

the able editorship of Dow Kirkpatrick: *The Doctrine of the Church* (1964), *The Finality of Christ* (1966), *The Living God* (1971), and *The Holy Spirit* (1974).

Special attention is called to the bibliography included in this volume, containing a comprehensive listing of secondary materials on Wesley's doctrine of sanctification and its social implications.

The warden for the Sixth Oxford Institute was Rena Karefa-Smart of Boston University; and Brian Beck of Wesley House, Cambridge University, and I served as co-chairpersons. Financial assistance was provided by the Overseas Division of British Methodism, the Board of Global Ministries, New York, and the World Methodist Council. Abingdon, publisher of most of the previous Oxford Institute volumes, cooperated to make publication possible. Special appreciation is due Phyllis Barker, Kathy Henderson, and Clarence Bence for their assistance in preparing the manuscript for publication.

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Introduction: Wesley and the Theologies of Liberation

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During the decade of the 1970s liberation theologies moved from the periphery of theological attention to its center. Their insistent questions have instigated a re-evaluation not only of traditional understandings of Christianity but of the function and methods of theology. Three types of liberation theology are represented in this volume: black theology, with its concern for the plight of those oppressed politically and economically because of racial barriers; feminist theology, with its sensitivity to male dominance and the shaping of culture to the detriment and disadvantage of half the human race; and Latin American theology, with its use of Marxist analysis to expose exploitation of third-world peoples by the privileged groups, classes, and systems that control economic power.

In spite of their obvious differences these theologies share a common *critical* approach. Their task, as they conceive it, is not to rationalize and justify doctrine and church practice but to ask, on the basis of the biblical vision of the kingdom of God and his righteousness, how Christian theology and practice have been consistent with that vision—or have thwarted it. Aware of the extent to which theology has served as an ideology to legitimize unjust social orders in the past, these theologians have a litmus test that they apply to any claim to theological truth: Does it advance the cause of human freedom? With Jürgen Moltmann, they find that "*the new criterion of theology and of faith is to be found*

in praxis. . . Truth must be practicable. Unless it contains initiative for the transformation of the world, it becomes a myth of the existing world."¹

The thesis advanced by some of the writers of the following chapters is that there is a peculiar affinity between Wesleyan theology—especially Wesley's doctrine of sanctification—and movements for social change. When *Christian perfection* becomes the goal of the individual, a fundamental hope is engendered that the future can surpass the present. Concomitantly, a holy dissatisfaction is aroused with regard to any present state of affairs—a dissatisfaction that supplies the critical edge necessary to keep the process of individual transformation moving. Moreover, this holy dissatisfaction is readily transferable from the realm of the individual to that of society—as was evident in Wesley's own time—where it provides a persistent motivation for reform in the light of "a more perfect way" that transcends any status quo.

Justification by faith, the *leitmotiv* of the Reformation, remained for Wesley a fundamental component of salvation, as we shall see. But the role of justification is to provide the foundation in grace for the actual transformation of the person that is the divine intention. Justification restores us to God's favor; sanctification, to God's image.² Only with sanctification begins the renewal of creation that is explicit in the vision of the kingdom of God. A qualitative change in human existence is the divine objective in the process of reconciliation. From Wesley's standpoint, redemption, therefore, cannot be complete without it. *Entire* sanctification functions on the level of the individual as an eschatological goal, paralleling the kingdom on the social level. Though the realization of this goal is the gift of the Father's unfailing grace and not the product of human striving, entire sanctification is nevertheless a possibility within this world and this life.

It follows that Wesley, unlike most eighteenth-century

writers, does not view the kingdom of God as referring exclusively to heaven or to life after death. The first fruits of the Kingdom are available now. "A society [is] to be formed . . . to subsist first on earth, and afterwards with God in glory. In some places of Scriptures the phrase [kingdom of God] more particularly denotes the state of it on earth; in others, it signifies only the state of glory; but generally it includes both."³ Therefore, when we pray "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,"

the meaning is, that all the inhabitants of the earth, even the whole race of mankind, may do the will of their Father which is in heaven, as *willingly* as the holy angels; that these may do it *continually*, . . . yes, and that they may do it *perfectly*—that "the God of peace through the blood of the everlasting covenant, may make them perfect in every good work to do his will, and work in them" all "which is well-pleasing in his sight." In other words, we pray that we and all mankind may do the whole will of God in all things.⁴

"Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" is *not* to be understood as it is "by the generality of men" as a phrase expressing only resignation, "a readiness to suffer the will of God, whatsoever it be, concerning us." On the contrary, we pray "not so much for a passive, as for an active, conformity to the will of God."

