Measuring "a hair's breadth": determining John Wesley's closeness to Calvinism by a comparison to Jonathan Edwards

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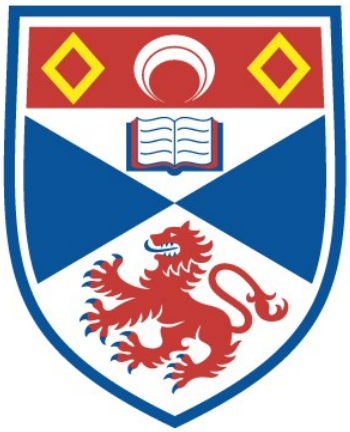

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Abstract

John Wesley is recognized as one of the most powerful voices of the 18th century. His work sparked a revival which spread around the world, becoming the basis for multiple Christian denominations which are still present today. He was famously fond of Arminian theology, though he did admit that he believed the truth of the gospel to be so close to Calvinism as to be only a "hair's breadth away." This particular turn of phrase is one which is often cited by Wesleyan scholars and then immediately forgotten as they go on to emphasize the more Arminian elements of his theology. I argue in this thesis that Wesley's theological super-system was far more Reformed Orthodox in nature than is typically thought. This is shown by comparing Wesley to his contemporary across the sea, Jonathan Edwards, particularly along the topics of theological anthropology and federal theology.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

John Wesley is recognized as one of the most significant theological forces of the 18th century. His work sparked a revival in England and birthed multiple Christian denominations, either directly or indirectly. Yet, as has happened to many people of influence, his true beliefs have become obscured by those who have followed him, and many today are confused about what it actually meant to be a follower of John Wesley. It is widely known that Wesley was a sort of Arminian, but what sort exactly? Was he a disciple of the Reformers, the Catholics, the Anglicans, or the Dissenters, or was he something else entirely?

Wesley's words at the 1745 Methodist Conference in Bristol is one of his most cited phrases. He writes that his convictions come "to the very edge of Calvinism," them being not more "than a hair's breadth away."[1] This is a telling passage, for when one looks closely at his works it does become apparent that Wesley had been significantly influenced by the work of John Calvin and his theological descendants. The one doctrine he could not abide, though, was predestination. In his controversial sermon, "Free Grace," Wesley says confidently that "The grace or love of God, whence cometh our salvation, is free in all, and free for all."[2] Continuing throughout the rest of his career, it is obvious from Wesley's works that he found the doctrine of predestination, especially double-predestination, to be abhorrent. The question remains, though, where exactly Wesley theologically stood.

The aim of this thesis is to better articulate John Wesley's unique Arminian position by comparing him to his contemporary across the sea, Jonathan Edwards. In this way it will be shown that while Wesley insisted on a (somewhat) Arminian notion of free grace, his theological system was more Reformed Orthodox in nature than is typically thought, though adapted in such a way as to be compatible with Arminian notions of free will.

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[1] Wesley, "Minutes of Some Later Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesleys and Others,", *The Works of John Wesley,* Jackson Edition, vol. 8, (London: Wesleyan Methodist, 1872), 284-285.

[2] Wesley, Sermon 110, "Free Grace," *The Works of John Wesley,* Bicentennial Edition, vol. 3, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 544, hereafter WW.

Biographical Survey

John Wesley was only a few months older than Jonathan Edwards, and though the two of them never met, their biographies have some striking similarities. Both Wesley and Edwards were from ministerial families; both Wesley and Edwards studied for the ministry and eventually became ministers; both men even spent time as missionaries to the Native Americans. The most striking similarity between them, however, is that both Wesley and Edwards presided over revivals which sought to renew both a love for God and a vigorous Christian ethic. Edwards's revival was relatively short-lived, though its effects reached far and wide, its impact still felt to this day. Similarly, Wesley's revival had such an impact that the Methodist movement that came out of it remains in prominence.

Another fascinating point of intersection between Wesley and Edwards is their mutual friendship with George Whitfield, another revivalist preacher who was effective both in Britain as well as in New England. Whitfield was a member of Wesley's "Holy Club" at Oxford, and he was one of the influences that led Wesley to take up the evangelist lifestyle as well. Furthermore, when Whitfield traveled to New England to preach the gospel there, he spent some time visiting with Jonathan Edwards in Northampton, stoking the flames of revival there which had recently started to lose heat. Therefore, not only were Wesley and Edwards both friends with Whitfield, but both of men also owed a debt of gratitude to Whitfield for his assistance in their respective ministries.

Yet it seems that Wesley's friendship with Whitfield was not built to last. Whitfield was a devout adherent of predestination theology, something which Wesley was not willing to tolerate. Following some years of tension, Wesley ultimately severed his ties with the predestinarians in 1741 and firmly positioned the Methodist movement against the doctrine.

This episode highlights the point of disagreement between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Edwards, for Edwards likewise strongly supported predestinarian doctrine. Edwards regularly

wrote against Arminian theology in an attempt to show that it was without merit, and Wesley did the same against predestination. Both men were vigorous in their polemics and sermons and neither was willing to surrender any ground. Perhaps it was their focus on this one issue that makes it seems as though there was a great doctrinal chasm between these two. But when one considers the broader scope of their lives, this chasm shrinks while other doctrinal bridges appear. It is the aim of this thesis to emphasize some of those bridges.

Literary Review

This study naturally stands on the shoulders of others that have gone before. There is, however, a lacuna in the study of John Wesley as it regards his proximity to Reformed and Calvinist positions, especially those of a Puritan persuasion. Though there have been other studies of Wesley's which have sought to articulate Wesley's unique Arminianism,[3] those which have compared his theology to that of Jonathan Edwards are sparse and not necessarily written with the express purpose of differentiating Wesley's position. Naturally, there is much work still to be done, but there are some works which must be mentioned, without which the present study would not have been possible.

Randy Maddox is one of the most influential Wesley scholars since Albert Outler, and his book *Responsible Grace: John Wesley Practical Theology*[4] is a valuable monograph for Wesleyan studies. He argues that responsibility is central to Wesley's Arminian framework; God's grace is the primary force of creation, but mankind must respond to that grace in order for that salvation to be realized. Yet this should not be confused as Pelagianism or Semi-Pelagianism in Wesley since, according to Maddox, it is only by God's prevenient grace that mankind is even able to respond to this grace. In Wesley's eyes the fallen man is entirely

[3] Most notably Herbert Boyd McGonigle's *Sufficient Saving Grace: John Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism,* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2001).

[4] Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology,* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994).

incapable of effecting his own salvation. In the words of Maddox, "While not always using the specific term, [Wesley] repeatedly affirmed the point that Inbeing Sin's corruption pervades every human faculty and power, leaving us utterly unable to save ourselves. Fortunately, however, God the Great Physician can heal our diseased nature."[5] According to Maddox, that nature has already been healed for all people, at least to a minimal degree, as a result of God's prevenient grace. Thus, mankind was only ever totally depraved in theory, but since God's prevenient grace has been given to all the totality of that depravity is no longer an effective reality. "The key point, of course, is that our response is made possible by grace, not something that we accomplish with our inherent (dis)abilities."[6]

Maddox's work is particularly valuable for this study because it emphasizes the dialogical nature of God's grace toward humanity for Wesley. God has graciously reached out to fallen humanity in order to enable his creation to respond to that grace appropriately, whether that be faith, hope, or love. And with each response, Maddox also shows that God's grace increases all the more, each increase in grace requiring further response. This expanding nature of God's grace is a valuable distinctive in Wesley, providing a helpful point of contrast from Edwards.

In his book *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace,*[7] Kenneth Collins provides a flowing survey of Wesley's theological framework by following his *ordo salutis*. Collins's aim is to defend Wesley's status as a theologian of the first rank, beginning with a begrudging recall to Outler's description of Wesley as a "folk theologian." Collins's thesis is that while Wesley was not particularly systematic, his theology was still robust and consistent, even if it did experience some development over the course of Wesley's life.

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[5] Maddox, 82.
[6] Ibid., 90.
[7] Kenneth Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace,* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007).

Collins begins with the Trinity and then works his way towards humanity, thereby emphasizing the centricity of the divine in Wesley's thought. Collins follows Wynkoop by emphasizing the love of God in all of Wesley's thought. In this way Collins is seeking to show a complex tension in Wesley's thought between love and holiness, because "holiness creates distance" while "love seeks communion."[8]

Collins holds this tension between love and holiness as God's essential nature throughout this text. He traces the stages of God's grace in Wesley's theology, from prevenient grace to saving grace to sanctifying and glorifying grace. Ultimately the Wesley's tension between holiness and love is resolved as God glorifies his people to full holiness characterized by love.

Collins's treatment of Wesley's theology is extremely thorough and his emphasis on holy love in Wesley's work is a necessary lens for understanding Wesley's theology. However, using the structure of the Wesleyan *ordo salutis,* which is something that Wesley never fully articulated in a succinct way, seems to show Collins as emphasizing different dispensations of God's grace in the Christian experience, as though one first receives prevenient grace and then at later stage receives saving grace. Yet an examination of the whole of Wesley's work alongside Maddox's *Responsible Grace* indicates a higher degree of fluidity in the experience of God's grace, and that the different stages of God's grace are not separate dispensations of grace but the same grace experienced in different ways. This fluidity will be considered more closely in this thesis.

One book which has recently sought to show Wesley's ties to the Reformed tradition is Stanley Rodes's *From Faith to Faith: John Wesley's Covenant Theology and the Way of Salvation*.[9] In this work Rodes emphasizes the role of federalist theology in Wesley's work

[8] Ibid., 21.

[9] Stanley Rodes, *From Faith to Faith: John Wesley's Covenant Theology and the Way of Salvation,* Distinguished Dissertations in Christian Theology 8, (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013).

while likewise showing the ways in which Wesley adapted the doctrine to his particular theological perspective. According to Rodes, Wesley considered there to be a clear distinction between the two covenantal dispensations within the Old Testament, arguing that the covenant of works was only in effect for prelapsarian Adam. As soon as Adam fell, says Rodes, God established a new covenant between man and himself for the sake of redeeming the fallen.

An essential distinction in Wesley's federalism is seen in his use of the servant/son metaphor, something which Rodes notes is of particular importance in Wesley's later sermons. Rodes sees this metaphor used in two particular ways. There is the widely recognized use of the metaphor in Wesley's sermon "The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption" in which Wesley uses this metaphor to distinguish those who are "not far from the kingdom of heaven" and those who are actually "sons of God."[10] But Rodes highlights another use of the servant/son metaphor in Wesley's works, one which marks the different dispensations of the covenant of grace. The first is the earlier Mosaic dispensation, characterized by servant's faith, which is a faith that obeys out of fear rather than love. The second is the later Gospel dispensation which is characterized by son's faith, a faith of love and trust rather than fear.

Rodes's work in detailing the federal theology of John Wesley is exceptional, showing how Wesley engaged with and adapted the theological standards of his time in order to develop his unique Arminian theology. Rodes's study also provides a helpful point of connection between Wesley and his Reformed peers and contemporaries, especially Jonathan Edwards. However, there is an oversight on Rodes's part regarding the nature of covenant theology in the 18th century. Rodes makes much of Wesley's Puritan influences, saying that "their predestinarian views notwithstanding, [Wesley] deeply appreciated Puritan practical divinity as an invaluable ally sin his effort to bring relief from the scourge of

[10] Wesley, Sermon 9, "The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption," WW1:249-250.

antinomianism."[11] Yet Rodes fails to engage with Puritan federalist doctrine, entirely omitting any treatment of the covenant of salvation, something for which the Puritans were known. While it is true that Wesley likewise seems to omit the facet from his covenant theology, he at the very least would have been aware of it. Rodes's decision not to engage with why Wesley chose not to employ this doctrine therefore indicates a gap in his thesis.

There have, of course, been other studies which have sought to compare Wesley and Edwards specifically, some being more helpful than others. One of the more helpful studies has been Richard B. Steele's 1994 book *"Gracious Affection" and "True Virtue" in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley*.[12] Here Steele sets out to provide a comparative analysis of the moral philosophies of his two subjects. Beginning with the historical setting of both authors, Steele first seeks to provide context for his arguments. The bulk of the first chapter is dedicated to his analysis of three basic philosophical theological positions of the time—intellectualism, voluntarism, and sentimentalism, voluntarism being a sort of middle ground between the other two. Locating both Edwards and Wesley within the voluntarist position, Steele then goes on to provide a comparative analysis of the two, emphasizing the ways in which Wesley and Edwards are not all that different, arguing that they both occupied relatively moderate ground within their respective traditions.[13] Because of this perceived similarity, Steele's tactic of comparison is first to evaluate Wesley's five abridgments of works written by Edwards, and secondly to evaluate their polemical responses to three contemporary works.

Steele's arguments are well-stated, and some are even cutting-edge, but his methodology proves to be problematic. Because of his choice to only evaluate the two men through certain similar writings rather than to take a more systematic approach, most of

[11] Rodes, *From Faith to Faith,* 98.
[12] Richard B. Steele, *"Gracious Affection" and "True Virtue" in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley,* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1994).
[13] Steele's argument that Edwards maintained a moderate ground is a contentious judgment.

Steele's arguments lack nuance and sufficient support. Throughout his monograph Steele is prone to draw conclusions about the two based on isolated statements within their respective writings while failing to support those conclusions with supporting citations from other works within either men's corpuses, thus giving a tinge of confirmation bias to many of Steele's findings. Still, Steele's work proves valuable for this study in its conclusion that Wesley and Edwards are actually quite similar in numerous ways, a conclusion which this thesis will examine.

Methodology

This thesis will begin with a focused look at a particular controversial piece written by John Taylor, a contemporary of Wesley and Edwards, on the subject of original sin, looking specifically at Taylor's exegesis of original sin texts and how Wesley and Edwards went about refuting him. Beginning in this way has two advantages. First, doing so sets the stage with a contemporary debate for both theologians, one which features a theological topic that naturally leads to a systematic evaluation of Wesley's and Edwards's larger theological systems, especially their theological anthropologies. Second, beginning in this way also provides an early insight into the theological priorities of both theologians. Chapter Two will enter into a more focused evaluation of Wesley and Edwards themselves. Beginning with an examination of Wesley's and Edwards's arguments for Adam's original righteousness, this chapter will look specifically at what these men believed regarding the image of God in Adam. Chapter Three will then offer a discussion of the Fall, asking how Adam could have possibly fallen from grace if he had been created originally righteous as well as what sort of effect the Fall had on Adam and his posterity. Finally, Chapter Four will engage with Wesley's and Edwards's doctrines of justification and regeneration.

Examining Wesley and Edwards in this way allows for careful evaluation of the

similarities and differences between them. Though they might at first to be quite different, recent scholarship has indeed begun to show where Wesley's theology is not as far from the Reformed tradition as many have supposed, calling into question the true nature of Wesley's theology. By highlighting and examining those similarities between Wesley and Edwards this study will provide further clarity regarding Wesley's true position.

Chapter 1: An Occasion for Debate: John Taylor's Rejection of Original Sin

In 1740 John Taylor published a treatise titled *The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination.*[14] This work called into question the Calvinist doctrine of original sin as proclaimed in the Westminster Confession. The influence of this piece was significant, reaching the ears of ministers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Dr. Taylor was not, however, greeted with unanimous applause. There were more than a few theologians and ministers who published rebuttals, among them Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley, whose responses, alongside Taylor's original, will here be analyzed. The goal of this chapter is to begin to show how Wesley navigated a doctrinal middle way between Calvinist doctrines and those of many English dissenters, articulating his unique position known today as Wesleyan Arminianism. By presenting both Edwards's and Wesley's rebuttals alongside Dr. Taylor's treatise, this chapter will showcase some subtle indicators of Wesley's unique Arminian position. However, before this work can begin, it will be helpful to provide a brief biography of Dr. Taylor.

John Taylor was born at Scotforth in Lancaster in 1694. Though his father was an Anglican, his mother did not conform to the church's official teaching. Such a person was known as a 'Dissenter' or a 'Non-conformist,' a position which John Taylor would himself adopt.[15] It was under his mother's influence that Taylor began studies for ministry at Thomas Dixon's dissenting academy at Whitehaven, a coastal town in the northwest of England in what is now Cumbria. Dixon's academy was established in Whitehaven in 1708 and was soon known to be the leading dissenting academy in the north of England. The students here were taught Latin, Hebrew, and Greek, as well as works by contemporary thinkers such as

[14] John Taylor, *The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination,* 3rd ed, (Belfast: J. Magee, 1746).

[15] Among the dissenters there are four major groups: Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Quakers. The Presbyterians would come to be known as the most theologically liberal of the dissenters, probably due to their insistence that their ministers be well educated. John Taylor was a Presbyterian.

Isaac Newton and John Locke. In his brief description of Thomas Dixon's academy, David Wykes writes of how the notes of one student there reveal a "striking" emphasis on the value of reason in theological work.[16] Dixon's academy was moved to Bolton, a town just northwest of Manchester, in 1723 when Dixon was made minister there.

Taylor began study at Dixon's academy in 1709, just one year after the school was established. During his time there he wrote a Hebrew grammar, his first step towards prominence in that field (a prominence which would eventually lead to the bestowal an honorary doctorate by the University of Glasgow). After finishing his time at Whitehaven Taylor took on further studies at Findern Academy, four miles south-west of Derby. Findern was at the time led by Thomas Hill, a noted classicist. David Wykes notes that Hill was also interested in contemporary philosophy and music and incorporated these fields into his instruction.[17] Thus one can safely say that Taylor's theological education was exceptionally thorough.

At the conclusion of his studies, Taylor took on a parish in Kirkstead in Lincolnshire in 1716. Alan P. F. Sell reports that Taylor's time in Kirkstead was difficult, getting by on £33 a year, a sum equivalent to just under £6,500 today.[18] Still he remained there for 17 years until he took a new post in Norwich in 1733 where he worked alongside Peter Finch, who, like Taylor, was a Presbyterian minister. There he produced the piece here under consideration, written in 1735 and then first published in 1740.[19]

This chapter will only engage with the first chapter of Taylor's larger piece, focusing

[16] David L. Wykes, "The Contribution of the Dissenting Academy to the Emergence of Rational Dissent" in *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain,* edited by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 120.

[17] Wykes, 2004 "Hill, Thomas (d. 1720), Presbyterian minister and tutor." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 7 Jan. 2019. https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13307

[18] Alan P. F. Sell, 2004 "Taylor, John (1694–1761), Presbyterian minister and tutor," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.*

[19] Taylor would go on to publish two more editions of this piece, both of them including a supplement with counters to arguments brought against him. Wesley was working from Taylor's 2nd edition (1741) while Edwards was working from Taylor's 3rd edition (1746). Because there are no significant differences between the two, citations of Taylor's work will come from the 3rd edition unless otherwise noted.

on Taylor's opening exegetical work, especially his exegesis of Romans 5:12-19. For the sake of context, however, it will begin with an analysis of Taylor's exegesis of three other passages, as well as the rebuttals given by Wesley and Edwards, all of which set the stage for our discussion of original sin in Romans 5.

Genesis 2:17: The Threatening

This first passage, Genesis 2:17, is consequential. Here is the very first mention of punishment for sin in all of scripture. The passage reads, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."[20] Taylor identifies this passage as "the threatening" in which God promises the punishment of death for any who eat the forbidden fruit. He observes that the death promised is not specified as spiritual and therefore should not be assumed as such. To this point, Wesley counters that the greater error would be to assume that mankind only has a physical existence. Given that mankind was created in the image of God, Wesley argues that God endowed mankind with spiritual life as well as physical life.

Edwards's response is a bit stronger, arguing that the threatening here must be of eternal damnation. He makes this point by using Taylor's argument against him. Taylor had argued that all that is said here is that the death threatened can only be the antithesis of the life Adam had. Edwards contends that since Adam would have enjoyed an eternal life should he have remained obedient, the death threatened therefore would need to be eternal as well. Such a death would need to be maintained through eternal damnation and eternal conscious torment.

Taylor also observes that there is no actual mention of Adam's posterity in this passage, again claiming that it would be inappropriate to assume as much. Once again,

[20] Genesis 2:17, KJV. All scripture references are KJV unless otherwise indicated.

Wesley counters by flipping the argument, stating that Taylor likewise cannot prove that the threatening does not include Adam's posterity.

Genesis 3:7-24: Consequences

Taylor's treatment of the first passage is quite short, and he quickly moves on to Genesis 3:7-24, where Adam and Eve experience the consequences for their transgression. Here Taylor provides a survey of the consequences suffered as a result of the trespass. These he divided into three categories: pre-judgement, judicial, and post-judgment consequences. The pre-judgment consequences are seen primarily in verse seven, which says that "the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked."[21] Taylor claims that their shame in their nakedness also connotes guilt. According to Taylor, the Bible sometimes uses nakedness as a symbol for guilt, appealing to Genesis 32:25 (where the Israelites were said have been found by Moses naked in their shame after they created the golden calf), to defend this position.

Taylor pauses here to note the fact that the offenses committed have been personal, committed only by Adam and Eve and no one else, a fact which is obvious since "there was not a Man or Woman in the World besides themselves."[22] This being the case, Taylor makes the argument that it would be unjust for anyone besides these two to be punished for their trespass. This is a line of argumentation to which Taylor will frequently return.

Returning to his exposition, Taylor argues that the judicial consequences can be seen in verses fourteen through nineteen, noting that they are specific to each individual. The consequence for the serpent was to be cursed with enmity between himself and the posterity of Eve, specifically Jesus Christ. Though Jesus would experience suffering (a bruised heel), he would ultimately defeat the serpent (crushing his head). Eve's punishment (Taylor

[21] Genesis 3:7.
[22] Taylor, 13.

specifically notes that it is only the serpent who receives a 'curse') was a more painful process of childbearing as well as greater subjugation to her husband.[23] And finally, Adam's punishment was that the earth would now require toil, and that he must toil with it for the remainder of his life.

Taylor draws the post-judgement consequences from verses twenty through twenty-four. These were that the woman was now called Eve (possibly an exclamation of Adam's joy at having survived this ordeal), a need to be clothed, and their expulsion from the garden and the Tree of Life.[24]

Taylor concludes his consideration with three brief observations. First, he observes that while Adam and Eve experienced judgment for their transgression, it was only the serpent and ground that were "cursed." Taylor argues that while Adam and Eve have experienced consequences for sin, a loss of their cognitive abilities and (presumably) their ability to abstain from sin (which Taylor considers to be the nature of such a curse) is not one of them. According to Taylor:

> The Spirit of God, it is observable, wholly abstains from the Use of that Word, even with regard to their outward Condition; and much more with regard to their Souls. Not one Word of a Curse upon their Souls, upon the Powers of their Minds, their Understanding and Reason. Not one Word of darkening or weakening their rational Powers; not one Word clogging those with any additional difficulties. This is undeniable.[25]

Taylor secondly observes that the death which Adam and Eve will eventually experience is merely a physical death, not a spiritual death. Citing verse 19, the sentence to 'return unto the ground' is a reference to man's creation, and that the death toward which they march is an undoing of that creation.

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[23] It was also during this last section that Taylor gave his glancing attention to 1 Timothy 2:14. According to Taylor, this passage only speaks of the Fall in order to provide "a Reason why the Woman ought *not to teach,* or *usurp Authority over the Man, but to be in Silence.*" (Taylor, 17).

[24] Regarding the Tree of Life, Taylor sees possible interpretations of its purpose. Either 1) it served as God's pledge of immortality, or 2) it was the means by which they held at bay the forces of death and decay. According to Taylor, part of the promise of the resurrection would be that the benefits of the Tree, whatever they might be, will be restored.

[25] Taylor, 19.

