from the love of God, so there is no group that we as Christians should exclude with our love. The purpose of following Christ is to love God and each other; therefore, the purpose of the Church as the body of Christ is to do the same. Wesley's view of love is all inclusive. It does not only love the convenient but makes every effort to include everyone in love.

### *Dynamic Nature of Love*

Love is a concept that is mostly viewed within the context of personal relationships; however, love should be the structure of our relationship with God and others. In order to hold such a view of love we must affirm that love is a dynamic concept. In order to apply it to every aspect of our lives, love cannot be static. Not only in the sense that it must be contextual but also that we must continue to grow in love. Love is not something that can be mastered and then stopped. We are always growing and changing in our love for each other. Wesley believed that "touched every aspect of life and human relations."<sup>47</sup> Love is a concept that is contextual to the situation we are in. Rather than viewing love as something that restricts the way we interact and express ourselves, we should view love as liberating. Love should liberate us to express our thoughts, opinions, and ideas without the fear of being rejected or unloved. Love does not whittle away at individuality or creativity but supports those we love in their enterprises. The way we love one person may be different from the way we love another, but the important thing is that we love everyone. It is because of Wesley's view of love, in relation to God loving humanity, that allowed him to support total depravity without

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<sup>47</sup> Wynkoop, p. 26.

having to support predestination. God's love is for all of humanity, not just a select few. This propels universal prevenient grace as an intrinsic promise of God. Even though humanity turned its back against God by allowing sin into the world, through God's love we can enter back into relationship with him. The grace of God flows freely to all because God loves all. We must remember that it is God who initiates the loving relationship. On our own, humanity is totally depraved, but with love we can learn to emulate holiness.

In one of Wesley's letters, he comments on the fact that God is love, and because the Christian man is reconciled to the likeness of God, we are capable of the same universal love of God. In the same letter, Wesley recognizes that social love and self-love are different, but they are reliant to each other within the Christian person. This type of love is "the plain naked portrait of a Christian."<sup>48</sup> Self-love alone is a perversion of the universal love we are to imitate and is therefore not ontologically fulfilling.<sup>49</sup> The ability to love something is innate within all people. God designed us to love God, our neighbors, and ourselves. The world teaches us to only love ourselves. Practically speaking, love is something that must be learned and developed, but it is something that we are all capable of. The love I have been writing about should not be seen as an emotion but as a way of life. It does not reside in our hearts but is concretely expressed through all of our actions. As a Christian we can never be at peace with our love for God unless we love our neighbors. The absence of love in the lives of Christians was an ontological and soteriological problem for Wesley. If a person was truly saved, their "temper" would reflect such a transformational experience. Perhaps the distinction is

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<sup>48</sup> Plain Account, p. 15.

<sup>49</sup> Wynkoop, p. 31.

clearer when it comes to love than in holiness, but I find it worthy to mention that practically a theology of love is one that is acted out. In other words, love is not a concept that can be grasped but a way of life that must be implemented. In an article for Christianity Today, J. Wesley Ingles wrote that “every abstract word is hollow until we pour our whole lives into it.”<sup>50</sup> The everyday definition of the word love is derived from a half-hearted attempt to submit fully to its transforming influence. This pitiful attempt can create more problems than it can fix. One cannot be half a Christian. Either you love God fully, or you do not love God at all. Every action and thought should display the innate love humanity was created with. This is true for the individual, family, community, and even the world.

Love must be the driving force behind Christian social ethics because society’s morals are not derived from God. Society is influenced by the total depravity of humans and systemic evils the Fall allowed; therefore, society is not a good indicator for how we should live our lives. For instance under Hitler in Germany it was considered moral to support Nazism despite their unethical behaviors. The society would have looked down on anyone who did not support the “Christian” regime. Christians must influence society not vice versa because God defines morals. What we learn through the Bible and revelation most influence our outlook and approach to ethics. Holiness is manifested through love and practically acted out in ethical ways.<sup>51</sup> We should view ethics as the way that the sanctified person acts or as the outpouring of Christian love.<sup>52</sup> Rather than

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<sup>50</sup> Ingles, Wesley. “*Hollow Words*,” Christianity Today: Oct. 27, 1958 p. 27.

<sup>51</sup> Wynkoop, pp. 27-28.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.



viewing love as superficial solutions to problems we must use love as a foundation to solving problems that otherwise seem impossible.

The Holy Spirit plays a large role in showing us how we are supposed to live. In many ways it is the Holy Spirit's presence that allows love to be dynamic. In an ever-changing world, Christians must learn to be in tune with the Spirit's leading. Wesley described this relationship as the "personness" of God touching the "personness" of humanity.<sup>53</sup> I think it is safe to assume that when the personness of God touches you, you generally do not stay unchanged. This relationship promotes an ethical shift to radical obedience to God. What starts with individuals will eventually shape the community by allowing "corporate" love to influence the way people interact. Love between groups of people is possible because of the Spirit's influences in our lives.

All theology should have practical and ethical implications. A theology of love gives value and worth to people universally, rather than on the basis of creed, race, or power. People were created to love God and each other. We can still hope to achieve this communal love because of God's abounding grace. It is because of communal love that social ethics is a topic of discussion. This love breaks down all barriers of culture, society, sex, and any other divider. Ontologically humans are created with this capacity. The ethical implications of understanding love to be the purpose of humanity is to create, live in, and perpetuate a world where every person has the ability to live in the image of God. When the society devalues people based on external factors, the church must show that they have worth solely on their humanity.

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<sup>53</sup> Wynkoop, p. 31.

## Chapter 3. Empowering Grace

### *God's Desire for us to Experience Grace*

Grace is the vehicle behind much of the interaction that humans have with God. Wesley believed in total depravity, but he also had a high view of grace. Throughout much of his life Wesley was in contact with many proponents of Calvinism. Because of the vast amount of literature that Wesley wrote, it can be difficult to succinctly say how influenced Wesley was by these debates, writings, and encounters. Unlike Calvin, and later the Calvinists, Wesley saw grace as empowering rather than merely pardoning. In Calvinism there is no participation of grace from the human side of things. Those who are elect receive the grace without participation, and those who are not elect do not receive grace. With Wesley grace empowers humans to respond to God and implies that humans grow because of grace.<sup>54</sup> This empowering view of grace is also evident within Wesley's view of sanctification. In order to better grasp Wesley's view of grace, we need to look at how humanity has learned about it, the effects of grace, and some of the characteristics of God.

Wesley believed that we learn and experience God's grace through direct and indirect knowledge. Like his Enlightenment contemporaries he placed a heavy influence on the senses. Wesley trusted the senses more than most of the philosophers of his day, but he also believed there to be "spiritual senses." God designed humanity with spiritual

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<sup>54</sup> Maddox, p. 83.

sense to reveal the spiritual world to us, just as our five senses reveal the physical world to us.<sup>55</sup> Maddox cites Wesley as saying “*nihil est in intellectu quod non fuit prius in sensu*, nothing is in the mind that is not first in the senses.”<sup>56</sup> Beyond being made in the image of God; humanity was also created with spiritual senses, so we can discover, relate, and experience God. It is because of these spiritual senses that we are aware of and learn about God’s grace.

### ***Grace for Everyone***

God’s grace is best represented to us through the life and death of Jesus, but it is through the Holy Spirit that grace is predominately conveyed. This is due to the fact that the Holy Spirit is present within our daily lives. We can experience the grace of Christ through such means as communion and other spiritual practices, but we can also experience God’s grace in the mundane life because of the Holy Spirit. Wesley believed that God was for the common person. God works in the ordinary just as he works in the extraordinary. The church does not have a monopoly on God’s grace, which should be accessible to the common person. If the church refused to teach and care for the poor, Wesley was willing to show God’s grace to them in an un-ordained way.<sup>57</sup>

Wesley taught and showed the poor that God’s grace was for the common person just as it is for the rich. It is out of this foundational ideal that the Methodist Movement was born. Because of the presence of the Spirit there are “channels” that God uses to show his saving grace to humanity.<sup>58</sup> The purpose of these ordinary and extra-ordinary

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<sup>55</sup> Maddox, p. 27.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid..

<sup>57</sup> Wesley, John. “Sermon 128: Free Grace.” In *The Sermons of John Wesley*. Ed. Thomas Jackson. Wesley Center Online <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-128-free-grace/>.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid..

means of grace is to restore us to the likeness of God. These mediums of grace, when received properly, should prompt us to live out our lives with perfect love. I think it is safe to say that God's original intention for humanity was to live in perfect love with God and one another. The only way we can hope to achieve that original intention is by allowing God's grace to transform our lives resulting in an outpouring of love. God's grace not only restores the relationship we have in the trinity, but it also has the potential to restore our relationship with each other. We need to look at the effects of the fall, both in regard to what changed between our relationship with God, and what changed with our relationship with humanity. It is not enough that we restore our relationship with God we must restore our relationship with humanity.

As mentioned earlier true restoration is the product of loving God and one's neighbor, which is synonymous in the eyes of Wesley with holiness. Maddox quotes Wesley as saying, "The Gospel of Christ knows no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness. I mean not only that it cannot subsist so well, but that it cannot subsist at all without society, without living and conversing with others."<sup>59</sup> This quote sheds light on the way that Wesley believed Christians should live in communion with each other and society. God in its very nature is a communal being. We worship the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three persons that live and work together in perfect love and harmony. I believe that being made in the image of God gives us the ability, through God's grace, to choose to live in the harmony displayed to us through the trinity.

### *Stages of Grace*

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<sup>59</sup> Maddox, p. 209.

So far much of the talk about grace has been abstract; now let's look at some of the stages that humans experience as a result of God's grace. It is also important to note that Wesley scholars often use different language when it comes to describes grace. Most of these terms have extensive overlap and are easily compared with each other. We have already discussed some differences between God's intention for humanity, humanity after the fall, and humanity restored by God's grace. I want to discuss the effects of God's grace after the fall and after humanity is restored. As humans, we experience prevenient grace the moment we are born. Wesley believed that this grace is more than sufficient to cover the effects of original sin; however, humans have to respond to this grace. God is the source of the grace and it is at all times freely given to all of humanity. Wesley believed that most humans choose to ignore or reject it and have lived their lives in such a way that they are blind to it. People have learned to tune out their spiritual senses and ignore the effects of prevenient grace.<sup>60</sup> The effects of prevenient grace are to bring humans to the point of justification.

One of the more concrete effects of prevenient grace is the negation of original sin to all humanity. In the *Minutes* from the 25<sup>th</sup> of June in 1744 Wesley affirmed that Christ's sacrifice wiped away the inherited guilt from original sin.<sup>61</sup> In other words the state of the fallen human is not the result of original sin within our own life, but by rejecting prevenient grace and sinning.<sup>62</sup> Rather than sin being something inherent within humanity, it is something that is learned, which puts the responsibility on the individual's life rather than a state they were born into.<sup>63</sup> Another benefit of prevenient grace, that

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<sup>60</sup> Maddox, p. 160.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 299.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*.

contrasts total depravity, is that it allows for a small restoration of liberty.<sup>64</sup> This liberty allows us to choose God's salvation over the confines of sin. It is the reason that humanity never truly experiences total depravity and shows that sin is a choice. Sin is not innate within us but it is something we choose because it has been modeled to us by society. Sin is rejecting the way of love that God calls us all to live.

In *Predestination Calmly Considered*, Wesley lists two benefits of prevenient grace.<sup>65</sup> Our spiritual senses still work even when people are not justified because of prevenient grace. That means that people can use their spiritual senses to learn about "divine things." These divine things would include things as the existence of heaven or hell and the existence of a divine being. Within prevenient grace, humans have the ability to decipher between good and evil at a basic level. This ability is often referred to as a conscious.<sup>66</sup> You can see that although the effects of prevenient grace are resistible, they offer humanity a chance to discover God and move toward justification. Even though humanity is depravity, it is not an excuse to allow evil into the world based on this universal grace. Christians must lead by example if the world is to be an ethical place.

Wesley believed that "every salutary human action or virtue, from the earliest expression of faith to the highest degree of sanctification, is grounded in the prior empowering of God's grace."<sup>67</sup> This grace helps us to comprehend the amount of love that God is continually pouring into us. This grace is given to all of humanity before individuals are justified. This is one of the ways Wesley deals with the state of the fallen human. Wesley affirms that humanity is in a state of depravity, but unlike some of his

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>65</sup> Maddox, p. 299.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

Calvinist opponents, he allows for universal grace. This universal grace can be experienced through the spiritual senses. Grace allows for people to experience God or his attributes through natural and supernatural mediums.<sup>68</sup> You might be wondering how Wesley deals with the issue of a universally given grace that does not seem to have a universal effect on the world? It is because this grace is resistible not because it is not freely given to all.<sup>69</sup> When people reject God's grace they choose to act out of depravity.

