

My conclusion from the above is that Luther's reading on justification definitely influences Wesley and many others. Luther's life and Wesley's share common concerns about futile attempts to please God. The role of Luther's preface to Romans at Aldersgate can be overemphasized, but it is difficult to dismiss it; and the gift of God's grace in forgiveness and pardon and the gift of faith seem to be powerful influences of Luther on Wesley. I should also say that it is not necessary in arguing for Luther's influence on Wesley to make the case that the impact comes from a full understanding of Luther's mature or more holistic thought by Wesley.

Wesley's view, however, did differ from that of Luther. Again, Runyon states this difference, at least for Wesley; explicitly. For Luther the change brought about by justification is a new status in which "Christian life is living in continuing faithfulness to the God who justifies." But for Wesley, while justification does, indeed, change one's status, it is only the beginning in which believers are restored to the image of God, which is in each person. Justification is the beginning of a lifelong process of growing in grace, of going on to perfection.<sup>26</sup> This does not mean justification ends with the beginning of this process of sanctification, however; justification remains as the ongoing foundation of growing in grace.<sup>27</sup>

At the same time, Campbell acknowledges that no matter how much the deeper or more mature views of Luther differ with justification theory, "the conclusion is basically unavoidable that Luther did release the theory of justification, married to various key Pauline texts, into the interpretive tradition." Luther "is clearly a transmitter, and almost certainly the origin, of this reading."<sup>28</sup>

While Wesley's view of sanctification—to which we shall attend below—did, indeed, make his position different from Luther's, he nonetheless struggled earlier in his life, as did Luther, with issues of guilt, forgiveness, pardon, and seeking to be acceptable to God. Justification in Wesley's theology came to be the answer to this struggle. As we shall see, however, this was not Paul's problem.

## one

### Justification or Rectification?

**J**. Louis Martyn's magisterial commentary on Galatians argues that the apocalypse of the one God of Israel in Christ must be seen as basic to Paul's thought. This apocalypse is not only disclosure, but also a fundamental change in reality itself: it is a cosmic, historical act of God. It is an "invasion" of the world by God in Christ. In Christ's death and resurrection God has taken on the powers of the world and defeated them: their destiny of subjugation to Christ is assured in the *parousia*. Thus Paul's theology is a liberation theology, one in which the world is already set free from sin, death, and the powers, both human and superhuman. God's action is the initiative of a new creation, the coming of an already in God's liberation, and the saving of the world that awaits its fulfillment in the *parousia* of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

#### Paul: Justification or Rectification?

In Martyn's reading of Paul, *dikaioynē* must be understood in terms of this apocalyptic. Martyn argues, therefore, that this word, usually translated as justification in Paul, should be translated as rectification, meaning that God has rectified or set right Jew and Greek, slave and free, and male

26. Runyon, *New Creation*, 83, 89, and 222.

27. See Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, 182.

28. Campbell, *Deliverance of God*, 250.

1. Martyn, *Galatians*, 97–105, 263–80.

and female. Rectification is the righteousness of God, God's justice, the making right of the cosmos and history.<sup>2</sup>

Paul's views, however, do not ignore individual transgressions or sins. But "the root antidote to an individual sin is not an individual instance of forgiveness." In Christ's defeat of the enslaving captivity of sin, it is rather the church that God has called out as the community of new creation, which has, as part of its role, the task of dealing with such individual transgressions. "It is in that newly created company that a sin is not only forgiven but also and fundamentally overpowered by God's mighty victory over sin."<sup>3</sup>

N. T. Wright argues that in Paul the doctrine of justification by faith cannot be separated from "the incorporation of Gentiles into the people of God." Indeed, justification is a "subset of election" in Paul, meaning that God's righteousness/justification has elected both Jews and Gentiles—everyone—in Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, Wright states that it is wrong to view justification as having nothing to do with the salvation of sinners from sin and death. Humans are sinners, and God does act to rescue them. To belong to God's covenant "means, among other things, 'forgiven sinner.'" But, still, the use of the word "justification" is not to "denote the process whereby, or the event in which, a person is brought by grace from unbelief, idolatry and sin into faith, true worship and renewal of life." Paul's word for this process, "clearly and unambiguously," is "call." According to Wright, justification is what "happens immediately after the 'call'; those God called, God also justified (Rom 8:30). "In other words, those who hear the gospel and respond to it in faith are then declared by God to be his people . . . They are given the status *dikaiois*, 'righteous,' 'within the covenant.'"<sup>5</sup>

2. *Ibid.*, 263–75.

3. *Ibid.*, 97. Gal 6:1–4.

4. Wright, *Paul*, 121. It should be noted here, however, that Wright comes out of a "salvation historical" reading of Paul in contrast to Martyn's apocalyptic view. It should be obvious that I side with the latter.

5. Wright, *Paul*, 121. Italics in original.

## Wesley on Justification

Wesley's approach to justification is quite different from that of Paul. Specialists in Wesley often describe him as an eclectic thinker, a theologian who is conjunctive in his work.<sup>6</sup> For my purposes, here I focus on Wesley's conjunction of salvation as accomplished by God alone and by faith alone.

We are saved by *God alone* in Wesley's thought. It is God's free grace that saves. God's redemptive grace in justification and sanctification. The fruits of free grace are not given on the basis of some prior cooperation between God and humans, but rather are the free gift of "a holy, merciful, and loving God." On Wesley's view there is nothing that sinners first have to do or be before receiving justification or in order to be entirely sanctified. Wesley's emphasis is on the utter bounty of God's grace. Yet, God's grace is not irresistible as it was with the Calvinists of Wesley's day. The gifts of God can be rejected on Wesley's view.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, Wesley argues for a view of justification by *faith alone*. While the power of justification certainly comes from the merits of Christ, faith is the only element that is absolutely required for justification in terms of a human response.<sup>8</sup> In his sermon "Justification by Faith," Wesley argues that faith alone is the condition necessary for justification. He says: "Faith therefore is the necessary condition of justification. Yea, and the only necessary condition thereof." He goes on to say that faith "alone is sufficient for justification."<sup>9</sup> In his notes on Galatians 6:12, Wesley comments that "faith in a crucified Saviour is alone sufficient for justification."<sup>10</sup> Finally, some twenty-eight years after his Aldersgate experience, Wesley declares, "I believe justification by faith alone, as much as

6. Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, 6–16, 155–93.