Thirdly, Taylor observes that while Adam's posterity experience the same afflictions and mortality as they did, and that this is experienced on account of their transgression, this is not a punishment since the guilt of the sin belongs only to Adam and Eve. "Punishment, in its true Nature, always connotes, or includes Guilt; but guilty of their Sin we neither are, nor . . . possibly could be. We may suffer by their Sin, and actually do suffer by it; but we are not punished for their Sin, because we are not guilty of it."[26] According to Taylor, these sufferings in fact are now a great benefit, "as they are a great Advantage to our Virtue, by mortifying our Lusts, and leading us to the Fear and Obedience of God, and the Desires of a better World."[27]

Genesis 3:7-24: Edwards's Objections

For Edwards, the most important question here is that of Adam's posterity, whether they would be included in the consequences of Adam's sin. Taylor had tried to make the case that they are not, with the exception of the fact that all people die (although Taylor also tried to reframe that death as benefit rather than punishment). Edwards argues that they were indeed included in those consequences, employing three counterpoints to do so.

He first appeals to the fact that humanity does experience death, which Adam had been threatened with in the event of his disobedience. Since we share in some of the consequences of Adam's trespass (suffering and death), we must have been included in the threatening. Therefore, Edwards says, since we had been included in the threatening, we now actually share in all the consequences of Adam's sin, not just a selection.

Edwards then appeals to the curse which God had put upon the ground. Taylor had tried to argue that only the ground was cursed, not humanity. Edwards counters that the ground is not sentient and has no comprehension of a curse, nor is its existence inhibited by

[26] Ibid., 20-21.
[27] Ibid., 21.

such a curse. (Whether or not the ground has weeds is no difference to the ground itself) Rather, a curse on the ground is actually a curse against humanity since we are the ones that must now contend with its new challenges. And since such a curse is on-going, it is a curse for Adam's posterity as well as Adam himself.

Finally, Edwards points to Adam's decision to give his wife the name 'Eve' after this whole affair. 'Eve' means 'life,' and Edwards argued this must indicate the promise of redemption that was yet to come. This name clearly references Eve's status as the mother of humanity, but Adam did not give her this name until after they had been cursed, "having now a new awful prospect of her being the mother of nothing but a dying race."[28] On account of this, Edwards offers the following explanation:

> Doubtless Adam took notice of something distinguishing concerning her, that occasioned his giving her this new name. And I think, it is exceeding natural to suppose, that as Adam had given her her first name from the manner of her creation, so he gave her her new name from redemption, and as it were new creation, through a Redeemer, of her seed.[29]

Adam had concluded that there would be a redemption for his posterity, and that they would not go on suffering death forever. The fact that Adam would come to this conclusion suggests that the fortunes of his posterity would have been in jeopardy if it weren't for this redemption. From this Edward concludes from this that their posterity must have been included in the threatening. He writes,

> And if multitudes of Eve's posterity are saved, from either spiritual or temporal death, by a Redeemer, of her seed, how is that any disappointment of Satan's design, in tempting our first parents? How came he to have any such thing in view, as the death of Adam's and Eve's posterity, by tempting them to sin, or any expectation that their death would be the consequence, unless he knew that they were included in the threatening?[30]

From these three arguments Edwards concludes that Adam's posterity must have been

[28] Jonathan Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 3, Original Sin*, ed. Clyde A. Holbrook, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), 256, hereafter WJE3.
[29] WJE3:256.
[30] Ibid., 257.

included in the threatening and consequences of Adam's sin, and that Adam and Eve were fully aware of this fact.

Genesis 3:7-24: Wesley's Objections

Wesley disagrees with Taylor's claim that nakedness in scripture ought to be taken as a symbol of guilt. He cites numerous passages from both Testaments where those who are naked are indeed ashamed (either because of their nakedness itself or for some other misdeed) even though they are not actually guilty of anything. Therefore, while it may be true that those who are shamefully naked might be guilty of something, it does not follow that those who are naked are necessarily guilty.

Wesley then turns his attention to Taylor's aside regarding whether or not it would be just for God to punish Adam and Eve's posterity for their sins. Wesley argues that it is clear that their posterity do indeed suffer the punishment (since everyone experiences suffering and death), and therefore it must be just. He supports this argument by quoting David Jennings, who had identified multiple places in scripture where God is shown to punish the posterity of the original offender. Since God does this elsewhere, it is assumed that this is indeed a just thing to do, provided that God is understood to always act justly. Therefore, one can conclude that it would not be an act of injustice for God to punish Adam's posterity for his sins.

Within Wesley's citation of Jennings is an interesting proof that Adam's posterity is in some way guilty of Adam's sin, though hinged on what could be a faulty premise. Wesley paraphrases Jennings thusly:

> I would ask, What is *guilt*, but an obligation to suffer punishment for sin? Now since we suffer the same penal evil which God threatened to and inflicted on Adam for his sin, and since it is allowed we suffer this for Adam's sin, and that by the sentence of God appointing all men to die because Adam sinned, is not the consequence evident? Therefore we are all some way guilty of Adam's sin.[31]

[31] David Jennings, *A Vindication of the Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin,* (London: for R. Hett, 1740), 7-8, 12-13, abridged and slightly paraphrased, in John Wesley, *The Doctrine of Original sin, According to Reason, Scripture, and Experience,* in WW12:218.

According to Jennings (paraphrased by Wesley), one can know that he is guilty of Adam's sin because he is punished for Adam's sin. This is because Jennings defines guilt as "an obligation to suffer punishment for sin." Therefore, since one does suffer the punishment for Adam's sin, and it is affirmed that he suffers this punishment on account of Adam's sin, and not someone else's, then he must be guilty. Jennings's argument can logically be laid out in the following way:

A. Guilt is obligation to suffer penalty for sin.[32]
B. A specific punishment has been threatened for a specific sin (S).
C. (S) has been committed by my forefather.
D. I am now experiencing a punishment consistent with (B).
E. It is established that (D) because (C).

Therefore

F. Under the premise of (A), I am somehow guilty of (C).

The most important detail in this construction is the definition of guilt. For Jennings (and Wesley by extension) there is a clear distinction between the guilty party and the offending party. According to this line of reasoning, Adam's posterity is guilty because they must pay the penalty, not the other way around. Guilt is not proved so much as it is observed. For Wesley, the much greater problem is the corruption of humanity rather than the guilt of humanity, a point to which this chapter will return.

Wesley's objections to the judicial consequences of Adam's sin are brief and are only concerned with the technicalities of Taylor's wording. The bulk of his final objections are aimed at the first two of Taylor's three closing observations, apparently content not to engage with Taylor's final observation since it has already been challenged by Jennings's argument for the justice in punishing Adam's posterity. To the first observation (that no curse is pronounced, and that this is out of step with God's character), Wesley simply disagrees. He cites Deuteronomy 27:26 as proof that those who disobey God's law will indeed be cursed.

[32] Jennings here seems to conflate *reatus culpae* (liability of guilt) and *reatus poenae* (liability of punishment), taking guilt as the obligation to suffer a penalty for sin rather than a moral quality of someone who has sinned.

According to this logic, to say that God wouldn't do that is therefore out of step with Scripture. To the second observation (that the death promised is only physical), Wesley argues that spiritual death is implied in the dissolution of the body. Drawing on his earlier argument from Genesis 2:17, Wesley asserts that death, like life, has both a physical and a spiritual dimension.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22

Having now finished with the Old Testament (Taylor claims that the only mention of original sin in the Old Testament is in Genesis 2 and 3), he turns his gaze to 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, which reads, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." In his treatment of this passage Taylor makes three brief observations. First, he observes that Paul is here speaking only of the bodily resurrection that is yet to come, and that Christ's resurrection foreshadows this. Second, he observes that all mortality comes from Adam while third, that Christ's resurrection is likewise for all mankind. No one is made alive again until this resurrection, and no one is made alive again apart from this resurrection. As Taylor puts it, "From this Place we cannot conclude, that any other Evil or Death came upon Mankind in Consequence of Adam's first Transgression, besides that Death from which Mankind shall be delivered of the Resurrection; whatever that Death be."[33]

Wesley's arguments against Taylor's objections are just as brief. To the first observation, Wesley counters that Paul speaks of the resurrection in such a way as to indicate something spiritual and unworldly. Wesley follows this by asserting that Paul's discourse in 1 Corinthians 15 is aimed at Christians, not the general public, and therefore both the death and life spoken of in this passage can only be known to be that which is for believers. "It is of

[33] Taylor, 25.

[believers] only that he here asserts their 'death came by' the first, their 'resurrection by' the second Adam; or that 'in Adam they all died', 'in Christ, they all are made alive.'"[34] According to Wesley, this passage says nothing about death and resurrection for the rest of humanity.

Edwards chose not to contend with Taylor's exegesis of 1 Corinthians 15 in isolation, but rather to save his arguments for his refutations of Taylor's exegesis of Romans 5:12-19, the passage to which Taylor gave the lion's share of his consideration. Therefore, examination of his response is withheld until later in this chapter.

Romans 5:12-19

Discussion advances now to Romans 5:12-19, Taylor's primary focus. Building on his exegesis of the previous three passages, Taylor will here make the case that this passage is not about original sin. His argument is made up of six consecutive observations which will be evaluated alongside the rebuttals provided Wesley and Edwards. Romans 5:12-19 reads as follows:

> **12** Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:
> **13** (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.
> **14** Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.
> **15** But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.
> **16** And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.
> **17** For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)
> **18** Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.
> **19** For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of

[34] Wesley, *Original Sin,* WW12:221.

one shall many be made righteous.[35]

Before delving into Taylor's treatment of this passage, it would first be helpful to consider another related doctrine which relies on this passage. Romans 5:12-19 is not only an important passage for the defense of original sin as a doctrine, but it is also significant in federal theology, a doctrine which was especially prevalent among Protestant Christians in the 18th century. In this passage Paul speaks of Christ as the "second Adam," setting up a dichotomy between Adam and Christ and suggesting that Christ came in order to accomplish a work which Adam could not. This work, according to federal theology, is the fulfillment of the covenant made between God and mankind. Within this doctrine there are three covenants: the covenant of works, the covenant of redemption, and the covenant of grace.

The covenant of works is that covenant between God and Adam where God said to his creature, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."[36] The breaking of this covenant bore the consequence that Adam and all his descendants deserved death, both as a consequence of the law as well as in satisfaction of the covenantal debt owed to their maker. Anselm had argued that a debt such as this could never be repaid, for a transgression against an infinite God bore infinite guilt.[37] Such a debt therefore necessitated divine intervention in the incarnation. In becoming man, Christ fulfilled the new covenant between God and his creation, the covenant of grace. Under this new covenant it is faith, not obedience, which brings about righteousness.

The covenant of grace actually predates the covenant of works as a theological idea. It is generally held that the new covenant of grace was enacted in Genesis 17 when God said to

[35] Romans 5:12-19.
[36] Genesis 2:17.
[37] St. Anselm, "Why God Became Man," in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works,* eds. and trs. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), §I.19-25, 300-315.

Abraham, "thou shalt be a father of many nations."[38] It is by this covenant that the Church receives the benefits of Jesus' obedience in his life and sacrificial death. Two of the earliest proponents of federal theology was Ulrich Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger in the early 16th century. Michael McGiffert writes that one of the most motivating factors for these theologians was the defense of the Old Testament's relevance, devising "a covenantal hermeneutic to link the Old and New Testaments in a sequential sacred history. . . ."[39] As time went on the integrity of this covenantal system became a concern, leading to the development of the covenant of works in order to back up, as it were, the idea that the ministry of Christ was somehow linked to covenantal satisfaction.

The covenant of redemption is that covenant between God and Christ where it is agreed between them what Christ must do in relation to God's creation and what sort of rewards would be bestowed upon Christ upon fulfilling that work, specifically the promise of eternal life for his elect. In the words of Willem van Asselt, "it is a pact between the will of the Father, who designates his Son as the Head and Redeemer of his foreknown people, and the will of the Son, who offers himself in order to procure salvation."[40] The covenant of grace, then, is that covenant between Christ and the elect upon whom Christ confers the benefits of his rewards, conditional upon the faith of those elect.

The covenant of redemption goes back at least to the 16th century where there are references to the doctrine in the works of Jacob Arminius and Caspar Olevianus, but the it was first explicitly articulated in the mid-17th century. In his book *The Covenant of Redemption: Origins, Development, and Reception,* J. V. Fesko identifies a 1638 speech by David Dickson at the General Assembly of the Scottish Kirk as the "first explicit definition

[38] Genesis 17:4.

[39] Michael McGiffert, "Grace and Works: The Rise and Division of Covenant Divinity in Elizabethan Puritanism," *Harvard Theological Review,* 75:4 (1982), 468.

[40] Willem J. van Asselt, *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius,* Tr. Raymond A. Blacketter, (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 229.

and defense" of the covenant of redemption, apparently (according to Fesko) assuming that this doctrine was so ubiquitous within the Reformed camp at the time that he felt no need to justify his description of the covenant of redemption as "our doctrine."[41] While such a statement is certainly worthy of debate, the question of the ubiquity of the doctrine would take this discussion too far afield. The important factor here is that federal theology, anathema to Dr. Taylor's scheme as he sought to refute the doctrine of original sin, was a prominent doctrine in Europe and New England in the mid-18th century.

Observation 1: Physical Death Only

"No Man can deny, or doubt that the Apostle is here speaking of that Death which we all die, when this present Life is extinguished, and the Body returns to the Dust of the Earth."[42] And so Taylor begins with gusto. His first observation is among the most controversial, and the least defended. Stated simply, Taylor argues that the only death experienced as a result of Adam's sin is the physical death which everyone experiences today. To read anything more than that into this passage would be a reckless editorialization. He takes this position as readily observable, presumably because he is building upon the arguments he's already made concerning Genesis 2 and 3 and 1 Corinthians 15. Here in Romans 5 he arrives at such a conclusion by looking to verses 12, 14, 15, and 17, arguing that in all cases Paul was discoursing on the same subject, the physical death mankind suffers on account of Adam's transgression.

Wesley and Edwards both dismiss this claim in the same way: Taylor has failed to prove conclusively that Paul was speaking only of physical death. Obviously neither one would disagree that physical death is in reference here, but they both criticize Taylor's

[41] J. V. Fesko, *The Covenant of Redemption: Origins, Development, and Reception,* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 20-31.

[42] Taylor, 27.

limited interpretation of death. This first observation is exceptionally short, as are Wesley's objections. Edwards's rebuttal, on the other hand, is slightly more thorough, showing how such an interpretation is inconsistent with other New Testament passages as well as with Taylor's own interpretation of Romans 6. Still, both Wesley and Edwards's rebuttals of this point are essentially the same.

Observations 2 and 3: A Sentence of Mortality and a Condemnation to Suffering

Taylor's second and third observations are closely related and will therefore be considered together. His second observation contends that by 'judgment' to 'condemnation' in verses 16 and 18, Paul means that humanity is sentenced with mortality.[43] The basis of this observation are two parallels, one between the 15th and 16th verses and the other between the 17th and 18th. While the 15th verse speaks of death and not justification, both verses 15 and 16 speak of the gift, which in both instances Taylor assumes to be Christ's 'gift of grace.' Understanding that in both cases 'the gift' is the un-doing of something, Taylor considers the 16th verse to be a restatement of the 15th verse, and therefore identifies 'judgment' and 'death' as parallel concepts. Similarly, since both 17th and 18th verses speak of a 'gift,' Taylor again identifies a parallel between the 'judgment to condemnation' in the 18th verse with the 'death' spoken of in the 17th.[44]

His third observation builds on the second, arguing that in the 19th verse 'many were made sinners' by the 'disobediences of one' is better understood as 'many were made subject to death' by the 'disobedience of one.'[45] In support of this interpretation Taylor erects three defenses. He defends this in a similar fashion to that of his second observation, that the

[43] "By *'judgment to condemnation'* or a judicial *act* of *condemnation*, (v.16, 18), it appeareth evidently to me, he means the being adjudged to the fore-mentioned *death*." (Taylor, 27).
[44] Taylor, 28.
[45] Ibid., 30.

internal opposition within the verse mirrors verses 17 and 18.[46] And so, building on the prior observation, Taylor argues that 'to be made a sinner' should be understood as 'to be judged to condemnation,' and therefore to mean 'to be subjected to death'. This equation is slightly more labored than those of his previous observation, having to pass through multiple layers of meaning. His second defense, not quite as strong, references a Hebrew word which sometimes means 'to be a Sinner' and other times means 'to make one a sinner by judicial sentence,' depending on the conjugation.[47] Taylor argues that since Paul would have been aware of this Hebrew word, he could possibly have been intending to express both its meanings.

Taylor's third defense is that Paul could have only meant to say that mankind now suffers the consequences of Adam's sin, adding that it is absurd and illogical that one bear the guilt of the sins of another. "They who are made sinners" says Taylor, "by the Disobedience of another, without their own Knowledge or Consent, surely can be Sinners in no other Sense but as they are Sufferers."[48] Taylor bolsters this by citing various passages wherein 'to be made a sinner' is meant to indicate suffering.[49] Most striking among them is Taylor's appeal to 2 Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin."[50]

Regarding Taylor's second observation, Wesley admits the condemnation that comes by the judgment of God could indeed be death, but since that death has yet to be adequately proven, Taylor's argument is still quite weak. Wesley then goes on to refute Taylor's third observation, noting first that "being 'made sinners' is different from being *judged*, *condemned*, or *punished* as such.'"[51] One is an actual condition, the other a designation. (This

[46] Taylor also invokes the structure of 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 where Paul uses a similar opposition, stating that death came by one man while life came from another.

[47] Taylor references *Rachah* which "signifies 'to be a Sinner,'" but then, when conjugated as *Hiphil,* "signifies 'to 'make one a Sinner' by a judicial Sentence." (Taylor, 31).

[48] Taylor, 34.

[49] These include Lot 'being made a sinner' along with the Sodomites, Abimelech's subjects 'being made sinners' because they were in danger of experiencing suffering, and even the entire nation of Israel itself, which was to be 'made a sinner' on account of Babylon.

[50] 2 Cor. 5:21a.

[51] Wesley, *Original Sin,* WW12:223, emphasis original.

distinction will be dealt with momentarily). Wesley is also entirely unconvinced by Taylor's appeal to Paul's identity as a Jew, arguing that two Greek phrases can't be equated simply because the writer is familiar with a Hebrew word that contains both. As to Taylor's third defense, Wesley notes that in all the cases, including that of Jesus Christ, they were not 'made sufferers' so much as they were made to suffer the consequences of their own sin. In the case of Christ, he wasn't made sin itself, but an offering for that sin.

Edwards chose to rebut these observations as a whole, showing how this system which Taylor has devised is illogical. Edwards's rebuttal is quite sophisticated, but his major point can be quickly summarized: since Taylor is unwilling to say that those who came after Adam should share in his guilt, the judgment that God passes is either arbitrary or it is no judgment at all.

> But, according to his scheme, 'tis a judicial sentence of condemnation passed upon them that are perfectly innocent, and viewed by the judge . . . as having no guilt of sin, or fault at all chargeable upon them, and a judicial proceeding, passing sentence arbitrarily, without any law or rule of right, . . . And not only so, but over and above all this, 'tis a judicial sentence of condemnation to that which is no calamity, nor is considered as such in the sentence: but 'tis a condemnation to a great favor![52]

Likewise, Edwards criticizes Taylor's understanding of 'justification' and 'righteousness' in verses 18 and 19 as correlating to the free gift. Not to say that Edwards disagrees with that correlation, but in Taylor's system they are used "in such a sense, as to suppose 'em to belong to all, and actually be applied to all mankind, good and bad, believers and unbelievers."[53] Edwards calls this a universalism of the sort that even the Arminians would reject.[54]

It is true that many Arminians would disagree with the system Taylor presents, but this does not suggest agreement between Wesley and Edwards. Rather, one can see through their rebuttals that Wesley and Edwards disagree with Taylor's argument on slightly different

[52] WJE3:318.
[53] Ibid., 320.
[54] Ibid., 322. "By the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life,"

grounds. For one, Wesley did affirm a universal offering of God's grace, though not all accept it. As Jason Vickers says, "Wesley denied that the universal or unlimited scope of the atonement meant that all people would be saved. To be sure, it was God's intention to save all . . . [but] people were free to accept or reject the covenant of grace."[55]

Edwards objected primarily to Taylor's argument that Adam's guilt could not be imputed to his posterity. The question of imputation for Edwards is known to be one of the most challenging bits of Edwards's theology and is the cause of division among scholars. Edwards seems to vacillate between federalist imputation (Adam was the representative for all mankind) and Augustinian realism (Adam's posterity were actually present within him and are therefore actually guilty of his sin). In his article "On the Theological Pedigree of Jonathan Edwards's Doctrine of Imputation," Oliver Crisp argues that Edwards seem to go back and forth because he was actually trying to "forge a via media between the two, utilising the notion of a real union in Adam from Augustinianism and the representational aspect of federalism to form a new theory of imputation which, though indebted to the traditional alternatives, is independent of both."[56] Regardless of which position Edwards took, it is clear that, in line with Augustine and Calvin, Edwards considered Adam's posterity to be actually guilty of the sin committed, and therefore to be deserving of punishment.

Wesley's objection, on the other hand, lies primarily with Taylor's exegesis. As was noted earlier, Wesley objected to Taylor's equating 'being a sinner' with 'being condemned as a sinner.' Though Wesley would not deny that Adam's posterity are themselves guilty, this distinction hints at Wesley's understanding of sin as a corrupting agent, passed on to all of Adam's posterity. In his sermon "The New Birth," Wesley seems to adopt a mediate interpretation of the transmission of guilt, a view which emphasizes guilt resulting from a

[55] Jason E. Vickers, "Wesley's Theological Emphases," in *Cambridge Companion to John Wesley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 197.

[56] Oliver Crisp, "On the Theological Pedigree of Jonathan Edwards's Doctrine of Imputation," in *The Scottish Journal of Theology* 56:3, (2003), 308. Edwards's doctrine of imputation will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

corrupted nature. He writes, ". . . every man born into the world now bears the image of the devil, in pride and self-will; the image of the beast, in sensual appetites and desires. This, then is the foundation of the new birth—the entire corruption of our nature."[57] In light of his mediate position it is easy to see why Wesley considered it necessary to differentiate between 'being' a sinner and being 'condemned' as a sinner. 'Being' a sinner suggests something having to do with the nature or condition of something. It speaks of the inner workings of the thing. Being 'condemned' as a sinner is external, having to do with the judgment passed by someone else, presumably someone who has conducted an evaluation and arrived at a conclusion. The latter speaks of guilt while the former speaks of condition. For Wesley, the problem was a corruption which leads to guilt, not the other way around.

Observation 4: The Typology Between Adam and Christ

Taylor's fourth observation had to do with the typology between Adam and Christ. He writes, "It is evident that the Apostle draws a Comparison between Adam and Christ; something that Adam did, and the Consequences of that; and something that Christ did, and the Consequences of that: And this comparison is the main Thing he had in View."[58] Taylor then specifies a comparison beginning in v.12, that the specific consequences of Adam's sin are physical death, and nothing more. He observes a pause in Paul's discourse, beginning in v.13, wherein the Apostle "brings an Argument to prove . . . that Death came upon Mankind, not for their personal Sins, but upon account of Adam's one Transgression."[59] Paul then, according to Taylor, resumes the typology halfway through v.14. Paul carries on this discourse through v.17, articulating this typology in such a way as to show that Christ's obedience not only undoes Adam's disobedience, but also renders graces and benefits which

[57] Wesley, Sermon 45, "The New Birth," WW2:190.
[58] Taylor, 36.
[59] Ibid., 38.

exceed beyond the consequences of Adam's sin. This discourse is continued by Paul through v.17. "And then," says Taylor, "having dispatched these incidental Reflections, which fell in his way from what he had said, he takes up again his main Design . . . half of which he had but executed in the 12th verse, and which he had but hinted at the Close of the 14th verse."[60]

On this account, Edwards maintains that the typology presented between Christ and Adam is irrelevant if Adam's posterity do not share in Adam's guilt. If this be the case, then the death now experienced does not come by Adam, but by Christ. "For, according to his doctrine," writes Edwards, "both come by Christ, the second Adam; both by his grace, righteousness and obedience: the death, that God sentenced mankind to in Gen. 3:19 being a great deal more properly and truly by Christ, than by Adam.[61]

One of the most notable differences between Edwards and Wesley in their rebuttals is that while Wesley's approach is to refute Taylor line-by-line, Edwards argues each point with the entire piece in mind, an approach which allows him to identify and evaluate the inconsistencies in Taylor's treatise. Therefore, in order to fully grasp Edwards's argument it is necessary to jump ahead in Taylor's treatise to the appendix of Part 1.[62] In this appendix, Taylor sets out to answer two challenges: first, how it can be just that all people experience suffering and death if Adam alone is guilty, and second, how it is that Christ's obedience would be enough to make all Mankind righteous. This first question will be briefly engaged with here and then be returned to at the end of the chapter.