It is because of God's restoring grace that Wesley found assurance in justification. Justification is the point in a person's life when they have been justified by God. We generally associate this stage with salvation or forgiveness from sin. It is at this point that individuals partly regain what it means to be made in the likeness of God.<sup>70</sup> It is a restoration of the gift of creation that God gave to humanity. Wesley wrote "Man at his creation was full of love; which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions. God is full of justice, mercy, and truth; so was man as he came from the hands of his Creator."<sup>71</sup> So the effect of justification or restoring grace is to return humanity back to its perfect state. God offers this grace to us for free through the death of Christ, but we must choose to accept it.<sup>72</sup> Not only must we choose to accept it, but we must also be changed by it. God's grace is given to all, but we have a responsibility to accept it and allow it to change our lives.

Without grace, humanity would not be able to have the relationship it has with God. Our spiritual sense still works because of grace and God's willingness to give us

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid..

<sup>69</sup> Maddox, p. 86.

<sup>70</sup> The totality of Christians changing society along with grace will bring about social holiness.

<sup>71</sup> Wesley, John. "Sermon 45: The New Birth." In *The Sermons of John Wesley*. Ed. Thomas Jackson. Wesley Center Online <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-45-the-new-birth/>.

<sup>72</sup> "Sermon 45 The-New-Birth"

another chance. It is because of grace that humans can change. Even though prevenient grace negates the effects of original sin, humanity is still in a different state than in original creation. We are still made in the image of God, but it has not been restored until sanctification. “For Wesley Christian holiness was fundamentally a matter of purified and strengthened tempers. As such it was dependent upon God’s grace.”<sup>73</sup> Grace is always freely given but it requires a response on our end to transform our lives. Ultimately it can be said that the purpose of grace is to allow us to live a life of love. This life of love is not only geared toward God but loving those around us as well.

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<sup>73</sup> Maddox, p. 201.



## Chapter 4. Sanctification

### *Roots of Holiness*

I have already briefly talked about how love and sanctification are similar, but I find it useful to include it in its own section. While talking about sanctification is essential to remember experience, the role of the Spirit, and the dynamic role of love. The doctrine of sanctification can be traced Biblically to both the Old and New Testament. In the Old Testament the word sanctified occurs, or in a like form, 835 times. At its root sanctification or consecration (both words dealing with holiness) mean to be set apart. It means to be made distinct from something else. We are called to be set apart from things and to things. This may include separating ourselves from the world and culture that we live in, if it is in conflict with God's Kingdom. If we are to assume that holiness is possible we must first set ourselves apart from sin and worldliness, which makes us unclean.<sup>74</sup> It is an acknowledgement that there are things in this world that are not beneficial and that one should abstain.

God is the primary actor making things holy. He must be the one to make distinctions between what is pure and what is worldly. Not only does he show what is holy but he plays a part in making it holy. There is a "profound alteration" that must take place for something to be holy. This alteration must be initiated and completed by the trinity. There is nothing we as humans can do to be holy unless God acts for us. W.T

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<sup>74</sup> Oswalt, John. Called to be holy. Napanee, Independent Evangelical Publishing House, 1999. p. 17.

Purkiser believes that because humankind is made in the image of God, we are capable of innocence, holiness, and communion with the creator. These would have been lost due to sin, but because of grace we have hope that we can be holy and commune with God. This affirms what I have said about the capability of man to become holy. It affirms the fact that God plays a large role in it. It stays true to the Wesleyan optimism of grace, while recognizing the fallenness of humanity. Wesley did not believe that as humans we will be fully holy as God is holy but through his grace and our faith we can partake in a piece of it. We can learn what it means to be holy by imitating God.<sup>75</sup>

We must not only consecrate ourselves but we must live our whole lives in obedience to God. In our post-modern understanding of the Bible this may be difficult for us to grasp, but in a culture where the word hear implies obey, it may not be as difficult as we assume. Only God is the source of holiness, and he can take his holy blessing away if we are not obedient. Worshipping idols is searching for another source to act on your behalf. As humans, even though we are made in the image of God and have the capability of being holy, we cannot produce things that are holy. Objects that are crafted by our hands are incapable of achieving that divine status. Since that is true there is a difference between the objects that we create as human and the hands that God made us from. Living the sanctified life rejects money, wealth, and some forms of power in order to recognize that these are not a part of the Kingdom of God.

John Wesley's view of holy living was influenced by Thomas a Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*. As the title suggests this book is about living a holy and pure life, which is done through imitating Christ. Because Jesus is fully God, he is the source of

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<sup>75</sup> Oswalt, p. 20.

holiness just as the father, so his presence on Earth allows us to look at him the same way we look at God the Father. Every interaction Jesus has with people in some way will help us learn more about holy living. Jesus is the perfect example for us as Christians. His character and interactions with humans are without blame. Jesus was not just fully God, he was fully man. I am sure that part of him resisted the God part and the desire to be holy. It would have been a constant and daily struggle not to give into temptation, but Jesus' life shows us that God is more powerful than sin. God is holy and as the source and the perfect example of holiness, his influence in our lives is necessary.

As Christian we need God's grace shown through the death and resurrection of Jesus in order to consecrate ourselves. We must have faith in the saving and sanctifying power of the death and resurrection. Belief in the cross, as well as an obedient heart will consecrate any human being from the rest of the world. God's spirit works within us after we have been justified. The New Testament changed who the consecrated people are. The whole world now has access to God through Jesus Christ and the Spirit in personal ways. There is no longer the distinction of Jew and Gentile, it is now a matter of faith and the heart. God has not set apart a whole nation but has grafted the Gentiles into his sanctified people if they believe.

### ***The Application of Holiness***

Earlier I wrote that holiness has an aspect of love to it. I was not referring to romantic love but rather the love that God has for his people. This love is what drives God to save and redeem humankind after their sinful disobedience. Ultimately through God's creation, redemptive acts, and grace, we see that God is love, so at some level holiness involves love. For us as humans it involves loving God and our neighbors.

Through the pure and perfect love that God has shown us, we learn to replicate that love to others. Without that love we cannot understand the point of holiness. The point is not to brag and show off our spirituality, but rather to commune so closely with God that his attributes wear off on us. If God is holy and his interactions ultimately show his love for us, then that in turn teaches us about holiness.<sup>76</sup> It is a matter of heart and attitude which changes our actions. Wesley often used the Sermon on the Mount as a benchmark for ethics and he believed that it requires that we not only sin in deed but that we would abstain from it in our minds. Clearly this is another step toward living a holy and pure life. As Matthew says, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see the Kingdom of God.” Holiness is living with a pure heart. Holiness is a reflection of the universal love that God has for Creation; therefore, our love should be universal as well. Sanctification should affect society in a positive way. It does not accept the world’s ethics as good enough, but drives us Christians to make the world’s ethics better.

Wesley believed that sanctification was the process that led a person to repent of “inbred sin.”<sup>77</sup> He assumed that if an individual was justified they had already eradicated outward sins. It is through faith that we are justified and that same faith sanctifies. God has already saved us so we need to respond with faith and his grace will cover our sins. Freedom over sin and its bondage occurs at justification. As Christians we are convicted by the Word and the Spirit, to more fully realize the moral law that God wants us to live by. At the point of justification the Spirit starts the process of regeneration.<sup>78</sup> The whole process of sanctification is done over time and is finished with a second work of grace.

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<sup>76</sup> Plain Account.

<sup>77</sup> Collins, p. 279.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., pp. 279-285.

The second work of grace (entire sanctification) is a distinct moment, but the process is a gradual realignment of one's will being "bent" toward God rather than sin. This gradual work can be done over any amount of time, which emphasizes Wesley's view of the sovereignty of grace. God works differently in each person's life. Wesley wrote that "A gradual work of grace constantly precedes the instantaneous work both of justification and sanctification. But the work itself is undoubtedly instantaneous."<sup>79</sup> Concerning regeneration and the Spirit's role in sanctifying a person Wesley often used the metaphor of a baby being born, but with entire sanctification he used a metaphor of death.

Wesley saw entire sanctification as the *telos* of religion. He was influenced by William Law to believe that it is impossible for a person to be half a Christian. Wesley placed a heavy emphasis on the circumcision of the heart. As Christians we are supposed to have a disposition of Christ-ness. Faith, hope, and love are supposed to abound within us but especially love. Christians still need to grow in love for each other and God after they have been entirely sanctified. Their entire life will reflect daily choices to be bent toward God and not sin. This love is evidence of God's second work of grace within the person.

Wesley did not believe that anyone except Jesus would ever be truly perfect here on Earth. There are areas that we will always be lacking in, but we can have hope in the goal to imitate Christ. He also believed that there was no "state of grace" attainable by man that the possibility of fall was eradicated. As humans we all have the ability to sin, but we can choose not to with God's grace. Even a person who is entirely sanctified needs to rely on Christ daily. At no point should a person stop growing closer to God.

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<sup>79</sup> Collins, pp. 285-297.

Human beings still need to rely on the atonement and forgiveness of God because of mistakes in judgments and the possibility of sinning again.<sup>80</sup>

Entire sanctification is healing the soul and a restoration of the *imago dei*. Mostly it is a restoration of the moral image of God that was lost in the fall. This puts us back into proper relationship with God, and his love/holiness should radiate from us.<sup>81</sup> God and Jesus are our example for living the sanctified life. We learn more about the disciplines through prayer, the Bible, and spiritual disciplines. It is only through faith on our part and God's grace that we can hope to achieve sanctification here on Earth. Wesley's doctrine was and is heavily contested by theologians worldwide, but his systematic approach to holiness was a spring board for sanctification doctrines. The Holy Spirit is fully God and is the primary actor in extending the grace that justifies and sanctifies the human race. He is present within us and helps guide us as believers.<sup>82</sup> How we live shows practical implications for what we believe. We need to allow God's grace to have a greater impact in our lives than that of society.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp. 297-300.

<sup>81</sup> Collins, p. 300-303.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 304.

## PART II. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROMOTE LIBERTY AND DIGNITY

## Chapter 5. Wesleyan Anthropology

### *What is Man Made of?*

Wesley believed our bodies and minds were of this world and therefore acknowledges that there are intrinsic limitations, especially if we were to be left on our own. Even though Wesley was well versed in the science of his day, unlike his contemporaries he did not reduce the human to elements. He was wary of reducing the human to elements that are confined to this world. He did believe that humanity was the composition of body and soul but believed there to be an element of mystery that is undiscoverable. In Wesley's sermon "What is Man," Wesley deals with the question of anthropology in regard to Creation. He describes how humanity is small compared to the world, let alone the universe. He goes on to speak about God's power over humanity, and contrasts that to the eternity of God that our lives are inconsequential. Wesley's reason for describing the "diminutive" aspect of humanity is to then contrast it with the worth described in the second half of the sermon.<sup>83</sup>

It is difficult to talk about the summation of humans because it often leads to a gnostic duality of body and spirit. This view would devalue the role of social ethics as a whole and create a certain pessimistic *teleos* of Creation. God in his "infinite wisdom" created and declared it to be good. Creation was effected by the fall, but not such that

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<sup>83</sup> Wesley, John. "Sermon 103: What is Man?" In *The Sermons of John Wesley*. Ed. Thomas Jackson. Wesley Center Online <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-103-what-is-man/>.



matter inherently became evil. There is value even in the temporal nature of this world. Just as there is value in Creation, Wesley describes the worth of humans in regard to creation:

That man is not only a house of clay, but an immortal spirit... a spirit that is of infinitely more value than the whole earth; of more value than the sun, moon, and stars, put together; yea, than the whole material creation... Consider that the spirit of man is not only of a higher order, of a more excellent nature, than any part of the visible world, but also more durable; not liable either to dissolution or decay.<sup>84</sup>

It is true that humans were formed by dust and that Creation as a whole is infinitely larger than humanity, but God's role and ongoing relationship with humanity sets it apart. You could say that Wesley believed that humanity was more than the sum of its parts, but this summation was heavily grounded in our relationship with God. The life, liberty, and abilities that humanity experience as a whole are gifts that are universally and freely given, but dependent upon God.