7. *Ibid.*, 162. I am also indebted in this paragraph to my colleague Henry H. Knight III, who helped me avoid an error of statement. He is, of course, not responsible for mis-statements that may yet remain.

8. See Wesley's letter to Dr. Horne in 1762, Telford, *Letters*, 4:178, and his letter to William Law, Baker, *Letters*, 25:541.

9. Outler, *John Wesley's Sermons*, 1:196.

10. Wesley, *Explanatory Notes*, 502.

I believe there is a God." He further clarifies that he "never varied from it, no, not an hair's breadth, from 1738 to this day."<sup>11</sup>

How are we to understand this seeming contradiction in Wesley? Collins maintains that the synergistic paradigm that involves both divine and human action must be caught up in an even larger conjunction in which the Protestant emphasis on the sole activity of God, apart from all human working, is equally factored in—not simply co-operant or responsible grace, but the conjunction of responsible and free grace, the union of both a Catholic and a Protestant emphasis.<sup>12</sup> That is, there is a co-operant and synergistic dynamic in Wesley's understanding, but this comes after God's free gift and the freedom of God to save. That further co-operant and synergistic action between God and humans comes after this initiating, gracious work of God alone. Wesley says, "Nay, but we affirm, that God alone does the whole work, without man's working at all; *in one sense*, we allow this also. We allow it is the work of God *alone* to justify, to sanctify, and to glorify, which three comprehend the whole of salvation."<sup>13</sup>

Obviously, much more can be said about both Paul and Wesley and their views on justification, but this is enough for our more limited purposes here, that is, to show the quite real differences between the two. In Paul God's rectification is an apocalyptic act changing the cosmos and history. It sets right the relationship of Jews and Gentiles. This is accomplished through the obedient, faithful death of Christ on the cross. By these actions God calls out the ecclesia, the church, as a community made up of both Jew and Gentile fulfilling God's promise to make the ecclesia worldwide in scope. Furthermore, it is in the context of the church that Paul deals with personal "transgressions." As Stendahl observes, Paul in his authentic writings "does not ever use the word 'forgiveness.'"<sup>14</sup>

For Wesley justification is the action of God alone where God's free grace offers redemption to the whole world. This initiates a synergistic relationship between God and sinners where God's grace is offered

preventiently to all, and where sinners can receive this free gift. In justification persons are forgiven and pardoned by God. Thus Wesley begins his work on salvation by attending to the action of God to love and to redeem individuals with its primary focus on forgiving and pardoning them of their sin. This clearly is not Paul. Indeed, it is strange that justification should take on such importance in Wesley and yet take on the character it does. It is, I suggest, a result of a reading and translation of "Luther" that so governed Protestant uses of Paul, including Wesley's, although Wesley certainly was not uncritical of "Luther," as we see above. Still, we must not conclude a discussion of Wesley's view of justification without consideration of its relationship to sanctification. Maddox warns us that while Wesley defines justification as forgiveness, this can be misleading if one does not also take into account his understanding of sanctification.<sup>15</sup>

### Sanctification in Wesley and Paul

Maddox reports that Wesley was very purposeful in what he omitted from his view of justification. He carefully circumscribed justification from sanctification so as not to suggest some immediate realization of Christlikeness as had been his inclination earlier while under the influence of the English Moravians.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, Wesley had problems with the notion of Christ's imputation of righteousness, a result of his concern that this idea might be misunderstood in an antinomian way.<sup>17</sup> This caused Wesley to reject Substitutionary Justification by which the righteousness or obedience of Christ is imputed to believers. Instead, Wesley's emphasis fell upon God's merciful grace by which we are pardoned as a result of the merits of Christ. This enabled Wesley to "insist that we never 'earn' or 'deserve' God's pardoning favor," while at the same time claiming our role in responding to "God's gracious acceptance."<sup>18</sup> Collins argues that Wesley used the lan-

11. I am indebted to Kenneth Collins in this paragraph and for pointing out these sources in his *Theology of John Wesley*, 179.

12. *Ibid.*, 164.

13. *Works* (Jackson), 10:230. Quoted in Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, 164. Italics in original.

14. Stendahl, *Final Account*, xi–xii.

15. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 166.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, 167.

18. *Ibid.*, 168.

guage of imputation only in relation to justification and with it forgiveness and acceptance, but did not use it in relation to sanctification.<sup>19</sup>

For Wesley justification is a relative change: by God's pardon we are enabled and empowered to participate in God's grace. We are pardoned "in order to participate," comments Albert Outler.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, sanctification represents "real change" whereby we are renewed by the work of the Holy Spirit. For Wesley the end or aim of salvation is restoration of the image of God in each person, that is, to be a reflection of the image of God by means of participation in the divine nature.<sup>21</sup> Sanctification is, then, the work of God's love by the power of the Holy Spirit perfecting us as a new creation. In response, the sanctified have the responsibility to give expression to, to proclaim, to bear witness to, and to mediate to the world the love of God. If justification is "Christ's work for us," then sanctification is "the Spirit's work in us."<sup>22</sup>

There is much of importance in Wesley's view of sanctification. Runyon in his assessment of Wesley's theology for today indicates that it is of value to correct certain evangelical Protestant views that reduce salvation to justification or conversion alone. Wesley's work not only names the central role of reconciliation and new standing before God in sanctification, but also the importance of the re-creation of both persons and the social world through the restoration of the image of God. Further, Wesley's theology offers hope by the transforming power of God's love in that it can be reflected into the world so that, indeed, the future can transcend the present.<sup>23</sup>

### Paul on Sanctification

These, indeed, are important contributions from Wesley. My question here is whether Wesley's view of sanctification is Paul's view and what is

19. Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, 175. Collins describes Wesley's view of imputation as no cover for one to continue in sin and unrighteousness; it is rather attestation to "the sheer grace and utter favor of God in forgiving sinners."