Taylor's response to the question of how it can be just for innocent people to experience suffering and death is that such tribulations are better seen as beneficial correction rather than punishment. The benefit as Taylor describes it is two-fold, though it can be essentially summed up as a proper perspective. On the one hand, Taylor describes suffering

[60] Taylor, 39-40.
[61] WJE3:313.
[62] Taylor, 65-83.

and death as things which help mankind to understand their own shortcomings and a propensity for bad behavior, as well as to see the fleeting nature of this life. Another benefit that Taylor notes is that following the Flood God reduced the average lifespan to a tenth of what it used to be, thus making the inevitable specter death evermore present. Thus, the first benefit is that suffering and death give the individual a proper perspective of himself. Additionally, Taylor also sees death as beneficial because it "teacheth those, who enjoy Revelation, to form a just Idea of the odious and destructive Nature of Sin."[63] Sin is not committed in a vacuum, but has cascading consequences. According to Taylor, suffering and death help to provide a proper perspective regarding the severity of disobedience.

Returning to Edwards's argument, he believed that the typology between Adam and Christ in Romans 5 depends on an understanding of death as punishment for the sins of Adam, and resurrection as the undoing of that punishment. But if death is beneficial, then one would have to assume that it also comes about as a result of Christ's obedience rather than by Adam's disobedience. But if both come by Christ and his grace, then there is no dualism at hand. One is not undone by the other if both are beneficial.

Wesley, in contrast, contends that Taylor's division of the text is untenable, arguing that the typology between Adam and Christ does not begin until v.14. Here Paul begins a "new thought," which Taylor himself says begins in the latter half of v.14,[64] in order to build on what had been said in vv.12-13. Furthermore, Wesley disagrees that a tangential discourse ends in v.17, arguing that the 'therefore' at the beginning of v.18 links it to the preceding verse as a continuation of the argument rather than a return to a separate one.

Observation 5: Death by Adam, Life by Christ

Turning back to Taylor, his fifth observation is a continuation of his fourth, arguing that the

[63] Ibid., 69.
[64] Ibid., 39.

typology between Adam and Christ affirms that death comes by the disobedience of Adam while life comes by the obedience of Christ, and not by our own righteousness. He writes,

> The whole of the Apostle's Argument and Assertion evidently stands upon these two principles: that it is by the one Offence of Adam that Death passed upon all Men, and not by their own personal Sins: and again, that it is by the Obedience of one, or the Act of Christ's Obedience . . . that all Men are justified unto Life, and not by their own personal Righteousness.[65]

Taylor does not consider the second of these principles to need explanation, calling it "the grand Principle of the Gospel."[66] The first principle, Taylor says, is proven by vv.13 and 14. "For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come." "Law," Taylor says, "is the only Constitution which subjects Men to Death for the Sins they commit."[67] And yet, according to Taylor, the Law did not come into being until Moses. And yet, those who lived in the time between Adam and Moses still died, even though they did not have a law to break and could not therefore be considered guilty of sin. Taylor summarizes his explanation in this way:

> For during that Period Mankind were not under Law, but under Grace. And therefore, tho' Sin in its several Branches was, during that Space, committed by Mankind, yet they were not subjected to death for their Transgressions. It remains then that Death was universally inflicted upon Mankind in Consequence of 'Adam's' one Transgression.[68]

This, of course, is subject to an obvious objection, one Taylor believes he is ready to meet. There are multiple cases in the book of Genesis in which God is said to have punished people with death on account of their sins.[69] Yet Taylor did not consider this to undo his argument, since "extraordinary Interpositions come under no Rule but the Will of God."[70]

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[65] Taylor, 40.
[66] Ibid., 41.
[67] Ibid., 41.
[68] Ibid., 42.
[69] These include Antediluvians as well as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.
[70] Ibid., n42-43.

Taylor characterizes Genesis 4:6, where God instructs Noah that those who commit murder ought to be punished with death, as a "Rule for Magistrates in executing Justice," but not an actual penalty for sin since God would not be the actual executioner. All this Taylor rationalizes by appealing to Locke's commentary on Romans 5:15, where Locke argues that in these cases those who were punished were not made mortal by their sins, but had already been born mortal, and their early demise was merely the anticipation of the death that had already been assured them.[71]

In his rebuttal to this observation, Edwards challenges Taylor's assertion that no law was in place, citing the natural law, which he observes both in Job 24 as well as, most strikingly, in Romans 2, wherein Paul writes, "For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law to themselves; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts; their conscience also bearing witness."[72] Therefore, Taylor's interpretation falls out of harmony with the larger body of the text. Furthermore, since the death which was suffered on account of Adam's sin continued following the reception of the law of Moses, Edwards argues that the giving of the law is largely irrelevant within Taylor's construction.

Wesley's rebuttal challenges every detail of Taylor's argument. He demands evidence that the law of God was abrogated between the time of Adam and Moses, seeing no proof that God's prohibition against murder in Genesis 4 is not itself a law, and asks if it is not true that those who remained impenitent even in those days were subject to everlasting death. Furthermore, Wesley counters that the presence of the law is actually proven by God's extraordinary interpositions, for if the Sodomites and the Antediluvians were not guilty of breaking the law, then God would have been acting out of arbitrary sadism, not justice.

[71] John Locke, *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul,* vol. 2, ed. Arthur W. Wainwright (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 525-526.

[72] Romans 2:14-15 in Edwards's paraphrase, which only modifies the punctuation (WJE3:315).

In all this one observes a definitive Arminian strain in Wesley's logic, regarding the eternal fate of the impenitent. Even in the case of those who lived before Moses, Wesley sees humanity having the freedom to determine their eternal fate by means of repentance. By this, he guards against the notion of an unconditional election for a limited few, instead seeing Christ's atoning work being for the benefit of any who would repent, even for the earliest humans.

Observation 6: The Grace in Christ Abounds Over the Condemnation in Adam

Taylor lastly observes that the benefits which come by Christ's obedience far exceed the consequences of Adam's disobedience. Taylor says,

> That is, [God] hath in 'Christ' bestowed Benefits and Blessings upon Mankind of his mere Favour, far exceeding, and abounding beyond, the Consequences of Adam's Sin. He hath not only taken off those Consequences, but over and above hath conferred a rich Overplus of Grace, in erecting a new Dispensation, furnished with a glorious Fund of Light and Truth, Mean and Motives.[73]

According to Taylor, Christ's obedience has done far more than to merely undo the consequences of Adam's disobedience, as confirmed by Paul's words in v. 15, "and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." He argues that since Paul speaks of the grace as abounding, it must therefore mean that it goes even beyond the restoration of life, but also relates to the personal sins of all people. Mankind is justified by Christ, meaning they are set right with God, and also actually made righteous, therefore granted the right to life and salvation. Taylor's universalism is again on display as he argues that by Christ's obedience all people, regardless of their own behavior or whether they repent, are given new life.

For Edwards, the problem of unimputed guilt remains his greatest objection. He argues that if mankind is not guilty of Adam's sin, then the death they now suffer is unjust,

[73] Taylor, 44.

and the work of Christ in restoring that life is one of justice. There is no grace present here, much less abounding grace.

Wesley objects to Taylor's claim that God's grace abounds in such a way that all the consequences of humanity's personal sins are remediated as well, as though all people now live according to the law. As Wesley asks, "Is not this allowing too much?"[74]

Wesley did believe that the grace of God was such that it could teach believers to behave differently and to choose righteousness over sin, but he understood this rehabilitating work to be pneumatological in nature. Jason Vickers writes, "Wesley portrays the consequences of the fall into sin in terms of a complete impairment of the spiritual senses."[75] As a result of this impairment, according to Vickers's summary of Wesley's Arminian framework, the individual is incapable of perceiving the new covenant under Christ. It is only by the work of the Holy Spirit that those senses could be restored. Vickers notes that "Although the technical term for this was prevenient grace, . . . at the level of the restoration of the spiritual senses, it was also irresistible grace."[76]

Wesley's understanding of prevenient grace as irresistible, while not explicitly stated as such, is proved when his insistence on total depravity is considered alongside his understanding of the human conscience as an interposition of God's grace by the Holy Spirit. Wesley taught that all mankind is fallen from birth, being totally depraved. This is observed in his sermon "Original Sin" where he writes,

> Is man by nature filled with all manner of evil? Is he void of all good? Is he wholly fallen? Is his soul totally corrupted? Or, to come back to [Genesis 6:5], is 'every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually'? Allow this, and you are so far a Christian. Deny it, and you are but an heathen still.[77]

Wesley's emphasis on the totality of the depravity is crucial. Man is not partially

[74] Wesley, *Original Sin,* WW12:229.
[75] Jason Vickers, 200.
[76] Ibid., 201.
[77] Wesley, Sermon 44, "Original Sin," WW2:183-184. Outler dates this sermon as written in 1759. This this sermon was written at this time is presumably due to the influence of Dr. Taylor.

depraved or mostly depraved, but totally depraved. Therefore, it must be assumed that there is no natural goodness within anyone, but only evil. This depravity is such that man is incapable of perceiving his own transgressions against God's will or his need to be saved. This is of course a very serious problem, leaving all mankind hopelessly damned in their transgressions. For Wesley this problem is solved by prevenient grace, which he equates with the natural conscience. In his sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," Wesley argues that the natural conscience is actually the presence of God's prevenient grace (which he also calls preventing grace). ". . . all that is wrought in the soul by what is frequently termed 'natural conscience', but more properly, 'preventing grace'; all the 'drawings' of the 'Father', the desires after God, which, if we yield to them, increase more and more; . . ."[78] Since mankind is naturally inclined to do evil, as Wesley's sermon on original sin argues, then any act of goodness must find its source outside of the individual, stemming from the grace God. This understanding of Wesley's, however, is somewhat muddled by his sermon "On Conscience." Wesley writes:

> What is conscience in the Christian sense? It is that faculty of the soul which, by the assistance of the grace of God, sees at one and the same time, (1), our own tempers and lives, the real nature and quality of our thoughts, words, and actions; (2), the rule whereby we are to be directed, and (3), the agreement or disagreement therewith.[79]

The complication in this text comes from Wesley's description of the conscience as a "faculty of the soul" which receives the assistance of the grace of God. This description would lead one to believe that Wesley considered the conscience to be a natural part of the human creature rather than an interposition of God's prevenient grace. Given that this sermon was written nearly fifty years after his sermon on original sin, it could be that Wesley's thoughts on this matter had further developed. However, this modification is slight enough that Wesley's understanding of the presence and timing of prevenient grace remains the

[78] Wesley, Sermon 43, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," WW2:157.
[79] Wesley, Sermon 105, "On Conscience," WW3:485.

same: the conscience faculty is still assisted by God's prevenient grace.

For Wesley, this is a grace for all people, regardless of their beliefs or behaviors. Having been given the ability to perceive his own sins, it is up to the individual to determine how they will respond, and a positive response is certainly not a given. Wesley believed that it is just as possible to reject God's prevenient grace as it is to follow it. And so, on this point, there is an agreement between Wesley and Taylor that there is an irresistible grace which comes upon all people. But there the similarity ends. Wesley did not believe that this grace to be that which saves; it merely helps the blind to see.

Throughout this excerpt one can readily observe Wesley's Arminianism. While Wesley rejected Taylor's claim that a depraved nature was not passed on to Adam's posterity, he likewise rejected Edwards's position that the main problem for mankind is guilt. Instead, Wesley portrayed sin as an infection of the soul, passed down to all Adam's posterity, inhibiting one's ability to perceive and love God. And though Wesley rejected Taylor's universalism, he also rejected the Calvinist position of a limited atonement, opting instead for an irresistible prevenient grace which affords all people the opportunity to repent and believe. On the whole, however, Wesley and Edwards manage to refute Taylor in methods so similar as to suggest a harmony between their two positions.

Chapter 2: "Righteousness and True Holiness": Wesley and Edwards on Original Righteousness

As this study progresses the focus now shifts to the positions of Wesley and Edwards, though not by ignoring Taylor's work entirely. The aim of this project is to better articulate John Wesley's Arminianism by comparing him to Jonathan Edwards, and the method for accomplishing this over the next three chapters will be to evaluate how both men used the image of God in Adam and his posterity in their theological frameworks. This chapter will examine and compare how Wesley and Edwards spoke of the image of God as the content of Adam's original righteousness, both as a response to Dr. Taylor's opposition as well as in their larger theological frameworks.

Taylor's Argument

John Taylor was as opposed to the doctrine of Adam's original righteousness as he was to the doctrine of original sin. He believed that the doctrine of original sin depended upon Adam's having been originally righteous, presumably because a fall from grace requires an elevated place from which to fall. If Adam wasn't originally righteous then his disobedience would not have merited a fall. Taylor's argument therefore is that Adam's posterity now enjoys the same level of moral ambivalence that Adam himself enjoyed. Since there was no actual fall, there was never that near-impeccability of Adam which most theologians have insisted upon.

Arguments for Adam's original righteousness in the early modern era seem to have been centered around the image of God in Adam's original created state. David Fergusson has noted that there has been much controversy surrounding the image of God, whether it is simply that which separates man from beast, an image of the trinity, or even a source of holiness.[80] Scholastic theology took the image of God as a means of participation in the

[80] David Fergusson, *Creation,* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 11-13.

Godhead. Thomas Aquinas reasoned that the image (*ṣelem*) and likeness (*dĕmût*) spoken of in Genesis 1:26 is not simply an instance of emphasis by repetition, but a real distinction wherein God's likeness is the image perfected as a true love of virtue.[81] John Calvin took this one step farther by arguing that the image of God was the source of Adam's original righteousness, and in the fall the image of God was effaced, and therefore effectively lost. Fergusson argues that this approach faces significant problems, not least of which is the fact that such arguments can be scripturally challenged. "It is not at all clear from Genesis that the image is lost at the fall . . . The implication of Genesis 1 seems to be that human beings everywhere and at all times bear the image of God."[82] Yet it is clear from the works of Taylor, Wesley, and Edwards that it was a common argument in their day that Adam was created in an exceptional state as a result of the image of God in which he had been created, and that the fall resulted in the loss of much (or even all) of that image.

It was therefore important for Taylor to argue against this common conception as he sought to dismantle the doctrine of Adam's original righteousness. Taylor directly engages with the issue of Adam's original righteousness at two points in his dissertation. The first is in part three where he provides his answers to common objections to his anti-original sin thesis. The second place is in his supplement, published in the year following his original publication. This supplement was meant to be answer to the theological objections raised by Isaac Watts and David Jennings. Taylor's thoughts on original righteousness in the supplement are considerably longer than those in his original treatise, but the arguments he employs are essentially the same in both places. Taylor's argument can be broken down into two essential parts: the scriptural argument and the logical argument.

Dr. Taylor's original conversation partner was the Larger Westminster Catechism,

[81] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ,* vol. 13, *Man Made to God's Image,* trans. Edmund Hill O.P., §I.93.9, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 81-85.

[82] Fergusson, 13.

and so his arguments from scripture generally follow those used in the catechism as proof-texts. The original objection Taylor sought to answer reads as follows:

> But the Assembly of Divines affirm, and quote the Texts under-mentioned to prove, that Adam was created after God's own Image, in Knowledge, Righteousness, and Holiness, having the Law of God written in his Heart, and Power to fulfill it. And will you say that his Posterity are made in the same Image of God?—See the Assembly's larger Catechism.[83]

The question was not whether Adam was created in the image of God, but of the nature of that image. Taylor rejected the notion that Adam's knowledge, righteousness, and holiness were housed in God's image. Taylor's first scriptural argument looked to Genesis 9:6. Here God decrees that anyone who commits murder ought to be put to death, "for in the image of God made he man." "Therefore," Taylor argues, "if Gen. i. 27 proveth that Adam was made in the Image of God, Gen ix. 6 proveth that his Posterity also are made in the same Image, whatever that Image be."[84] Taylor believed that if the image remains in Adam's posterity then it cannot be said that this image was lost in the fall.

The issue, however, has not yet been put to rest. Taylor identifies four other passages which might be used to argue that Adam was indeed originally righteous in God's image, that the image has been lost, but can still be recovered. The first two are Colossians 3:10, "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him," and Ephesians 4:24, "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." From both passages it is easy to gather that Paul taught a renewal of God's image, and that such renewal brought about perfected knowledge and action. Taylor did not object to such interpretations, though he felt these did not go far enough in that they could prove Adam's original righteousness. Instead, he pointed out that these passages could point to even greater spiritual heights of the likes that Adam himself never enjoyed, which Taylor calls the Christian state and is that which is enjoyed by those

[83] Taylor, 176.
[84] Ibid., 177.

who are saved. In his supplement he wrote, "From all this I apprehend we may gather, that the Old Man relates to the Gentile State, and that the New Man is either the Christian State, or the Christian Church, Body, or Society."[85]

As far the other two passages, Taylor argues that Romans 2:14-15 actually show that even Gentiles have within them the ability to know God's law and the capacity to follow it, thus overturning the argument that the fall affected mankind in such a way. And as for Ecclesiastes 7:29, ("Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.") Taylor argues that "man" is intended in the plural sense, referring to all mankind, and therefore further weakening the notion that all Adam's posterity is naturally wicked.

Having evaluated these passages, Dr. Taylor stands firm in his conviction that none of them have actually proved Adam's original righteousness. But in his next argument, which shall here be called the logical argument, Taylor delivers what he likely thought was the most devastating blow to the doctrine. He argues that it is simply impossible that Adam could have been created originally righteous because righteousness requires a choice to be so.

> But sill, Holiness must necessarily be the Choice of our own Minds. For how much soever we are assisted in choosing, it must be our own Act and Deed, or it cannot be our Virtue and Holiness. A necessary Holiness is no Holiness; a Virtue or Righteousness supposed to be forced upon our Minds, and irresistibly infused into us, whether we will or not, is no Virtue, no Righteousness. Therefore, however God may provide and apply Means to engage our Wills to the Observance of what is right and true, it is, I think, Demonstration that we cannot, as moral Agents, observe what is right and true, or be righteous and holy, without our own free and explicit Choice.[86]

For Taylor, there is no holiness that is not freely chosen by a moral agent. If Adam's will was predisposed to holiness such holiness would not be to Adam's merit. It would be God's holiness displayed through Adam. Adam himself would not actually be righteous, even if he were displaying acts corresponding with righteousness. Therefore, Taylor draws the

[85] Ibid., 430.
[86] Ibid., 180.

conclusion that original righteousness is a logical impossibility.

This is the philosophical position of indeterminacy, which argues that true freedom requires the total absence of extenuating circumstances which might incline the will one way or another. Taylor's insistence on indeterminacy in Adam's original state is indicative of a larger philosophical debate, one which raged in the 18th and 19th centuries. It is not the aim of this dissertation to give a close evaluation of various philosophies regarding free will and how they developed over time, so it should suffice to say that it was in vogue at the time of Taylor to insist those who are truly free are free to arrive at their conclusions without their will having been affected one way or another. Thus, Taylor believes that the defense of Adam's indeterminacy is essential if he is to be held accountable for his actions.

Wesley and Edwards on Original Righteousness

Both Wesley and Edwards argued for Adam's original righteousness, though in different ways. Wesley understood the image of God to be crucial for understanding Adam's original state, his fall from grace, and humanity's experience of salvation. Edwards, on the other hand, erected his counterarguments in a more philosophical fashion.

Wesley On Original Righteousness

The image of God was pervasive throughout Wesley's theological thought and teaching. One of his earliest sermons ever recorded, titled "The Image of God," was preached in St Mary's at Oxford on November 15, 1730 when Wesley was just 27 years old. But this was not a one-off; Wesley mentions the image of God, usually as that which is being restored in believers, in at least sixty of his other published sermons. This section will endeavor to illustrate how the image of God is bound to Wesley's unique Arminianism on the basis that he considered freedom to be among the endowments of that image. It will begin by examining Wesley's

response to Dr. Taylor's position concerning Adam's original righteousness, in which Wesley utilizes image of God arguments to make his point. This section will then examine Wesley's arguments for Adam's original state in his sermons, especially "The Image of God" (1730) and "The End of Christ's Coming" (1758).

The reader will recall that Taylor's first argument regarding the image of God and Adam's original righteousness was that God's image was never lost in the first place, pointing to Genesis 9:6 as proof. Given the fact that this verse is the last time God's image is mentioned in the Old Testament, this first argument by Dr. Taylor is an important one for Wesley to overcome. He accomplishes this by reasoning that God's image is not totally lost, though not all of it remains either. Wesley writes, "But we can in nowise infer from hence, that that entire image of God in which Adam was first created now remains in all his posterity."[87] Wesley's argument here is very much in the same style as Taylor's, showing that he has assumed too much and that there is still much that this verse does not say. Given the persisting ambiguity, it remained of utmost importance for Wesley to give due consideration to the other passages presented by Taylor.

Interestingly, Wesley did not at first engage with Taylor's exegesis of the other passages, all but ignoring them in his response to Part III of Taylor's dissertation. It was not until his response to Taylor's supplement that Wesley gave a response to any of the scriptures presented by Taylor. Much like before, Wesley argues that Taylor has failed to prove that these passages do not refer to the image of God, and that Taylor has once again made a dangerous inference. Wesley then offers his interpretation of those passages, arguing that the "putting on" of the new man is a reference to the work of God in each individual believer as he renews his image within. Wesley supports this interpretation by appealing to other passages which speak of the Holy Spirit's work of renewal in the believer. Among others,

[87] Wesley, *Original Sin,* WW12:276.

Wesley points to Titus 3:3-5 as the strongest proof for this interpretation. This passage, which speaks explicitly of the renewing work of the holy spirit within the believer, must surely show that this work is the renewal of the full image of God in man, or so Wesley believes. Thus, he writes, "These texts therefore do manifestly refer to 'personal internal holiness', and clearly prove that this is the chief part of that 'image of God' in which man was originally created."[88]

Wesley has not yet disproved any of Taylor's exegetical arguments; so far he has only presented an alternative framework to Taylor's in the hopes that it will be more congruent with the whole body of Scripture. Of course, there is a scarcity of scriptures speaking explicitly about the image, which is perhaps why most theologians who participate in such debates have typically supplemented their arguments with philosophical proofs.

Taylor's philosophical argument is one which appealed to the necessity of indeterminacy in Adam in order for him to have been truly righteous. In so doing, Taylor defined true righteousness as the choice to do that which is considered righteous rather than doing that which is considered righteous. Viewed from another perspective, Taylor believed that holiness is the act of rejecting unrighteousness. Wesley disagreed with Dr. Taylor's framework, arguing from the basis of an alternative definition for holiness.