For Wesley this active conformity includes the responsibility to critique conditions in this world that are not in accord with the divine will. In the chapter "John Wesley on Economics," Thomas Madron details Wesley's attacks on the causes of poverty, such as the enclosure laws, which rationalized agriculture, denied the peasants access to common grazing lands, and drove them off the land and into the cities to become the great disenfranchised urban proletariat. Not content simply to *speak* against injustices, Wesley organized various self-help projects, cottage industries, literacy classes, credit unions, medical clinics, and

other means of coping with the degrading and impoverishing impact of industrialization and early capitalism.

Wesley's sharpest attacks were directed against the slave trade, which he witnessed firsthand in Carolina (initially the Georgia colony prohibited slavery) and considered the worst abomination found in the Christian world. He cut through the pious rationalizations of the trade offered by his contemporaries—that it was, for instance, an economic necessity. "Better is honest poverty," he wrote, "than all the riches brought in by tears, sweat and blood of our fellow creatures." Or that it brought Africans the benefits of living in so-called civilized lands, to which Wesley retorted that no slave merchant actually operated with such motives. "To get money, not to save lives, is the whole spring of their motions."⁵ The profit motive perpetuated the evil for all concerned. He was not impressed by the piety of some slaveholders.

It is your money that pays the merchant, and through him the captain and the African butchers. You therefore are guilty, yea, principally guilty, of all these frauds, robberies and murders. You are the spring that puts all the rest in motion; they would not stir a step without you; therefore the blood of all these . . . lies upon your head.⁶

The last letter Wesley wrote was to William Wilberforce, who at the time was attempting to win passage of an antislavery bill in Parliament. Wesley did not hesitate to give Wilberforce's cause absolute status and transcendent sanction. "Unless God has raised you up for this very thing you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? . . . Go on, in the name of God and in the power of his might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it."⁷

Black liberation theology has found in Wesley a congenial figure, therefore, whose consistent championing of the rights of black people set an unambiguous standard for the

movement he founded. Unfortunately, Wesley's example was not always followed by his sons and daughters, as James Cone and Kwesi Dickson show in their analyses of the development of Methodism in North America and in Africa. The Methodist witness often has been compromised by the socioeconomic structures of slavery and racism. Nevertheless, the abolitionist cause obtained much of its support in nineteenth-century America from the perfectionist orientation called into being by the Wesleyan revivals and frontier preaching, as Timothy Smith and Donald Dayton demonstrate. Moreover, the notions of sanctification and holiness proved more compatible with the style of worship and piety of black churches as they developed on American soil, than did Calvinism or Anglicanism.

Similarly, as Nancy Hardesty explains, feminist theology can point to the openness of both Wesley and the Wesleyans to the contributions of women and to the leadership roles women occupied in the movement, long before they won comparable recognition elsewhere in society. Though scarcely a champion of equal rights in the modern sense, Wesley was capable of passionate prose when arguing for the right of women to exercise ministries such as visitation of the sick.

But may not *women* as well as men bear a part of this honorable service? Undoubtedly they may; nay, they ought—it is meet, right and their bounden duty. Herein there is no difference: "there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus." Indeed it has long passed for a maxim with many that "women are only to be seen; not heard." Accordingly many of them are brought up in such a manner as if they were only designed for agreeable playthings! But is this doing honour to the sex? Or is it real kindness to them? No; it is the deepest unkindness; it is horrid cruelty; it is mere Turkish barbarity. And I know not how any women of sense and spirit can submit to it. Let all you that have it in your power assert the right which the God of nature has

given you. Yield not to that vile bondage any longer. You, as well as men, are rational creatures. You, like them, were made in the image of God: you are equally candidates for immortality.⁸

Thus with regard to the first two forms of liberation theology under discussion, the relation of Wesleyan doctrine to human liberation is fairly clear-cut; there is ample historical documentation to suggest a more than coincidental connection between sanctification and social reform. The case is not as clear when we turn to the third type; its criticism of the status quo is grounded not so much in traditional democratic egalitarianism as in Marxism.

The Special Challenge of Latin American Theology

When we move from black and feminist theologies to Latin American liberationist thought, we move, as Rupert Davies observes, into a new arena. No straight line can be drawn from Wesley through nineteenth-century enlightened liberalism, or through evangelical perfectionism to the political liberation movements of today. The Wesley whose name lends legitimacy to movements for social reform cannot as readily be called upon to legitimize revolutions. The relationship necessarily becomes more complex and requires a more thorough introduction.

The crux of the problem from the Latin American standpoint is that Wesley was a reformer, but not a revolutionary. His witness may lend itself to increased justice *within* the politico-economic system, but can it endorse radical change? Is there not something in the very notion of sanctification that is meliorist and gradualist, and therefore not appropriate as a model in a situation that calls for more fundamental solutions? Wesley assumes that for the most part, in both church and state, the structures are already in place; that what is lacking is the power and the

new content of righteousness. This assumption makes him attractive to the liberal reformer—but suspect to the Marxist, for whom liberal reforms may be worse than nothing since they relieve the pressures that otherwise would force the fundamental changes necessary for a new order.