20. Outler, "Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition," 31. I am indebted to Maddox for this quote from Outler. See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 168.

21. Runyon, *New Creation*, 51.

22. Ibid., 232. Italics in original.

23. Ibid., 231.

to be gained by a comparison between the two of them. The beginning of this move is best initiated by noting that Wesley's view, again, is not Paul's. In his work on the theology and ethics of Paul, Victor Furnish states that for Paul sanctification is to be set apart for God's work. While this is certainly not absent in Wesley's work, sanctification in Paul "presupposes nothing about their [believers'] moral worthiness, only that they belong to the Lord."<sup>24</sup>

Contrary to Wesley, the goal or end of justification is not sanctification, if that is understood as some "ultimate condition" we attain, maintains Furnish. Rather, in Paul it is the "ever repeated" service of God. As related to justification, "it is the meaning of God's call." That is, sanctification is identified primarily with the will of God and God's call (1 Thess 4). While sanctification involves ethical demands, these "are derivative from this central point."<sup>25</sup> Inasmuch as enslavement to sin is alienation from God, so justification is reconciliation with God. Sanctification, then, as the "fruit" of this reconciliation, is service to God, and the end or telos of this service is eternal life.<sup>26</sup> In a telephone conversation, Furnish indicated, however, that he does not mean that there cannot be maturing or growing in grace. His comments rather have to do with how sanctification is used in Paul.<sup>27</sup>

James D. G. Dunn argues that in Paul identification with Christ is not simply a status one accepts, but also a process one works through. This process involves "a growing conquest of or detachment from the flesh" while the "outward person" wastes away and the "inner person," renewed by the Holy Spirit, is thereby wholly claimed for God. Ultimately, the body itself will be transfigured into an agency of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection. "Above all, it is a process of sharing in Christ's death, of being conformed to his death, with a view to a full sharing in his resurrection (Rom

24. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 157. With respect to Wesley, Collins reports that holiness means a separation for purity and with that a communion for the sake of love. *Theology of John Wesley*, 8.

25. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 155.

26. Ibid., 157. Here Furnish is working with the word order in 1 Cor 6:11, along with 1 Cor 1:30, 2 Cor 5:21, Rom 5:1ff, 1 Thess 4, 1 Cor 1:2, Rom 6:19ff. See 153-57. Note, too, that Hays defines sanctification as "to be set apart for God's service" in his *First Corinthians*, 100. Cf. 58 on holiness.

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6.5; 8.17; 2 Cor 4.17-18; 13.4; Gal 2.19).<sup>28</sup> Dunn concludes that Paul's view of salvation is "a process of transformation of the believer, not simply of the believer's status, but of the believer as such."<sup>28</sup>

Let me then pull together these threads of comment on sanctification in Wesley and Paul. Wesley and Paul share a sense of sanctification as being set apart for God's work, but Wesley makes a sharp distinction between justification and sanctification to avoid the suggestion of some immediate realization of Christlikeness in justification. He also was concerned that the notion of imputation of righteousness might be misunderstood in an antinomianism direction, that is, using the righteousness of Christ as a cover for the believer's own unrighteousness. Rather, justification is that relative change that enables us to participate in God's grace while sanctification is real change whereby we are renewed/restored by God's grace to the image of God. For Wesley justification is God's action for us, and sanctification is God's action in us. The goal of justification is sanctification. As renewed believers we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be Christ's new creation and to reflect this reality in the social world, mediating God's grace and love for others—indeed, for the whole creation.

In Paul sanctification is not some "ultimate condition" we attain even by God's grace. It is the ever-repeated service of God that comes to those who are set apart by God's act in Christ in the calling out of the church. Sanctification is the very meaning of being so called. It is the result of justification, of reconciliation: its "fruit." As we see above, justification is rectification. It is a theology of liberation. It is not about forgiveness and pardon. While Paul gives attention to transgressions, these are dealt with in the church. Forgiveness is not mentioned in Paul in relation to justification and does not have the dominant role it does in Wesley. Sanctification in Paul must be seen in this larger context, not in the context that Wesley gives to it.

My claim here does not mean that there is no role for maturation in Christ or growing in grace, as Furnish suggests, but these must not replace the more cosmic and historical action of God as understood in Paul. Even with Wesley's quite helpful understanding of the restoration of the image

28. Dunn, *New Perspective on Paul*, 93, cf. 487. My problem with this particular passage is that Dunn individualizes Paul too much with this focus on the individual believer, about which I will say more below.

of God in human life and of the role of witness and mission in reflecting God's image in the world, it is not enough to capture the wider vision of Paul. To make this clearer, we turn to "the battle of the genitives."

two

## Faith in Christ or the Faith of Christ?

The translation of the Greek words *pistis Christou* in the writings of Paul has been a controversy in New Testament studies over the last three decades or so. The question is whether to translate this Greek phrase as “faith in Christ” or as “the faith of Christ” (The phrase appears seven times in the authentic Pauline writings: Rom 3:22, 26; Gal 2:16 [twice]; 2:20; 3:22; and Phil 3:9. See also Eph 3:12.) A good place to see the issue is in Galatians 2:15–16: “We ourselves, who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, yet who know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in [or the faith of] Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in [or the faith of] Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified.” The issue is whether the phrase *pistis Christou* is an objective genitive (faith in Christ), that is, where one’s faith has as its object Christ; or whether the phrase is a subjective genitive, that is, where the phrase is about Christ’s own faith as the subject, “the faith of Christ” or the faithfulness of Christ.