> What is holiness? Is it not, essentially, love? The love of God and of all mankind? producing 'bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering'? And *cannot* God shed abroad this love in any soul without his concurrence? Antecedent to his knowledge or consent? And supposing this to be done, will love change its nature? Will it be no longer holiness? This argument [by Taylor] can never be sustained—unless you would play upon the word 'habits'. Love is holiness wherever it exists. And God *could* create either men or angels, endued from the very first moment of their existence with whatsoever degree of love he pleased.[89]

For Wesley, holiness or righteousness is not an action but a disposition which is then the principle of righteous actions. "Righteousness is properly and directly *a right temper* or

[88] Ibid., 337.
[89] Ibid., 277, emphasis original.

disposition of mind, or a complex of all right tempers."[90] Therefore, Adam need not have been created originally indifferent in order for him to have been capable of true righteousness. Thus, Wesley did not consider Adam's original righteousness to be dependent upon his will being indeterminant.

Wesley, however, did not always feel this way. In his 1730 sermon "The Image of God," Wesley begins with a detailed analysis of Adam's original state and the characteristics of the image in which he was created. This was followed by an examination of Adam's fall and how that image was defaced, the effects of which have continued on through all of humanity since then. Wesley concludes this sermon with a glimpse of hope as he reflects upon God's grace which restores this image in mankind. Albert Outler calls this sermon "an important statement of Wesley's early basic understanding of the ordo salutis."[91] In his exposition of the image of God in Adam, Wesley seems to have favored indeterminacy, which will be shown momentarily.

In the opening section of this sermon, Wesley explains the image of God as being made up of three endowments: unerring knowledge, an uncorrupted will, and perfect freedom. These then culminated in a fourth endowment: happiness.

Regarding Adam's knowledge, Wesley taught that Adam knew no incorrect thing. All that Adam knew, he knew it perfectly. This is not to say, however, that Adam was omniscient. The fulness of this divine trait was not part of the endowment. It could be said that Adam's knowledge was an image of God's omniscience. In Wesley's words, "either he saw not at all, or he saw plainly."[92] Such perfect knowledge allowed Adam to be free of all dilemmas and deliberation; in every instance he could easily differentiate between right and wrong and knew instantly the most praiseworthy action.

[90] Ibid., 338, emphasis original.
[91] Albert Outler, "The Image of God: An Introductory Comment," WW4:290.
[92] Wesley, Sermon 141, "The Image of God," WW4:294.

The second endowment the image was Adam's 'uncorrupt' will, which is observed in Adam's affections. "His affections were rational, even, and regular—if we may be allowed to say 'affections', for properly speaking he had but one: man was what God is, Love. Love filled the whole expansion of his soul; it possessed him without a rival."[93] Wesley's use of "uncorrupt" when speaking of Adam's will is worthy of note. It speaks to the absence of any imperfection in his will, or anything that might incline him towards evil. Wesley was not teaching that Adam had a greater level of affection for God and an inclination toward good than we do now, but that Adam lacked everything that was contrary to love. While this distinction does not make much functional difference, it is important for the third endowment, which is perfect freedom.

Wesley taught that Adam enjoyed perfect freedom in his original state, and that this freedom entailed "an entire indifference, either to keep or change his first estate. . . . His Creator would not, and no creature besides him could, weigh down either scale."[94] So here, in this very early sermon of Wesley's, he argues for the will's indetermination as a necessity for true freedom: if Adam were predisposed either to righteousness or to unrighteousness then he would not have actually been free. Finally, Wesley taught that all three of these endowments came together and "the result of all these . . . gave the last stroke of the image of God in man, by crowning all these with happiness."[95]

This sermon by Wesley has a clear problem: he has left no room for Adam to have actually been able to commit that first sin. His perfect understanding makes it entirely untenable for Adam to have been deceived by anyone, whether it was the serpent, Eve, or even himself. If all his knowledge is perfect knowledge, it ought to have been impossible for him to have had any misconceptions regarding the virtue of eating the fruit. And if Adam's

[93] Ibid., 294.
[94] Ibid., 295.
[95] Ibid., 295.

will were uncorrupted, he would have had no inclination to eat the fruit which he knew was wrong to eat. Wesley maintains in this sermon that the temptation was necessary for him to have actually had free will, reasoning that a free will without an opportunity to actually choose is not free at all. Yet the combination of perfect knowledge and an uncorrupt will effectively make Adam's will determinate, contradicting his true freedom and disagreeing with the biblical narrative.

Wesley did not hold this view of Adam's original righteousness through his career, but instead developed it as various objections, such as the one raised above, began to formulate.[96] As Wesley's theology developed, he adapted his understanding of the image in accordance with the standards of his day. Wesley adopted of a threefold understanding of the image of God. In this paradigm, God's image is in three parts: the natural image, the political image, and the moral image. The natural image consists of all those things upon which Wesley had already insisted: knowledge, the will, and freedom. The difference is that while all these characteristics are present in the natural image none of them are perfected. Instead, they are perfected by the moral image which consists of righteousness and true holiness, a reference to Ephesians 4:24.

This was not Wesley's innovation, but appears to have been borrowed from Isaac Watts in his *The Ruin and Recovery of Mankind*. Following Wesley's arguments against Taylor, he includes an extract from Watts's work. Wesley quotes Watts as saying the following:

> 'Tis true, the *natural image* of God in which man was created consisted in his spiritual, intelligent, and immortal nature, and his *political image* (if I may so speak), in his being Lord of this lower creation. But the chief, the *moral* part of his image, we learn from St. Paul to have been the rectitude of man's nature—who in his Epistle to the Ephesians says that the image of God in which man is to be *renewed*, and

[96] Cf Wesley, Sermon 60, "The General Deliverance," WW2:436-450.. This sermon first appeared in the *Arminian Magazine* in 1782, the latter stage of Wesley's career. In the first part of this sermon, Wesley teaches a similar perfection of knowledge and incorruption of the will, which seems to indicate that his position did not change significantly over the course of his career. However, given that Wesley's aim in this sermon is to comment upon the fate of the "brute creation," it is not surprising that he did not trifle with his language regarding Adam's original state.

consequently in which he was *made*, consists 'in righteousness and true holiness'.[97]

Not surprisingly, Wesley did not hesitate to use this model for years to come. John Taylor's treatise on original sin had been in circulation since the 1740s and had gained much popularity. Before Wesley published his treatise refuting Dr. Taylor, Wesley frequently preached sermons intended to counteract the influence of Taylor and other Deists and Dissenters. Wesley's sermons "Original Sin" and "The New Birth" are distillations of those sermons, and in the "New Birth" Wesley even uses Watts's paradigm, almost verbatim, appealing even to the political image of God as that which allowed Adam to have dominion over the animals.[98] Eventually Wesley jettisoned the political image, and instead spoke only of God's natural image and God's moral image.[99]

This is seen most clearly in his sermon "The End of Christ's Coming." Once again, Wesley describes Adam's original created state, but this time Wesley does so using the natural/moral distinction of God's image. The natural image, he says, is made up of understanding, allowing him to discern things by intuition rather than instruction. It is also made up of a will, "with various affections (which are only the will exerting itself various ways) that he might love, desire, and delight in that which is good; otherwise his understanding had been to no purpose."[100] And finally, Adam was endued with liberty, which allowed him to utilize his understanding and will.

Notice how each endowment of the natural image builds on the one before it. Knowledge and understanding are foundational, giving Adam the power of discernment and wisdom. His will gave him an appreciation for that knowledge, allowing him to be inclined one way or another depending on his discernment. His freedom gave him the ability to act on

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[97] Isaac Watts, *Ruin and Recovery of Mankind, or An Attempt to Vindicate the Scriptural Account of these Great Events upon the Plain Principles of Reason,* 2nd ed. (London: James Brackstone, 1742), 7, in Wesley, *Original Sin,* WW12:354, emphasis original.

[98] Albert Outler, "Original Sin: An Introductory Comment," and "The New Birth: An Introductory Comment," WW2:170-171 and WW2:186-187 respectively.

[99] In at least seven of Wesley's sermons he speaks of either the natural image, the moral image, or both.

[100] Wesley, Sermon 62, "The End of Christ's Coming," WW2:474.

his understanding and will. Freedom, says Wesley, is what makes the other endowments useful. "Without [liberty] both the will and the understanding would have been utterly useless. Indeed without liberty man had be so far from being a free agent that he could have been no agent at all. For every unfree being is purely passive, not active in any degree."[101]

Thus far Wesley's doctrine has nearly matched that of his 1730 sermon on the image of God. The difference, however, is in the quality of the endowments. Unlike before, Wesley now teaches that Adam's righteousness was not a result of the natural image, but of the moral image which perfected the natural image.

> And God created man, not only in his natural, but likewise in his own moral image. He created him not only in knowledge, but also in righteousness and true holiness. As his understanding was without blemish, perfect in its kind, so were all his affections. They were all set right, and duly exercised on their proper objects. And as a free agent he steadily chose whatever was good, according to the direction of his understanding. In so doing he was unspeakably happy . . .[102]

As was noted earlier, Wesley's paradigm failed to leave room for Adam's ability to sin. Having recognized this issue, Wesley clarifies his position regarding Adam's understanding. He writes, "Indeed it has been doubted whether man could choose evil, knowing it to be such. But it cannot be doubted he might mistake evil for good. He was not infallible; therefore not impeccable."[103] It seems that in arguing this Wesley had relaxed his position on the perfection of Adam's state, therefore allowing room for Adam to have been deceived and to have committed the first sin.

In this sermon Wesley again makes the case that it was necessary for Adam to experience temptation in order for him to have actually been free. "Yet his liberty (as was observed before) necessarily included a power of choosing or refusing either good or evil."[104] If Adam never actually had the opportunity to exercise his freedom then that freedom was

[101] Ibid., 475.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid., 476.
[104] Ibid.

never actually there. The vast majority of prisoners have the ability to open doors, but as long as their cell doors are locked, they lack the actual freedom to open those doors. And so Wesley again insists that Adam had actually been free. "Otherwise neither his understanding nor his will would have been to any purpose; for he must have been incapable of virtue or holiness as the stock of a tree."[105]

Wesley evidently considered freedom to have been the most crucial of all Adam's original properties. In this way his position was actually quite similar to that of Taylor, with the exception that Wesley disagreed with Taylor's argument that holiness can only be achieved through a choice. And yet, as Wesley continually insists upon freedom as an essential feature of Adam's original estate, he seems to drift back toward that position Taylor had elsewhere rejected. But their position is not the same. Taylor insisted on original indifference with the freedom to choose good; Wesley insisted on original righteousness with the freedom to choose evil.

Wesley's position is better appreciated against the relief of Jonathan Edwards's reply to Taylor. For Edwards, Adam was not nearly as free as Wesley and Taylor said. Instead, Edwards held to a determinist position, arguing that actions are each results of principles rather than spontaneous occurrences. This section will provide a brief examination of Edwards's response to Taylor in Original Sin as well as his other writings on Adam's original state and the image of God.

Edwards On Original Righteousness

Edwards's defense of original righteousness takes an inverse form to Taylor's original argument. He begins with the philosophical argument, which he believed to be the more important of the two, and then progresses to a proof from scripture. The essence of Edwards's

[105] Wesley, Sermon 57, "On the Fall of Man," WW2:409-410.

philosophical argument is that contrary to Taylor's belief that original righteousness is a logical impossibility, Taylor's system itself is far more untenable.

Edwards saw a contradiction in the notion that before Adam could be righteous he would have to first choose to be righteous. Edwards counters this by arguing that actions are not spontaneous but arise from a principle. And while it can be said that in Taylor's argument the choice is the principle of holiness, Edwards asks what the principle of that choice would be. If the choice be the principle of righteousness, then it follows that the choice itself must be righteous, and therefore arising from a righteous principle. Already we can see how Edwards dismantles Taylor's argument using his own logic.

But what is this righteous principle? Having easily dispatched Taylor's philosophical argument, Edwards goes one step further by providing his alternative. He begins by equating righteousness with innocence, at least as it pertains to moral agents. "In a moral agent, subject to moral obligations, it is the same thing, to be perfectly innocent, as to be perfectly righteous."[106] In the context of a moral agent with moral obligation, as Adam was, true moral neutrality is impossible. There is only obedience and disobedience. Indifference to the commands of God would still fall within the realm of disobedience, and therefore unrighteousness. Taylor had hoped to prove that Adam began in such a state of indifference (and therefore perfect freedom), but Edwards shows that this is simply not possible in the context of the biblical narrative.

Therefore, Adam was from the very beginning obedient to God and therefore righteous. But as Edwards said before, he rejects the notion that obedience to God could arise without a principle. In fact, Edwards rejects to the notion that any action could arise without a principle. "Human nature must be created with some dispositions; . . . Otherwise, it must be without any such thing as inclination or will. It must be perfectly indifferent, without

[106] WJE3:228.

preference, without choice or aversion towards anything, as agreeable or disagreeable."[107] If Adam had been created without any principle, then he would have been entirely incapable of action at all, since all action arises from the will. If Adam had been entirely indifferent, having neither love nor hate for God or his precepts, or any positive or negative reckoning of anything in his environment, he would have been without even the most basic motivation for action.

Another way to express Edwards's argument is to say that Adam did indeed act and therefore had dispositions. He walked about, and in so doing walked one direction rather than another, presumably because the chosen direction served his purpose and was therefore considered by Adam to be preferable. Thus, even if it the action seems to be of the littlest importance, all actions by moral agents have moral implications. Therefore, since Adam was a moral agent who did indeed act, those actions must have arisen from a disposition.

Edwards believed that dispositions were the sources of actions. Since actions by moral agents are either righteous or unrighteous, it therefore follows that these dispositions themselves must be either righteous or unrighteous. So, for Adam, he must have been created with a righteous disposition in order for him to have been able to do anything virtuous at all.

> Adam was brought into existence capable of acting immediately, as a moral agent; and therefore he was immediately under a rule of right action: he was obliged as soon as he existed, to act right. And if he was obliged to act right as soon as he existed, he was obliged even then to be inclined to act right. Dr. Taylor says, 'Adam could not sin without a sinful inclination';[108] and just for the same reason he could not do right, without an inclination to right action.[109]

Edwards illustrates his position by entertaining Taylor's notion that Adam could not have acted righteously without first choosing to act righteously. If this be the case, then Edwards argues that the mere act of reflecting upon the command would have been the morally right thing to do. Thus, by Taylor's own argument Adam could not have entered into

[107] Ibid., 231.
[108] Taylor, 442.
[109] WJE3:228.

this state of reflection naturally since that would imply that he had been created with a disposition toward this morally good reflection. In this way Edwards shows that Taylor has not actually logically disproved Adam's original righteousness at all.

Edwards relies heavily on determinist reasoning for Adam's original righteousness. Since Adam was righteous from the beginning, he must have been created with a righteous principle. This righteous principle was his disposition toward that which is good, a disposition which must have been given him by his creator. From this one can gather that for Edwards all righteous action finds its origin in God, not in the moral agent. Yet by his argument it becomes apparent that Edwards considered the alternative to this to be absurd. He argues that moral actions must have a cause, that actions without causes are therefor non-moral. Counter to the arguments by Arminians such as Taylor and Wesley, Edwards argues, in the words of Oliver Crisp, that "Actions which are said to be contra-causal are not thereby more moral because they are 'free' in accordance with liberty of indifference. They are non-moral, because they have no cause."[110]

Edwards goes on to further substantiate his argument in favor of original righteousness by making two scriptural arguments. The first is to show that Taylor's system lacks harmony with the Genesis 2 description of Adam and Eve's original setting, and the second is to counter Taylor's argument concerning Ecclesiastes 7:29.

Recall from the previous chapter that Taylor believed that the present sufferings experienced by the human race are not punishments for sin but are actually helpful challenges which encourage spiritual growth. Edwards argues that such an interpretation of the present situation is out of step with the description of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2 as a place of paradise. If suffering is helpful rather than hurtful and yet was absent from the Garden, it therefore follows that either the Garden was not actually paradise, or these sufferings are not

[110] Oliver Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards and the Metaphysics of Sin,* (Alershot, Hants, Englland and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 27.

actually the blessing Taylor believes them to be. Insisting on the Garden as a place of perfection, Edwards draws the conclusion that the introduction of suffering is indicative of a fall from a position of grace, which would have been Adam's state of original righteousness.

Edwards then turns to Ecclesiastes 7:29, a passage which he describes as "a very clear text for original righteousness."[111] The passage reads, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." Here Edwards quickly refutes Taylor's exegesis of this text on the grounds that Taylor misinterprets "man" and "upright." As was said above, Taylor argues that "man" in this passage is used in the plural sense and is therefore speaking of all mankind rather than a specific individual. Edwards concedes that "man" here could very well be used in the general sense rather than the specific sense, but this does not preclude it speaking specifically of Adam. Edwards argues that in its general use it could also be speaking of the parents of mankind. "And 'tis certain, that to speak of God's making mankind in such a meaning, viz. his giving the species an existence in their first parents, at the creation of the world, is agreeable to the Scripture use of such an expression."[112]

Additionally, Taylor had made the argument that the word for "upright," *jashar*, is not typically used to speak of moral rectitude, at least not when used in this sense. Edwards disagrees, claiming that there are "about an hundred [instances of this word], without all dispute, to signify virtue, or moral rectitude."[113] Taylor's exegesis of this passage is for Edwards neither compelling nor accurate, and therefore in no way refutes what Edwards considers to be its most obvious interpretation: a reference to Adam's original righteousness.[114]

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[111] WJE3:233.
[112] Ibid., 234.
[113] Ibid., 235.
[114] Later Edwards also engages with Taylor's argument regarding the *new man* in Ephesians 4:24, though his argument is fairly straight-forward and not necessarily that different from Taylor's. Edwards merely insisted that this passage is speaking specifically of a change within the believer, something which Taylor did not necessarily oppose. (WJE3:366-369).

Like Wesley, Edwards considered Adam's original righteousness to correspond with the image of God. In a later stage of his treatise (a stage in which Edwards lays out his systematic argument in favor of the doctrine of original sin) he briefly articulates his theological anthropology of the first man. Edwards states that Adam was implanted with two kinds of principles: inferior and superior. Upon closer examination it becomes clear that these principles correspond with a two-fold image of God.

Edwards's earliest writings of the original state of man were occasioned by the problem of the authorship of sin and Adam's ability to trespass against God's will. This problem will be carefully examined in the following chapter, but for now it will suffice to say that Edwards believed that Adam was able to sin because God had allowed him in his image a greater degree of freedom in his original state. This is because Adam did not yet have the sinful nature, therefore lacking the inclination to sin. Not so anymore for Adam's posterity. "Man has not so much freedom now as he had before the fall, . . . now he has a will against a will, an inclination contrary to his reason and judgment, which begets a contrary inclination, and this latter inclination is often overcome and suppressed by the former."[115] Edwards believed that in the fall an "inferior inclination" was introduced, an inclination which frequently suppresses the rational will.

This writing was quite early on in Edwards's career. Harry S. Stout dates this Miscellany as having been written between June and October of 1727, when Edwards was about twenty-three years old. As time went by, his thought developed. In a later Miscellany, written in either September or October of 1729, Edwards writes in greater detail of Adam's state. We find that Edwards considered both the rational will and the "inferior inclination," which Edwards here calls "appetite," were both native in Adam, though the rational will reigned supreme over the will of the appetite. But this is not the natural dynamic between

[115] Jonathan Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 13, "The Miscellanies" (Entry Nox. a-z, aa-zz, 1-500),* ed. Thomas A. Schafer, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), Misc. 291, 383, hereafter WJE13.

these two wills. According to Edwards, it is natural to the appetite to overpower the rational will, but by the influence of God's grace, though to a limited degree. Edwards writes that God gave Adam sufficient grace in order to resist sin, though not efficacious grace, "or a grace that should certainly uphold him in all temptations he could meet with."[116] From this we see that at twenty-five, Edwards might not yet have established a link between Adam's original righteousness and the image in which he had been created.[117]

By the time of *Freedom of the Will,* Edwards's position had changed significantly. Here he argues that God is a perfect moral agent, and man is likewise a moral agent, though an imperfect one, because he is created in God's image. In fact, Edwards argues that it is this image which makes man a moral agent!

> And herein does very much consist that image of God wherein he made man . . . by which God distinguished man from the beasts, viz. in those facilities and principles of nature, whereby he is capable of moral agency. Herein very much consists the natural image of God; as his spiritual and moral image, wherein man was made at first, consisted in that moral excellency, that he was endowed with.[118]

There is much which can be learned from Edwards's description of the natural will. It is striking that the way in which he describes the natural will in many ways mirrors his discussion of the rational will from his earlier writings. Edwards identifies those native human traits as part of the image in which man had been made, thus differentiating man from beast. From this it is clear that Edwards's thought had developed considerably by this point, whether it was by the natural evolution of his thought, the adaption of theology by his contemporaries, or a combination of the two.

Edwards's description of the moral image of God, while only mentioned briefly in *Freedom of the Will*, is prominent in *Religious Affections*, which was published that same

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[116] Misc. 436, WJE13:485.

[117] Such a link is seen as early as 1731 in a sermon by Edwards titled "East of Eden," in which he teaches that God withdrew his spiritual image from Adam as a consequence of Adam's rebellion. (Jonathan Edwards, "East of Eden," in *Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 17, Sermons and Discourses 1730-1733,* ed. Mark Valeri, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 334-335, hereafter WJE17).

[118] Jonathan Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 1, Freedom of the Will,*(New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1957), 166, hereafter WJE1.

year. While there are numerous times in this piece where Edwards speaks of God's moral image in man,[119] his argument is faithfully represented in the following description: God's

> "moral or spiritual image . . . is his holiness, that is the image of God's moral excellency."[120] Edwards would then return to this description four years later in Original Sin, describing this moral image as "superior principles" with which Adam was endowed, while the natural image was described as "inferior principles."[121]

Edwards's arguments come together to show a similarity with Wesley: God's image is twofold, consisting of the natural image which gave man his will and the moral image which perfected that will. The obvious difference between their two views is that Wesley emphasized man's freedom while Edwards emphasized God's sovereignty in an occasionalist and deterministic way, most prominent in his rebuttal of Taylor's philosophical argument.

Conclusion

Both Wesley's and Edwards's views have significant weaknesses. For Edwards the problem is that he never successfully proves that God is not the author of sin. Oliver Crisp argues that Edwards's argument is internally coherent, but externally incoherent. Edwards's use of "sufficient grace" and "confirming grace" align with his use of "inferior principles" and "superior principles" and therefore form a compelling argument for how Adam could have been created in original righteousness and still be able sin. But his argument is not externally coherent because Edwards fails to reconcile an originally righteous creature's ability to sin with his broader determinist and occasionalist framework. "That is, it is not coherent when set alongside other aspects of his metaphysics, particularly his commitment to absolute divine sovereignty, understood occasionalistically."[122]

Wesley's flaw could be described as a general disregard for the philosophical

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[119] Jonathan Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 2, Religious Affections,* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1959), 158, 175-176, 232-233, 255-256, 258-259, 271-272, 340, 346-348, and 365, hereafter WJE2.

[120] WJE2:255.

[121] WJE3:381.

[122] Crisp, *Metaphysics of Sin,* 50.

quandaries of his day, a disposition which he seems to have developed over time. Yet this disregard appears to result in contradiction. In his 1730 sermon on the image of God, Wesley explicitly contends for the indeterminacy of Adam's will, arguing that this was required for him to have been truly free. It seems as though the position of young Wesley was quite similar to that of John Taylor, who later argued against Adam's original righteousness specifically on the grounds of indeterminacy. Yet by the time that Wesley was writing against Taylor, his rebuttal to Taylor's argument was to contend that Adam's will need not have been indeterminate since all that is required to make one holy is a disposition, not a choice. Yet Wesley fails to explain how Adam's actions could be considered praiseworthy if they arose out of a disposition given to him by God. It seems that both Wesley and Edwards argue against Taylor using similar logic but arrive at entirely different conclusion. Unfortunately for Wesley, it appears that Edwards's conclusion was the more rational, even if it did ultimately prove to be incoherent.