Is it possible to read Wesley in a way that makes sense and that contributes to Christian understanding and action in those parts of the world influenced by the Marxist critique? To spell out the nature of the dilemma, we turn first to the so-called *Halévy thesis* to summarize the issues at stake.

Elie Halévy (1870–1937) was a French historian intrigued by the contrasting developments in England and France at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. In the first volume of his monumental six-volume *History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, he sought to explain why, with similar conditions of impoverishment and unrest, France went through a bloody revolution, while England moved into the modern period without such violent upheaval.⁹ In this and other writings, he concluded that

England was spared the revolution toward which the contradictions in her polity and economy might otherwise have led her, through the stabilizing influence of evangelical religion, particularly Methodism. . . . The despair of the working class was the raw material to which Methodist doctrine and discipline gave a shape.¹⁰

The result was the rise of leaders within the proletariat and petty bourgeoisie who were committed to nonviolence and to the orderly achievement of social reforms in basic loyalty to the government. The influence of Methodism on the trade-union movement in Britain has often been remarked. Labor leaders received their training as class leaders and local preachers, and they adapted the methods of the class

meeting and dues collection to the needs of the fledgling trade unions.¹¹ In his book *The Methodist Revolution*, Bernard Semmel has updated Halévy and argued, from the standpoint of a social historian, that sociologists should give Wesleyan theology the same careful attention accorded Calvinism by Tawney and Weber, because of Methodism's undeniable social impact.¹²

The Halévy thesis continues to exercise a fascination—not least of all because it is so ambiguous. Does it mean that Wesleyan doctrine and practice instigated profound socio-economic changes, which in other societies have been accomplished only by prolonged violence and bloody revolution? If so, Wesleyan doctrine conceivably could be touted as the answer to the third world's search for ideological alternatives to both capitalism and communism.¹³ Or does it mean that Methodism's effect was to dampen the fires of revolution by redirecting discontent toward spiritual preoccupations, which would have left the external world unaffected, had it not been for other forces for change at work? Historians of a more critical and Marxist persuasion are inclined toward the latter theory. Their arguments run from the judgment that Methodism simply was not strong enough numerically (150,000 to 200,000 members) by the end of the eighteenth century to wield the kind of influence Halévy attributes to it and that by the time its numbers increased significantly, it had lost most of its identification with the working class and had become bourgeois (a view that John Kent [chapter 4] shares¹⁴), to the claim that Methodism was a retrogressive and reactionary force, preoccupied with individual morality and that it drove a wedge between converts and their fellow proletarians—between the chapel and the pub. "Energies and emotions which were dangerous to social order . . . were released in the harmless form of sporadic love-feasts, watch-nights, band-meetings or revivalist campaigns."¹⁵ Hence it can be argued that, to the extent that Methodism

did affect the working classes, it indoctrinated them in the conservative Toryism of its founder and prevented the kind of radical critique of economic and class structures that could have brought about a new and more just social order.

Wesley's political conservatism cannot be denied. He defended the monarchy, opposed the American colonists in their moves toward independence, and abhorred anarchy in any form. And with good reason. He had faced mobs and lawlessness, and he knew how to value the political structures that guaranteed order and relative freedom of speech. Moreover, he was convinced that under the monarchy and Parliament, in spite of corruptions, Britons enjoyed the greatest degree of freedom found anywhere. But this same conservatism caused him to oppose the new *laissez-faire* economic policies and to call upon the government to return to mercantilist practices, which would assure more just distribution (e.g., setting the price of bread at a level the poor could afford). Oppression lay not in the government as such, but in corruption where it existed—in the buying of votes, for instance, or in an economic policy that accepted unemployment as a matter of course. But the system was presumed to be reformable. True, Wesley's doctrine of universal depravity saw evidence of human folly everywhere, as his treatise "The Doctrine of Original Sin, According to Scripture, Reason and Experience" amply illustrates.¹⁶ But sin can be rooted out; the sanctifying grace of God is given in order that the devil and all his works might be not only renounced but actively opposed and even destroyed.¹⁷

If we may press the theological analogy, Wesley assumed that the system was "justified"—in its basic lineaments capable of being conformed to the will and purpose of God. What remained was "sanctification," the practice of conformity to that will. Thus the appropriateness of the gradualist, meliorist approach. But what about lands where the regime is neither just nor subject to reform? Is sancti-

fication then not an inappropriate category? Should not one demand instead a fundamental "conversion" before sanctification becomes a possibility? Meliorism does not commend itself to those who see radical change as the precondition of any genuine improvement in the lot of the masses. Gradualist reforms are, intentionally or unintentionally, always the ally of the present system. They relieve the worst inequalities and undercut pressure for revolution, thus insuring that exploitation will continue as before under those who control the wealth and the trade.