In his influential study of Paul’s use of *pistis Christou*, Richard Hays comes to the conclusion that it is Christ’s “faithfulness and obedience” that are central in significance for salvation in Paul’s writings. Hays regards it as “a terrible and ironic blunder to read Paul as though his gospel

made redemption contingent upon our act of deciding to dispose ourselves toward God in a particular way.” Such a conclusion does not cause “the human faith-response to God’s action in Christ” to be unimportant, but it is not “the precondition for receiving God’s blessing; instead, it is the appropriate mode of response to a blessing already given in Christ.” Furthermore, faith is “the mode of participation in the pattern definitively enacted in Jesus Christ: as we respond in faith, we participate in an ongoing reenactment of Christ faithfulness.” It is a life pattern into which we are called and which we enact.<sup>1</sup> Hence, it is by participation in Christ, as a representative of true faithfulness to God, and not by faith in Christ, that we are saved. As I read Hays, the issue is whether one focuses on a Christ-centered participation by us which has a relational base in Christ as a result of Christ’s faithfulness and obedience, or whether it is one of a more individual trust in Christ that has a subjective base located in our own inner response to Christ. Hays sees the issue in terms of the former without denying that there are places where our faith in Christ is an appropriate translation.

George Howard, in his study of *pistis Christou*, states that “Luther was the first in the history of NT translators to render *pistis Christou* as an objective genitive.”<sup>2</sup> While Howard’s study is admittedly not exhaustive, he does examine early versions of the New Testament (the Syriac, Latin, and Coptic), translations in the Middle Ages, the Vulgate, and Reformation translations like those of John Wycliffe and the Authorized Version of 1611.<sup>3</sup> Howard concludes that “for Paul, the doctrine of justification by faith is the doctrine that by the faith of Christ God has united Israel and the nations in the present age in order to lead them to faith in God and to accomplish the salvation of mankind.”<sup>4</sup>

### Wesley on Faith of Christ and Faith in Christ

When examining Wesley’s use of *pistis Christou*, it is informative to compare his rendering of the Pauline texts in his *Translation of the New*

1. Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 211.

2. Howard, “Faith of Christ,” 2:759.

3. *Ibid.*, 2:758f.

4. *Ibid.*, 2:760.

*Testament* and his commentary on them in his *Notes on the Bible*.<sup>5</sup> What follows is first his translation of the texts where *pistis Christou* appears and then his commentary on these same passages. In his translation of the phrase in Galatians 2:16, where the phrase occurs twice, Wesley both times translates it as a subjective genitive.

- Galatians 2:16

Translation: "Even we (knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by *the faith of Jesus Christ*) have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be *justified by the faith of Christ*, and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified" (*italics mine*).

Notes: Here, where he seems quite cognizant of the genitive as a subjective one, he actually rephrases it as an objective genitive. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law. Not even of the moral, much less the ceremonial, law. But by *the faith of Jesus Christ* — That is, *by faith in him*" (*italics mine*).

- Galatians 2:20

Later, in his translation of verse 20, he uses the objective genitive: "I live by faith *in* the Son of God" and repeats that usage in his *Notes* (*italics mine*).

- Galatians 3:22

Translation: "But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith *of* Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (*italics mine*).

Notes: Here, the usage is not clear. That is, it may mean the *promise of* Jesus Christ given by faith in Jesus Christ or the promise of the faith of Jesus Christ. Here he makes no mention of the faith of or in Jesus Christ, but only that all are under sin and cannot be justified by the law. This sentence of the law is so that "the promise might be freely given to them that believe." This suggests a usage of the objective genitive.

5. Wesley, *Translation*; Wesley, *Notes*, no pages. Reference is by specific biblical text.

- Romans 3:22

Translation: Wesley's translation of Romans 3:22 again uses the subjective genitive: "But now the righteousness of God is manifested without the law, being attested by the law and the prophets, Even the righteousness of God, by the faith *of* Jesus Christ, to all and upon all that believe . . ." (*italics mine*).

Notes: "To all — The Jews. And upon all — The Gentiles that believe: for there is no difference — Either as to the need of justification, or the manner of it." The suggestion here in the *Notes* is one of faith in Christ, that is, the focus is on "the Gentiles that believe."

- Romans 3:26

Translation: "For a demonstration, I say, of his righteousness in this present time, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth *in* Jesus" (*italics mine*).

Notes: "For a demonstration of his righteousness — Both of his justice and mercy. That he might be just — Showing his justice on his own Son. And yet the merciful justifier of every one that *believeth in* Jesus. That he might be just — Might evidence himself to be strictly and inviolably righteous in the administration of his government, even while he is the merciful justifier of the sinner that *believeth in* Jesus." In both of these instances he seems to be using the objective genitive, or, at least, it is the meaning he gives to the text (*italics mine*).

- Philipians 3:9

Translation: "And be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through faith *in* Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (*italics mine*).

Notes: Here he clearly focuses on the faith of the believer when he distinguishes "the outward righteousness of the law" from "that *inward righteousness which is through faith* — Which can flow from no other fountain. The righteousness which is from God — From his almighty Spirit, not by my own strength, but *by faith alone*" (*italics mine*).

Furthermore, see his comment about Philipians 3:9, where he states that "the apostle is far from speaking of justification only." This comment is clarified by the one on verse 8 where Wesley, in describing Paul's view that he regards all things as loss compared to knowledge of Christ, "as my Lord . . . atoning for my sins, and reigning in my heart. To refer this to justification only, is miserably to pervert the whole scope of the words. They manifestly relate to sanctification also; yea, to that chiefly." Here Wesley seems to have brought his own distinction between justification and sanctification to Paul's writing and imposed a meaning on the text that is not there.

In sum, Wesley translates *piſtis Chriſtou* in Galatians 2:16 and Romans 3:22 in the subjective genitive (faith of Christ), but "corrects" his own translation in Galatians 2:16 to "faith in him." In his *Notes* he makes no mention of the phrase in Galatians 3:22 and Romans 3:22. At the same time, he translates *piſtis Chriſtou* as some variant of faith *in* Christ in Galatians 2:20, 3:22, and Romans 3:22, and his commentary in his *Notes* stays with that translation. That he was aware of the distinction between an objective and a subjective genitive seems clear enough. That in some sense he uses them both seems true also. We must, however, turn to his other writings to get a clearer picture of how he worked with the faith of/ in Christ.