### *Natural Image*

As mentioned earlier, Wesley split the image of God into the moral, political, and natural image. Each of these is distinct in their own way but together form the image of God that humans possess. The image of God is important to understanding Wesley's view of Creation, humanity, and soteriology. It is something that makes humans distinct from the rest of Creation. Like with grace, it is useful to discuss different states of humanity that lead to different experiences within the image of God. The three that were discussed earlier, that we will look at again, are God's original intention for humanity, humanity changed by the fall, and humanity redeemed by grace. Each of these states offers a piece to understanding Wesley's view of the human being. It gives us a

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<sup>84</sup> "Sermon 103: What is Man?."

framework for looking at some of the traits and characteristics that set humanity apart from the rest of Creation.

For much of history people have attempted to define the image of God based on the way in which humanity is different from Creation. Because of experience, Wesley decided to take a different approach. From Wesley's point of view the image of God contains characteristics of God that help humanity be in relationship with God. In other words they are given to us so that we can be in a relationship with God. This relationship model of the image of God is dynamic in the sense that it requires a response in how we relate to God. Theodore Runyon says that it is the "vocation" that each of us has. We should view the image of God as something that is both innate within humanity but not something that is static throughout all of humanity. That is not to say that the image of God is not freely given, but rather like grace, humanity can reject God, which will lead to a rejection aspects of his image. The image of God is distortable in the sense that it is dependent on how individuals interact and respond to God.<sup>85</sup> It is difficult to write a treatise on Wesley's view on this because he did not write a systematic theology, so this section will heavily depend on his sermons.

In order to understand how humans are to respond to Creation as a whole we must discover how we are distinct and similar. Due to the nature of the image of God, we are a political presence of God to the rest of Creation. Just because humans possess the image of God, does not mean that we can use it anyway that seems fitting to us. The workings, abilities, or results of being made in the image of God reflect our inward character.

Humans are capable of using it for others or for selfish gain. In other words, as God's

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<sup>85</sup> Runyon , pp. 13-14.

holy representatives, we should be emulating love and grace to Creation.<sup>86</sup> This is a concept that is foreign to the modern world and brings up ethical questions of its own. Humanity is obligated to take care of the world.

In Wesley's words it is the natural image that allows us to enter into a relationship with God. As defined by Wesley, the natural image at a basic understanding is reason, will and freedom. In Wesley's sermon "On the Fall of Man," he describes some of the characteristics that God created man with:

Man is not mere matter, a clod of earth, a lump of clay, without sense or understanding; but a spirit like his Creator, a being endued not only with sense and understanding, but also with a will exerting itself in various affections. To crown all the rest, he was endued with liberty; a power of directing his own affections and actions; a capacity of determining himself, or of choosing good or evil.<sup>87</sup>

This quote is filled with how Wesley understood the human being, and has implications for looking at a Wesleyan anthropology. In this sermon, Wesley affirms the fact that humans are not just matter but Spirit, like God. In other words humanity is more than just a physical being. Because we are made with spirit, humanity is endowed with understanding and senses. Humans were not endowed with senses that are restricted to perceiving the things of this world. We have the spiritual senses, which help bring us into relationship with God. We are worth God's time and desire to be in relationship with because he pursues us.

By listing and explaining liberty in a separate sentence Wesley is drawing the attention of his listeners to it as an important, if not the most important, concept within the natural image. Without liberty there would be no relationship but rather a dominating

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<sup>86</sup> "Sermon 44: Original Sin."

<sup>87</sup> Wesley, John. "Sermon 57: On the Fall of Man." In *The Sermons of John Wesley*. Ed. Thomas Jackson. Wesley Center Online <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-57-on-the-fall-of-man/>.

force over lesser beings. Because of liberty, the ability to make decisions for the self creates the possibility of a world with sin. Liberty allowed humanity to sin and create such a world. Along with liberty, Wesley believed that humanity was created with understanding and intelligence. God created us with the ability to do whatever we wanted and the ability to understand and know what we are doing. What is clear from this is Wesley believed that God created humanity as something distinct from the rest of Creation.

Wesley saw the natural image as something that is essential to understanding the relationship between humanity and God as different from humanity and the rest of Creation. This is essential to understanding Wesley's view of why God allowed sin into the world. He allowed Adam and Eve to make their own choice out of love for them. Even in the most rebellious and world altering mistakes, out of love, God allowed humanity to fall. The natural image is what allowed humanity to make its own decision rather than follow God. When writing about liberty Wesley said:

Indeed, had not man been endued with this, all the rest would have been of no use: Had he not been a free as well as an intelligent being, his understanding would have been as incapable of holiness, or any kind of virtue, as a tree or a block of marble. And having this power, a power of choosing good or evil, he chose the latter: He chose evil. Thus "sin entered into the world," and pain of every kind, preparatory to death.<sup>88</sup>

As you can see in order for love and holiness to be an ontological reality for Wesley, God needed to create humanity with the natural image, specifically with liberty. In order for humanity to truly love God back and emulate his holiness in a non-forced way, the natural image was required. Love and holiness require daily choices that cannot be imposed or forced. Therefore liberty, understanding, and will are essential to the concepts of love and holiness. Without liberty, humanity cannot choose to love, and without

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<sup>88</sup> "Sermon 57: On the Fall of Man."

understanding, love is not a sincere expression of the heart. In a latter sermon called “The General Deliverance,” Wesley adds “innate principle of self-motion” to the list.<sup>89</sup> In other words humanity is moving or asking questions in such a way that will naturally point toward God. Slavery and trafficking dispel any notion of inherent liberty. It denies that all humans are created to make decisions. It denies people the ability to change their circumstance.

As Wesley was in dialogue with many Enlightenment thinkers, he questioned whether reason would be a better definition to explain some of the concept of the natural image. Wesley intentionally decided that the 18<sup>th</sup> century definition of rationalism did not adequately describe his view. I think his reasoning was two-fold. He did not trust the Enlightenment definition of reason and thus wanted people to understand what he was saying, rather than using his words out of context. The Enlightenment thinkers put too much in store on reason. The other reasons he was wary of affirming reason are described in “The General Deliverance.” Wesley spends a good deal of time talking about the natural image of God being something distinct within humanity, but just as humanity displays a lower form of the image of God allows that the “brutes” display a lower form of humanity. Wesley’s use of the word understanding, rather than reason, allows him to apply the term universally. He affirms that even the heathens have understanding, which is greater than the brutes.<sup>90</sup> He is saying that all people possess understanding in a way that is greater than animals. This was a bold statement in a time when England and the Americas justified the slave trade by reducing the slaves to animals and denying that they

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<sup>89</sup> Wesley, John. “Sermon 60: The General Deliverance.” In *The Sermons of John Wesley*. Ed. Thomas Jackson. Wesley Center Online <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-60-the-general-deliverance/>.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*.

had the ability to reason. Wesley is both raising the status of slaves to humans and affirming other parts of Creation.

Wesley believed that the animals received the natural image to some extent. Through observing nature, he concluded that animals to a lesser extent engaged in understanding, will, and liberty. The political image that humans possess contains anthropological traits that mark humanity as distinct from the rest of Creation.<sup>91</sup> The political image of God naturally elicits a response from humanity. At a rudimentary understanding, it is the political image that humanity should derive its praxis with Creation. God created humanity to take care of and watch over creation. Wesley often quoted Genesis 1:28, "Have thou dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth," to support his view of the political image. Wesley viewed the political image as both a gift and a responsibility. Humanity does not have free reign over the world, but rather has been "thus qualified for his high charge."<sup>92</sup> This high charge is to take care of the world and its inhabitants. The political image does not give humanity the right to abuse Creation, rather it helps enable humanity to take care of Creation the way God would. Through the image of God, humanity has been equipped to care for Creation, and through the political image, humanity has been given the authority to care for it.

### ***Political Image***

Humanity finds some of its ontological purpose in the political image. Through the political image, we discover how we respond to Creation and that our obligation to respond to Creation. Wesley explains the political image further by saying:

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<sup>91</sup> Runyon, p. 17.

<sup>92</sup> "Sermon 60: General Deliverance"

Man was God's vicegerent upon earth, the prince and governor of this lower world; and all the blessings of God flowed through him to the inferior creatures. Man was the channel of conveyance between his Creator and the whole brute creation.<sup>93</sup>

This is an area where it is clear that Wesley is showing the practical side of theology. Stewardship and environmentalism are buzzwords for post-modernity, but during the Industrial Revolution these concepts were not prevalent. Theologically Wesley is preaching to the people about who they are ontologically. Ontologically we are God's presence on Earth. As Wesley said, we are the prince and governor of the lower world, but Wesley does not stop with merely explaining what it means to be made in the image of God. Wesley goes further by explaining what implications this has for humanity. We are the prince and governor, but only in the sense that we should be reflecting God's character and presence. God's love and grace should flow through humanity to the rest of Creation.<sup>94</sup> The political image allows us to utilize the attribute from the natural image to make decisions that influences the world in positive or negative ways.

Because of the political image, God allowed the decisions in the garden to have universal consequences. The presence of evil or bad things happening in the world is not reason to believe that God does not exist. This fits into the schema of the political image, in the sense that God allows humanity to be the prince and governor of the world even when humanity makes mistakes.

As all the blessings of God in paradise flowed through man to the inferior creatures; as man was the great channel of communication, between the Creator and the whole brute creation; so when man made himself incapable of transmitting those blessings, that communication was necessarily cut off. The intercourse between God and the inferior creatures being stopped, those blessings could no longer flow in upon them. And then it was that "the creature," every creature, "was subjected to vanity," to sorrow, to pain of every kind, to all manner of evils.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> "Sermon 60: General Deliverance"

<sup>94</sup> Runyon, p. 17.

<sup>95</sup> "Sermon 60: The General Deliverance."

When humanity fails to properly fulfill the role of the political image there are consequences to the natural world. When we ignore the political role God has entrusted to humanity, we are ignoring what it means to be human. Sanctification and love are how we respond to God, our neighbor, and Creation as a whole. Wesley is affirming the goodness of Creation and the material world. When humanity ceases to be the vehicle, which God flows his love and grace through, a distortion of the political image occurs. In a world of use and abuse against the environment, we only have ourselves to blame.

### ***Moral Image***

The third image Wesley believed God endowed within humanity is the moral image. Wesley wrote that this image, more than the other two, has been corrupted by the fall; however, Wesley believed that this image could be restored through grace and sanctification. The reason this image is more affected by the fall, and then grace, is because our understanding of the image is dependent on God. We cannot understand the moral image apart from God's character, so rather than seeing it as something that is innate within us, it should be seen as dependent on God. Runyon says the moral image is accepting the Spirit's breaths into our lives just as God breathed into Adam.<sup>96</sup> The moral image is the best example of God's influence and presence in our lives. It is an expression of the life that is changed by justification, regeneration, and sanctification. It is the return to the perfect ethics before the fall.

Wesley has a lofty view of humanity prior to the fall, which he explains in his Sermon entitled 'The New Birth.' After speaking about the natural and political image,

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<sup>96</sup> Runyon, p. 19.



Wesley utilizes the moral image to describe how he believes a Christian should live.

Wesley uses the language of love to explain the moral image by saying:

God is love. Accordingly, man at his creation was full of love; which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions. God is full of justice, mercy, and truth; so was man as he came from the hands of his Creator. God is spotless purity; and so man was in the beginning pure from every sinful blot.<sup>97</sup>

With Wesley's emphasis on love as a central point of his theology it is easy to understand why he rests the moral image on love. Based on his prelapsarian view of humanity, God created humanity able to perfectly love God, neighbors, and Creation. The results of humanity being able to fully love each other are expressed through justice, mercy, and truth. God originally created humanity without sin, which means that sin is ontologically separate from the original humans. Clearly God did not intend for humanity to sin or desire for evil to enter the world.

The reality of life is that humanity participated in sin, which had adverse effects to the moral image. Wesley describes that loss and why it occurred through the lens of the moral image as "So had he lost both the knowledge and the love of God, without which the image of God could not subsist. Of this, therefore, he was deprived at the same time, and became unholy as well as unhappy."<sup>98</sup> Being made in the image of God is dependent on our relationship to God. When people are separate from God and choose to ignore the ways that God is working in their lives, they experience depravity. This way of life leads to un-holiness and unhappiness. Wesley believed that humans would be happy if they were able to participate in God's holiness, but without knowledge of God, it is impossible.