What made Wesley appealing to the older liberalism, with its emphasis on humanitarian reform in the context of a democratic, evolving, enlightened capitalism, makes him less than helpful in the eyes of those who see the results of that same capitalism in their own lands, where it has worked hand in glove with local power elites to enrich oligarchies and impoverish the masses. In his chapter "A Liberating *Pastoral* for the Rich," **Dow Kirkpatrick** writes out of his own encounter with Latin American realities. He undertakes the difficult task of interpreting to first-world Christians that, in all its well-intended charity and goodwill, the first world has not yet grasped the extent to which it is implicated in the third world's misery and that it has created situations not amenable to the traditional liberal approaches to problem solving. **José Míguez Bonino** states the issue clearly when he comments in a previous work,

The liberal ideology under which the liberal project was launched in Latin America, however excellent its intentions may have been, and whatever value it may have had at a point in our history—as a means of breaking the stranglehold of feudal society—proves to be for us *today* an instrument of domination, an ally of neocolonialism and imperialism.¹⁸

Even the church's missionary efforts are implicated, he charges in chapter 2. "For us in the Third World at least, Methodism as a social force is part of history—and in some

ways part of the history of our domination and exploitation."

If this is the case, the older social liberalism, which produced among other things an impressive body of Wesley scholarship, is no longer able to interpret Wesley convincingly in a world that has been sensitized by the Marxist critique of liberalism. The response to this dilemma, however, may be not to jettison Wesley, but to discover a hermeneutic that opens up his theology in a way that applies to the new situation.

Challenge and Response in Wesley Scholarship

Confrontations such as the one posed by Latin American liberation theology are not to be feared or avoided. Indeed, judging from recent history, research and reflection in the Methodist tradition have been spurred by just such challenges. The two most creative periods of Wesley scholarship in this century were called forth by cultural and theological changes that provoked questions about the conventional images of Wesley and Methodism. After World War I, the rise of the social gospel confronted scholars with the necessity of demonstrating that Wesley had more to offer than the pietism, revivalism, and individualism popularly associated with his name. The spate of research and publication on the social implications of Methodism is evidenced by the bibliography appended to this book. From the series by Wearmouth and Edwards and the studies by Wellman, MacArthur, and Bready, down to the recent works by Schneeberger and Marquardt, this has proved to be a rich lode. It speaks directly to the concerns of black theology and feminist theology. The fact that it cannot, for the most part, answer as directly the Latin American situation by no means discredits its contribution.

When liberalism was challenged in Europe by dialectical theology and in North America by neo-orthodoxy, a new critique of Wesleyanism arose. As neo-Reformation thought

became the norm in the Protestant ecumenical movement, the Methodist interest in religious experience was labeled "Schleiermachiian" (*horribile dictu!*), and the doctrine of Christian perfection was viewed as superficial and overly optimistic, in the light of the tragedies of World War II and its aftermath. In this period when continental Protestant theology was dominant, Methodists were regarded as not having a theology—at least not one that could contribute significantly to the ecumenical discussion.

Rising to the challenge, studies appeared that reappraised Wesley's thought in continuity with the Reformation tradition, beginning with Cell's early study of Calvinist elements in Wesley. This was followed by Cannon's treatment of the classical soteriological doctrines, Deschner's analysis of Wesley's Christology from a Barthian perspective, and Hildebrandt's examination of Wesley's continuity with Luther. Flew, Sangster, Peters, and Lindstrom all reinterpreted sanctification; and the works of Davies, Outler, Rupp, Williams, and others related Wesley more or less consciously to the mainstream of the Reformation tradition. The role of original sin was rediscovered, and the qualifications with which Wesley hedged Christian perfections were reiterated.

All of which is to say that each generation approaches the study of Wesley—or of any major figure in the past—with the questions and issues that demand attention in that generation's own time. If humanistic Marxism appears the most viable option to a significant segment of the world's population today, it is not surprising that the scholars of a world movement like Methodism begin to approach Wesley with questions generated by their encounter with Marxism. It can be argued, of course, that in the case of Marxism we are dealing with atheistic thought-forms inimical to any theological discussion. The long-standing Christian/Marxist dialogue would seem to indicate, however, that this is not

entirely the case. Latin American liberation theology has consciously appropriated Marxist methodology and found it a useful tool for both biblical and historical reflection, much as Thomas Aquinas converted pagan Aristotelianism, which posed no inconsiderable threat in his time, to Christian use.