### Wesley on Faith

Maddox describes justifying faith for the mature Wesley as "the objective evidence of God's pardoning love for us."<sup>6</sup> Wesley's focus here is not on the "subjective" dimensions of assent to the truths of the faith or on trust that God loves us, but rather on the Witness of the Spirit that we have, indeed, been justified and adopted by God as children, not merely as servants. This Witness of the Spirit within us calls forth "in response, a personal trust and confidence in God's specific gracious forgiveness and acceptance."<sup>7</sup>

With Wesley faith is not some natural human capacity used by us to gain justification. It is a "gift" called forth by God's grace at work in us and on us by God's offerings of pardon and forgiveness. Still, this gift is not offered irresistibly by the Witness of the Spirit; we *can* reject it. It is exactly and only in this sense that our subjective and responsive trust of this gift of God can be understood as necessary for our justification.<sup>8</sup> This is, of course, in keeping with Wesley's emphasis on an appropriate human responsibility in God's saving work through the Witness of the Spirit.

Collins summarizes Wesley's view of justifying faith as encompassing a number of crucial factors. First, it involves assent to the truths of the revelation of Scripture, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, but also the personal love that Christ has for each one, that is, in Wesley's words that Christ "loved me, and gave himself for me." Collins observes that the "for me" here are Luther's words, which Wesley uses.<sup>9</sup> Second, this personal sense of God's love in Christ takes in as well a vital trust in who Christ is and what he did. Third, this means that justifying faith cannot be understood apart from the redemptive work of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Fourth, neither can it be rightly conceived apart from the subjective trust and conviction graciously given to the believer by the work of the Holy Spirit, and faithfully received, not rejected, by the believer. (This is Maddox's point above.) Finally, it includes the development of spiritual senses as spiritual sight, the capacity to see by faith what is not available to the natural senses taken alone.<sup>10</sup>

In sum, central to Wesley's understanding of justifying faith is its status as a gift of God, as objective evidence of God's pardoning love for and forgiveness of us. While assent and trust have a role, faith is a gift that cannot be earned. It comes through the Witness of the Spirit, not irresistible but crucial to our justification. Faith is a rich concept in Wesley, as Collins indicates, yet it still addresses primarily our forgiveness and pardon as justifying faith. (We have already considered sanctification.) It embraces the lived sense that "Christ loves me and gave himself for me." Much more can be said about Wesley's understanding of faith, but this is enough to allow us now to turn to Paul.

6. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 173.

7. Maddox, 173. Cf. 124–31. See Wesley's summary in Sermon 5, "Justification by Faith," *Wesley's Works*, 1:194.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, 169.

10. *Ibid.*, 169f.



### Paul on Faith in Christ or Faith of Christ

Martyn argues that the primary translation of *pistis Christou* in Paul is rightly "the faith of Christ." It is the obedient, suffering love of Christ on the cross. This is the event by which the powers are faced and then defeated in the resurrection: "the crucifixion is the apocalyptic, cosmic event in which God confronts the powers that hold all of humanity in subjection."<sup>11</sup> In Paul, "The need of human beings is not so much forgiveness of their sins as deliverance from malignant powers that hold them in bondage."<sup>12</sup>

There are, of course, times when faith in Christ is an appropriate translation, as in Galatians 2:16, "to place one's trust in Christ Jesus"; or 3:6, "to have faith in God" (quoting Gen 15:6); or 3:22, "those who believe" ("in the form of a substantive participle," as Martyn points out).<sup>13</sup> In Paul, trusting God in Christ is a human act, but it is also more than a human act. God's rectification by the faith of Christ goes before believers placing their trust in Christ; indeed, it not only precedes faith in Christ, but is causative of it. In Galatians 3:2, Paul states, "Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?" The initiative here is clearly with the Spirit, not with humans choosing between two options. Paul is not thinking here of autonomous wills with the capacity to choose one of two options. As Martyn writes, "for Paul faith does not lie in the realm of human possibility? Trust in Christ is not an act of the free will but a case of God freeing the will through the defeat of the slaves to which humans are captive."<sup>14</sup>

To sum up our discussion of Wesley and Paul on the battle of the genitives and on faith, Wesley seems to be close to Paul in his understanding that faith is a gift dependent on the merits of Christ and the Witness of the Spirit. For Wesley justifying faith as faith in Christ is a gift. There is, at least here, a shared view of faith as a gift to us, which is not available on the basis of human capacity. The sharp difference between Wesley and

Paul seems to lie in Wesley's view of justifying faith as the work of forgiveness and pardon through the Witness of the Spirit, wherein we are able to have faith in Christ, while Paul's view of faith is one that makes primary God's rectifying action through the faith of Christ, which frees humanity from the captivities of the powers. Wesley's understanding of faith, at least initially, is one of a gift of forgiveness and pardon; Paul's is one of liberation from the powers. As we shall see in the next section, the place of the powers in Wesley and Paul is a crucial one and quite determinative to understanding their differences.

11. Martyn, *Galatians*, 279.

12. *Ibid.*, 273, cf. 95-97, 370-73.

13. *Ibid.*, 275.

14. *Ibid.*, 276.

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# The Powers in Wesley and Paul

Perhaps the greatest difference between Wesley and Paul is on the issue of the powers and their role in the human predicament. Their views here relate to a sharp divergence at the point of whether redemption requires first and foremost forgiveness and pardon for our sin or whether it necessitates apocalyptic deliverance from the captivities that enslave us.

## Wesley on the Powers

Wesley had a great interest in early Greek theologians, and these theologians had basically two approaches to the liberation of humanity from the powers, sin, and death. One is the ransom theory, in which God offers Christ to Satan in exchange for all of humanity, but thereby outmaneuvers Satan; as Jesus Christ is without sin, Satan takes him unjustly, and in penalty for this unjust act, Satan must then release all of humanity. The other theory is a military one in which God defeats Satan by means of the resurrection.