The aim of this chapter has been to articulate the similarities in how Wesley and Edwards described and defended Adam's original righteousness. Both men used similar techniques and language, a sign that these two were not the only ones having this debate. Both brought strong opposing arguments, but their arguments had serious flaws. While Wesley was enthusiastic to make room for freedom in his paradigm, his theological position on this issue is not far from his Reformed peer. The following chapter will continue to engage with this paradigm, now turning to Adam's fall.

Chapter Three: The Fall from Righteousness: What It Was and How It Happened

Having established that both Wesley and Edwards believed that Adam was created originally righteous, the question of how Adam could have sinned in the first place now arises. This chapter will evaluate the theological and anthropological systems presented by Wesley and Edwards as they sought to explain how Adam's primal sin was possible. For both men the question of the possibility of the original temptation and the nature of the trespass itself were important stepping-stones in their larger theological systems, ones which could not be ignored, although not necessarily the focus of their theological considerations. It was the nature of the consequences and how (and why) those consequences should be passed on to Adam's descendants that was most pressing, especially given the challenge that had been presented by Dr. Taylor. This chapter will evaluate all this, focusing specifically on the effect of Adam's trespass upon the image of God.

Temptation

Wesley had argued that all that Adam knew, he knew perfectly. Not to say that Adam knew all things perfectly – only God is omniscient – but Adam knew nothing incorrectly. Furthermore, Wesley stated that in his original state Adam had but one affection: love, specifically love for God. There was therefore no inclination within him to do anything but the highest known good. Since Adam knew all that he knew perfectly and, according to Wesley, he only desired to do what was good, there seems to be no room in Wesley's original presentation for Adam to have sinned.

Wesley's solution to this problem is found in his insistence on freedom as being a part of the natural image of God. In his early sermon on the image of God, Wesley explains that opportunity to sin is an essential part of freedom, which is a part of the natural image of God in every man. Wesley writes, "the liberty of man necessarily required that he should have

some trial; else he would have had no choice whither he would stand or no, that is no liberty at all."[123] According to Wesley, true freedom not only requires the capability to choose any one thing over another, but also the opportunity. If God had made man with such a capacity but had not provided the opportunity, it would be as though mankind had the ability to turn a handle, but the door is locked from the other side. True freedom requires the opportunity to exercise that freedom.

Wesley's answer to the question of temptation is therefore relatively straightforward: God created Adam originally righteous, but not impeccable. Furthermore, Adam's freedom required the ability and the opportunity for him to truly exercise it. This opportunity came about at the hands of the devil. Wesley follows tradition as he describes how the devil had himself fallen before Adam. According to Wesley, evil "came from 'Lucifer, . . . 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."[124] Wesley goes on to articulate the path of Satan's[125] fall into sin. Satan "freely yielded" to temptation, which then gave way to pride followed by what Wesley calls self-will, which is contrary to the will of God.[126]

Satan, having fallen, then went on to tempt humanity to fall as well. Yet, it seems that in Wesley's conception Adam and Eve's fall took a slightly different course. Where the devil's fall began with temptation which then led to pride, things seem to have followed a different course for humanity. There are two crucial differences. The first is that Satan "was self-tempted to think too highly of himself."[127] Adam and Eve, on the other hand, having been created originally righteous, experienced only external temptation, not temptation from within. The second difference is that Wesley seems to believe that the primary sin to which

[123] Wesley, Sermon 141, "The Image of God," WW4:295-296.
[124] Wesley, Sermon 62, "The End of Christ's Coming," WW2:476.
[125] Kenneth Collins notes that 'Lucifer,' 'Satan,' and the 'devil' were interchangeable for Wesley. (Kenneth J. Collins, *A Faithful Witness: John Wesley's Homiletical Theology* (Wilmore, Kentucky: Wesley Heritage Press, 1993), 110.
[126] Wesley, Sermon 62, "The End of Christ's Coming," WW2:476.
[127] Ibid.

Adam and Eve were tempted was unbelief, not pride (although pride did follow unbelief). Kenneth Collins writes, "When Wesley describes the fall of Even in this same sermon he maintains that Satan, as an external foil, mingled truth with falsehood so that 'unbelief begot pride … it begot self-will."[128] Collins goes on, "For Wesley, then, the nature of human sin, its irreducible essence, is not pride, . . . but unbelief. A lack of faith in God is the true foundation for the subsequent evils of pride and self-will."[129] Collins's conclusion that Wesley considered unbelief to be the essential sin committed by Adam and Eve is confirmed by similar arguments in his sermon On the Fall of Man, where Wesley writes, "Here sin began, namely, unbelief. . . . [Eve] believed a lie: she gave more credit to the word of the devil than to the word of God. And unbelief brought forth actual sin."[130]

Thus, Wesley has provided a complete system for how Adam did originally sin in the first place. But is his system coherent? The problem of how Adam could have been deceived in the first place still remains, though it is not a problem that Wesley never tried to resolve. In "On the Fall of Man," Wesley seems to argue that it was only Eve who was deceived, not Adam. "How then came [Adam] to join the transgression? 'She gave unto her husband, and he did eat.' He sinned with his eyes open."[131] So according to Wesley, Eve was deceived, but Adam was not.[132] Yet such an explanation still does not resolve the problem of Adam's sin. If it be so that Adam sinned intentionally, this would require that malice and contempt for God's command had already existed in his heart, contradicting Wesley's earlier statements that within Adam the only affection that existed was love. Wesley's system, therefore, was not coherent.

Jonathan Edwards likewise had the problem of explaining how a "good" creation

[128] Collins, *A Faithful Witness*, 110.
[129] Ibid., 111.
[130] Wesley, Sermon 57, "On the Fall of Man," WW2:402-403.
[131] Ibid., 403.
[132] Kenneth Collins notes this as proof that Wesley laid the greater blame on Adam rather than Eve. (Collins, *A Faithful Witness,* 111).

could descend into sin. For Edwards each moment is determined by the moments that came before it, a determinist framework that ultimately finds its source in God's original act. Yet if each moment is ultimately the result of God's action, it would seem that the Edwardsian system would make God the author of sin. The authorship problem is one that Edwards was quite aware of and one which he attempted to resolve in the second part of Original Sin. His explanation is complex, but ultimately ineffective, as will be shown.

Edwards taught that humans are created with the ability to judge things as being either good or amiable, with that which is judged to be good determining behavior. "Human nature," Edwards writes, "must be created with some dispositions; a disposition to relish some things as good and amiable, and to be averse to other things as odious and disagreeable."[133] As a basic example of this, consider a dog by a fire. The dog learns that the closer it comes to the fire, the warmer he feels, but that touching the fire is painfully hot. Therefore, the dog judges lying next to the fire to be preferential to lying in the fire. Relative to each other, lying next to the fire is for the dog good while lying in the fire is bad. According to Edwards, this is the basic method used by all sentient creatures to determine their actions, whether it is what to eat, where to go, what to say, or anything else. "Otherwise," if mankind had not been created with such affections, "[human nature] must be without any such thing as inclination or will. It must be perfectly indifferent, without preference, without choice or aversion towards anything, as agreeable or disagreeable."[134] Thus, Edwards believed that all creatures, humans included, will always do that which they perceive to be the most good.

In the case of Adam, Edwards taught that though he was created originally righteous, he was still capable of falling. Remember that Edwards taught that mankind had been created with inferior and superior principles, corresponding with the natural and spiritual image of

[133] WJE3:231.
[134] Ibid.

God. Remember also that in Edwards's earlier miscellanies he had written that Adam had been at first given sufficient grace which enabled him to keep from sinning, but not confirming grace, a grace which would have effectively made him *non posse pecarre*.

In *Jonathan Edwards and the Metaphysics of Sin*, Oliver Crisp cleverly argues for the correlation between the inferior/superior principles in Adam and sufficient/confirming grace in Adam. Crisp's argument is masterful but would have been even stronger had he incorporated Edwards's sermon "East of Eden." This sermon, written in 1731, provides a helpful link in the development of Edwards's thought. Here Edwards focused on Adam's original righteousness and subsequent fall from grace, and in the course of his arguments Edwards employs the language or concepts of the natural and spiritual image of God, superior principles, and sufficient and confirming grace. When speaking of Adam's original state, Edwards says that "The natural image of God that consist in reason and understanding was then complete."[135] Furthermore, he had "excellent endowments," his mind shining "with the perfect spiritual image of God, being without any defect in its holiness and righteousness, or any sport or wrinkle to mar its spiritual beauty."[136]

Edwards goes on to write that while Adam did not have anything within him that brought him to death, he was still capable of death. Rather than grant Adam eternal life from the outset, God saw fit to establish a time of probation for Adam. "God was not pleased absolutely to promise [eternal life] to man when he first created him, but he gave him a trial for it."[137] This probationary period was Adam's opportunity to show his obedience to his creator. Had he succeeded, "the tree of life would have been a tree of life to him these two ways, viz. as upon the eating of it after his trial he was to have a living forever ascertained to him, and was also to be exalted to a more glorious and blessed life," being put "beyond all

[135] WJE17:334.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid., 337.

possibility of falling."[138] Edwards then immediately explains that Adam's reward of impeccability would not have been a natural endowment, but would have been accomplished by God's having "become engaged for his never sinning or dying," clearly corresponding with the notion of confirming grace mentioned in *Miscellany 290.*

Here is found a similarity between Edwards and Wesley: both men considered it necessary that Adam was given the opportunity to rebel against God, though for different reasons. Wesley considered such an opportunity to have been essential to Adam's endowment of freedom, which was a part of the natural image of God. Therefore, Wesley's construction would have had temptation as a permanent part of Adam's existence, as well as that of his posterity. Edwards, on the other hand, considered such an opportunity to be only temporarily necessary, meant to allow Adam the chance to prove his loyalty and devotion to his creator. Yet there are obvious weaknesses in both constructions. As was noted above, Wesley fails to show how Adam could have been deceived in the first place since he was created, Wesley says, with perfect (though incomplete) understanding and only a loving affection toward God and his will. Though Wesley insists that Eve was deceived and that Adam rebelled, it is difficult to see how this would have been possible for an originally righteous humanity.

The weakness in Edwards's construction is seen against the relief of his larger understanding of freedom. It was noted earlier that Edwards had engaged in the discussion of Adam's original estate partially to disprove the argument that the doctrine of original sin made God the author of sin. Edwards argues against this notion by emphasizing the difference between God causing transgression and God allowing transgression. Edwards argues that in order for God to be the author of sin in Adam, he would have had to have exerted "positive influence" toward that end, meaning that God had caused the rebellion.[139]

[138] Ibid., 338.
[139] WJE3:380.

Instead, Edwards argues that God merely allowed Adam to sin. However, since Edwards had earlier argued that all actions are determined by previous actions and the moral agent's judgment was what is most good, it fails to obtain that God is entirely innocent in the case of Adam's rebellion since Adam's transgression can be traced back to God's initial action. Given God's infinitude and omniscience, (things Edwards upon which is elsewhere quite insistent), one can easily argue that God's initial action could be interpreted as a positive influence leading to sin.

Defining "Sin"

In sinning Adam broke the covenant which had been established between him and his creator. Language of "covenant" is often seen as a hallmark of the Reformed tradition, which emphasizes two covenants between God and his creation: the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. In this understanding there are multiple dispensations of God's grace, first in his creative work and then in his redemptive work. Most who maintain a covenantal theology typically consider the covenant of works to be the covenant initiated at creation, and then the covenant of grace was initiated by the incarnation of Christ. Under the covenant of works it is for humanity to obey God's righteous law, and to justly suffer his wrath as a consequence of disobedience. In the covenant of grace there is a new dispensation, in which it is now for humanity to repent and believe in the saving work of Jesus Christ as the satisfaction of God's wrath. In this way God's justice is not offended and his creation is redeemed.

It appears that federal theology was generally accepted by both Wesley and Edwards, though with some important distinctions. Edwards occasionally appeals to the covenants in *Original Sin,* specifically pointing to it as justification for Adam's guilt being imputed to his posterity (an important factor in covenantal theology, as shall be shown). In his defense of the

doctrine of imputation, Edwards writes that Adam's sin was "a full and complete violation of the covenant, which God had established; even as much as if each one of mankind had the like covenant established with him singly, and had by the like direct and full act of rebellion, violated it for himself."[140]

Clyde Holbrook makes the argument that Edwards saw Adam's sin as essentially a rejection of God's glory. He writes, "What is essential to an understanding of Edwards's position is the point that sin does not consist solely of immoral deeds . . . but rather that sin is a persistent failure to enjoy and cleave to the glory of God for his own sake." The glory of God is an important theme in Edwards's work, even leading Stephen Holmes to argue God's glory to be the central theme of all his work.[141] Indeed, it is helpful to see that Edwards considered Adam's trespass as something more than simply breaking an agreement between himself and his creator; it was an actual rejection of God, the source of the image in which he was created. In rejecting God's glory Adam lost God's glory.

Language of the covenant is ubiquitous in Wesley's work. In his sermon "The Righteousness of Faith," Wesley begins with his argument that the covenant of grace opposes "the covenant of *works*, made with Adam while in Paradise, but commonly supposed to be the only covenant which God had made with man, particularly by those Jews of whom the Apostle [St. Paul in Romans 10] writes."[142] In Wesley's extraction of John Preston's *The New Covenant; or, the Saints' Pardon*, Wesley includes an important phrase regarding covenantal theology. He writes, "You must know that there is a double covenant; I. A covenant of works; and 2. A covenant of grace."[143]

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[140] WJE3:411-412.

[141] Stephen R. Holmes, *God of Grace and God of Glory: An Account of the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000).

[142] Wesley, Sermon 6, "The Righteousness of Faith," WW1:203.

[143] John Preston, "The New Covenant," in *A Christian Library: Consisting of Extracts from and Abridgments of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity Which Have Been Published in the English Tongue,* vol. 6, edited by John Wesley, (London: J. Kershaw, 1827), 31. Wesley published extracts of many thinkers in his *A Christian Library* in order that it would be a helpful tool for the growing Methodist movement. Wesley regularly made changes to the pieces he extracted, deleting certain phrases and adding others. Stanley Rodes shows how Wesley even modified the paragraph cited here. Wesley's decision to publish Preston's work on the covenant can therefore be taken as an endorsement of the theology, even if Wesley

According to Stanley Rodes, Wesley was very much inclined toward a covenantal theology, though not without making some major amendments. He notes that while language of covenantal theology is ubiquitous in Wesley's work, this language is technical and therefore easy to overlook or to simply write off as Wesley's uncritical inclusion of a theological framework that was already 'in the air.' It is Rodes's thesis that many have underestimated just how pivotal covenant theology was in Wesley's thought, and that Wesley had actually appropriated the doctrine in a significant way. Rodes's arguments will be carefully evaluated in the next chapter, but for now it will suffice to say that Wesley clearly categorized Adam's original trespass as a forsaking of a known covenant made between him and his creator.

The fact that the covenant was a known covenant between God and Adam is an important distinction. Wesley considered the proper definition of sin to be "an actual, voluntary 'transgression of the law'; of the revealed, written law of God; of any commandment of God acknowledged to be such at the time that it is transgressed."[144] True sin, for Wesley, requires understanding and is a conscious rebellion against God. For Wesley, as with Edwards, Adam's decision to ignore the prohibition against eating the fruit was an affirmative decision to disobey, not a deception. In Wesley's words, Adam "sinned with his eyes open."[145]

Consequences of the Trespass

In keeping with the covenant, Adam was made to suffer the consequences of his trespass. In this next section the consequences Edwards and Wesley taught were those which Adam and his descendants have been made to suffer will be presented and evaluated.

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was inclined to make certain amendments. (Rodes, *From Faith to Faith*, 60).

[144] Wesley, Sermon 19, "The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God," WW1:436.

[145] Wesley, Sermon 57, "On the Fall of Man," WW2:403.

The doctrine of the Church of the England certainly had a powerful effect on Wesley, even if he was not necessarily inclined to adhere to every jot and tittle. It is common knowledge that Wesley fought to keep the Methodist movement within the Anglican fold. Therefore, when considering the consequences which Adam and his posterity suffered, it is best to first consider the doctrine of Wesley's church. Article X of the Thirty-nine Articles states:

> The condition of Man after the fall of Adam is such, that he can not turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have this good will.[146]

It was the teaching of the Church of England that in consequence of the fall, Adam and his posterity were essentially made *non posse non peccare*. This can also be affirmed in Wesley.

In Wesley's framework, Adam was created originally righteous because he was created in the full natural, political, and (especially) moral image of God. When Adam sinned, according to Wesley, the moral image was lost. In the words of Wesley,

> And 'in that day' yea, that moment, he 'died'. The life of God was extinguished in his soul. The glory departed from him. *He lost the whole moral image of God*, righteousness and true holiness. He was unholy; he was unhappy; he was full of sin, full of guilt and tormenting fears.[147]

Kenneth Collins identifies this loss of the moral image as the greatest disruption in Wesley's righteous state, given that "Wesley maintains that the moral image is the principal image of God in that it is a reflection of the very righteousness and holiness of the Supreme Being."[148]

Upon the loss of God's image, Wesley taught that Adam and his posterity now bear "the image of the devil, in pride and self-will; the image of the beast, in sensual appetites and

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[146] Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 493–94.
[147] Wesley, Sermon 62, "The End of Christ's Coming," WW2:477.
[148] Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 63.

desires."[149] This emphasis on pride, the reader will remember, is an important distinction for Wesley's understanding of Adam's trespass. As was outlined in an earlier section, it was unbelief and pride which Wesley considered to be the essential elements in the primal sin. It is also these elements which are carried on in Adam's descendants.

> It would be endless to enumerate all the species of wickedness . . . that now overspread the earth, in every nation and city and family. They all centre in this atheism, or idolatry; pride, either thinking of themselves more highly than they ought to think, or glorying in something which they have received as though they had not received it; independence and self-will, doing their own will, not the will of him that made them. Add to this, seeking happiness out of God, in gratifying the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life.[150]

Kenneth Collins distills this statement to four essential elements: atheism (unbelief), pride, self-will, and love of the world.[151] As it was for Adam that the first sin was unbelief and then closely followed by pride, Wesley likewise considers this to be the case for Adam's descendants: the essential sin is a failure of faith, and this is followed by a removal of God from the throne of one's own heart. Yet while Adam descended into this sad estate, his posterity is born into it.

For Edwards the consequences of Adam's sin have already been summarized, but a second review is helpful. As was stated above, Edwards believed that God created Adam with sufficient grace which enabled him to withstand sin, but not so much grace as to exclude the possibility of sin. By creating humanity in this way God provided the circumstances in which Adam could be tested so as to prove his devotion to his creator. Of course, Adam did not pass this test.

Edwards believed that if Adam had succeeded God would have granted him confirming grace such that Adam would have been made *non posse peccare.* Edwards is clear in "East of Eden" that such a condition would not have been the result of a change to Adam's

[149] Wesley, Sermon 45, "The New Birth," WW2:190.
[150] Wesley, Sermon 128, "The Deceitfulness of the Human Heart," WW4:154.
[151] Collins, *A Faithful Witness*, 119.

nature, but because of the imposition of God's grace.[152] But Adam did not succeed. As a result of this, Edwards teaches that the sufficient grace of God which granted his "superior principles" was actually withdrawn, leaving Adam in his natural state. Edwards explains that upon the loss of those "superior principles," which was the moral or spiritual image of God, Adam's condition drastically deteriorated. Here Edwards is quoted at length in order to fully appreciate this change in Adam's nature.

> Therefore, immediately the superior divine principles wholly ceased; so light ceases in a room, when the candle is withdrawn: and thus man was left in a state of darkness, woeful corruption and ruin; nothing but flesh, without spirit. The inferior principles of self-love and natural appetite, which were given only to serve, being alone, and left to themselves, of course became reigning principles; having no superior principles to regulate or control them, they became absolute masters of the heart. The immediate consequence of which was a fatal catastrophe, a turning of all things upside down, and the succession of a state of the most odious and dreadful confusion.[153]

Wesley and Edwards both maintained that the state into which Adam fell is the state in which all humans now are born, evidenced by the first sections of both Wesley's and Edwards's treatises on original sin. In both cases they look to the past and present states of humanity, arguing that all men everywhere have always been sinful, even in the most remote circumstances. From this observation both Wesley and Edwards empirically conclude that all of humanity continues to suffer the consequences of Adam's sin.

The Issue of Imputation

It is easy to understand why Adam and Eve had to suffer the consequences they did. They trespassed against God's known law and therefore had to pay the price for their actions. Yet the question of why Adam's posterity should have to suffer the same consequences indefinitely is one which became less and less appealing over time. There are numerous instances in the Old Testament of the children of an individual having to suffer the penalty

[152] WJE17:338.
[153] WJE3:382.

for his wrongdoing, indicating a general acceptance of imputed guilt at the time of writing and reception. But as time went on and notions of what makes one guilty evolved, the issue of imputed guilt came to the fore.

An early explanation for the sinfulness of mankind is a doctrine called traducianism, most associated with Tertullian. Here Adam's soul is considered to have been corrupted by sin in his transgression. Tertullian believed that in procreation the soul is transferred to one's progeny, conceiving of it as being transmitted in sperm. "The sperm of the father consists of a corporeal substance . . . and a psychic one. . . . In the same way that the loam and the breath of God were united and constituted Adam," says Tertullian, "the two elements of the sperm constitute man. Hence eventually all souls arose from the soul of Adam."[154]

Tertullian taught that when the soul is transferred in the act of procreation, the taint of sin is transferred with it, thereby explaining how the actual guilt of Adam's sin would be had by all. The only exception, of course, is Jesus Christ, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit rather than Joseph and therefore did not have a tainted soul. Pier Franco Beatrice writes, "In Tertullian's view . . . the fact that Jesus was born from a virgin without the coagency of the male seed . . . may be taken to indicate that there is at work in the Word of God a principle of salvation and liberation from the chains of original sin."[155] Tertullian's ideas here are considered by many to be precursors of original sin. One of the most significant theological voices that contributed to the development of hamartiology was "the great theologian of sin," Augustine.[156]

In reformed theology there are essentially two doctrine's of imputation: Augustinian realism and federalism. Augustine's doctrine of imputation teaches that all mankind was

[154] Tertullian, *De Anima*, in *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani* De Anima," tr. J.H. Waszink (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2010), 342.

[155] Pier Franco Beatrice, *The Transmission of Sin: Augustine and Pre-Augustinian Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 231.

[156] Jesse Couenhoven, "Augustine," in *T&T Clark Companion to the Doctrine of Sin*, eds. Keith L. Johnson and David Lauber (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 218.

present in Adam at the time of his transgression. Therefore, all of humanity were actual participants in the primal sin and are therefore guilty. Augustine uses a traducian system, arguing that all mankind was present in Adam's loins. But he also makes the important emphasis upon the guilt of Adam which is mediately transferred, passing to each person from his or her father.

The second doctrine of imputation, federalism, is often traced back to John Calvin but was more explicitly developed during the Protestant Scholastic period following the Reformation. Federalism is covenantal in nature and teaches that Adam served as the federal head of all humanity, and that when Adam sinned he broke the original covenant between God and man. "This view is also sometimes called 'representationalism,' for the central theological claim here is that Adam represents the rest of the human race in committing the primal sin; he acts on our behalf, and God imputes his sin to us as a consequence."[157] Thus, the guilt of Adam's sin is transferred immediately to all humanity "in such a way that all his posterity are born with the inherited condition of a vitiated nature."[158]

Edwards on Imputation

Jonathan Edwards's theory of imputation has been subject to a significant amount of debate with many theologians disagreeing on whether for him the guilt of Adam's sin is transferred mediately or immediately. This is because Edwards's development of this particular doctrine was one of the few places where he did something genuinely innovative. In the opinion of Oliver Crisp, "His work on this topic is . . . one of the few significant theological restatements of this doctrine in the early modern period, and perhaps one of a handful of post-Augustinian accounts that can claim to have made a real contribution to our understanding of

[157] Oliver Crisp, "Sin," in *Christian Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic*, eds. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 201.