If the Marxist critical component in Latin American theology tends to discredit the older liberal interpretation of Wesley, it treats the continental Reformation influence in contemporary theology in no more kindly fashion. Latin Americans fault their European Roman Catholic colleagues for allowing protestantizing concerns to dominate their rethinking of Catholicism after Vatican II. The doctrine of justification by faith alone has had fateful historical consequences, they warn. "The disappearance of the notion of *merit* from Protestant theology," says Juan Luis Segundo, "... seems to have undermined the possibility of any theology of history." The Catholic doctrine of merit, for all its shortcomings, gave eternal worth to human effort and right intention. But the exclusive emphasis upon justification by faith alone puts human beings in a completely passive position and turns the determination of history over to the secular powers. Segundo detects vestiges of this heritage even in today's Protestant liberation theologians, such as Moltmann and Alves, and in their Catholic allies, such as Metz, when they view the kingdom of God as so radically different from this world as to negate any human effort to approximate it. This is Luther's "two realms" doctrine *redivivus* in the thin disguise of political theology, Segundo suspects. "The 'revolution' it talks about seems to be more like a Kantian revolution than an historical revolution. It merely revolutionizes the way we formulate our problems." A theology of hope of the European variety, which speaks of a radical future but is unwilling to take responsibility for the concrete and ambiguous steps that lead from here to there, is no theology of hope—at least not

of hope for our history. Segundo sees the continuing grip of the Reformation doctrine as the fundamental debilitating element responsible for this impotence. If the theology of hope "remains consistent with itself and its fonts," he claims, "the revolution it speaks about is transformed into faith and hope in something metahistorical and a disgusted turning-away from real-life history." Segundo does not favor a return to the Catholic doctrine of merit in its medieval form. That would reintroduce the legalism from which the Reformation revolted. Rather, he seeks an approach combining the freedom *from*, experienced in justification, with freedom *for* human responsibility.¹⁹ What is needed, say the Latin Americans, is a holistic, critical, transformationist theology, one that understands salvation not only as a process that changes the individual, but as a historical process moving toward a divine goal—one in which the God of the Bible has a stake and takes sides—a process in which human efforts count for something and in which God enlists those efforts and brings them to fulfillment through their incorporation into the divine enterprise.

What happens when we approach Wesley with these Latin American concerns in mind? Because of the limits of this introduction, we can focus on only one example, but one that nonetheless is central enough to demonstrate the usefulness of the method. We shall focus on the role of *work* in the basic anthropologies of Wesley and Marx. In Wesley's case this will inevitably lead to a comparison with Reformation and quietist views on the relation of work to justification and sanctification, which in turn will open up parallels with Marx's criticisms of Feuerbach.

Wesley and Marx on Work

What is the role of human work in Wesley's soteriology? This has been a continuing conundrum to those who wish to

view Wesley as standing solidly within the Reformation tradition. He himself maintains that the Methodists espouse and proclaim nothing other than the Reformers' doctrine—justification by faith, without works of the law. At the same time he claims that "one who preaches justification by faith [and] goes no farther than this, [and] does not insist upon . . . all the fruits of faith, upon universal holiness, does not declare the whole counsel of God, and consequently is not a Gospel Minister." Introducing a distinction between "present" and "final" salvation, Wesley declares that "faith alone is the condition of present salvation," but that holiness and obedience are "the ordinary condition of final salvation."²⁰ As he explains, "Good works . . . cannot be the conditions of justification, because it is impossible to do any good work before we are justified. And yet, notwithstanding, good works may be and are conditions of final salvation."²¹

These and similar statements have led Cell and Peters to conclude that Wesley provides a "synthesis of the Protestant ethic of grace with the Catholic ethic of holiness."²² Rupp and Williams find this "synthesis" less than helpful and, for their part, cannot believe that Wesley is guilty of adding a Catholic doctrine of works to a Protestant foundation. "The Catholic view of holiness [with its ladder of merit] cannot be molded onto the Protestant view of grace," they object.²³ And if Wesley actually has done this he must perforce have abandoned his essential Protestantism.²⁴

But is it not possible that Wesley is operating out of an understanding of the nature and function of works that fits neither a traditional Protestant or a traditional Catholic position? Against the Catholic position as he understands it, he contends that human merit is *never* the basis for justification, whether initial or final; and against the Reformers, he argues that final justification is not apart from works. In terse form, this reduces to: We are not accepted for our works; and we are not saved apart from our works.²⁵

If we bring to Wesley a Marxist understanding of the relation of work to human nature, however, we discover some intriguing parallels that may illuminate Wesley's underlying anthropology and in turn may clarify his notion of final justification.

The early Marx—the left-wing Hegelian humanist—has a special appeal for the advocates of liberation theology, in that he writes out of a deep compassion for the human plight. He wrestles to find categories not only to express that plight but to change it. During this early period he develops his basic understanding of human existence, as to both its nature and its implicit teleology.²⁶ For Marx, humans achieve their true being and come to self-consciousness through action.²⁷ Through our labor we take the empirical (*sinnlich*²⁸) world outside ourselves and shape it into the authentic expression of our own being. In this process humans produce something that is objective and apart from themselves and that yet is their own product and the genuine expression of their own creativity, through which they find pleasure and a sense of fulfillment.²⁹ The artist is the paradigm of this process. The sculptor takes the empirical world of clay, stone, or metal and creates something that has an independent reality and is therefore “objective,” but that also embodies the inner creativity and subjectivity of the artist.