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<sup>97</sup> "Sermon 45: The New Birth"

<sup>98</sup> Ibid..

Many people in the modern world have taken issue with God's allowance of sin/evil to enter the world. Through exploring the natural and political image, we said that if God intervened to prevent humanity from rebellion, then humanity would lack will and authority in this world. In regard to God allowing evil into the world, Wesley looked past the evil of this world and said it existed "by the wise permission of God, determining to draw eternal good out of this temporary evil."<sup>99</sup> When humanity uses its natural and political images in rebellion to God, the moral image is perverted. God allowed this to occur in Wesley's opinion because ultimately God will reign victorious and sin is temporary. Because of prevenient grace humanity is not left in the dark to stumble upon God. God's grace is at all times working within our lives to bring about the fruition of justification. Wesley had such high hopes for God's grace; he was willing to believe that humanity would be restored to a state even higher than before the fall.<sup>100</sup> So even though humanity has been subjected to sin through God's grace, we can be blameless once again. This transforming power is the driving force behind ethics and should lead the outpouring of love.

Being made in the image of God is a concept that can be difficult to parse, but it is quintessential to understanding how Wesley viewed the human being. It would be impossible to look at this section without understanding this. As we shift from looking specifically at the image of God as anthropology, to a less systematized approach, we should keep in mind the duality of total depravity and practically what humans experience. This duality can be used to explain why non-Christian are capable of pious actions and conversely why humanity is capable of evil. Fundamentally humanity has a

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<sup>99</sup> "Sermon 45: The New Birth"

<sup>100</sup> Maddox as cited earlier in the grace section.

choice whether to accept the fact that we are created in the image of God, and be the expression of his love and grace to humanity, or rebel and be a curse to the world. The choice is entirely up to the individual as Wesley said, “Nothing is more sure, than that as the Lord is loving to every man, so his mercy is over all his works; all that have sense, all that are capable of pleasure or pain, of happiness or misery.”<sup>101</sup> God has offered every individual the chance to respond to his grace in a transforming way that allows humanity to be made full the image of God. God wishes love and happiness for each individual.

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<sup>101</sup> “Sermon 60: The General Deliverance.”

## Chapter 6. Wesley's View of Slavery

### *Georgia*

Much of this paper is an attempt to show how and why Wesley valued human life. In modern vocabulary we would say that Wesley believed in human dignity. He believed that because of God's abounding grace, love, and care for humanity, each person deserved certain rights. Personally I have come to summarize these rights as an allowance for everyone to live out the *imago dei* to its full extent. If God does not restrict people's will and liberty, how can we as humans justify doing it? This next section is an exploration of Wesley's view of slavery, which will later be compared to and applied to human trafficking. The time he spent in America was particularly influential to his disdain of slavery. It provided him with first hand experiences of the atrocities. Later in his life he compiled a pamphlet called *Thoughts on Slavery*, which contains original material and primary sources that Wesley believed to be credible. *Thoughts on Slavery* is a synthesis of writings from the 18<sup>th</sup> century against slavery that Wesley compiled to raise awareness and illicit a response.

Wesley experienced slavery first hand when he was in Georgia, and he would have seen slave markets on a semi-regular basis in England. At the time Georgia did not allow slavery, but Wesley made several trips to neighboring states where he witnessed it.<sup>102</sup> Some of these trips were intentionally focused on ministering to current and former

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<sup>102</sup> Wesley commended Oglethorpe on this numerous times and pleaded with him not to allow change.

slaves. One of the reasons that Wesley went to America in the first place was to minister to the Native Americans, which expanded to include slaves.<sup>103</sup> In a letter dated October 10 1735, Wesley wrote, “My chief motive, to which all the rest are subordinate, is the hope of saving my own soul. I hope to learn the true sense of the Gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathens... I hope to learn the purity of that faith which was once delivered to the saints.”<sup>104</sup> Wesley saw that in order to fully understand the Gospel, it must be done in practical ways. In all times Christians need to make the lives of the downtrodden, outcast, and poor better. Wesley understands God’s universal grace and love for all people by taking on this mission.

Wesley goes on to say that in order to learn the fullest meaning of the word Gospel, he must leave England. We must remember that prior to his journey to America, Wesley and the holiness club regularly participated in “social justice.” They fed the poor, clothed the naked, and visited/fed the starving in prison. Wesley was not a man who stayed in an ivory tower. He was out among the neediest people, yet he still felt that he needed to go to America in order to learn “the true sense of the Gospel.”<sup>105</sup> Wesley was able to see through prejudice and racism in order to preach to groups of people that were mistreated.

While Wesley was in Georgia, he did much of the work that slaves did, which he goes on to use as a counter argument against the fallacy that the African’s darker skin made them unique to working in the conditions of the West Indies and American Colonies. Wesley affirmed that Europeans were capable of doing the same work in the

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<sup>103</sup> Smith, Warren T. *John Wesley and slavery*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986. p. 36.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*.

same conditions that slaves were. Wesley thought that even if the Africans were uniquely able to work under these conditions it should be by their own choice and not forced upon them. He saw into the systemic evils of the slave trade in spite of it having a stamp of approval by society at large. His witnessing of the horrific working and living conditions of slaves had a profound impact on his desire to end slavery.<sup>106</sup> Journal entries from the Wesley brothers indicate the abuse that they witnessed in their short time in South Carolina. These accounts are numerous and horrible, so I have chosen just one to illustrate the cruelty:

He whipped a she-slave so long that she fell down at his feet for dead. When, by the help of a physician, she was so far recovered as to show signs of life, he repeated the whipping with equal rigor, and concluded with dropping hot sealing-wax upon her flesh. Her crime was overfilling a tea-cup.<sup>107</sup>

Whereas planters and merchants saw Africans as economic property, which could be abused, handled, and killed at the whims of the “master,” John Wesley saw them as people made in the image of God. As such they were just as worthy to live out their image of God to its full capacity. When most people abused their societal position, John Wesley concerned himself with reaching out and preaching to these people. While Wesley interacted with Africans, he quickly discovered their spiritual capacity and intelligence. He in no way saw them as inferior and desired equality for all people regardless of color.

In a letter to Anthony Benezet in 1774 Wesley reflected on the status of the American colonies and slavery. He wrote:

Mr. Oglethrope you know went so far as to begin settling a colony without negroes, but at length the voice of those villains prevailed who sell their country and their God for gold,

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<sup>106</sup> Smith, p. 52.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

who laugh at human nature and compassion and defy all religion, but that of getting money. It is certainly our duty to do all in our power to check this growing evil.<sup>108</sup>

Wesley recognized the role that economics play in the systemic evil of slavery. As noted earlier this perversion of love defies the capacity of love that God created humanity with. They have created a god of money and will do anything to increase their wealth, even if it usurps people's rights. Wesley saw slavery as counterintuitive to religion. One cannot truly love the Creator, while abusing Creation in such a way. This type of rampant abuse necessitates a response from the faithful. Wesley wrote that it is our "duty" to respond to societal injustices such as slavery. Christians cannot remain passive to the evils of the world. "Wesley embraced the whole of life and the whole of humankind."<sup>109</sup> This inclusive and closer reading of the Gospel brings about societal and political justice for those voices that are not heard or listened to.

### ***Wesley's Pamphlet***

The issue of slavery was in Wesley's pen for decades. He wrote numerous letters, pamphlets, and sermons condemning it as one of the greatest evils that the world has ever seen. In order to give a brief account of Wesley's view, we will explore *Thoughts on Slavery* which was printed and reprinted numerous times in England, as well as all of the American Colonies. One of the difficulties when dealing with both human trafficking and slavery is how to define it. There are numerous forms that slavery can take. In *Thoughts on Slavery* Wesley attempts to describe it by saying:

The variety of forms in which slavery appears, makes it almost impossible to convey a just notion of it, by way of definition. There are, however, certain properties which have

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>109</sup> Smith, p. 71.

accompanied slavery in most places, whereby it is easily distinguished from that mild, domestic service which obtains in our country.<sup>110</sup>

Within this definition we can see that slavery is distinguishable from domestic service, which was often an honest enterprise in 18<sup>th</sup> century England. Wesley goes on to later describe what some of the easily distinguishable characteristics are.

Wesley clarifies what he means by the term slavery by saying, “By slavery I mean domestic slavery, or that of a servant to a master.”<sup>111</sup> In the case of slavery, the master has control over almost all aspects of the slave’s life and makes all major decisions for them. Slavery is the capture of another human being’s body, often for personal gain. The captured person is exploited, often against their will, for the benefit of the master. This capture infringes on a person’s rights and puts them in horrific living conditions. It denies them the *imago dei* and bars them from freely participating in the creative acts that God has commissioned to us. Slavery is an infringement on personal liberty. Wesley goes on to describe the restrictive and controlled lifestyle that is impossible to break away from. “It creates an incapacity of acquiring anything, except for the master's benefit. It allows the master to alienate the slave, in the same manner as his cows and horses.”<sup>112</sup>

Anthropologically Wesley is saying that another human cannot own another human. We cannot treat each other like we treat animals. Because humans are made in the image of God and receive God’s grace we have a higher status than animals. Clearly the political image, reflected in humanity as the governors of the world, does not include over other people in such a way as slavery. He compares the slave to that of owning livestock,

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<sup>110</sup> Wesley, John. *Thoughts Upon Slavery*. London: n.p., 1778. University of North Carolina. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/wesley/wesley.html>. p. 1.

<sup>111</sup> *Thoughts*, p. 2.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.



which is a rejection of God's creation of humanity as separate from the beasts of the air and sea.

In typical Wesley fashion, John goes into historical detail about the rise of slavery. Wesley synthesizes multiple accounts and reports to better understand what life on the African Continent. He likes and is impressed with his findings. The accounts describe the African people as having both political leaders and a justice system, which prove their distinction from animals. It is sad that this distinction is necessary but when placed within historical context we see that it is necessary. When writing about the political system Wesley said:

The government is easy, because the people are of a good and quiet disposition; and so well instructed in what is right, that a man who wrongs another is the abomination of all. They desire no more land than they use, which they cultivate with great care and industry.<sup>113</sup>

Wesley is writing this section to describe the life of the Africans as human rather than savages. A common excuse for slavery, which he quotes in order to refute, was that slavery actually improved the lives of the slaves. In some instances people even used the church to perpetuate and promote slavery as the Christian burden. Wesley has no patience or room for this type of thinking in his writing and clearly expels it as sin. You would hope that this ideology would have dissipated by the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but nationalism perpetuates the ideology that a certain groups way of life is better.

Wesley's *Thoughts upon Slavery* shows some aspects of how life on the African Continent displays more "Christian" principals than the Europeans. Wesley describes their care of Creation and desire for justice in admirable ways. He is impressed with their societal care for the elderly, lame, and for providing jobs to prevent the needy from

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<sup>113</sup> Thoughts, p. 9.

begging.<sup>114</sup> Wesley is able to affirm their way of life based on his view of prevenient grace. He ends the first section of the pamphlet by saying, “Where shall we find at this day, among the fair-faced natives of Europe, a nation generally practicing the justice, mercy, and truth, which are related of these poor black Africans?”<sup>115</sup> He goes as far to say that if what he has heard is true, which he whole heartily believes is the case, then the Europeans should move there to learn to live. He clearly has a high respect and regard for the African people and believes they should be treated as equals and people who can be learned from. His approach to give worth and dignity to everyone lies within his anthropology of equality. Humanity is ontologically the same no matter where you are from.

It is interesting how Wesley points out the fact that the slave traders first had to corrupt the indigenous people with wealth, alcohol, and material possessions. Before the slave traders were able to start a viable industry, the powers and principalities had to corrupt the “innocent” hearts of the people. The pamphlet tells firsthand accounts of Africans starting wars and murdering hundreds of their neighboring peoples to get a few slaves. Stories of branding and amputated body parts paint an aroma of death. This blatant mistreatment of human life is an insult to the Creator. Wesley wrote, “Did the Creator intend that the noblest creatures in the visible world should live such a life as this?”<sup>116</sup> Slavery is counter to God, the Bible, and social ethics. Wesley believed that the world created slavery and any attempt to use the Bible to justify it is an insult to God.

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>115</sup> Thoughts, p. 14.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

There is no grey line in his eyes on this issue. Human life is the same globally and no people group should restrict other's right. There is value in every human life.