[158] Oliver Crisp, *Retrieving Doctrine: Essays in Reformed Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 55.

the doctrine."[159] Crisp goes on to say, "It seems to me that Edwards's most important contribution to the Christian doctrine of original sin was . . . his reworking of the doctrine of the transmission of original sin from Adam to the rest of the human race."[160]

Indeed, Edwards's work here is exceptional, but also given to much confusion. It therefore requires a great deal of care in its interpretation.

Edwards's primary engagement with the topic of imputation is found in Part IV, Chapter III of Original Sin. He begins:

> From which it will follow, that both guilt, or exposedness to punishment, and also depravity of heart, came upon Adam's posterity just as they came upon him, as much as if he and they had all coexisted, like a tree with many branches; allowing only for the difference necessarily resulting from the place Adam stood in, as head or root of the whole, and being first and most immediately dealt with, and most immediately acting and suffering. Otherwise, it is as if, in every step of proceeding, every alteration in the root had been attended, at the same instant, with the same steps and alterations throughout the whole tree, in each individual branch. I think, this will naturally follow on the supposition of there being a constituted oneness or identity of Adam and his posterity in this affair.[161]

Edwards begins with his thesis that the guilt of Adam's sin came upon Adam's posterity as if they had coexisted and had all sinned together at once. Already the question arises of whether Edwards maintained a federalist position or something more aligned with Augustinian realism. That Edwards speaks of Adam and his posterity "coexisting" together suggests a realist approach. However, Samuel Storms notes that those who would use the passage to support a realist argument have overlooked Edwards's use of the modifier "as if," indicating a hypothetical treatment rather than a statement of reality. Adam's sin is imputed to his posterity so completely that they might as well have committed the sin themselves, but that was not the case. "Edwards' theory, however, is that the ground of imputation is a divinely constituted covenantal oneness, not a divinely constituted seminal or physiological

[159] Oliver Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards Among the Theologians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 107.
[160] Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards Among the Theologians*, 111.
[161] WJE3:389-390.

identity."[162] Thus, Storms argues that Edwards is clearly employing a federalist framework for his theory of imputation, as is evidenced by his use of the hypothetical "as if."

Given the clear strain of covenantal theology in Edwards's work (noted above), it is easy to see why Storms and others have argued for a federalist interpretation of Edwards's system of imputation. However, such an interpretation overlooks many statements within Edwards's argument and thereby misses the true meaning of his words. Thus, when Edwards speaks of the "coexistence of the evil disposition" in the hearts of Adam and his posterity, it is indicative his understanding of humanity as a singular metaphysical whole, existing in four dimensions. This is seen in his adjoining footnote where he presents the following argument:

> Let us suppose, that Adam and all his posterity had coexisted, and that his posterity had been . . . united to him, something as the branches of a tree are united to the root. . . . so as to constitute as it were one complex person, or one moral whole: so that by the law of union there should have been a communion and coexistence in acts and affections; . . . and when the heart of the root, as a punishment of the sin committed, was forsaken of God, in like manner would it have fared with all the branches; . . . And thus all things, with relation to evil disposition, guilt, pollution and depravity would exist, in the same order and dependence, in each branch, as in the root. Now, difference of the time of existence don't at all hinder things succeeding in the same order, any more than difference of place in a coexistence of time.[163]

Edwards makes the case here that mankind had coexisted with Adam in his trespass, though not in the Augustinian traducian model. For Edwards, the guilt of the trespass is not imputed because all mankind is essentially contained within Adam's loins but because all humanity is essentially one, all rising from Adam, the common root. Thus, when Edwards argues that Adam's posterity are not subject to a "double guilt, one the guilt of Adam's sin, another the guilt arising from their having a corrupt heart,"[164] it is because that corrupt heart, the principle of Adam's sin, is shared by all humanity.

It is also in this section that Edwards presents his argument for the universe being

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[162] C. Samuel Storms, *Tragedy in Eden: Original Sin in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 230.

[163] WJE3:n391-392.

[164] Ibid., 390.

constantly created by God, *ex nihilo*, moment by moment. Edwards writes, "In point of time, what is past entirely ceases, when present existence begins; otherwise it would not be past. The past moment is ceased and gone, when the present moment takes place; and does no more coexist with it, than does any other moment that had ceased twenty years ago."[165] For Edwards, each moment exists in isolation, separate from and independent of the preceding and proceeding moments. "Therefore," says Edwards, "the existence of created substances, in each successive moment, must be the effect of the immediate agency, will, and power of God."[166] In this way, Edwards makes the case that each moment is created and then immediately annihilated by God as each successive moment is likewise created.

Edwards's use of constant creationism is important for a proper understanding of his presentation of imputation. As Edwards makes his case that each moment is numerically distinct from all others, the question of how guilt can be imputed at all arises, for if each moment is created by God then it stands to reason that guilt is only imputed arbitrarily by the creator of those moments, begging the question of why creatures from one moment should be responsible for the sins of previous creations. Presumably, created humans do not persist through time, so how can they be responsible?

This difficulty is answered by Michael Rea, who argues that Edwards actually does see humanity as persisting through time, though in different segments. In "The Metaphysics of Original Sin," Rea reasons that the people of each created moment are actually segments of humanity as a metaphysical whole.[167] Thus, humans must be understood to be four-dimensional, with time being the fourth dimension. Each segment of humanity makes up a part of the whole.

Edwards's understanding of humanity as a single entity being constantly created yet

[165] Ibid., 400.
[166] Ibid., 401.
[167] Michael C. Rea, "The Metaphysics of Original Sin," in *Persons: Human and Divine,* eds. Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 319–56.

persisting through time allows him to have a via media between the federalists and the realists. For Edwards, the guilt of sin is both mediately and immediately imputed: it is mediately imputed through the successively created moments through the course of human history, but it is immediately imputed because it was all of humanity which sinned in Adam, who was an early segment of the entire entity.

Wesley on Imputation

John Wesley's position on the issue of imputation is not so clearly outlined and, as a result, challenging to confirm. Randy Maddox notes how Wesley's views on imputation changed over time and can essentially be divided into three different periods: early Wesley, middle Wesley, and late Wesley.[168] While Wesley seems to have mostly defended a Federalist position during his middle years, it appears that Wesley's career began and ended with a preference for a traducian explanation.

The question of imputation seems to have had little importance for Wesley at the beginning of his career, though there are some hints that he was open to the notion that sin could be passed down through natural generation. Examples of this possibility are found in two of Wesley's early sermons. In "The Image of God," Wesley posits that the juices of the fruit could have infected Adam with a sinful pathogen which is then passed on to his posterity. A second example is found in "Justification by Faith" where Wesley writes the following:

> For the moment he tasted that fruit he died. His soul died, was separated from God; separate from whom the soul has no more life than the body has when separate from the soul. His body likewise became corruptible and mortal, so that death then took hold on this also. And being already dead in spirit, dead to God, dead in sin, he hastened on to death everlasting, to the destruction both of body and soul in the fire never to be quenched.
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> Thus 'by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. And so death passed

[168] Maddox, 75.

> upon all men,' as being contained in him who was the common father and representative of us all.[169]

Notice how in this sermon Wesley seems to adhere to both a traducian as well as a federalist imputation. Randy Maddox argues that Wesley has uncritically included a federalist argument because he had been "influenced by the Reformed juridical concern."[170] The traducian argument is likewise in its nascent form. It is clear that at this stage in Wesley's career he was not yet particularly interested in the finer points of this argument.

This changed in the 1750s. Maddox points to Wesley's 1755 correspondence with Richard Thompson and his subsequent *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (1755) as proof of a heightened interest in the doctrine, places in which Wesley seems to have once again tended toward a traducian interpretation.[171] The timing of these writings make Wesley's words in his treatise on original sin that much more interesting, given that this reply to John Taylor was written in 1758. As Wesley reasoned against Taylor he used an almost exclusively federalist argument in his rebuttal.[172]

Beginning in his rebuttal to Taylor's exegesis of Romans 5:12-19, Wesley engages in a federalist argument to combat the notion that Adam's descendants do not suffer the punishment for his sins. Wesley affirms that Christ has come as the new representative for mankind and has established a new dispensation for humanity, though he rejects Taylor's notion Christ being humanity's federal representative automatically "sets them quite to rights with God."[173]

Not much later in this piece is Wesley's defense of a federalist position. Where the Westminster Catechism had stated that Adam was a public representative of all mankind, Taylor had argued that this is wrong on account of the fact that only Adam received the

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[169] Wesley, "Sermon 5, Justification by Faith," WW1:185.
[170] Maddox, 78.
[171] Ibid., 79.
[172] Cf. Wesley, *Original Sin,* WW12:280. Wesley here chooses not to challenge the objection that children often inherit the vices of their parents, which could be taken as a traducian argument.
[173] Ibid., 229.

punishment for his trespass. Wesley refused this, arguing that the consequences suffered by all people show that all Adam's descendants are "partakers of the death which was so threatened to Adam,"[174] affirming the federalist interpretation.

Wesley's adherence to federalism is especially seen in his response to Taylor's supplement. Here Taylor had stated that "no Action is said to be imputed, reckoned or accounted to any Person for Righteousness of Condemnation, but the proper Act and Deed of that Person."[175] Wesley's response speaks repeatedly of the covenant between God and his people, showing that it was the role of Christ to be the "scape-goat" and to have the guilt of mankind's transgressions imputed to him that he might suffer the penalty. Adam was the representative of all mankind, and then was Christ.[176]

Finally, in Part III, Section VI, Wesley speaks directly to the question of whether Adam was a federal head of mankind. Again, Wesley's affirmation of this doctrine is grounded on his belief that Christ was a similar representative. Wesley begins this section with the following explanation:

> My reason for believing he was so in some sense is this. Christ was the *representative* of mankind when God 'laid on him the iniquities of us all', and 'he was wounded for our transgressions'. But Adam was a type or *figure* of Christ. Therefore he was also in some sense our *representative*. In consequence of which 'all died in him', as 'in Christ all shall be made alive'.[177]

Randy Maddox suggests that Wesley's defense of federalism in *Original Sin* is somewhat half-hearted, perhaps indicating that while Wesley was resolute in his desire to refute Taylor he still had reservations. Maddox takes interest in the "amount of energy that Wesley devoted to arguing with Taylor that the curse on Adam was not simply physical death, but a closely related spiritual death . . . [signaling] renewed emphasis on 'natural

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[174] Ibid., 241.

[175] Taylor, 283.

[176] While Wesley does argue clearly argue for a federalist interpretation in this section, he also affirms the universality of Christ's representative atonement. He writes, "I believe none ever did, or ever will, die eternally, merely for the sin of our first father." (WW12:307). Adam's guilt is imputed to his posterity as well but is already cancelled by the sacrifice of Christ. Only the guilt of personal sins remains.

[177] Wesley, *Original Sin,* WW12:326.

generation.'"[178] Perhaps even at this point Wesley was not entirely convinced of the federalist model.

Wesley would eventually be won over to the traducian perspective, thanks in particular to a piece published by Henry Woolnor in 1641 titled "The True Original of the Soule," a piece of which Wesley would later publish an extraction.[179] The most striking example of Wesley's adoption of traducianism is found in the fifth issue of the *Arminian Magazine,* published in 1782. Here in a piece titled "On the Origin of the Soul," Wesley makes a full-throated case in favor of the doctrine, insisting that it be the only explanation which aligned fully with both scripture and reason. His final argument is as follows:

> Moses informs us, fallen Adam begat a son in his own likeness, and after his image: but had he generated a body without a soul, he would not have begotten a son in his own likeness, since he was not a mere mortal body, but a fallen, embodied spirit. 'But upon this scheme,' will not objectors say, 'if Adam was converted when he begat a son, he begat a converted soul.' This does by no means follow; for if he was born of God after his fall, it was by grace, through faith, and not by nature, through generation: he could not therefore communicate his spiritual regeneration, by natural generation, any more than a great scholar can propagate his learning together with his species.[180]

It is therefore clear that as Wesley's theology developed, he eventually came to adopt a traducian explanation for the imputation of Adam's sin.

It seems that for both Wesley and Edwards the subject of imputation was a particularly murky area. Both men were clearly aware that the question needed to be dealt with but were generally unhappy with the options that had been provided. Edwards's response to this dissatisfaction was to offer a new explanation, one which he felt better appreciated mankind's unique position in creation. Wesley, on the other hand, was simply not willing to regard the question of imputation as something worthy of a tremendous amount of effort to resolve; his focus was elsewhere. Therefore, when Henry Woolnor's traducian

[178] Maddox, 80.
[179] Henry Woolnor, *The True Original of the Soule,* (London: Paine and Symmons, 1641), mentioned in Wesley's journal on 27 January 1762, (WW21:350).
[180] Wesley, "On the Origin of the Soule," *Arminian Magazine* 5, (London: J. Paramore, 1782), 195.

account came to his attention he appears to have adopted it as the explanation which worked best for him, inspite of its shortcomings.

Conclusion

Neither Wesley nor Edwards are able to adequately explain how Adam was able to sin in the first place, a serious flaw in both systems. The primary problem for Edwards was his inability to explain how Adam could have sinned in the first place without God having preordained it. Edwards maintains that God had given Adam a test to determine his loyalty, but all this is moot in light of Edwards's determinist framework. There is simply no getting around the fact that in a system of Edwardsian determinism God is ultimately the author of sin. Wesley's unresolved difficulty was his inability to reconcile his insistence on Adam's perfection with his having trespassed God's law. Wesley insists that Adam was not deceived nor was he inclined towards evil, and yet he sinned, an entirely incoherent conception.

The structure of the treatises by both on original sin suggest that they were logically working backwards, beginning with the present situation of humanity and then looking back to see how things came to be as they are. Thus, Wesley's career-long focus on the renewal of the image of God comes into view: for Wesley the effect of faith was that God's moral image would be renewed in humanity, which caused him to regard the essential anthropological problem for humanity to be the loss of that image. This will be explored fully in the next chapter. For now it suffices to say that for both Wesley and Edwards their concern was not so much to explain how humanity came to be in its present state but to prove and emphasize the dire condition in which humanity has found itself, causing both men to look to Adam's trespass as the root of the problem, even if they were ultimately unable to adequately show how this is the case.

Chapter 4: Restoring the Image of God: Wesley and Edwards on Regeneration

The issue of regeneration was pressing in 18th century federal theology. The terms of the covenant were not only that the elect would be saved, but also that the lost image would be renewed. Following in the logic of Galatians 5:22-23, it was expected by both Wesley and Edwards that those who were truly saved should be exhibiting signs of renewal, those being the "fruit of the spirit" spoken of in the passage. All this was meant to take place as a part of the experience of salvation. This chapter will evaluate the soteriologies of Wesley and Edwards, considering specifically their individual interpretations of federal theology and how regeneration is experienced.

Federal Theology Reprise

Recall from chapter one the brief summary of the three covenants within covenant theology, those of works, grace, and redemption. By way of reminder, the covenant of works is that unmediated covenant between God and his creation in which it was incumbent upon humanity to follow the righteous law of God. This covenant was broken, leaving Adam and his posterity to bear the negative terms of that covenant. This was followed by the covenant of grace, which is that covenant between God and humanity, mediated through Christ. This covenant is what allows the elect to cleave to Christ and claim the merit of his sacrifice. This sacrifice was able to bring about salvation for the elect thanks to the third covenant, the covenant of redemption, that unmediated covenant within the Godhead.

But what about the Holy Spirit? Since the pact seems to be made between the Father and Son it almost seems as though there is no place for the Holy Spirit within this covenant or any of the others. This, however, is incorrect. While it is true that this covenant is primarily between the Father and Son as its legal partners, it is the Holy Spirit who implements the covenant. Johannes Cocceius, one of the earliest defenders of covenant

theology, wrote that "The Holy Spirit brings to bear the power of the Deity in the work of regeneration within us, as well as love, through which he unites us to God as a seal of our inheritance."[181] From Cocceius it is seen that redemption was also expected from the covenant of redemption, not just salvation, and it is by the Holy Spirit that this regeneration is to take place.

The *Religious Affections*

During the Great Awakening in New England, of which Jonathan Edwards was among the most influential voices, revival swept across the northern colonies. Encouraged by powerful sermons of "awakening," many people became convinced of their immanent need for spiritual renewal. In many cases these renewals were characterized by religious "enthusiasms" (shouting, leaping, etc.) which led some to condemn such the revival as inauthentic, or even as a work of the devil. Indeed, the picture of 1730s and 40s New England is one of revival as well as division.

The lines of division formed between those who were in favor of the revival and its associated enthusiasms and those who opposed it. Among the opposition were the Old Lights or the Old Calvinists and the Liberals. According to Richard Steele, "The Old Lights sought to restore the sober decorum of the traditional New England Way and suspected the 'awakened' of demonic enthusiasm, even when they professed the impeccable orthodoxy of Westminster."[182] The other side of the opposition to the revival was the Liberals. They endorsed a form of Arminianism which "construed moral virtue as the control of the passions and appetites by cool reason."[183]

On the other side of the debate were those who supported the revival and the

[181] Johannes Cocceius, *Summa Doctrinae de Foedere et Testamento Dei* §89 Tr. Raymond A. Blacketter in Van Asselt, *Federal Theology,* 234.
[182] Richard Steele, 216.
[183] Ibid.

affections which characterized those who had been revived. All who supported the Awakening were called New Lights, and can also be subdivided into two factions, here called the Extremists and the Moderates. The Extremists "generally identified true religion with emotional intensity and physical manifestations" and condemned those among the Old Lights, who argued for a measured and moderated approach to religion, as unregenerate. The Extremists were also more aggressive in their tactics, rivaling Old Lights ministers by founding congregations of their own in those towns. The Moderates, among whom Jonathan Edwards was a leader, took a more measured approach. According to Steele, the Moderates "neither rejected the Awakening outright nor accepted it uncritically but attempted to differentiate the genuine signs of conversion from those manifestations that were either value neutral or clearly demonic."[184] Edwards's *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* is an example of such a work.

In *Religious Affections* one once again sees the unique personality of Edwards's theology come into view. It was important for Edwards to protect the agency of the Spirit in the life of the Christian and the reality that those who are justified are also regenerated. Yet Edwards also believed in a rational approach, rejecting the notion that anything which seems spiritual is therefore authentic and from God. Establishing criteria by which one could differentiate between true and false affections was, therefore, the goal of the *Religious Affections.* In the words of John Smith,

> Edwards found himself in an unenviable position; on the one hand, he was committed to defending the importance of gracious affections, but, on the other, he had to admit that there are false affections, and that one must find criteria for distinguishing these from the true ones.[185]

Religious Affections runs at 378 pages in the Yale edition and includes a preface by Edwards followed by three major sections. In the preface Edwards states that his aim in this

[184] Ibid., 217.

[185] John E. Smith, "Religious Affections and the Sense of the Heart," in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards,* ed, Sang Hyun Lee, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005),105.

piece "is to show the nature and signs of the gracious operations of God's Spirit," distinguishing it from his *Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* wherein Edwards had evaluated both the "common and saving operations" of the Spirit.[186] John Smith notes that in saying this Edwards has very narrowly defined the focus of this tract. "Calvinists," says Smith, "traditionally distinguished within the Spirit common and saving operations; the term 'gracious,' however, was reserved for the latter alone."[187] Thus Edwards has clearly stated that his focus on this piece will be on those operations by which the Spirit graciously renews the image of God within the elect.[188]

Edwards begins in Part One by defining "affections" and how they come about. Edwards writes that "the affections are no other, than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul."[189] Here Edwards differentiates between understanding and the will, where the understanding is that faculty capable of perception and evaluation while the will is the faculty of inclination or disinclination and is responsive to the faculty of understanding. Out of these two faculties actions arise. (Edwards also engages with this in his treatise on *Freedom of the Will*, which was evaluated above.) Early on Edwards sought to establish that affections are to be differentiated from passions. In the affections the individual remains in full control of his faculties but passions are "those that are more sudden, and whose effects on the animal spirits are more violent, and the mind more overpowered, and less in its own command."[190] Thus Edwards argues that while the affections which are from the Spirit take arise from the understanding and will, passions subdue these faculties.

[186] WJE2:89, emphasis added.
[187] John E. Smith, "Editor's Introduction," WJE2:6.
[188] In addition to the *Religious Affections* and *Distinguishing Marks,* Edwards wrote two other treatises concerning the revival over which he had presided: *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton* (1737) and *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England* (1742).
[189] WJE2:96.
[190] Ibid., 98.

In Part Two Edwards presents twelve "negative" signs, which are those which had been popularly considered to be signs of the Spirit's renewal in the believer but are not actually authentic. It is not beneficial to list all twelve of the negative signs here; a sampling will be sufficient to show the aim of this argument. Among these negative signs are affections "raised very high,"[191] "great effects on the body,"[192] the accompanying of "texts of Scripture, remarkably brought to mind,"[193] or that the affections come "in a certain order,"[194] among others. In essence, Edwards sought to show by these negative signs that one should not expect special revelation or remarkable experience as proof of these affections, nor should one expect to be able to evaluate them in someone else by observing a particular sequence of such an experience.

Part Three, the longest section by far, is Edwards's presentation of the twelve signs of true religious affections. These signs are listed below:

1. They "arise from those influences and operations on the heart which are spiritual, supernatural and divine."
2. "The first objective ground of gracious affections, is the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things, as they are in themselves; and not any conceived relation they bear to self, or self-interest."
3. They are "primarily founded on the loveliness of the moral excellency of divine things."
4. They "arise from the mind's being enlightened, rightly and spiritually to understand or apprehend divine things."
5. They are "attended with a reasonable and spiritual conviction of the judgment, of the reality and certainty of divine things."
6. They are "attended with evangelical humiliation."
7. They are "attended with a change of nature," that is, conversion, which is a turning toward God and a turning away from sin.
8. They "naturally beget and promote such a spirit of love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness and mercy, as appeared in Christ."
9. They "soften the heart, and are attended and followed with a Christian tenderness of spirit."
10. "Another thing wherein those affections that are truly gracious and holy, differ from those that are false, is beautiful symmetry and proportion."
11. "The higher they are raised, the more is a spiritual appetite and longing of soul after spiritual attainments, increased."

[191] Ibid., 127.
[192] Ibid., 131.
[193] Ibid., 142.
[194] Ibid., 151.

12. They "have their exercise and fruit in Christian practice."[195]

Evaluating each sign in detail would be so exhaustive as to become counter-productive, so instead this section will evaluate the signs by their respective groupings, differentiated by themes. While Edwards himself did not present these as groups, there are four which naturally emerge.