We must add that what is expressed is not only individual but *social*, in the most profound sense. The sculptor is inextricably linked with the world that provides the material substance that interacts with subjectivity. The result is the product, not just of a single individual, but of the social, cultural, and natural context with which the individual interrelates and is in turn shaped. Thus “productive life is the life of the species. It is life-engendering life. . . . In creating a world of objects by his practical activity, in his work upon inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species being [*Gattungswesen*],” one

whose product is the result of social interaction in community. “The object of labor is, therefore, the objectification of man's species life.” (The term *Gattungswesen* carries overtones of linkage and interrelatedness, as well as of sexual creativity, that are missing in the English “species.”) The human thus “duplicates himself not only in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively in reality.”³⁰ This creation of the “other,” which is at the same time the expression of the self in its interrelatedness, is the basic model of human fulfillment for Marx and describes human humanity in its ideal state or, so to speak, before the Fall.

Marx introduces the term “alienation” (*Entfremdung*) to show how “the relationship of the worker to the objects of his production” has become distorted in industrialized, capitalist society. Industrialization produces more goods, but relegates workers to the condition of cogs in a machine. Work no longer can function as the creative objectivizing of the self; it becomes instead the constant loss and deprivation of the self as one's life is poured out. Not only is the *product* alien and no longer the authentic expression of the self, but the mode of production—the *labor expended* to produce it—is alienating. “In the very act of production [the worker] is estranging himself from himself.” In his labor the worker “does not affirm himself but denies himself.” The proof of this, according to Marx, is seen in the fact “that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labor is shunned like the plague. . . . The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home.” His labor is in effect forced labor. It does not fulfill the intended function of satisfying his humanity but “is merely a *means* to satisfy needs external to it.” The worker is enslaved to the production process because he must have the necessities of life for himself and his family, but the way he spends most of his waking hours alienates him from his essential humanity.

Work ceases to be a means of genuine life and becomes a means of subsistence.³¹

Moreover, the loss is not just that of the individual. "In tearing away from man the object of production, [alienating] labor tears from him his species life"—his contribution as a social being whose interrelatedness must come to expression.³² The products made by alienated workers give objective form to that alienation and to the system that produces it—a system with goals in contradiction to humanity as such.

Though one may quarrel with Marx's "romanticizing" of labor, his analysis of what happens when work is alienating cannot be ignored. For our purposes, however, this brief summary of Marx's notion of humanity as coming to expression through work is included for the light it may shed on the essential differences between Wesley and the Reformers in their understandings of the relation of work to salvation. It also may enable us to see more clearly the nature of the change that occurred in Wesley at Aldersgate—an issue of perennial interest and speculation.

Wesley and the Reformers

The medieval preoccupation with the certainty of one's salvation was not substantially altered by the Reformation, although the way in which that certainty was provided did change. For both Luther and Calvin, the certainty of salvation was best guaranteed by lodging it with God. Divine mercy, in Luther, and divine election, in Calvin, functioned to ensure that human salvation would be accomplished in a way that could not be subject to institutional control or—equally important—to the foibles of the human will, the waverings of the human heart, or the inadequacies of human deeds. Only in this way could the Reformers spring free from the medieval church's monopoly

on the means of grace and from the necessity of constantly examining the state of one's soul and one's works to determine whether one is indeed saved or not. With a single sweeping move they removed salvation from the realm of dependence on human action and placed it in the realm of divine promise and faithfulness. The Christian looks not to self or to an institution for assurance, but to divine steadfastness. God has elected us from eternity (Calvin) or declared himself for us in Christ Jesus (Luther). Therefore our salvation is where God is—in eternity; or where the Son is—in heaven; and our fate cannot be determined by what we do or do not accomplish.

The price paid for this way of grounding security is a shift in the location of *essential* humanity, however. Our true being is to be found in God, in his election, or in his forensic declaration of our justification through Christ, rather than in our existence in this world. The result is the split to which Segundo refers—between the transcendent realm, in which our salvation is actually occurring, and this world, which is in effect bracketed out of salvation history.