Wesley describes the horrendous conditions and circumstances that slaves were subjected to on a regular basis. Beside all the evils that go with owning another human life, the mere treatment of slaves should have been enough for people to recognize it as pure evil. When one person, even with the support of society, knowingly and willingly subjects another human to starvation, exposure, unsanitary living conditions, and many other daily atrocities, there must be a Christian response. Wesley did not understand how any Christian could own slaves or passively observe such occasions in silence. Wesley argued that even if such acts are permissible under human laws there “must still remain an essential difference between justice and injustice, cruelty and mercy.”<sup>117</sup> Wesley does not trust human laws to accurately portray justice and mercy. In cases like slavery it is up to Christians to prompt societal and judicial change in order to bring about universal justice and mercy. Justice and mercy are not for a few in privilege but rather the whole of human kind. Justice and mercy are individual and community rights.

The issue of slavery is a systemic sin that was driven by an economic engine, bent only on making money. In some ways the trans-Atlantic slave trade was like a modern corporation that exploits indigenous people to produce cheaper goods. These forms of industry do not care for the people, environment, or ethical nature of business. Even while writing for the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Wesley makes his position clear about businesses that participate in unethical practices:

Wealth is not necessary to the glory of any nation; but wisdom, virtue, justice, mercy, generosity, public spirit, love of our country... It is far better to have no wealth, than to

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<sup>117</sup> Thoughts, p. 34.

gain wealth, at the expense of virtue. Better is honest poverty, than all the riches brought by the tears, and sweat, and blood of our fellow-creatures.<sup>118</sup>

Wesley condemns any form of unethical behavior in order to gain money. Clearly the exploitation of human life through slavery is in all circumstances inexcusable. The value of a human life greatly outweighs any sum of money or material possessions. The issue of money and sin is one that has not gone away but rather adapted to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is eerie how Wesley's writings still speak to our modern struggles with human trafficking.

Wesley goes on to challenge those who are actively participating in the slave trade. If the government is unwilling to lawfully change the status of the slave trade, people should actively stand against it. Wesley was patriotic and loyal to the king but he recognized that following the laws of the world is not an excuse to engage in unethical manners. He appeals to human emotion through a series of rhetorical questions:

Are you a man? Then you should have a human heart. But have you indeed? What is your heart made of? Is there no such principle as compassion there? Do you never feel another's pain? Have you no sympathy? No sense of human woe? No pity for the miserable? When you saw the flowing eyes, the heaving breasts, the bleeding sides and tortured limbs of your fellow-creatures, were you a stone, or a brute... When you squeezed the agonizing creatures down in the ship, or when you threw their poor mangled remains into the sea, had you no relenting? Did not one tear drop from your eye, one sigh escape from your breast? Do you feel no relenting now?<sup>119</sup>

This powerful series of questions was directed toward ship captains and people who worked on the ships; however, it paints a powerful picture of the atrocities of the slave trade. It also presupposes that human beings by nature know that this is wrong. No one should be treated in this manner. This type of appeal is drawing on human emotion and the commonalities that we all share. Wesley has gone to great lengths to show how Africans are equal as people; therefore, they should be treated as equal. Even though

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>119</sup> Thoughts, p. 52.

humanity is totally depraved, which allows for something as wicked as slavery to exist, Wesley believed that those participating in it recognize its evil. The barbaric and animalistic people are the ones without love. As we have already explored, humanity does not experience total depravity because of God's grace, so Wesley's appeal to humanity is an attempt to open their spiritual eyes. Wesley is attempting to show them God's grace and love as a better way of living.

He goes on to place the sins of the Africans of killing, capturing, and selling their countrymen on the Whites who started up this "business." He says the Englishmen and other Europeans who introduced and exacerbated slavery on the African Continent will be held accountable and found guilty.<sup>120</sup> There is something fundamentally wrong to slavery and the slave trade. It is such a villainous evil that even non-Christians should be able to recognize its evil. As this project is focusing on a Wesleyan anthropology, it is worthwhile to mention that the knowledge of systemic evil within the slave trade should be evident to all of humanity, as expressed by Wesley saying, "Whether you are a Christian or no, show yourself a man; be not more savage than a lion or a bear!"<sup>121</sup> Humanity is distinct from the rest of Creation therefore we should reflect such a distinction in the way we live.

Wesley concludes his pamphlet with a charge to his fellow countrymen and all those reading. He makes the point again that slavery and the slave trade infringe upon what he believes to be basic human rights. These human rights come out of the fact that we are created in the image of God and that God's grace extends to all humanity. He fears for judgment day for those who have witnessed such travesty and remained silent.

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<sup>120</sup> Thoughts, p. 54.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

He also calls for individuals to release slaves even if the law does not require it. God's law supersedes those of this world and Wesley sums up his pamphlet with:

Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air. And no human law can deprive him of that right, which he derives from the law of nature... Is it lawful to abuse mankind, that the avarice, the vanity, or the passion of a few may be gratified? No! There is such a thing as justice, to which the most sacred regard is due. It ought to be inviolably observed... Freedom is unquestionably the birth right of all mankind; Africans as well as Europeans: to keep the former in a state of slavery is a constant violation of that right and therefore also of justice.<sup>122</sup>

Because slavery is an infringement on human rights and contains the fallacy that one human can own another he disregards the whole of slavery as a farce. It is impossible for one to love and live the sanctified life while endorsing slavery. Slavery in every form is against human nature in ways that are so repulsive that even non-Christians should be able to recognize this horror.

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<sup>122</sup> Thoughts on Slavery, p. 52.

## Chapter 7. Social Ethics

### *Origins of Ethics in Wesley's Life*

Wesley's view of ethics is firmly rooted in scripture and can be summed up with love for God and neighbor. In many ways social ethics is the purpose of this paper. Essentially social ethics is treating everyone with love, respect, and dignity. It promotes justice and harmony among everyone in the world. Human dignity resides firmly in the doctrine of God's grace. Because of the universal reach of God's grace, God's love for humankind, and anthropologically speaking, every human being deserves to live fully in their image of God. I do not wish to reduce the ongoing polemic between faith and works to social ethics, but responding to situations in a way that is congruent with ethical behaviors are the works of a person of faith. Wesley resonated with language about perfection from the Johannine literature. He was influenced by *The Imitation of Christ* and William Law's approach to holiness.<sup>123</sup>

In many ways social ethics are the practical results of the sanctified life, which is tied to love, grace, and faith. It is this principle that drove Wesley to minister to people in practical ways. Often times social ethics means standing up for or doing good for a person or group of people who have been neglected or harmed by society. This can either be de jure or de facto. It can take many shapes or forms depending on the needs of the situation. At times it may include lobbying governments, supporting groups of people , or

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<sup>123</sup> Stone, Ronald H. *John Wesley's life & ethics*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001. p. 146.

simply bringing food to a person in need. Wesley is careful in his explication of social ethics to put the responsibility on both individuals and society. Marquardt begins his first chapter by saying, “Anyone wanting to achieve an overview of the breadth of Wesley’s social activity must become seriously concerned with individual actions and place them in the broader perspective of social responsibility.”<sup>124</sup> Individual people cannot wait around for society to handle problems, and society cannot handle problems without the help of individuals.

Wesley’s strong roots in social ethics can be traced back to his family of origin. His mother instilled a strong desire to serve that he and Charles carried to Oxford when they formed the Holiness Club. Manfred Marquardt believes that the success of this communal group prevented Wesley from joining a “monastic or acetic form of piety.”<sup>125</sup> They attempted to reach out to help people who were downtrodden and otherwise had no way to improve their situation. One such example from Wesley’s time at Oxford was his ministry in the prisons. 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain prisons were overrun with men in debt. These men had no way to make money to pay their debts, so they left families who often had no other way to make money.<sup>126</sup> The prisoners themselves had no access to food in prison unless it was brought to them. By law these people were to be forgotten and cast out of society with little hope of return. Wesley and the Holiness Group took time to minister, feed, and in some cases help monetarily.<sup>127</sup> Wesley’s decision to travel to Georgia was partly based on his desire to live ethically out of faith.

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<sup>124</sup> Marquardt, Manfred. *John Wesley's social ethics: praxis and principles*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992. p. 19.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>126</sup> Due to discrimination against women in the workplace

<sup>127</sup> Marquardt, p. 23.



Wesley was not only concerned with feeding the poor. He made it his business to reflect on how they became poor and what he could do to bring them out of it. Wesley went to great lengths to socially, politically, and in practical ways alleviate the surrounding circumstances that left people in poverty. He had a radically different approach to those in poverty than the English norm. At the time those in poverty were often seen as lazy, incompetent, and “in some cases as a stigma of divine punishment.”<sup>128</sup> Even when people in the bottom echelons of society had jobs, they were often forced to work in “inhumane” conditions. Those who had wealth wanted to keep it and often took advantage of people in vulnerable situations. Ronald Stone’s *John Wesley’s Life and Ethics* is a biography of Wesley that highlights points in his life that significantly intertwine with the development of Wesley’s view of social ethics. Stone is not afraid to humanize Wesley by reminding the reader of failures in his life that hagiographies gloss over. When studying any theologian, but especially one that is intently focused on holiness and ethics, it can be difficult to separate the person from the theology. Wesley was not perfect in all areas of his life, but that does not mean we should throw out his theology and practical approach to ministry. As mentioned earlier Wesley went to America “to save his own soul.”<sup>129</sup> At this point in his life he did not believe that he was fully acting out the Gospel. In order to more fully discover what it means to be confident in faith, Wesley believed he needed to travel to America to serve the colonist, heathens, and slaves. This time brought many trials and failures in Wesley’s personal life. He had a failed love interest, did not have the time to minister to the Natives that he desired, and had many faith crises. This was also a time where Wesley witnessed firsthand the

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<sup>128</sup> Marquardt, p. 21.

<sup>129</sup> As cited in Chapter titled Thought’s on Slavery

atrocities of slavery, learned piety from Monrovia, and further developed his desire for political reform.<sup>130</sup> Wesley's time in Georgia had a profound impact on his desire for societal equality, despite personal struggles.

***Love as the Driving Force of Ethics***

Wesley saw the summation of theology as love. Wesley firmly believed that the Ten Commandments should be used in teaching and living out ethics. They are a guide to understanding right from wrong. He also saw the Sermon on the Mount "as a standard to pure religion and had been presented by God."<sup>131</sup> He believed these passages could be used as a guide to praxis. Passages of the Sermon on the Mount teach on topics such as humility, good works, how to treat the poor, evils of money, love, moral law, and other topics.<sup>132</sup> Each of these individually contributes to a full understanding of social ethics. They highlight the weak and vulnerable as groups of people to be helped, rather than take advantage of.

Stone understands Wesley to have supported natural law. Stone emphasizes the moral law by quoting Wesley's "Upon the Lord's Sermon on the Mount V:" "not depending either on time or place, or any other circumstance liable to change." This moral law is binding to humanity. Pieces of it can be found throughout the Old Testament, specifically the Ten Commandments. It is a universal law that is written on the hearts of all humankind regardless of race, ethnic heritage, or class.

All of this law that is also Gospel to Wesley is for the love of God and humanity. He urges a religion of the heart that is willing to be meek and to suffer for righteousness. A thirst for God is a sign of the Christian who seriously seeks to live life to achieve everlasting glory.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Stone, Chapter 3 "Georgia."

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., pp. 115-120.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

This moral law is tied into the image of God that was distorted in the fall and regained through justification. Living it out is the responsibility of all Christians. It is the standard by which we should live despite being surrounded by sin in the world.

### *Holistic Care*

One of the reasons that Wesley stands out as a social reformer is his involvement in a wide spectrum of “current issues.” He wrote about and took action to reform areas in economics, politics, and education. His reform was driven by his desire for equality and human dignity for all people. The major thrust of this paper is to look at slavery and human trafficking, it is important for the reader to understand that Wesley took a holistic approach to saving people. He did not just want to save people’s souls, he wanted to save their bodies, not only their bodies, but he wanted them to be free, not only to be free but to have an education to use their freedom and live life to the fullest. Wesley wanted the rich to see the impact they could have by denying themselves luxuries in order to feed the poor.<sup>134</sup> He did not understand how people could live in luxury while consciously knowing that people are impoverished.