The first grouping is not actually a group at all but is simply the first sign on its own. Here the first major theme of *The Affections* is presented, which is that these affections come about solely as a work of the Holy Spirit and are those which follow justification. The second grouping is more substantial, consisting of signs two through six. The theme of this group, which is stated most explicitly in the fourth sign, is that the religious affections give the Christian a spiritual "sense of the heart" which allows him to know spiritual truths. Grouping number three consists of signs seven through nine and is characterized by the theme that the affections bring about a change of nature, transforming the believer into the likeness of Christ. The fourth grouping consists of the final three signs. These last three are characterized by the idea that true religious affections are holistic and consistent. Those who experience the religious affections should experience them evenly and should expect those affections to bear fruit. Edwards gives the most thorough treatment to the twelfth sign, suggesting that this is where he put the greatest amount of value. Though Edwards did not intend this treatise as a means to identify the falsely regenerated, he still clearly believed that true regeneration should be observable. As John Smith writes, "the principle behind this sign is that holy affections must exert their influence in Christian practice; the deed is the most important 'outward and visible sign of an inward grace.'"[196]

Of the five works of Edwards that John Wesley abridged, none received a more

[195] Ibid., 197-461.
[196] Smith, "Introduction," WJE2:40.

thorough treatment than *Religious Affections*.[197] Wesley significantly shortened the treatise, leaving a document only one sixth of Edwards's original. Most scholars agree, however, that Wesley was not actually working from that original, but from another abridgment written by William Gordon published in 1762. Christopher M. B. Allison notes that Gordon's abridgment, itself only two-thirds of Edwards's original, was not written with the intention of changing any of Edwards's argument but was simply abridged for the sake of length.[198] Not so for Wesley's. Richard Steele writes that Wesley's abridgment was a "radical overhaul carried out with specific doctrinal objectives,"[199] especially the encouragement and education of those within his movement regarding the nature and work of the Spirit while excising anything that hinted at predestination.

Wesley's most notable changes are his omissions of signs two through four. According to Allison, the second and third signs were likely omitted because Wesley's considered them to be redundancies of the first sign.[200] Kevin Lowery, however, argues that Wesley's omissions are more carefully considered. According to Lowery, the second sign was omitted because it dealt with a theme, self-love, with which Wesley had not so closely engaged. In the words of Lowery, "Wesley never gave the topic of self-love the attention it should have received, given the importance that love holds in his thought."[201] Of the third sign, Lowery argues that Wesley omitted it either because he perceived it as a defense of predestination or because it advocated for an idea of virtue which was not sufficiently scriptural.[202] Wesley's omission of the fourth sign is more puzzling. In the words of Gregory Clapper, "Conjecture about why Wesley deleted the fourth sign is more difficult, for it asserts

[197] The fifth work Wesley abridged was Edwards's *The Life of David Brainerd*, 1749. Wesley's abridgment of the *Religious Affections* first appeared in 1773 in Volume 23 of the Pine edition of *Wesley's Works,* later appearing as a stand alone publication in 1801.

[198] Christopher M. B. Allison, "The Methodist Edwards," in *Methodist History,* 50:3 (April, 2012), 157.

[199] Steele, 224.

[200] Allison, 158.

[201] Kevin Lowery, *Salvaging Wesley's Agenda: A New Paradigm for Wesleyan Virtue Ethics*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 86, (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 168.

[202] Ibid.

something which Wesley would not want to deny—the intellectual component in the affections."[203] Theories abound as to why Wesley omitted this section, but it most likely appears that he considered Edwards's argument to be too subtle for most of his readers. It seems that while Wesley wanted to utilize this very popular work for the sake of his followers, he remained concerned that anything which smelled of predestination should be excised with extreme prejudice. The end result is a treatise which suffered no words wasted, though maintained its original argument that the work of the Holy Spirit in renewing the image of God in man.

Edwards on Covenant and Justification

But why does it matter what Edwards thought about true regeneration or what sort of changes Wesley made? It matters because this shows that both Wesley and Edwards considered regeneration to be a promise of the covenant and therefore something that all true believers will necessarily experience. It was previously argued that Jonathan Edwards did not employ a traditionally Reformed interpretation of federal theology. As Oliver Crisp notes, "Edwards's solution to the ontological problems underlying the doctrine of imputation went beyond both federalism and realism,"[204] instead recognizing humanity as a single metaphysical whole, a system which caused Adam's sin to be imputed to his posterity both mediately and immediately. The covenant of works was certainly in play for Edwards, but it was not his primary focus. Edwards's answer to the question of imputed righteousness, and how the elect might be saved, has yet to be addressed in this thesis. The following section will consider the role of the covenant of grace in Edwards's theology, showing that while Edwards did not believe that any without faith could be saved, this did not lead him so far as to adopt

[203] Gregory S. Clapper, "'True Religion' and the Affections: A Study of John Wesley's Abridgement of Jonathan Edwards' Treatise on Religious Affections," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 19 no. 2, (Fall 1984), 81.
[204] Crisp, "Theological Pedigree," 326.

Arminian notions of free grace.

Edwards on Federal Theology

The division between the covenants of grace and redemption was introduced above. Maintaining a clear distinction between these two covenants was an important practice for Edwards; four of his later Miscellanies were dedicated to offering his definitions of both (Miscellanies 617, 825, 919, and 1091). As Edwards says, "These covenants are often confounded, and the promises of each called the promises of the covenant of grace without due distinction."[205] Of the four, Misc. 825 is the most concise, consisting solely of his definitions of the two. According to Edwards, the covenant of redemption is the "covenant of God the Father with the Son, and with all the elect in him, whereby things are said to be given in Christ before the world began, and to be promised before the world began."[206] Edwards goes on to frame this covenant as that which replaces the broken covenant of works. Here Edwards emphasizes Christ's role as the second Adam, appealing to the typology between them. "For as God made the first covenant with Adam for himself and all his posterity, so God makes this covenant with Christ, as second Adam, for himself and all his posterity."[207] One of the most important features of this covenant for Edwards was that the receiving party consisted of Christ and the elect. In an earlier miscellany he writes that it is "the covenant that God makes with Christ and his people, considered as one."[208] Through his insistence on the unity of Christ and his elect (or his 'posterity'), Edwards's theory of imputation once again comes into view.

Edwards then defines the covenant of grace as the "covenant that is the marriage

[205] Jonathan Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 18, The "Miscellanies" (Entry nos. 501-832),* ed. Ava Chamberlain, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), Misc. 617, 148, hereafter WJE18.
[206] Edwards, Misc 825, WJE18:536.
[207] Ibid, 537.
[208] Edwards, Misc 617, WJE18:148.

covenant between Christ and the soul, the covenant of union, or whereby the soul becomes united to Christ. . . . In marriage, or in the soul's conversion, it becomes a proper covenant."[209] Here the covenant of grace is enacted at conversion, it being the terms of the bond between Christ and his elect. In Misc. 617 Edwards states that the promise of this covenant is marriage to Christ, pointing to the biblical distinction of the church as Christ's bride.

> And the sum of what is promised in Christ's marriage covenant with his people, is the enjoyment of himself and communion with him in the benefits he himself has obtained of the Father by what he has done and suffered; as in marriage the persons covenanting give themselves and all that they have to each other. And indeed we may say that the sum of all that Christ promises in his covenant with his people, is that he will give himself to them. In marriage the persons covenanting, giving themselves to each other, do give what they have to each; the union which they mutually consent to infers [and] confers communion. This promise of the covenant of Christ with his people, implies eternal life of both soul and body.[210]

The marriage metaphor is important to Edwards because it emphasizes the unity between Christ and the elect. It is through this unity that the terms of the covenant of redemption are applied to the church in addition to Christ himself. According to Edwards, the benefits promised to Christ in the covenant of redemption are the following: "eternal life, perseverance, justification; and not only so, but regeneration or conversion; the giving of faith, and all things necessary in order to faith, [such] as the means of grace, God's Word and ordinances."[211] Through these promises the exact natures of both covenants come into view: the covenant of redemption between father and son is that which secures redemption for those who are united to Christ, while the covenant of grace is the means by which that union takes place. The condition of this covenant "is that they should close with him and adhere to him."[212]

To "close with Christ" is a distinctive of Puritan theology, referring to that which

[209] Ibid., 148.
[210] Ibid., 148-149.
[211] Ibid, 149.
[212] Ibid, 148.

must be done in order to cross the proverbial finish line of salvation. In his 1734 discourse on Romans 4:5 titled *Justification by Faith Alone*, Edwards teaches that nothing quite facilitates closing with Christ like faith,

> because faith includes the whole act of unition to Christ as a Savior: the entire active uniting of the soul, or the whole of what is called "coming to" Christ, and "receiving" of him, is called faith in Scripture; and however other things may be no less excellent than faith, yet 'tis not the nature of any other graces or virtues directly to close with Christ as a Mediator, any further than they enter into the constitution of justifying faith, and do belong to its nature.[213]

Edwards on Justification

Faith clearly holds an important role for Edwards, being that by which the covenant of grace is observed. Yet this invites the obvious question of how such a covenant is maintained within a predestinarian system, especially one characterized with determinism and occasionalism such as Edwards's. According Michael McClenahan, "Edwards believes that it is faith that brings the believer into union with Christ and a right to his benefits."[214] In the following section Edwards's understanding of faith as an essential gift of God to the elect for the sake of this unity will be explored.

Within Edwards's treatment of justification by faith, he remains insistent that justification is merited, not by works performed by the would-be justified, but by God's mysterious good will. Justification is ultimately a work of God, not man, and there is nothing that a creature of God can do to compel God to justify him. And yet Edwards also maintains that justification is by faith, and that faith is itself a condition of justification. From this the problem arises of how God's unmerited grace could come as a result of something conditional. The presence of the condition suggests merit, seemingly contradicting the proposition that this justification comes only by God's grace. In response to this concern,

[213] Jonathan Edwards, "Justification by Faith Alone," in *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, *Volume 19, Sermons and Discourses, 1734-1738,* ed. M. X. Lesser, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 160, hereafter WJE19.
[214] Michael McClenahan, *Jonathan Edwards and Justification by Faith,* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2012), 117.

Edwards provides the following explanation:

> [T]hough faith be indeed the condition of justification so as nothing else is, yet this matter is not clearly and sufficiently explained by saying that faith is the condition of justification; and that because the word seems ambiguous both in common use, and also as used in divinity: in one sense, Christ alone performs the condition of our justification and salvation; in another sense, faith is the condition of justification; . . . there is a difference between being justified by a thing, and that thing universally, and necessarily, and inseparably attending, or going with justification; for so do a great many things that we ben't said to be justified by: it is not the inseparable connection with justification that the Holy Ghost would signify (or that is naturally signified), by such a phrase, but some particular influence that faith has in the affair, or some certain dependence that that effect has on its influence.[215]

Faith is necessary for justification and therefore the condition of justification, but it is not something which earns justification. Much like a field must be tilled before it can be planted, the elect must have faith in order to be fit to be justified. This notion of fitness for justification is quite important for Edwards's system. In his discussion of this fitness, he differentiates between natural fitness and moral fitness. "A person has moral fitness," Edwards writes, "when his moral excellency commends him to it, or when his being put into such a good state, is but a fit or suitable testimony of regard or love to the moral excellency, or value, or amiableness of any of his qualifications or acts."[216] Thus moral fitness is the sort of fitness which might naturally come to mind when one thinks of justification by faith, since it such a condition brings about the disposition to do good works. In moral fitness the agent does the good which might be (wrongly) considered meritorious for salvation. But Edwards did not consider the faith of the elect to be a part of this fitness, instead associating it with natural fitness. A person is naturally fit for "a state when it appears meet and condecent that he should be in such a state or circumstances, only from the natural concord or agreeableness there is between such qualifications and such circumstances,"[217] that is, when their natural traits meet the conditions of that state. For Edwards, having faith makes a person naturally fit,

[215] Edwards, "Justification," WJE19:152-153.
[216] Ibid., 159.
[217] Ibid.

not morally fit, for justification. Faith is therefore the essential condition for justification in that justification cannot occur without it but is not that which merits justification.

Faith for Edwards is not a passive trait, but active, bringing about a unity with Christ in the elect. As Conrad Cherry writes,

> Above all, faith is not the condition of justification as that which stands outside justification to be rewarded with justification. For that reason faith is not really an 'instrument' . . . of salvation. Faith is the bond between the soul and Christ and Christ's righteousness and is the actual reception of Christ's righteousness.[218]

When Edwards writes that closing with Christ is accomplished through faith, this is because faith itself is the act of engaging in intimacy with Christ. Edwards again points to the biblical metaphor of this union as a sort of marriage between Christ and his church.

> It is certain that there is some union or relation that the people of Christ . . . compared to a marriage union between husband and wife. . . . This relation or union to Christ, whereby Christians are said to be in Christ (whatever it be), is the ground of their right to his benefits. . . . So it is, in those unions which the Holy Ghost has thought fit to compare this union to; . . . 'tis the relation of the wife to the husband, that is the ground of her joint interest in his estate; they are looked upon, in several respects, as one in law: so there is a legal union between Christ and true Christians. . . . And thus it is that faith is that qualification in any person, that renders it meet in the sight of God that he should be looked upon as having Christ's satisfaction and righteousness belonging to him, viz. because it is that in him, which, on his part, makes up this union between him and Christ.[219]

As has been said before, this faith is not meritorious for justification, but simply a necessary component. In this way it can already be said that faith is not a means by which a person could earn their own salvation, but such concerns are especially mitigated within Edwards's system. For Edwards, not only is faith not a saving work, but it is also not something which is produced by an individual - faith is a gift from God. In developing how Edwards considered the relationship between faith and Salvation, Conrad Cherry writes that faith is for Edwards a gift, but not "a gift bestowed outside a relation with Christ and his

[218] Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal,* 2nd ed, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 100, emphasis original.

[219] Edwards, "Justification," WJE19:156.

forgiveness that deserves the relation; it is rather the gift of the relation itself."[220] Here Cherry argues that Edwards is explicitly disavowing the Scholistic *meritum de congruo*, arguing that for Edwards, "although God looks upon it as fit and congruous that man is united to Christ in faith, man does not thereby merit salvation congruously."[221] Recalling Edwards's discussion of faith as essential to a person's natural fitness for justification, this fitness is a state which God grants his elect. Therefore, having faith is for Edwards a part of God's unmerited grace in justification rather than something a person does in order to meet a qualification for that justification.

But since the faith that exists in the believer temporally prior to justification is itself "good," it raises the question of how such a faith can exist in the believer without it being considered as in some way deserving of justification, given that only the elect receive that faith. Edwards resolves this problem by suggesting that given the limited nature of this faith, God doesn't even consider it as being remotely meritorious for justification, and therefore effectively treats it as if it weren't there at all. According to Edwards, prior to justification

> there is indeed something in man that is really and spiritually good . . . yet there is nothing that is accepted as any godliness or excellency of the person, till after justification. . . . [A state of natural suitableness though a respect to the natural suitableness] does go before justification, yet the acceptance even of faith as any goodness or loveliness of the believer, follows justification: the goodness is on the forementioned account justly looked upon as nothing, until the man is justified.[222]

Sang Hyun Lee summarizes Edwards's position in the following way: "there is in a believing sinner a holy disposition and its holy exercises, which are absolutely without merit for justification and so, from God's point of view, unacceptable as holiness."[223] According to

[220] Cherry, 98.

[221] Ibid. Michael McClenahan argues that Cherry's examination at this point has missed an opportunity to examine the relation between condign merit and Edwards's notion of natural fitness. McClenahan argues that Edwards is not drawing this language from Schoolmen so much as from the language of the Puritan tradition. According to McClenahan, "Cherry's discussion is certainly suggestive but does not underline sufficiently the rejection of merit in the Reformed tradition - there is no sense in which Edwards' tradition attributes merit to the Christian." (McClenahan, 124).

[222] Edwards, "Justification," WJE19:164-165.

[223] Sang Hyun Lee, "Grace and Justification by Faith Alone," in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards,* ed. Sang Hyun Lee, (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 142.

Lee it is important to remember Edwards's use of Anselm in this matter. For Anselm, since the trespass is against an infinite being then only an infinitely good work, something of which only God is capable, could possibly satisfy such a debt. Yet the question then arises why the faith which is given to the elect by the Holy Spirit, who is himself infinite, would not also be infinite in nature and therefore merit justification. In response to this Lee points to Edwards's words in his *Religious Affections* where he writes that the holiness given by the Holy Spirit is given "according to the measure and capacity of a creature."[224] Faith is given to the believer, but to such a degree that it would instill a God-like degree of righteousness. "The Holy Spirit operates 'after the manner of the principle of action,' in the regenerate person,"[225] meaning that while faith is given, it is not given to such a degree that it is sufficient to compensate for the trespass.

The faith which God gives to the elect, then, is not that which justifies in itself but is instead of God's justifying grace. True justification is only possible through Christ. Remembering the covenants of grace and redemption, God's work of justification is an act of imputation. In the covenant of regeneration Christ, functioning in the role as a federal head, is declared righteous. Through the covenant of grace Christ's righteousness is imputed to the elect, carried out by faith. But since faith is a gift, all that has been done on behalf of the elect is by God's grace. Thus, for Edwards, justification is a key step in God's regeneration of his people and the renewal of his image within them. Robert Jenson writes, "The central event of human existence, for Puritanism as for all pietist Christianity, is the work of God's Spirit in the human soul, 'regenerating' it, creating a new humanity whose mode of existence is called 'faith.'"[226] Faith, then, is not only necessary for justification, but also a key part of what Edwards considered to be the truly converted believer, regenerated in Christ. Yet it must be

[224] WJE2, 203, (cited in Lee, 140-141).
[225] Lee, 141.
[226] Robert Jenson, *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 55.

stressed that faith is given, not performed. It is essential for justification, but God's saving work remains one carried entirely by his unmerited grace specifically for his elect.

Wesley on Covenant and Justification

It is at this point that Wesley's theological position finds its most pronounced contrast from that of Jonathan Edwards. Occasionalist determinism was the formula for Edwards, and predestination was irreducibly a part of that. Wesley, of course, rejected any such notions. As he says it, God's grace "is free for all, as well as in all."[227] Wesley similarly insisted upon justification by faith alone, and likewise within a covenantal system. Indeed, covenantal theology is ubiquitous in Wesley's works, and given Wesley's context this is of little surprise; many in his day employed covenantal theology as the framework for their systems, especially those within the puritan camp. Yet Wesley was not a passive subscriber to the doctrine. He actively utilized federal theology within his unique Arminian framework as he continued to lead the revival that was growing around him.

One of the most important elements in Wesley's system was his insistence that God's new covenant is for all people, not just the elect. This should come as no surprise given Wesley's well-documented rejection of a limited atonement. This is the most readily expressed difference between Wesley's and Edwards's covenantal theology, and it is a difference which Wesley articulates with a particular clarity, insisting that the new covenant between God and man was enacted immediately following Adam's trespass. Wesley's arguments will be presented in the pages that follow, showing how Wesley adapted covenant theology in such a way that it could be fully integrated with his Arminian convictions. This will then lead into Wesley's doctrine of justification by faith alone within the context of his *via salutis*.

[227] Wesley, Sermon 110, "Free Grace," WW4:544.

While the covenant of grace came into prevalence in the first half of the 16th century, its prelapsarian counterpart did not come into common use until the much later. According to David Weir, "Zacharias Ursinus is the theologian who first utilized the idea of a prelapsarian covenant to any great extent in the sixteenth century."[228]

Wesley on Distinguishing the Covenants

As was noted above, covenant doctrine had been subject to development for over one hundred years before Wesley came along. While it was particularly popular among the Puritans, most Protestants employed covenantal theology in one way or another. The expansion of covenantal theology to include the covenant of works brought with it a fair share of disagreement as ambiguity persisted in the distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, with the first one bleeding into the other. Stanley Rodes notes that those who developed this doctrine, especially the Puritans, were more so interested in developing the various elements of the two covenants than actually defining the distinction between the two, with many leaving underdeveloped the place of the Mosaic Law.[229] Not so for Wesley. He taught that the covenant of works was made between God and man when Adam was in his original state of perfection, and therefore in a condition in which he could actually fulfill the terms of the covenant. When Adam transgressed and subsequently fell, he was no longer capable of fulfilling the covenant and therefore no longer subject to its terms. As Rodes puts it, "The point of divergence [between Wesley and his contemporaries] is Wesley's conviction that not only is the inauguration of the covenant of grace coincidental with the fall, but also is the termination of the covenant of works."[230] Thus, Wesley writes in

[228] David Weir, *The Origins of Federal Theology in Early Sixteenth-Century Thought,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 101.

[229] Rodes, *From Faith to Faith* 66. According to Rodes, many Puritan divines placed the Mosaic law within the covenant of works as well as the covenant of grace, with their foci being more so on the works of the first and second Adam.

[230] Ibid., 64.

a sermon originally preached in 1750,

> And who ever was under the covenant of works? None but Adam before the fall. He was fully and properly under that covenant, which required perfect, universal obedience, as the one condition of acceptance, and left no place for pardon, upon the very least transgression. But no man else was ever under this, neither Jew nor Gentile, neither before Christ nor since. All his sons were and are under the covenant of grace. The manner of their acceptance is this: the free grace of God, through the merits of Christ, gives pardon to them that believe, that believe with such a faith as, working by love, produces all obedience and holiness.[231]

In another sermon written that same year Wesley describes the covenant of works as "that law which was originally given to angels in heaven and man in paradise,"[232] again indicating that the covenant of works was given only to those who were capable of fulfilling it.

An interesting point in Wesley's theological system is that he seems to have assumed that this original covenant was intended to be the lasting covenant between God and his creation. This becomes clear when Wesley says that

> There is one advantage more that we reap from Adam's fall which is not unworthy our attention. Unless in Adam all had died, being in the loins of their first parent, every descendant of Adam, every child of man, must have personally answered for himself to God.[233]

According to Wesley, the covenant of works would have applied to all of Adam's posterity, something which Wesley believed would have been to mankind's great disadvantage. Yet mankind would have been disadvantaged by the covenant since according to Wesley's paradigm they would have been capable of fulfilling that covenant, continuing in Adam's original state as bearing the full image of God. Such a *felix culpa* argument therefore indicates a different disadvantage: had any of Adam's descendants fallen at such a time when others lived and successfully resisted, those who had fallen would remain subject to the original covenant and doomed to suffer its full consequences. But since Adam fell when he

[231] Wesley, Sermon 35, "The Law Established Through Faith, I," WW2:27.
[232] Wesley, Sermon 34, "The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law," WW2:8.
[233] Wesley, Sermon 59, "God's Love to Fallen Man," WW2:432.

did, the original covenant could be terminated, and a new covenant could be enacted that would apply to all of mankind.

Stanley Rodes considers Wesley's amendment to covenant theology, namely Wesley's conviction that the covenant of works is terminated upon the fall, to be his most significant contribution to this doctrine. Wesley's conviction that the covenant of grace was the only covenant in effect between God and mankind throughout all of human history (following the fall) allows for a seamless integration of an Arminian framework. Under this covenant all of humanity, the posterity of Adam, has the opportunity to fulfill the terms of the covenant by faith in Christ. Yet there remains a problem: in the fall humanity has lost its capacity for righteous behavior such as faith in Christ. With mankind in such a sorry state, even the covenant of grace is beyond his grasp, and the divine-human relationship in a desperate state of disrepair.

Prevenient Grace

Above it was shown that Jonathan Edwards identified a similar problem, recognizing that total depravity precludes mankind from being able to effect his own salvation, even if all that needs to be done is the act of faith. Edwards's solution was to reframe faith as a gift from God as well as a condition of justification. Thus, those with faith have it because God has given it to them, not because they have generated it within themselves. Such a solution works well within Edwards's system, satisfying his occasionalist-determinism while maintaining the Reformation's cry of sola fide. John Wesley's solution is similar, though he operates from a different set of non-negotiables informed by a respectable eclecticism in his research. Kenneth Collins has identified two emphases in Wesley's work: a "protestant" emphasis on justification and a "catholic" (in the broad sense rather than the Roman Catholic sense) emphasis on rehabilitation. Collins argues that both of these emphases must be given equal

weight when considering Wesley's theology in order to fully understand the breadth of his thinking. "[A]lthough Wesley distinguished the two works of justification and regeneration," writes Collins, "he nevertheless viewed these two distinct graces in a similar fashion in that both richly display the favor and bounty of the divine love."[234] Both emphases play an important role in all stages Wesleyan *via salutis* (way of salvation), with Wesley seeking not only to overcome the legal problem of sin but also the anthropological problem of sin. For Wesley, the recovery of God's image in man is a work of grace carried out by God in the present as well as the future. This work begins with prevenient grace.