Lest this be thought a peculiarly Catholic reading of the Reformation, Reformed theologian Otto Weber comments on these same developments in Protestant orthodoxy. He notes that a nonbiblical distinction was introduced. The "person" was separated from his or her "works." This distinction was first made in order to explain that sinners are justified, whereas their sinful deeds are not. But then, to guarantee that the justified would not rely on their good works, it was insisted that all good works must be attributed to the divine Spirit who instigates them. The work was "no longer a work of the person but an event independent of the person." The result was a kind of "pneumatological docetism," says Weber.³³ When action is no longer understood as the expression of the person who acts, it becomes difficult to show how the person is accountable for deeds that are extrinsic to him or her. Life in the world loses its

cruciality and significance, leading historically to the twin reactions of antinomianism and otherworldliness. The Lutheran doctrine of "vocation" seeks to counteract these tendencies, but it cannot finally succeed if work must be viewed as extrinsic to the relationship that saves.

Although Wesley's early preoccupation with his own salvation and the certainty of heaven is reminiscent of Luther's search for a gracious God, when the assurance of divine love finally comes to Wesley, it is placed in the service of a grander scheme of the renewal of the world and the race.³⁴ Essential humanity becomes a *project*, to be realized not only in heaven but in this world. And the renewal of the race is an undertaking in which humans have their indispensable role; God enlists human beings in this redemptive process. They labor, knowing that God is at work in and through them, "to will and to do of his good pleasure." This is Wesley's model of synergism—human partnership with the divine. It is not that certain tasks in the process of salvation are parceled out to human initiative and free will while others require divine grace. On the contrary, all that humans say and do is to be inspired by the Spirit and, consistent with the nature of the Spirit, leads toward the perfecting of the individual and the restoration of the race.

"We know 'Without me ye can do nothing.' But, on the other hand, we know 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.' . . . God has joined these together in the experience of every believer; and therefore we must take care, not to imagine they are ever to be put asunder." Because he works in us, we *must* work. "You must be 'workers together with him.' . . . Even St. Augustine, who is generally supposed to favour the contrary doctrine, makes that just remark, . . . 'He that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves.'" The power of the kingdom, which has come near in the Spirit, provides both the goal and the motivation to those who in

sanctification have been taken into partnership with the divine. "Say with our blessed Lord, though in a somewhat different sense, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.'" ³⁵ Even God's own being is seen in his work, which takes the form not of divine fiat in the counsels of heaven but of the creative intervention of divine love, intent to restore a lost creation.

We note in Wesley's anthropology, therefore, some strong formal parallels with Marx. Human life is seen fundamentally as activity; as work which is teleological, always directed toward some purpose—in Wesley's case, toward the service of God or the service of self in pride, vanity, gain, or whatever. This anthropology may be traceable in part to Jeremy Taylor, whose influence on the young Wesley was strategic, and whose *Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* enjoined upon the would-be disciple the most stringent accounting of time and activities:

We must remember that the life of every man may be so ordered (and indeed must) that it may be a perpetual serving of God. . . . We have a great work to do, many enemies to conquer, many evils to prevent, much danger to run through, many difficulties to be mastered, many necessities to serve, and much good to do. . . . We must give account to the great Judge of men and angels. . . . We must account for every idle word; not meaning that every word which is not designed to edification [is] . . . sin, but that the time which we spend in our idle talking and unprofitable discourses, that time which might and ought to have been employed to spiritual and useful purposes, that is to be accounted for.³⁶

Because this theme of strenuous accountability is found in Wesley both before and after Aldersgate (cf. his instructions to his preachers not only never to be unemployed, but never to be "triflingly employed"), and because they detect little modification in Wesley's basic anthropology and soteriology after 1738, Maximim Piette and others have concluded that the decisiveness of

Aldersgate is more a matter of Methodist lore than historic fact.³⁷ As far as formal doctrine is concerned, they are correct. Wesley's *theory* of justification was already largely in place in his 1733 sermon, "The Circumcision of the Heart."³⁸ And formally, his anthropology does not change; work remains the expression of the committed person. But the foundation for that work, the spirit that informs it, and the nature of the goal toward which it is directed, are all decisively modified. The fastidious compulsiveness that drove the young Wesley is now more relaxed, though his intensity remains. His ministry breathes a freedom he previously had not known. And the agent of this transformation is the same Martin Luther from whom, up to this point, we have been attempting to distinguish Wesley.

Yet, in speaking of the role of Luther in Wesley's development, we have struck another of those perpetual puzzles in Wesley scholarship. How could the Luther whose "Preface to Romans" was the catalyst for Wesley's experience of justification be the object three years later of a broadside attack? After reading the Reformer's Galatians commentary, Wesley accuses him of being "muddy and confused. . . . How blasphemously does he speak of good works and of the law of God; constantly coupling the law with sin, death, hell, or the Devil! and teaching that Christ delivers us from them all alike."³⁹

The Change at Aldersgate

What many fail to notice is that Luther's "Preface to Romans," read that evening in May, 1738, in the conventicle on Aldersgate Street, did not question the place of work in the Christian life. Quite the opposite. It explicitly and repeatedly linked faith and works in a way that was atypical for later Lutheran orthodoxy. The Luther of that preface is more holistic in relating person and work and—dare we say it?—makes instead the more Marxist

distinction between works as the product of an alienated being and works as the expression of a reconciled being—and with this he put his finger on Wesley's problem.