Maddox reports that, because of Wesley's appreciation for these early Greek theologians, we do "occasionally find echoes of these themes in his work." But Maddox finds it surprising that we find so few echoes, especially since Wesley shares with these same theologians the conviction that we are finally to recover the likeness of God in salvation. But echoes of the ransom and military accounts of Christ's death and resurrection are very

scarce. Maddox observes that when one compares Wesley's work with the Book of Common Prayer, which Wesley prized very much, the ransom theme is far more prominent there than it is in Wesley's work.<sup>1</sup>

Why? Maddox believes that Wesley is consciously avoiding the use of the ransom model as the primary explanation of Christ's death. One reason for this is that Wesley believed that we are "far less enslaved to Satan than to corrupt tempers." Maddox, however, thinks that the more important reason is that the ransom view does not give sufficient attention to the issue of human guilt. For Wesley, if atonement does not address the guilt for human sin, we will never be freed from its captivity. Christ's atonement sets us free from guilt itself, which liberates us from the slavery of sin and Satan. In Wesley's words, "The voluntary passion of our Lord appeased the Father's wrath, obtained pardon and acceptance for us, and consequently, dissolved the dominion and power which Satan had over us through our sins."<sup>2</sup>

Wesley, however, did believe in supernatural powers. He held that evil entered the world through the fall of Lucifer and that the origin of evil is the Devil. He also uses the word Satan, and all three of these words operate in his writing, apparently "with little distinction" between them and with all three referring "to the same source of evil."<sup>3</sup>

Wesley also preached a sermon on "Of Evil Angels — Eph 6:12." These fallen angels are "governors of this world," "the rulers of the darkness of this age." They war against us, "blind our hearts," attempt "to damp our love of God" and neighbor: they lessen when they do not destroy love, joy and peace; they "hinder every good word and work." Insinuating evil thoughts, "evil passions or tempers," they "torment" those they cannot destroy. And they cause many diseases that seem to have only natural causes.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, Wesley takes very seriously the power of sin and death. Wesley compared the power of death to a kingdom, one that has more

1. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 97.

2. Quoted in *ibid.*, 98. Italics in original. Wesley's quote is from his *Notes*, comment on Col. 1:14. For helpful summaries of Wesley's view of the atonement, see Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, 99–113; Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 101–10.

3. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 58.

4. Wesley, "Sermon 72 — Of Evil Angels."

subjects than any other ruler.<sup>5</sup> Death entered the world through Adam's sin. That is, according to Wesley, Lucifer had fallen by means of self-temptation, pride, and self-will, leading to evil tempers and affections. In contrast, humanity had fallen as a result of external temptation, unbelief, pride, and self-will with the consequences of evil tempers and affections.<sup>6</sup> Sin, moreover, brings not only physical death but spiritual death as well, which has even more serious results in the corruption of the natural, political, and moral images of God in humankind.<sup>7</sup>

In terms of deliverance from the power of sin it is very interesting that Wesley, in contrast to Paul, sees this liberation first as one of deliverance from guilt, and only then from the power of sin. The role of Christ, first, as priest relates to the forgiveness from guilt that Christ's atonement (justification) provides. The atonement must first be made for human guilt before humanity is freed from the power of sin. As Wesley says, "without an atonement first made for the guilt, we could never have been delivered from the power" of sin.<sup>8</sup>

Breaking the power of sin, however, comes with sanctification. That is, the victory motif in Wesley is not so much understood in terms of Christ's priestly work (justification), but rather more with his kingly work (sanctification). Collins concludes that Wesley "sees the victory motif of conquering sin, death, hell, and Satan as playing out not simply at the cross, but also in the ongoing transformation of human hearts in the context of the church, as Christ returns, judges, and then finally reigns without a rival!"<sup>9</sup>

What we have to understand here is that the powers and Christ's victory over them are not important categories for Wesley, except for those of sin, death, and Satan. But in Wesley, liberation must come first as deliverance from guilt and only then release from the power of sin. While he certainly does argue for the power of sin and death and for Christ's kingly

5. Wesley, *Notes*, Rom 5:14. See Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, 60.

6. Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, 58f.

7. *Ibid.*, 60–64.

8. Wesley, *Notes*, 1 Pet 2:24. Quoted in Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, 111.

9. *Ibid.*, 113. My suspicion is that Collins would, on second thought, use a word other than "simply" in this sentence—perhaps "only." Still, his point seems to be well taken in terms of the association of the victory motif with sanctification in Wesley.

victory over these, he does not develop these with respect to the powers in the fuller sense that Paul does.

### Paul on the Powers

We have seen that Paul's gospel is an apocalyptic one where God has invaded the world and set right the relationship between Jew and Gentile. God's action not only discloses but enacts a change in the cosmos and in history by means of the faith of Christ, whose obedient, suffering death on the cross and whose resurrection have introduced a new creation as already here and yet to come in Christ's parousia. In the resurrection, God has vindicated Christ and defeated the powers of the world, and in this action God has called out the church to be the alternative community of this new creation, to be the embodiment of this new reality, and to live in faithful witness to it.

So far, however, we have only spoken of Christ's victory over the powers in a declarative sense. We need now to say more about how the defeat of the powers can be understood in Paul's writing. We can look at these powers only briefly here and cannot do more than an overview, but perhaps this is enough for our purposes.