In his latter writings, Wesley believed that he lived in England at a time that gave the most liberties to more people than any other time; however, this was not enough for him. One example was his critique of the voting systems restrictions to land owning men. He did believe that there were “essential and non-essential liberties.”<sup>135</sup> Things like voting were good liberties to have, but they do not compare to the liberty taken away by slavery. By being human every person has the right to certain things. Wesley believed that we should not infringe on other’s rights. Some examples of liberties that no one has,

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<sup>134</sup> Stone, pp. 144-145.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

are the right to “kill, take over another’s property, or to violate women.”<sup>136</sup> We cannot interpret Wesley’s view of love or social ethics to allow people to do harmful things. Stone believes that one of the key features to understanding Wesley’s view of social ethics is the realism that it contains and promotes.<sup>137</sup> Wesley’s individual liberty does not give anyone the permission to usurp another person’s liberty. There are limits to what individuals can do, which is why people need to participate in practical ways. People cannot wait around for huge organization to lead the way. Individuals need to lead the way by living ethically, which is often in stark contrast to the way society would have us live. It is when individuals find each other and team up that they can hope to make political or societal changes that can impact nations.

Wesley’s view of ethics drove him to present among the poor. He gave him time along with him money. In doing so, he modeled and encouraged others to do the same. “Wesley emphasized personal contact with those who needed help. Wesley wanted to see with his own eyes what they needed, and he demanded that those active in the social work of his fellowship must deliver help to the poor, not merely send it.”<sup>138</sup> By doing this he valued and elevated the people in need. The problems of the poor became the problems of the Methodists as the problems now had faces behind them. They were real people with real needs, who were going to suffer unless they got help. He wanted people with wealth to see how the poor struggled to get by. He hoped this would prompt greater charity and action on the side of the wealthy to care for the poor.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Stone, p. 176.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>138</sup> Marquardt, p. 30.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid..

Wesley had three rules that are commonly quoted when reflecting on his economic practices. “Gain all you can; save all you can; give all you can.” Marquardt expands these three rules to include material possessions as well. Wesley often said that if “he died with more than ten pounds to his name he would consider himself to be a crook.”<sup>140</sup> This was not because he made money in illegitimate ways; but rather, he did not wish to profit off the ministry. His objective was not to make a profit but to spread the Gospel and raise the living conditions of the poor. It is only by understanding the third rule that the other two can be applied. Wesley caveated the first rule so that money should only be made in legitimate ways. These legitimate ways included the British Law and the incorporated principles from the moral law. Just because an enterprise is lawful does not necessitate its ethical approval in Wesley’s eyes.<sup>141</sup> Stone is careful in his biographical approach to Wesley to recount his selfless giving, but Stone reminds us that we need to look at the message behind the practice, and not just if Wesley physically died with less than ten pounds. Money is not something that should be stored for later use or for luxuries while the poor are in need. The desire for amassing wealth or passions in any form can be dangerous.

Wesley saw the evils of wealth and the desire for luxuries as contrary to the Gospel and counterproductive to the sanctified life. As the Methodist societies started to climb into higher echelons of society Wesley had this to say: “The Methodists grow more and more self-indulgent, because they grow rich... And it is an observation which admits of few exceptions, that nine in ten of these decreased in grace in the same proportion as

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<sup>140</sup> Marquardt, p. 30.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., pp. 35-36.

they increased in wealth.”<sup>142</sup> Wesley desired for people to have everything necessary to live. For those who had more than what was necessary, he expected them to give to those in need. One of the keys to understanding social ethics is the diffusion and shared aspect of responsibility. Individuals must do all they can, and in cases, set up ways to serve socially. People should lobby the government for political aid, but individuals cannot wait or rely on this. Everyone is responsible at some level.

Wesley saw the value and dignity of human life as a gift from God, rather than dependent on race, age, gender, social status, or anything status.

Based on his own experience, his feelings of esteem for all human beings made it easier to deal with black slaves as persons with immortal souls to be rescued because God created them for that end... Wesley’s fundamental conviction was that the value of a person resides first and foremost in the individual soul, created by God for eternal life. According to Wesley’s own experience with the work of God among the blacks, black as well as whites possess such a soul.<sup>143</sup>

God made us all human and each individual deserves to experience life to the fullest. Those in positions of power, wealth, and privilege should not extort and abuse the people below them. There is no love of neighbor in manipulation and exploitation. As Christians we are called to work in the world just as God is working in the world. It is because of Wesley’s view of grace that everyone is responsible and called to action. Just as we receive grace from God, we should be a vessel that God’s grace is poured out to the rest of Creation.<sup>144</sup>

Wesley did not confine his personal life and writings to outward ethics. He emphasized and wrote great lengths about the “inner renewal” that the outward ethics flow from. This inner transformation is done through the process of justification,

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<sup>142</sup> Marquardt, p. 49.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., pp. 72-73.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 103

regeneration, and sanctification. It is done by the work of the Holy Spirit and teaches us how to emulate the love of Christ. Wynkoop is right to assert that all of Wesleyan theology will eventually lead to love.<sup>145</sup> Just as Jesus broadened the 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine conception of the word neighbor with the story of the Good Samaritan, Wesley asserts that every human being is our neighbor.

Hence Wesley's social ethic might be described as an ethic of responsibility and solidarity...this ethic viewed social obligation and involvement primarily from the perspective of individuals as change and transformation of the individual or creation of new social conditions, diaconal compassion, living activity, and engagement for social justice.<sup>146</sup>

I hope the reader sees how love, grace, and sanctification are all integral to understanding how Wesley believed we are supposed to live. Social ethics are the practical ways that the renewed Christian is supposed to live.

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<sup>145</sup> Marquardt, p. 112.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

PART III. THE PRACTICAL  
APPLICATION OF SOCIAL ETHICS



## Chapter 8. Human Trafficking

### *A Modernization of the Slave Trade*

As 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians, we would like to believe that slavery has been extinct for over a century now. In reality 21<sup>st</sup> century slavery is even harder to fight against. Many Americans believe that slavery is dead because the trans-Atlantic slave trade has been abolished, and the country has undergone reformations to increase civil liberties for minorities. In reality the slave trade has merely changed and adapted. Before, the word underground referred to the path or “railroad” of freedom to Canada for thousands of African slaves in the South, but now underground refers to the process by which slavery has become the third largest illegal industry in the world. Because it is illegal in so many countries, the process has been pushed underground, but because it is the third largest illegal enterprise, it is clear that the world is not doing enough to stop it. Like Wesley we must believe that this cause is inherently evil in all forms and fight against it.

Any American history book can tell you that slavery was legally abolished in the United States in 1865; however, at this time another chapter of the story begins. The whole issue of slavery and social ethics is still relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As mentioned earlier, slavery is still common throughout the world today. Some common forms of 21<sup>st</sup> century slavery are sex trafficking, bonded labor, child soldiers, child labor, involuntary domestic servitude, and debt bondage. As you can see this issue has only gotten more

complex with time, even though many governments are fighting it.<sup>147</sup> With current trends leading toward globalization and a world economy, the slave trade has expanded in many ways. David Batstone comments in *Not for Sale: the Return of the Global Slave Trade--and How We Can Fight It* that the slave trade has gone underground and has only gotten more sophisticated with time. Even when laws are made, traffickers find ways around them. Often this comes in the form of bribery.<sup>148</sup> The prominence of this issue should show that it is time that the Church started being proactive about this issue.

### *The United States*

In 2000 the United States came out with the TVPA or Trafficking Victims Protection Act. This became a springboard and provided a framework for cases of human trafficking. This document has been useful to people working in anti-trafficking, but it does little to help navigate the muddy waters of prostitution versus sex trafficking. Both are illegal and measures should be taken to prevent and end both, but not everyone in prostitution is a victim of trafficking. Too often when brothels are raided, questions of human trafficking are not brought up. In many countries the punishment for prostitution (or even legality for that matter) is not as severe as trafficking. Worldwide corruption in police departments, laws, and government officials plays a large part in the perpetuation of human trafficking.<sup>149</sup> After Germany, the United States has the highest number of women and children trafficked into it for the purpose of sexual exploitation.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000: P.L. 106-386. pp. 8-10. As cited in David Batstone

<sup>148</sup> Batstone, David B. *Not for sale: the return of the global slave trade--and how we can fight it*. New York: Harper One, 2010. p. 17.

<sup>149</sup> Bales, Kevin, and Ron Soodalter. *The slave next door human trafficking and slavery in America today*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. pp. 90-100.

<sup>150</sup> *Slave next door*, p. 106.

There are numerous problems that have perpetuated and allowed human trafficking to grow and fester. One of the biggest problems comes about because of its illegal nature. Although experts can estimate, it is nearly impossible to have concrete data on human trafficking. No one really knows how many people are forced to work against their will; however, studying human trafficking has gained momentum. We have a better definition of human trafficking than what was used in the 1990's, but the dynamic nature of this systemic issue is in constant flux. The United Nations has put forth this definition:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power, or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor service, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.<sup>151</sup>

No one definition fits all, but this definition explains the numerous forms human trafficking can take. The majority of definitions that I have seen are similar to this one. They highlight the vulnerability of the victim and the abductor taking advantage of the victim. Often people who are being trafficked think they are going to a better life. In many ways it is like United States Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart definition of obscenity, "I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material...and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. *But I know it when I see it.*"<sup>152</sup> Most people recognize the illegal and inhumane nature of human trafficking when they see it, but too often the problem is that we fail to recognize it. Whether by choice or ignorance we are often blind to those around us who are enslaved. We cannot remain blind, ignorant, or silent on this

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<sup>151</sup> United Nations Trafficking Protocol 2000

<sup>152</sup> Justice Potter Stewart, concurring opinion in *Jacobellis v. Ohio* 378 U.S. 184 (1964), regarding possible obscenity in *The Lovers*. Emphasis added

globally growing issue. We need to wake from the fantasy that this is other countries' problem or that it will go away on its own. The United States is one of the largest trafficked countries, and this issue of human life and dignity will not go away on its own.

Kevin Bales has been a leader in the anti-trafficking movement for over a decade. He has written numerous books that touch on awareness, prevention, restoration, and general information. Being that we are at a time in history where this issue is currently occurring, it can be difficult to have current facts. I want to assure you that the numerical facts and figures that I will quote are coming from the experts of the field and are less than five years old. With that being said Bales estimated in 2009 that there were about 27 million people enslaved, and that human trafficking was the third largest illegal enterprise behind drugs and guns.<sup>153</sup> When the third largest illegal enterprise in the world strips people of their liberty, dignity, and life, we have to see that the world has issues with the sanctity of life. Siddarth Kara lists four reasons that efforts remain insufficient in the fight against trafficking: trafficking is misunderstood, anti-trafficking work is underfunded, insufficient laws, and we need to explore the economic aspect of it in more detail.<sup>154</sup> The issue of human trafficking will not be solved overnight as it is a dynamic problem, but we have to take it seriously.

Globalization has played a large part in shaping the face of the modern slave trade. The ability to travel, communicate, and exchange money have all contributed to the change in slavery being regionally based to a global market. These factors have made it

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<sup>153</sup> Slave next door, p. 3.

<sup>154</sup> Kara, Siddharth. Sex trafficking: inside the business of modern slavery. New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. P. 200.

cheaper and have increased the ease at which people can be trafficked. A major difference between modern human trafficking and the trans-Atlantic slave trade is what

Bales calls “equal opportunity slavery” described as:

Where the slaves in America were once primarily African and African American, today we have equal opportunity slavery; modern day slaves come in all races, all types, all ethnicities. We are, if anything totally democratic when it comes to owning and abusing our fellow human beings. All that’s required is the chance of a profit and a person weak enough and vulnerable to enslave.<sup>155</sup>

People are trafficked from all over the world to anywhere in the world. This leads to legal nightmares and problems of impunity, extradition, and jurisdiction. This is a global problem, but that does not excuse the United States for the part it plays. Our economy has created traffickers the opportunity to make a profit by utilizing trafficked victims.

In the “land of the free,” capitalism often rules over democracy, ethics, and even religion. The average slave from 1850 would cost about 40,000 in today’s economy; whereas, the average slave in the modern world cost less than 200 dollars. “This cheapness makes the modern slave easily affordable, but it also makes him or her a disposable commodity...It’s often cheaper to let a slave die than it is to buy medicine if they are sick.”<sup>156</sup> Slaves are viewed as sub-human, which puts them in situations of abuse and mistreatment. They are stripped of every fundamental right and thrown away when they have been used up. There should never be a dollar value on a human life because it is not a commodity, and to determine the worth of someone’s life to be a few hundred dollars show the complete disregard for human life.