In his sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation," Wesley writes that the conscience which all people have can be recognized in a way as God's prevenient grace at least to a limited degree, calling it "that light wherewith the Son of God 'enlighteneth everyone that cometh into the world, . . .'"[235] In the words of Harald Lindström,

> Prevenient grace confers some discernment on everyone although natural man as such lacks all knowledge of God. . . . [Thus] Wesley concurs with St. Paul's statement in the Epistle to the Romans that even heathens are not without knowledge of God and his law.[236]

Wesley remained insistent that prevenient grace is that which enlightens man of his sorry state and allows him to respond in faith. Wesley's most explicit explanation of prevenient grace (here calling it "preventing grace," as he often did) is found in his 1785 sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," where he writes that

> salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) 'preventing grace'; including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight, transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life, some degree of salvation, the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God.[237]

So far it can be seen that Wesley considered prevenient grace to be essential for man

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[234] Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley,* 196.
[235] Wesley, Sermon 43, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," WW2:157.
[236] Harald Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation,* (Napanee, IN: Francis Asbury Press, 1996), 46.
[237] Wesley, Sermon 85, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," WW3:203-204.

to be aware of his sinfulness, but there is a difference between knowing one is sinful and being able to have any sort of faith that might bring about any sort of change. It seems to be an oversight on the part of Wesley that he fails to explicitly say whether the faith of the Christian is a work of God or of man. However, there are at least two plausible explanations for this omission. The first is that Wesley assumed knowledge and faith to be of a similar species. This is supported by Wesley's words at the beginning of his sermon On Faith where he asks, "But what is *faith*? It is a divine . . . evidence conviction of God and of the things of God."[238] In both cases, Wesley considers faith to be conviction which could be said to be the same thing as knowledge, albeit with greater intensity.

The second possible explanation is that Wesley did in some way consider faith to be an action to be carried out by the person in order to be saved, an appropriate response to the knowledge of man's condition. This explanation is built on the premise of Randy Maddox's *Responsible Grace* in which Maddox makes the case that Wesley considered mankind to have the responsibility to respond to God's grace at various stages. As Maddox says in his book's introduction, "I discerned in Wesley's work an abiding concern to preserve the vital tension between [the following truths]: with God's grace, we cannot be saved; while without our (grace-empowered, but uncoerced) participation, God's grace will not save."[239] Thus, while God has granted all men with prevenient grace and the knowledge that they are sinful, it is still up to man to exercise faith in keeping with repentance. According to Maddox, Wesley considered "all possibility of our restored health—including the earliest inclination and ability to respond to God's saving action—is dependent upon a renewing work of God's grace, without rendering our participation in this process automatic."[240] Thus, for Maddox prevenient grace is more than simply an enlightening; it is the first step in the restoration of

[238] Wesley, Sermon Sermon 106, "On Faith," WW3:492.
[239] Maddox, 19.
[240] Ibid., 83.

the image of God in man.

In reality it seems that a synthesis of both explanations is the most suitable answer to how man could act in faith in response to prevenient grace: in this act of grace God gives mankind the knowledge, but it remains up to each individual whether they will allow that knowledge to grow into conviction. In this way it can be affirmed that in Wesley's view no man brings about his own salvation through works, even works of faith, since faith is in a greater sense a gift from God. Man is then given the opportunity to exercise that faith, but this act remains the responsibility of each individual. In the words of Wesley, "For, first, God works; therefore you *can* work. Secondly, God works, therefore you *must* work."[241]

Not only is each individual given the ability and opportunity to respond in faith, but Wesley even says that God acts to convince all people of their need for repentance. "Salvation is carried on by 'convincing grace', usually in Scripture termed 'repentance', which brings a larger measure of self-knowledge, and a farther deliverance from the heart of stone."[242] Properly speaking, Wesley considered this convincing grace and accompanying repentance to logically come before saving faith, though the two are essentially coincidental. But what is most important here is the further evidence that Wesley while considered people to have a responsibility of action, any such action is only in response to God's grace. God acts with convincing grace, and then man responds with repentance and faith. In all cases God is the actor; man is the *re*actor.

The Via Salutis

It is clear from Wesley's work that he considered there to be a progression in the spiritual life of the Christian, called either the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation) or the *via salutis* (way of salvation). This progression in the spiritual life is typically spoken of in stages of grace,

[241] Wesley, Sermon 85, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," WW3:206, emphasis original.
[242] Ibid., 204.

notably expressed by Wesley in "On Working Out Our Own Salvation." The first two stages, prevenient grace and convincing grace, have already been discussed, both of them serving as evidence that in the way of salvation it is God who takes the first step, but as Maddox has shown, each movement by God requires a response, made possible by prevenient grace. For Wesley, the only appropriate response to God's prevenient and convincing grace is repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. This is followed by a further work of God's grace: saving grace. "Afterwards we experience the proper Christian salvation; whereby, 'through grace' we are 'saved by faith', consisting of those two grand branches, justification and sanctification."[243] Thus a dialectic between God and man is readily observed in Wesley's soteriology: God acts, man responds, God continues to act, man continues to respond, and so on.

Wesley's insistence on the need for human response to divine action is seen clearly in his sermon "The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God." Here Wesley writes that in faith there are two things that occur in the life of the new believer: justification and the new birth, which is the beginning of regeneration and the restoration of the image of God. In justification man is declared righteous before God by the merit of Christ's saving work. In the new birth God's moral image is further restored, thus allowing the new believer to perceive God's will to a new and heightened degree. In this dialectic of faith God continues to act and man continues to respond, and in this back-and-forth, this "spiritual respiration" as Wesley calls it, God's grace is experienced at new and increasing levels. Here it is good to quote Wesley at length.

> But when he is born of God, born of the Spirit, how is the manner of his existence changed! His whole soul is now sensible of God, . . . The Spirit or breath of God is immediately inspired, breathed into the new-born soul; and the same breath which comes from, returns to, God. As it is continually received by faith, so it is continually rendered back by love, by prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving—love and praise and prayer being the breath of every soul which is truly born of God. *And by this new kind*

[243] Ibid.

> *of spiritual respiration, spiritual life is not only sustained but increased* day by day, together with spiritual strength and motion and sensation; all the senses of the soul being now awake, and capable of 'discerning spiritual' good and 'evil'.[244]

It would therefore be a mistake to assume that God's actions are discrete, as if God refuses to act further until he receives the desired response. Wesley's description of the experience of faith as spiritual respiration suggests that with each breath and in each moment, the believer continually experiences God's grace to an increasing degree. As has already been said, Wesley's soteriology does not happen in discrete parts but in a flowing journey, each step building on the last in such a way that God's grace grows in magnitude in the life of the believer. For Wesley the ultimate aim of the covenant of grace is the renewal of the image of God in humanity. According to Wesley, the Covenant of Grace "prescribes [to fallen man] the condition whereon he may regain the pearl he has lost; *may recover the favour, and the image of God,* may retrieve the life of God in his soul, and be restored to the knowledge and the love of God, which is the beginning of life eternal."[245]

Furthermore, it is through receiving and responding to God's grace that this is accomplished. As man responds to God's grace, he continually experiences that grace to increasing degrees. Theodore Runyon argues that Wesley's soteriology is essentially relational. Drawing on Wesley's description of justification as a "relative change,"[246] Runyon argues that the process of salvation is best understood as the restoration of man's relationship with God. As this relationship is restored, the image of God is restored in man as well.[247] This

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[244] Wesley, Sermon 19, "The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God," WW1:434-435, emphasis added.
[245] Wesley, Sermon 6, "The Righteousness of Faith," WW1:209, emphasis mine.
[246] Wesley, Sermon 43, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," WW2:158.
[247] Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today,* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998)**.** Runyon argues that Wesley's understanding of the image of God is largely influenced by the Eastern Church, saying that man is meant to *reflect* that image rather than to *bear* that image. Thus, as man gets closer to God the reflection becomes clearer. It seems that in this maneuver, which Runyon seems to base on a liberal reading of Wesley's early sermon *The Image of God,* one which Wesley himself elected not to publish. Runyon fails to note that much of Wesley's development of the image of God seems much more influenced by his contemporaries, especially Isaac Watts. Wesley even credits Watts for his description of the three-fold nature of the image of God in *Original Sin*. Not only so, but Wesley also mirrors contemporary descriptions of how the image was lost in the fall, especially the moral image. Runyon is correct that the renewal of the image of God is the essential thrust of Wesley's soteriology, but his premise that Wesley considered man to be a *mirror* of God's image seems highly suspect. Yet while Runyon's premise is flawed, his conclusion that Wesley considered the image of God in man to be directly linked to man's relationship with his creator rings true.

is what Wesley identifies as sanctification, calling it a "real change."[248] Elsewhere Wesley writes, "Justification implies only a relative, the new birth [which is the beginning of sanctification] a real, change. God in justifying us does something *for* us: in begetting us again he does the work *in* us."[249] This change did not happen immediately, but gradually. The more a person interacts with God's grace, the more God's image is restored within him. Thus, Runyon writes,

> The foundation of justification is laid in order to be built upon. . . . Justification is intended not as the end but as the beginning of the salvation process. The relative change lays the foundation for a real change in the creature, and it is this real change that brings about the renewal of the image of God.[250]

Since Wesley considered the renewal of God's image in man to be the ultimate goal of the covenant of grace, it should be understood that God's grace itself is not given in discrete stages but is experienced in increasing intensity as the spiritual respiration between God and man continues: as man responds to God's grace he experiences it in greater degrees. In spite of the labels Wesley gives (preventing grace, convincing grace, justifying grace, etc.) he is not arguing that man experiences new graces, but one grace in new and greater experiences.

This understanding of God's grace in Wesley emphasizes another possible point of similarity with Jonathan Edwards. Unlike Wesley, Edwards did not articulate discrete stages of God's grace; Edwards saw considered salvation to be entirely a work of God (though one that did require obedience on the part of the individual) and therefore presented God's work in the Christian to be more fluid in nature. Thus, in *Religious Affections* Edwards speaks of a continual growth the Christian experiences. "The saints desire the sincere milk of the Word," says Edwards, "not so much to testify God's love to them, as that they may grow thereby in

[248] Wesley, Sermon 43, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," WW2:158.
[249] Wesley, Sermon 19, "The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God," WW1:432, emphasis original.
[250] Theodore Runyon, "The New Creation: The Wesleyan Distinctive," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31, no. 2 (Fall 1996), 11.

holiness."[251]

Interpreting Wesley's understanding of God's grace in this way is supported by Stanley Rodes's treatment of Wesley's servant/son metaphor within the superstructure of his covenant theology. According to Rodes, it is the presence of this metaphor that allows him to argue that Wesley considered the covenant of grace to be the only covenant between God and man since the fall of Adam. In order to fully show the relevance of this metaphor to the idea that God's grace is a singular emanation experienced in growing intensity, Wesley's use of this metaphor must first be evaluated.

As has been noted earlier, Wesley considered the covenant of grace to have been the only covenant in effect between God and man since the fall of Adam. One of the challenges to an amendment such as this is posed by the Mosaic law: if the covenant of grace is the only covenant in effect at the time of Moses, then how does one account for the presence of such a law. Does not the law's very existence indicate an adherence to the scheme that says, "do this, and live"? How can this be resolved?

Wesley's solution was simply to identify the Mosaic law with the moral law, being that which shows the people of God how to live as God would have them. As time went on and new dispensations of the covenant of grace came about, this law was likewise augmented by succeeding iterations. Not to say that the moral law was repeatedly abolished and replaced. To the contrary, "the moral law, contained in the Ten Commandments, and enforced by the prophets, [Christ] did not take away. It was not the design of his coming to revoke any part of this. This is a law which never can be broken, which 'stands fast as the faithful witness in heaven'."[252] When preaching on Galatians 3:17, Wesley says the following:

> But it cannot be so understood in the text; for the Apostle never bestows so high commendations as these upon that imperfect and shadowy dispensation. He nowhere

[251] WJE2:383.
[252] Wesley, Sermon 25, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount, Discourse the Fifth," WW1:551.

> affirms the Mosaic to be a *spiritual* law; or, that it is 'holy, and just, and good'. Neither is it true that God 'will write that law in the hearts' of those whose 'iniquities he remembers no more'. It remains, that 'the law', eminently so termed, is no other than the moral law.[253]

Thus, the law of Moses is not something meant to be discarded but is instead to be understood as something that was useful at the time of its implementation for the fulfillment of the covenant. Stanley Rodes writes that as the covenant of grace progressed, each stage augmented the last, thus providing a fuller understanding and experience of the covenant which was in effect. "The various economies (or dispensations) of the covenant of grace represent . . . an augmentation in the unfolding story of God's saving purposes."[254] Whereas during the Mosaic dispensation the people of God were primarily ruled by fear of God, living under the weight of the law which they were required to obey, the Gospel dispensation (the dispensation which began with Jesus) brought freedom in the form of a fuller revelation.

Wesley believed that the sacrifice of Christ had a timeless effect, and that each dispensation of the covenant of grace was salvifically sufficient. But of course, those who lived under the Mosaic dispensation could not have had faith in Jesus Christ himself since his ministry had not yet taken place. Instead, Wesley taught that when those who lived under the Mosaic dispensation followed the moral law, they exhibited what he called the "faith of a servant." This sort of faith is characterized by fear, Wesley saying that those that have it "fear God and work righteousness."[255] From this definition it can be seen that Wesley considered it an act of faith when those who were under the Mosaic dispensation followed the law, for in their fear of God they affirmed him as their master.

Yet as this dispensation has been augmented by the Gospel dispensation, such a faith is no longer sufficient. Since God has revealed himself more fully this revelation requires a faith that is "a faith in Christ—Christ, and God through Christ." This faith is distinguished

[253] Wesley, Sermon 34, "The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law," WW2:9.
[254] Rodes, *From Faith to Faith,* 74.
[255] Wesley, Sermon 80, "On Friendship With The World," WW3:132.

"from the faith of a devil . . . it is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head; but also a disposition of the heart."[256] Wesley calls this sort of faith "the faith of a son," his most explicit explanation of this faith being in his sermon "The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption." In this sermon Wesley describes the journey of faith through which an individual goes. Here Wesley writes that there are essentially three states of faith in a person, each of them corresponding to the dispensations of the covenant of grace. The first state is the natural state. Corresponding to the time before the Mosaic covenant when God's law had only been revealed in a limited sense, those in this state are hardly aware of God and his demand for righteousness. Wesley describes such a person as "utterly ignorant of God, knowing nothing concerning him as he ought to know. He is totally a stranger to the law of God, as to its true, inward, spiritual meaning."[257] Wesley goes on to describe them as spiritually asleep and in a state of blissful ignorance. Since they do not know the law of God they feel not the immanent danger they are in.

But of course, they are not totally separate from the grace of God: Wesley doctrine of prevenient grace teaches that God is continually reaching out to them. There are some who are then awakened. In the words of Wesley, "By some awful providence, or by his word applied with the demonstration of his Spirit, God touches the heart of him that lay asleep in darkness and in the shadow of death. He is terribly shaken out of his sleep, and awakes into a consciousness of his danger."[258] When this happens they who were asleep are awakened to the terrible reality of their guilt before God. It is at this point that the faith of a servant takes hold. Such an individual fears God and his righteous punishment and seeks to satisfy God's righteousness through following the law. Wesley writes that such people are dominated by fear, especially fear of death and the awful consequences it brings. Yet as they strive they

[256] Wesley, Sermon 1, "Salvation By Faith," WW1:120.
[257] Wesley, Sermon 9, "Spirit of Bondage and Adoption," WW1:251.
[258] Ibid., 255.

eventually come to recognize the futility of their actions: "But though he strive with all his might he cannot conquer; sin is mightier than he. He would fain escape; but he is so fast in prison that he cannot get forth. He resolved against sin, but yet sins on; he sees the snare, and abhors— and runs into it."[259] It is in this realization that God's convincing grace is allowed to come into view. Those who are "servants" of God, having realized their helplessness, cries out to God for help, and help he receives. He has "found 'grace', or favour in the sight of God, even the Father, and who has the 'grace', or power of the Holy Ghost, reigning in his heart; who has received, in the language of the Apostle, the 'Spirit of adoption, whereby' he now cries, 'Abba, Father'."[260]

It is at this crucial moment that this person repents of their sins and takes up faith in Jesus Christ as their savior, and it is here that the person experiences the new birth and the further renewal of the image of God within themselves. Thus, Wesley's use of this servant/son metaphor is a helpful tool for understanding his *via salutis* within the superstructure of his unique covenant theology, as well as for gaining a fuller understanding of Wesley's understanding of God's singular grace.

As was said above, Wesley understood the ultimate goal of the covenant of grace to be the restoration of the image of God in man, which is sanctification. Not only is this seen in Wesley's sermons, but also in his A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, where it is written, "Q. What is it to be sanctified? A. To be renewed in the image of God, *in righteousness and true holiness.*"[261] There is an inherent covenantal nature in Wesley's understanding of responsible grace: the action of the first party in a way compels the action of the second, and so on. It therefore seems entirely possible that for Wesley the covenant of grace is more than just the superstructure of his theology: it is an inseparable part of God's

[259] Ibid., 258.
[260] Ibid., 260.
[261] Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," in *John and Charles Wesley: Selected Writings and Hymns,* ed. Frank Whaling (London: SPCK, 1981), §17, 319, emphasis original.

gracious action towards mankind. Not that the covenant of grace is not also a superstructure for Wesley - it is. It is by the covenant of grace that the spiritual respiration between God and man has its frame. For Wesley the covenant of grace not only promises salvation but also sanctification, and the singular term of this covenant is man's faith in Jesus Christ as his savior. God reaches out in grace, and man responds in faith. As man responds to God's grace, he experiences that grace to increasing degrees as it continues to open his eyes and rehabilitate his soul. But as there is still just one covenant, there is one grace.

Conclusion

For Wesley and Edwards both it is affirmed that salvation is by faith and nothing else, but their deployment of this doctrine is remarkably different. The greatest difference between them is in Edwards's adherence to his structure of determinism, contrasted with Wesley's insistence on free will. Yet while Wesley did consider it to ultimately be up to the believer whether he would believe in Christ for salvation, he is in agreement with Edwards that this faith is ultimately a gift from God. Edwards considered God's gift of faith to be only for the elect, and it is on the condition of this faith that the elect are justified. Wesley, on the other hand, taught the essence of God's gift of faith is that it is still the individual's responsibility to exercise it.

Additionally, both men also employed covenantal theology in their theological systems, but in very different ways, and it is in that difference that their theological positions come out. For Edwards the covenant of grace is actually two covenants: the covenant of redemption, which is between God the Father and the Son and merits the justification of Christ's people, and the covenant of grace, which is between Christ and the elect and by which Christ's righteousness is actually imputed to his people. For Wesley the covenant of grace is singular and has been the only covenant in effect ever since the fall. Though Wesley

does not detail his understanding of the covenant quite as explicitly as Edwards, it is clear that Wesley considered the aim of the covenant of grace to not only be mankind's justification but also his regeneration. Thus, through the terms of this covenant the image of God in man is restored.

Conclusion: Seeing the Similarities

This thesis has sought to emphasize some of the ways in which Wesley's theology presents characteristics typical of Reformed orthodoxy in an effort to show that Wesley was not as distinct in his time as many have made him out to be. By comparing him with Jonathan Edwards several similarities have come to light between them. Those similarities fall within the subjects of theological anthropology, federal theology, and justification by faith alone.

Theological anthropology might be one of the most striking similarities between them, especially as it pertains to the image of God. Both Wesley and Edwards employed a distinct articulation of the image, breaking it down into either two or three distinct parts. While it might be tempting to say that speaking of God's image in this way was simple what was "in the air" at that time, the fact that Wesley did not employ this distinction in his 1730 sermon on the image of God suggests that he did not come upon this way of speaking until later in life. Thus, Wesley's adoption of this language suggests that it resonated with his thinking in a particular way, making it a distinctive marker in his theological system. Given that Edwards was also one to make use of this distinction beginning at least as early as 1731 and onwards throughout his life suggests that he also took a particular liking to this interpretation of the human condition.

This understanding of humanity fits neatly with federalist theology. Just like with their theological anthropologies, federalism seems to have been the prevailing doctrine of the time and something that both men seem to have taken for granted. Of course, both Wesley and Edwards inherited the doctrine in different ways. As one steeped in Puritan thought Edwards would have been well-versed in federalism, a fact which is proved by his adherence to the *pactum salutis,* a doctrine of which the Puritans were particularly fond. Wesley's federalism, on the other hand, does not develop beyond the bipartite model of the Westminster Confession.

Even though both men breathed the federalist air of their time, neither of them took the doctrine as is, but gave it careful consideration and modified it in accordance with their doctrinal systems.[262] Both developments were apologetic in nature. Edwards's sought to provide a better answer for how and why the punishment for Adam's trespass should be passed along to his descendants. His modifications were robust and have sparked many debates since their publication. Wesley's modifications were more in line with his Arminian framework, seeking to show how all people have the opportunity to be forgiven for Adam's trespass. His modification was relatively simple, but by relocating the inauguration of the covenant of grace to just after the fall Wesley reframed the nature of the Old Testament and the Mosaic law to be something which was actually given as a part of the second covenant. Thus, while Edwards's modifications were more technically robust, Wesley's had greater ramifications because it firmly placed all people after Adam under the covenant of grace alone.

Their modifications show that Wesley and Edwards were standing upon opposing convictions regarding the nature of faith and election, and this point of dissonance between them is so obvious that it simply cannot be refuted. And while their modifications of federalism do emphasize that dissonance, their use of the doctrine as a whole shows a mutual point of reference from which both men operated.

A third similarity is seen between these men in how they taught the doctrine of justification by faith alone, particularly as it pertains to regeneration. It is a known distinctive in Wesleyan theology that mankind is made able to have faith in God through the regenerative benefits of prevenient grace.[263] It is less recognized, however, that Edwards made a similar argument. But when one considers his arguments that when mankind receives

[262] While neither Wesley nor Edwards ever wrote a systematic theology, both of their works show that both of them had a systematic understanding of the Christian faith.

[263] Cf. Stanley Rodes, "Was John Wesley Arguing for Prevenient Grace as Regenerative?" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 48, no. 1, (Spring 2013): 73-85.

faith, which is given by God, it has the effect of actually creating more closeness between God and man, the regenerative elements of faith *as a gift from God* start to stand out.

This particular similarity between Wesley and Edwards becomes even clearer when one considers how Wesley understood the experience of God's grace. This thesis has argued that Wesley considered God's grace to mankind to be a singular grace which is experienced in different ways depending on stage of the individual's regeneration. Thus, while scholars frequently speak of grace in Wesley's *via salutis* under different titles (prevenient, convincing, saving, etc.), Wesley actually understood these to actually be different experiences of God's grace rather than discrete dispensations of God's grace. When this is grasped the gap between Wesley and Edwards narrows. Edwards taught that all of salvation is a work of God, and there is genuinely nothing man can do to earn it. Thus, Edwards's work does not emphasize varying stages of God's grace, but the growth the Christian experiences as he is exposed to that grace. This is essentially the same in Wesley. The primary difference between them, then, has to do with the question of who God allows to experience this grace as well as their idiosyncratic teachings regarding man's role in that experience.

As these similarities are revealed, the chasm between Edwards and Wesley begins to close. These men are often seen as representatives of opposing views, with the question of election causing such a flashpoint between them that it obscures the reality that they were indeed contemporaries and therefore worked with many of the same preconceptions, especially those listed above. Therefore, by beginning with these preconceptions and then working outwards, it is seen that while Wesley advocated for free grace throughout his life, his greater theological system is far more aligned with Reformed Orthodoxy than is typically recognized.

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