Wright characterizes Paul's view of the powers as moving "to and fro in ways natural to him but strange to us." Often these powers seem "purely spiritual" to us, but we find Paul naming sin and death as powers, and further, his understanding includes earthly rulers, authorities, and powers as well.<sup>10</sup>

Hays acknowledges that terms in Paul like "rule" (*arche*), "authority" (*exousia*), and "power" (*dynamis*) do refer first to "cosmic spheres" (10). Wright, *Paul*, 104. Dunn observes that Paul "did not have a very strong, or at least very clear, belief regarding . . . heavenly powers." While Paul does not seem to doubt that the powers were real in a supraindividual, suprasocial, spiritual sense, and that these had real effects on events and human behavior, Paul does not take the occasion in his extant writings to sketch out or define such powers in any definitive sense. Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 109. See Dunn's helpful chart of the Pauline and pseudo-Pauline biblical passages on the powers on page 105. Cf. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 1:256–58. In his use of the concept of the powers, Dunn seems to suggest that Paul is making some concession to his audiences in his talk of heavenly powers by using language that can communicate with his churches (109). Nevertheless, Dunn does conclude that for Paul the powers are actual forces that cause evil in the world (127).

or forces" that are hostile to and oppose God (1 Cor 15:24; cf. Rom 8:38; Col 1:16; 2:10-15; Eph 1:21; 3:10), yet these powers have "concrete political implications." Hays makes the argument that the very thought that "Christ is Lord and that the kingdom ultimately belongs to God the Father stands as a frontal challenge to the ideology of imperial Rome."<sup>11</sup>

That Paul would have good reason to oppose Rome can be seen in his experience with the empire. Neil Elliott calls attention to the fact that Paul never mentions in his own letters that he is a Roman citizen. Rather, Paul seems to be proud of events that brought him before magistrates and other Roman officials, of doing time in Roman prisons, of being perceived as a public menace and punished as such. Indeed, Paul sees these as proof of his apostolic legitimization. When he describes Christ as the one who "always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere" (2 Cor 2:14-16), Elliott sees this as a parody of the Roman triumphal ceremonies. Even more, Paul declares that "every ruler and every authority and power" will be destroyed "when he [Christ] delivers the kingdom to God the Father. For he must reign until he has placed all enemies under his feet" (1 Cor 15:24-25). No wonder Paul was executed under Nero in Rome, at least according to tradition.<sup>12</sup>

### *The Elemental Spirits of the Cosmos*

In Galatians, Paul states that "when we were children, we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe" (4:3), and "how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more?" (4:9; cf. Rom 8:38.) How are we to understand these "elemental spirits" that have the world in their grip?

In the traditional ancient view, the elemental spirits of the universe were opposites such as earth and air, fire and water. These pairs of opposites gave the world (cosmos) its foundation, its order, its dependable structure. About such opposites Martyn uses the word "antimony"—as

11. Hays, *First Corinthians*, 265. Hays here references Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 295-98.

12. I am indebted to Elliott throughout this paragraph. See his "The Apostle Paul and Empire," 100-101. Elliott notes that these kinds of things are omitted in Acts where Paul is "a model Roman citizen." Luke, for example, in Acts does not report Paul's execution in Rome, or even his death.

he says, in "an idiosyncratic way"—to speak of many expressions that the ancients used to name these pairs of opposites, "so fundamental to the cosmos, being one of its elements, as to make the cosmos what it is." In this sense it is more than an antithesis, which Martyn describes as "a form of rhetoric, a product of human thought." An antimony instead "lies at the foundation of the cosmos."<sup>13</sup>

Paul, however, provides a new list of opposites: Gentile and Jew, slave and free, male and female (Gal 3:28).<sup>14</sup> In other places he names opposites such as Law and Not Law, circumcision and uncircumcision, among others. When God in Christ liberates humanity from the old cosmos, these old opposites/antimonies are swept away; they no longer exist for those in Christ. There is, instead, a new creation. Beverly Gaventa states it quite starkly: "The gospel's invasion necessarily obliterates worlds." It obliterates ways in which people identify themselves in terms of "ethnicity, economic and social standing, and gender." She goes on to write that "it moves people from one place to another, from the place of torah observance or slavery or gender into the world of Christ."<sup>15</sup>

This also means, says Martyn, that they have "suffered the loss of the cosmos, as though a fissure had opened up under their feet, hurling them into an abyss with no dimensions."<sup>16</sup> Martyn calls attention to the many times in Galatians that Paul names this loss of cosmos, such as 2:16, 17-19, 21; 3:12; 3:21. Indeed, Paul summarizes Galatians in 6:14-15 where he characterizes the situation as a crucifixion of the cosmos: "But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the cosmos has been crucified to me and I to the cosmos. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation."

It may be necessary to pause as one reads Paul's account of the death of the old cosmos and the coming of new creation because of our familiarity with this language. It is too easy to move across these words and not grasp the full-blown vision of what they entail—indeed, if we can! In Paul's thought the very structure of the old cosmos is done. There is a new world, a new creation, and the powers, though not yet finally under the

13. Martyn, *Galatians*, 570 n. 79. Cf. 2:1-73, 3:73-77, 3:93-405, 5:70-74.

14. Ibid., 400-406.

15. Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul*, 68.

16. Martyn, *Galatians*, 571.

subjection of Christ, have been, nevertheless, decisively defeated. We now live in the time of the Spirit of Christ; we are free to walk in the light, to live faithfully, obediently, righteously in the expansive reality of a cosmos where the rulers, the authorities, the powers, sin, death, and the elemental spirits of the cosmos have been disclosed in their impotent futility even as they have been put on notice about their future subordination to the reign of Christ and ultimately to the Father. The good news of Paul's gospel is one of such encompassing deliverance from the captivities of human enslavement that our word *freedom* is too abstract and our word *liberty* too frivolous.