Human trafficking is much broader than sexual exploitation. Forced prostitution has become the face of human trafficking, but the issue at hand is much larger. Bales uses

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<sup>155</sup> Slave next door, p. 7.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

three criteria for his umbrella definition of human trafficking “complete control of one person by another, through violence-both physical and psychological. The second hard labor for little or no pay, slaves often receive nothing beyond meager subsistence. The third is economic exploitation.”<sup>157</sup> Using this definition domestic servitude and forced labor are easily seen as human trafficking. Bales notes that often people forced into slavery are not usually initially kidnapped against their will. They are generally living in poverty and someone offers them the chance for a better life. This lie springs them into a trap where they are left vulnerable. The traffickers rely on confusion, chaos, and abuse to subdue victims. By giving them little to eat or drink and depriving them of sleep, victims are not able to think clearly. Parents unwittingly allow their children to be taken because they cannot be provided for. The parents often think their children are going to a better life.<sup>158</sup> We cannot solve world poverty, but by using Wesley’s model of ethics we can provide for people in need. If they are provided for, vulnerable people will be less likely to be lured by traffickers. The United States

Americans are getting used to projecting and scapegoating the responsibility for ethical practices onto large corporations and businesses. While it is true that these corporations should be culpable, this does not negate the responsibility of average Americans. Everyone is responsible to live ethically. In the technology age, consumers have access to information about the origins of products. We need to use that information to make ethical decision about where we eat, where we shop, and what we buy. This branches out into the food industry as workers are often exploited and enslaved. In capitalism ultimately the consumer has control. If a corporation were to discover that

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<sup>157</sup> Slave next door, p.13.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

people would refuse to buy their product based on unethical practices, in theory their participation in unethical behavior would change.<sup>159</sup> The problem with such a model is that it will raise prices for the average American. We have to be willing to pay more for products that are made ethically; again it is a question of human life being more valuable than money. We need to be able to love people more than saving a few dollars. Having a plethora of poor people who are vulnerable and attracted to someone who comes to offer a better life is only part of the problem. In all cases of human trafficking there is a demand. If we are truly going to fight human trafficking we need to take away the demand. This may come in the form of taking away the demand for the cheapest product, regardless of its unethical origins. We should spend our money at places that engage in and encourage ethical practices. We should be rewarding the people who are growing food and making products ethically.

Restoration should be of primary importance. People who have been trafficked often need serious medical and psychological attention. I was shocked to read that at the time of Bales book, there were only 39 beds in the United States dedicated to the restoration of trafficked victims. The prevalence and magnitude of this fact shows the need for the Church and State to start pouring their time and dedication to helping victims. When society does not offer help to those who have been rescued, the chances of entering back into slavery greatly increase.<sup>160</sup> The NGO Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking recently made this statement:

What is needed now, more than ever, is a holistic, human rights based framework, to guide our next steps to ensure that all victims-including those forced into commercial or non-commercial sex, sweatshops, agriculture, domestic servitude, hotels or restaurants,

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<sup>159</sup> Slave next door, pp. 55-60.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

construction, even boy's choirs- have access to assistance that is equitable, non-paternalistic, survivor –centered, and client driven.<sup>161</sup>

People caught up in the slave trade are changed for life. We need to look for ways to heal and restore people who have gone through these traumatic events. We cannot just rescue, we need to restore their entire being. We need to teach them that they are human.

Less than 1 percent of all human trafficking that occurs in the United States is uncovered: “About one third of the slaves that are freed in America get their liberty because an average person spoke up.” These average citizens were a voice to people who had no voice. Often all they did was witness something off and then picked up the phone to call the police. Slaves are often too scared to run away or speak up about their conditions to other people. The slave holders take advantage of the slave’s vulnerability. Traffickers often use fear and abuse to keep their victims. Slave holders threaten the victim’s families, beat them, starve them, and keep deny them sleep in order to keep them in a constant state of disorientation.<sup>162</sup> “The more broken a slave’s spirit is, the more accepting she/he is of the life of a slave.”<sup>163</sup> Traffickers physiologically break their victims until they believe they are subhuman. While they are in the midst of being rescued, the psychological torture and abuse they have gone through, combined with trust issues, creates a complex situation. Often people who work with victims of trafficking make statements similar to this one, “it almost seems like they have gone blank.”<sup>164</sup> They have lost hope and do not know who they are. These people need holistic healing when they have been rescued. Many trafficked persons have been diagnosed with post-

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>162</sup> Slave next door, p. 94.

<sup>163</sup> Siddartha, p. 11.

<sup>164</sup> Slave next door, p. 24.



traumatic stress disorder.<sup>165</sup> We can't expect them to be able to function normally in society until they realize they have worth.

If we are really going to be in the business of rescuing people we need to be prepared to take care of them. Think for a minute about how much money is spent stopping drug trafficking and helping addicts recover. I'm not trying to devalue drug trafficking or say that we should cut funds, but when the budget to fight drug trafficking is over 10 times more than that of human trafficking it reveals a serious issue about our value on human lives.<sup>166</sup> Drugs ruin people's lives, so does trafficking. It teaches people that they are nothing and no one care about them. When people are broken and are not equipped to heal themselves, the community of faith needs to be ready to step in. Without help and care, a person rescued from slavery often goes right back into poverty and can find themselves back in slavery.<sup>167</sup> Through education and support, we can help alleviate some factors that make them vulnerable. When slaves utilize restoration programs, the chances of being re-trafficked dramatically decrease.

### ***Global Issue***

Laws are not the only solution to the global problem of human trafficking. Governments, companies, citizens, and police need to abide by the laws. Slavery is illegal in almost every country in the world, yet it persists because of corruption. People at all levels engage in corruption by turning a blind eye. Governments need to enforce the laws they have in place and make new ones where necessary. Citizens should not only spend their time lobbying such things, but we all have a responsibility to take care of our

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>166</sup> Slave next door, p. 178.

<sup>167</sup> Siddartha, p. 16.

neighbors.<sup>168</sup> In 1794, it became illegal, in the United States for a person or company to profit from slaves. Ignorance and corruption made this law ineffective throughout its entire existence.<sup>169</sup> We have laws that make slavery illegal, but too often they are not enforced. Because of the sensitive and confusing nature of the business of human trafficking, police need to receive special training. They need to be able to recognize the difference between labor trafficking and illegal immigration, sex trafficking and prostitution, and domestic slavery versus people willing to provide cleaning services.<sup>170</sup> Without recognizing the chains around enslaved people, it is impossible to free them. Trafficked victims are forced into silence, but there are signs that will almost always show through.

It is difficult to talk about people in terms of supply and demand, but these terms can be helpful to understanding why human trafficking is growing. As the world's population has increased, over 3 times what it was 70 years ago, the number of people in poverty has greatly increased. Along with population increases, Siddhartha Kara sees this list as some of the top reasons that human trafficking is growing: world market, globalization, urbanization, capitalism, and global poverty.<sup>171</sup> Transportation has allowed people and products to be moved with relative ease from one place to another. Along with the global economy, this allows businesses to import products from countries that use slave labor, which makes the products cheaper for the consumers and gives a better profit margin to the business. When money is the driving force of capitalism, human dignity is often pushed to the side for a cheaper product. The demand for human labors

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<sup>168</sup> Slave next door, p. 149.

<sup>169</sup> Slave next door, p. 151.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>171</sup> Siddartha, pp. 6-12.

increases as companies want cheaper products. Buying and keeping slaves is relatively insignificant when compared to the profits received from their work. No one willingly enters into slavery. Fraud and coercion are key elements for any individual attempting to enslave another. Often they play off the vulnerability, poverty, and hopes of the person being enslaved. One way to help tackle human trafficking is to alleviate global poverty.<sup>172</sup>

### ***Demand***

We've explored some of the reasons why there is a supply of people to be trafficked, now let's look at the demand side. Traffickers make a profit from trafficking because there is a demand. Demand can take the finished form of sex, products, or services. There is something to be sold, done, or gained from trafficked victims. This creates a market and way for traffickers to make a profit. If the supply were to exist but it were impossible to make a profit off the exploitation of other humans (demand), then human trafficking would largely die out. The fact is that while the United States is the third largest trafficked country it is likely the largest importer of trafficked goods. Americans most likely consume or buy more products of trafficked origins than any other country.<sup>173</sup> The way of life in America has grown accustomed to cheaper products and exploiting people of foreign countries. Why is it that while we have minimum wage we are willing to buy products from countries that do not? In most cases we won't exploit our own people, but we are willing to exploit people as long as they are from a different country. Does nationalism and GDP really outweigh the dignity of human life? When we

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<sup>172</sup> Siddartha, pp. 12-15.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., pp 15.

undercut the global economy by child labor, unfair wages, and trafficking we are saying that people in the United States have more value than those outside.

Although I am willing to admit that most Americans do not participate or perpetuate human trafficking firsthand, many people do in other ways. The choices and privileges that Americans have daily are sometimes the result of trafficked victims. We would not enjoy the luxuries we do if they were not put on the backs of the third world. The irony is that our “business” is keeping them impoverished. If we were to recognize everyone as human and pay them fair wages, the Global economy would look very different. Things would cost more in America, but less people would go to bed hungry.

Cheaper products, drugs, and pornography all perpetuate human trafficking. The system “removes” Americans from firsthand knowledge that they are supporting trafficking. As long as it isn’t right under our nose we are willing to accept the benefits without question. Traffickers can disguise their “businesses” as legitimate or intermingle their products with ones of ethical origins. If we remove the demand for trafficking we can remove the need for it. The demand side of human trafficking is something that everyone can impact. Recognizing that the choices we make have a global impact can save lives worldwide. Asking questions and not accepting societal norms are counter cultural, but are needed in order to fight human trafficking.

The demand aspect calls into question something called systemic sin. Systemic sin is an idea that the way a system function has become innately sinful. In this case the way society functions have inherent sin by enslaving people in order to bring more luxuries to the already wealthy. When impoverished people have no chance to improve their circumstances and rich people gain from their labor there is systemic sin. As

Christians we should be interested in liberating the poor, not trying to exploit them.

Systemic sin is difficult to see because many people take part in different roles. The issue of human trafficking and slavery is riddled with systemic sin. Corruption and bribery are essential to its proliferation. A trafficked victim has no way to liberate themselves or improve their situation. They are at the bottom of a vicious system that has a “need” for whatever service they can provide. It is the responsibility of the Church to step up and speak out against systemic sin. The Church should encourage its members to stand up and seek justice. We should be fighting the systems that impoverish and enslave millions of people worldwide.

## Chapter 9. Analysis

### *Why does it matter?*

Human Trafficking exists for many reasons. By learning about the Wesleyan position on love, grace, and anthropology, we can see some of the reasons why it exists. In their entirety the reasons are too complex to be described, but while reflecting on it as a whole; we must keep in mind the depravity of humans. The issue of fallen humanity and total depravity are quintessential to understanding why and how this happens; however, we must remember that God does not desire for humanity to remain in its fallen state. God has designed a way for humanity to be redeemed. With that redemption comes a way of living that is countercultural and completely opposed to human trafficking. God's love, grace, and image are universally given to all of humanity, not just a certain ethnicity, societal group, economic threshold, or even religion.

After a person commits a sin or a crime I have often heard responses like "That's human nature." A look at genocides, wars, and history might lead a person to believe in such a statement. Statements and ideologies like this focus on the depravity of the world, but as we have discussed that is not the complete picture. God created humanity to love God and our neighbors. Anthropologically speaking we were not created to kill, abuse, and own each other. We were not created to enslave each other. Not only were we not created to, but the whole concept is ludicrous because one cannot put a value on human

life. A human life is invaluable no matter the external circumstances. It cannot be reduced to a dollar amount. Our depravity is no excuse because of the outpouring of love and grace. As God's responsible agents, we should be his outpouring of love to everyone. Depravity and ignoring one's spiritual senses can explain how a misguided individual comes to believe they have the authority to own another being, but it by no means excuses. The corrupt political image grabs power and authority from the systemic evils of money. There is no excuse for such a travesty because by owning another person you reject God, his grace, his love, and what it means to be made in the image of God. In order to fully embrace these, we must express them in Godly ways to everyone.

Human trafficking and slavery are issues that call into question human dignity and liberty. We have explored some of Wesley's and the Wesleyan movement's theology, methodology, and responsibility to God and neighbor. Perhaps it would be beneficial to briefly explore human trafficking through the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. The roles of tradition, reason, and experience within the Wesleyan movement have all been discussed throughout other sections of the paper, so I will gloss over them now but not because they are tertiary. Wesley's *Thought's on Slavery* speaks into all four aspects of how slavery and human trafficking are wrong. Because of Wesley's practical and dynamic approach to theology, we can draw many parallels between what he wrote in the 18<sup>th</sup> century against slavery to human trafficking. Some of the issues and details of 18<sup>th</sup> century slavery do not directly correlate with modern human trafficking, but what's at stake is similar if not the same. The methods and laws would perhaps be different, but the bottom line is that slavery/human trafficking is wrong. The Wesleyan tradition has often taken a stance against slavery and other social injustices, but it is time that we do more with this

one. Just as we are responsible in responding to God's grace, we are responsible to flow God's grace and love to the rest of Creation. The rest of creation includes human life.

### ***Biblical Arguments***

I will highlight a few of the Biblical material that shed light on the issue of human trafficking. Many times throughout the Old Testament God instructs the nation of Israel to take care of those in need. The Law does not support people being taken advantage of and does not excuse society from taking care of those in need. In fact the system of gleaning and other practices were put in place to help ensure that the poor were able to survive. Often women, children, and foreigners were the most vulnerable and ignored groups within society, which are also some of the heaviest trafficked groups of people.<sup>174</sup> Their position in society made them easy targets to be taken advantage of and have their plights go unheard.

The law and prophets are filled with God's desire, purpose, and hopes for how his people are to take care of everyone in society. If I could personify God briefly, I would say that he is not foolish enough to think that these vulnerable people will be taken care of, so he offers them another level of protection. This is evident in Deuteronomy 10:18 which says, "He (God) defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing."<sup>175</sup> God makes it clear throughout the Old Testament that he is the defender of the fatherless, widow, alien, and orphan. God and the Law by extension are the voice of justice for these groups of people, who were often told by society that they had no voice. Their Father in Heaven is their legal guardian, and he

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<sup>174</sup> Loewenberg, Frank M. From charity to social justice: the emergence of communal institutions for the support of the poor in ancient Judaism. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2001. p. 145.

<sup>175</sup> Deuteronomy, 10:18.



indicts the nation of Israel numerous times throughout the prophetic books for their lack of care to these groups. God offers them his protection and someday will be their voice. This clearly shows the plights of the vulnerable to go unheard, and God sees when people take advantage of them. Without having someone to socially, politically, and legally watch out for them, these people were easily taken advantage of.<sup>176</sup> Like the majority of people trafficked today, they share the common bond of having little to no social status. This is why the reminder not to take advantage of them needs to be so prevalent. If God spoke through the Old Testament prophets, surely he is still speaking today.

Throughout the Gospel, and especially in Luke, Jesus reveals to us that the Kingdom of God is for the oppressed, downtrodden, and exhibits political paradigm shifts. Jesus spent much of his ministry with the poor and oppressed, rather than the rich and powerful. He showed how the Kingdom of God is where power truly lies, rather than with the powers and principalities of the world. Jesus healed and talked with people despite their lowly societal position and potentially damaging effect to his place in society. His mother's song in Luke 1:52 reveals that from the start of his ministry the incarnation was to accomplish a radical shift in power and desire for justice: "He has deposed the mighty from their thrones and raised the lowly to high places. The hungry he has given every good thing and the rich he has sent empty away."<sup>177</sup> God loves the marginalized and the outcasts. These verses along with the rest of the Magnificat reveal how radical Jesus' ministry was. Jesus challenged society, economics, and politics by showing that he valued human life more than anything else. Jesus did not work for money, status, or position but in order to heal and help people live with dignity. Jesus

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<sup>176</sup> Loewenberg, p. 149.

<sup>177</sup> Luke, 1:52.

worked and saved individuals, so when we hear that there are over 27 million people enslaved, we should feel prompted to respond.

### ***Human is Worthy Enough***

It takes a totally depraved person to enslave, beat, and torture another human being. This individual chooses to ignore all reason and spiritual promptings in order to make money. Rather than loving God and their neighbor, they have learned to love money and power. As referenced earlier, because humanity is made in the image of God, and God is love; a consequence is that humanity is love as well. Redeemed humanity seeks to be love and desires to love. When love is perverted by sin in fallen humanity, there is a shift from loving people to loving the self and objects. This shift learned to value objects over people. In practical theology this shift of love has implications for what is considered moral. Society's morals are determined by the objects, people, or things that it loves. It loves power, wealth, and ease of loving. Society does the things it does in order to perpetuate the status quo of morality.<sup>178</sup> Christians need to take a step back and recognize that people are more important than money. When people pervert the love God created us with to loving money, Christians are responsible to be the voice for the voiceless.

Every human life has worth regardless of social status, influence, ethnicity, sex, or any other external factor. Every human being is born in the image of God and no person bears more of the image than another. No human being has the power or authority to strip another human of their image, but in the case of human trafficking people try. Slave holders restrict human beings from being able to live out what it means to be made in the

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<sup>178</sup> Wynkoop, p. 177.

image of God. It is an insult against God, creation, and the dignity of human life.

Wesley's view of the image of God was based on things that help us relate to Creation and relate to God. The capture and enslavement of another human being strips a person of their ability to freely relate with Creation and in some cases God. In many ways it is because of the image of God that humans should be looked at with dignity. We were created separate from the Earth and animals that inhabit it. God breathed life into us and with it his image. Surely no human can take this away from another and each individual should be allowed to express this God breathed position. One of the crowning attributes of humanity is the liberty given to each person. Along with many other atrocities, human trafficking strips a person of their liberty. They do not have the ability to make decision for themselves. Trafficked victims are often physically, mentally, and emotionally abused in ways that make them feel like they have no liberty. They are not free to express their thoughts, feelings, or move as they please. They become a means to an end and that end does not benefit them. The capture and bondage of a human being reduces the human to an animal. God did not give liberty to humanity in order for humans to take it away from each other. Human trafficking is against human nature and, Christians should be working to free every captive. A corruption of the political image of God leads to a false desire for power. People use fear and abuse to take control over something they have no authority over. Humans have political authority but not over each other.

Our Wesleyan Tradition to Social Ethics should look at human trafficking seriously. It is a modern form of slavery that attempts to deprive people of what it means to be human. The prominence and role that Americans play in this issue is unforgivable. On any given day the average American probably either encounters a trafficked victim or

buys something that has been made by a slave. In many cases it would be impossible to trace every product's origin, but there are companies that make their product's origins public knowledge. We should encourage these companies and their local workers with our financial support. In the age of technology we have more access to more information than any other time. I think the main reason why people choose not to utilize this information is because they are afraid of what they will find. Until we admit that the American economy, way of business, and consumer all play large roles in perpetuating human trafficking, almost nothing can be done. We are part of the problem, but it is time that we start becoming a part of the solution.

## CONCLUSION

### *Response to Trafficking*

If Wesley were alive today, I think he would be disappointed with the Church. At its inception the Wesleyan Church was influential in the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade; however, as time has gone on the passion for social justice has dwindled. I believe that as the denomination became wealthy it began to lose its roots. The shift to middle class created a church that thinks it can afford to not care about social justice. The love of money, societal position, and political power have all created a quiet church unwilling to seek justice. The watering down of the Gospel and the seeker sensitive movement have created an environment in America where little responsibility is required. Justification has become a prayer rather than a lifestyle. Sanctification and social holiness are ideals not practical ways of living. The truth is that many Christians are benefitting from human trafficking. As Americans we all play a part in the demand aspect of human trafficking. In the eyes of Wesley this is irresponsible and contrary to Christianity. "There is no holiness but social holiness."<sup>179</sup> Living ethically is not a choice, reserved for the pastor, or something that only highly religious people are called to. Everyone is called to holiness and living ethically.

Wesley affirmed many types of grace, but he never affirmed cheap grace. Wesley had little patience for people claiming to have experienced God's justifying grace but still

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<sup>179</sup> Maddox, p. 209.

allowed sin to rule their lives. God's grace helps us to remove all sin from our lives. For Wesley one is either dead in sin or alive in Christ. Humanity is either serving God wholeheartedly or enslaved by sin and deception. Many of the congregations in the United States today are filled with people who only want cheap grace. They believe that they can enjoy the free benefits of God's grace without having the responsibility of it. Luke warm Christians do not want to give up their lifestyles, because that would incur hardships. By compartmentalizing their lives they are in effect affirming a laissez faire approach. They believe that they can allow sin in some areas of their lives while looking clean in other areas. These people are not serving God with everything therefore they are still slaves to sin. We are called to be pure in all areas of our lives. The justifying grace helps us understand the way God intended for us to live, which is total restoration. Total restoration is for all people not just ourselves.

In her book *Liberating Tradition*, Dr. Kristina LaCelle-Peterson talks about the image of God. She highlights the fact that all humans are created in the image of God, but when people deny that fact it can lead to dehumanization. "If we believe that someone else is made in the image of God, we might have to engage with that person as our equal, treating him or her with the same high regard we have for ourselves."<sup>180</sup> I earnestly believe that for one person to think they have the power to own another they have to completely strip them of their image. This disregard for the equality of humans defies God and Christianity. We should be appalled by it, but it is also a challenge to us. Rather than viewing 27 million as a statistic or as people far away from us, we need to think about 27 million people equally created in God's image and equally loved by God. We

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<sup>180</sup> LaCelle-Peterson, Kristina. *Liberating tradition: women's identity and vocation in Christian perspective*. Chapter 1 "Made in God's Image."

should love them just as God does, and that means doing everything we can until they are set free.<sup>181</sup>

As Wesleyans, Christians, and most importantly humans, we should care about human trafficking. There is a lot of work that needs to be done in this area. With facts like 1/3 of all rescued trafficked victims in America are rescued because an average citizen spoke up, we should be encouraged to do our part. The Wesleyan approach to social ethics shows that we are all responsible for our neighbors. We have the power to change lives; all it takes is the courage to speak up. Ethics and morality are not defined by the world's society but by the kingdom of God. Society says that it is acceptable to endorse companies regardless of their ethics. This laissez faire approach has taught Americans not to ask questions. Ignorance is bliss. As citizens of the Kingdom, we are called to live by and promote these ethics. We cannot excuse ourselves based on how the world lives. Living counter culturally takes effort and work.

The limited amount of beds dedicated to restoration says something about the American culture. It says that we are not ready to admit that this is a serious problem within our own borders despite what all the evidence says. In order to truly make a difference in the lives of a trafficked person, we need to be ready to holistically care for them. We need to provide food, shelter, education, and any other basic necessity until they are healed and no longer vulnerable. I hope that every trafficked victim gets rescued, but most rescued victims are not ready to immediately integrate back into society after being freed.

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<sup>181</sup> LaCelle-Peterson, "Made in God's Image."

I have already discussed how capitalism and the desire for a larger profit margin created a need to mass produce products cheaply. Along with the desire for money this model of business opened the way for people to enslave others for their personal gain. I would like to be able to write that in all of this the church and its members have not allowed or perpetuated human trafficking. I would like to be able to point to my own Wesleyan Tradition and say how and what we are doing, unfortunately that is hard to do. The reality is that while I hope that all Christians, and people for that matter, would say that human trafficking is wrong, I fear that most are unwilling to do much about it. We might sign a petition or listen to a sermon about it, but most people are not willing to get their hands dirty. Most people are not willing to ask the hard questions when they see something off. Most people are not willing to take a financial hit to support ethical companies. Most people are not willing to actively take a stand against a form of slavery that has enslaved more people than any other type throughout the history of the human race. For all those reasons, and many more, most people's hands are dirty and they are not willing to clean them.

I am no expert in human trafficking, global politics, or economics, but I know that God's heart and voice is with these people, and so should the church's. We need to prepare ourselves for helping to restore people, preventing others from being trafficked, and punishing those who break the law. Human trafficking cannot be solved overnight. Some concrete ways to make a difference are being aware of what some of the signs of human trafficking are, police need to be equipped to handle trafficking cases, and more laws need to be put in place on the national and global level. We cannot expect others to



solve this complex issue without help and support. Slavery has existed for too long. It is time the church takes another stand against its latest form.

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