### *Sin as a Power*

Even with such a brief treatment of Paul's views of the powers so far, we must go on and turn to his work on sin and death. Dunn notes the high predominance of the term "sin" in Romans, although Paul's view here is not at variance with that in other parts of his letters. Sin is also personalized in Paul. It is expressed in a rich variety of images: it comes into the world in one man (5:12), reigns via death (5:21), and dominates and enslaves people (6:12, 14; 6:16–23). Sin is seen as a master (6:23), a living being, a guileful enemy, and one that sets up a bridgehead within human-kind, which is too impotent to stop it (7:8–11). These images and others suggest that sin is a power that oppresses humanity.<sup>17</sup>

Dunn summarizes Paul's view of sin as a power that cannot be seen in individual terms alone because it is so profoundly relational in Paul. Its compulsive and coercive power is experienced in both inward states and in social contexts. It afflicts both attitudes and conduct, taking away the agency of the person or group. In terms of sin as *hamartia*, as missing the mark, it makes humans turn from the best they know and are. It leads them into idolatries of all kinds, thereby generating illusions by which they fail to see themselves as creatures of God and as utterly dependent on God. This turn to their own devices and illusions leads to preoccupations with the flesh, seeking to satisfy and compensate weaknesses that cannot be assuaged or overcome.<sup>18</sup> What seems important to Paul is the power of

this kind of evil to crash into human life, enslaving persons, groups, and communities and confining them in a constriction of death.<sup>19</sup>

### *Death as a Power*

Death is also a power in Paul. His use of death occurs on a spectrum both similar and related to his use of flesh. While Paul can write of death in a more "neutral" sense, "with some equanimity" says Dunn (e.g., Rom 14:8; 1 Cor 3:22), death is typically used "in a more negative sense" as a punishment due to a sinful humanity (Rom 1:32). Death is also associated with certain sins (Rom 1:29–31), and, finally, exacts one's very life (Rom 7:10).<sup>20</sup>

More specifically, death is a result of having lived life "in the flesh," subject to the influence of sinful passions (Rom 7:5), and as a result of the "mindset" of the flesh (Rom 8:6). Death, like flesh, is a dominating and negating power. It is the terminal end of the corruptible (1 Cor 15:42, 50). Lives lived in pursuit of sinful desires "sow to the flesh" and "will from the flesh reap corruption" (Gal 6:8) and its fate of death.

Most impressive is this close link in Paul between sin and death. The main section of Paul's writing on death occurs in Romans 5:12–8:2. Here we find that death came into the world by way of sin (5:12) through "one man's transgression" (5:15). Sin rules in death (5:21) and brings death as the wages of sin (6:23). As Dunn says, "death is the last and worst effect of sin."<sup>21</sup>

Although death is not God's intention for humankind, it cannot be avoided any more than sin and the flesh. Persons and corporate groups alike are caught in the coercive inter-captivities of the flesh and sin, and "death is the inescapable end of this life."<sup>22</sup>

19. Ibid., 114.

20. I am paraphrasing Dunn's work in *Theology of Paul the Apostle* (125–26) in this paragraph and in the four paragraphs that follow.

21. Ibid., 126.

22. Ibid.

17. Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 111–12.

18. Ibid., 112.

### Wesley and Paul on the Powers

Again, in Wesley we see the influence of Luther in his focus on guilt and forgiveness. It is Christ's atoning priestly work that must first address our guilt before the defeat of sin, death, and Satan can occur through Christ's kingly role in the hearts of sanctified believers. While there are references to supernatural beings—evil angels, for example—references to the powers, in the fuller sense of Paul, certainly are not prominent in Wesley. The powers understood in a more this-worldly sense of rulers, authorities, and powers and in terms of the polar antinomies that constitute the cosmos are not important categories for Wesley and receive at most "echoes" in his work.

In Paul there is no systematic distinction between heavenly powers and more earthly ones. Yet, clearly those of a supraindividual, suprasocial, spiritual kind clearly exist and hold humanity—indeed, the whole creation—in bondage. That he had reason not to trust Rome seems clear, and that he understood that Christ would, one day, reign over every rule, authority, and power of this world can hardly be denied. It is also difficult to believe that such claims were not "subversive"—to use a more contemporary term—of Rome. Furthermore, on Paul's view, the elemental spirits of the cosmos—those fundamental polar opposites by which the world is ordered and sustained—have been swept away in Christ. While this must be seen not in a final sense (that is, a not yet status), nevertheless in Paul there is an already presence of a new creation for those who are in Christ. And, finally, Christ is victorious over the powers of sin and death and their pervasive enslavement of the world. The ecclesia is then able to live into the reality of this new world, confident that Christ is Lord and finally will rule over its captivities.

So then, if Wesley is focused on justification as an initial act of God's forgiveness and pardon of our sin in Christ, addressing first of all our guilt, then Paul sees God's apocalyptic action as taking on and defeating the powers of this world, addressing first our captivity. If Wesley sees Christ's kingly work as defeating the powers of sin, death, and Satan in the hearts of believers as they are restored to the image of God, then Paul sees God in Christ at work sweeping away the elements of the old creation and establishing a new creation in this rectifying act so that the walls are

brought down between Jew and Greek, male and female, and slave and free. If the prominent categories for Wesley are those of God in Christ redemptively addressing the sin and guilt that capture the hearts and minds of individuals and that deface the image of God in them, then in Paul we see God's apocalyptic act, changing the cosmos and conquering sin and death, offering a new creation to those who are in Christ.

At this point, I need to address another significant issue in the differences between Wesley and Paul. It has to do with a basic conceptuality at work in Wesley's work. It is hardly ever absent in his thought, so far as I can tell, and it is not operative in Paul. We turn next to this dual conceptuality of the individual and society.

THE FUTURE OF JOHN WESLEY'S THEOLOGY  
Back to the Future with the Apostle Paul

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Cascade Books

An Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers  
199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3  
Eugene, OR 97401

[www.wipfandstock.com](http://www.wipfandstock.com)

ISBN 13: 978-1-61097-629-9

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*Cataloging-in-Publication data:*

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The future of John Wesley's theology : back to the future with the apostle Paul / Tex Sample

xvi + 120 p. ; 23 cm. —Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 13: 978-1-61097-629-9

1. Wesley, John, 1703-1791. 2. Paul, the Apostle, Saint—Teachings. 3. Theology, Doctrinal. I. Title.

BX8495.W5 S26 2012

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Manufactured in the U.S.A.

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Will D. Campbell*