For even though you keep the law outwardly, with works, from fear of punishment or love of reward, nevertheless, you do all this without willingness, under compulsion; and you would rather do otherwise, if the law were not there. The conclusion is that at the bottom of your heart you hate the law. . . . To fulfil the law, however, is to do its works with pleasure and love, and to live a godly and good life of one's own accord, without the compulsion of the law. . . . Hence it comes that faith alone makes righteous and fulfils the law; out of Christ's merit, it brings the Spirit, and the Spirit makes the heart glad and free, as the law requires that it shall be. Thus good works come out of faith. . . .

Faith, however, is a divine work in us. It changes us and makes us to be born anew of God; it kills the old Adam and makes altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and powers, and it brings with it the Holy Ghost. O, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith; and so it is impossible for it not to do good works incessantly. It does not ask whether there are good works to do, but before the question arises, it has already done them, and is always at the doing of them. He who does not those works is a faithless man. He gropes and looks about after faith and good works, and knows neither what faith is nor what good works are, though he talks and talks, with many words, about faith and good works.

Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a man would stake his life on it a thousand times. This confidence in God's grace and knowledge of it makes men glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and with all his creatures; and this is the work of the Holy Ghost in faith. Hence a man is ready and glad, without compulsion, to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, in love and praise of God, who has shown him this grace; and thus it is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate heat and light from fire.⁴⁰

In all likelihood that is the passage to which Wesley refers in his *Journal* as the word which overcame the alienation in his own life. "While he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."⁴¹ The transformation that occurred at Aldersgate is not in Wesley's anthropology (the conviction that human life is fundamentally purposive activity), but in the relational *foundation* that undergirds that activity. As Wesley looks upon his pre-Aldersgate existence, he sees that what Marx would call his "species" life was alienated. His good works did not flow out of freedom; they were not the expression of positive relations but emerged from the compulsive effort to fashion a life in which every thought and action would be well pleasing in God's sight—and therefore worthy of salvation. "My chief motive, to which all the rest are subordinate, is the hope of saving my own soul," he had written to Dr. John Burton before setting sail for Georgia.⁴² Toward this end he gave up all—"friends, reputation, ease, country; I have . . . given my body to be devoured by the deep, parched up with heat, consumed by toil and weariness, or whatsoever God should please to bring upon me."⁴³ But as he later recognized, all such efforts could bring no peace, for at their root was alienation. He could not serve freely the law he had imposed upon himself. Luther's words identified the basic difficulty: "At the bottom of your heart you hate the law." As Wesley later confessed, given this fundamental alienation, there was no way his works could be good, since they emerged as the expression of a species life that was basically distorted, in relation both to God and to his fellow creatures. All his efforts could not fulfill the law, because the foundation was wrong.

Into this vicious cycle of alienation came the good news of justification by faith—the new foundation laid by God in

Christ Jesus, who is the outworking of the Father's redemptive intervention to release humanity from bondage. The Son does the Father's work in the world; he is the self-expression of the divine heart. His work alone provides the basis for reconciliation; it eliminates all human efforts toward self-justification because it makes them unnecessary. The new basis for relationship is his love which "has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." The reception of this love overcomes estrangement and is marked by the sense of forgiveness and liberation to which Wesley testifies in his *Journal*.

Nothing may appear to have changed, in the sense that the same good works are done that were done before. Yet everything has changed, in that life is placed on a different foundation. In Marxist terms, the previous economic base with its alienated method of production has been replaced by a "substructure" that puts all relationships on a new footing. The actual job one does may be exactly the same after the revolution as it was before, but one's way of relating to the system has changed, and the result is a liberated worker whose work now expresses a free and co-responsible existence. Analogously for Wesley, the deeds may seem the same as before, but they issue forth from a new status and embody a fresh spirit. Nothing less than "new birth" will do to describe this change. It is the shift "from the faith of a *servant* to the faith of a *son*; from the spirit of bondage unto fear, to the spirit of childlike love . . . enabling [one] to testify, 'The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me.'"⁴⁴ "Justification" describes this foundation and context within which life is now placed; "regeneration" describes the transformation in the person, made possible by the new mode of being related; and "sanctification" is the reordering and reconstituting of all interrelationships in conformity with the base.

The species character of this whole salvific process now

becomes evident. New birth is a social event that brings divine love down into the human family to take effect here. The nature of Christ's love is that it turns us immediately and inevitably toward others. Love that is self-contained, or purely and simply between the soul and its God, is not "evangelical" love as Wesley understands it. It is not the intent of the love "which is shed abroad in our hearts" to draw human love to itself in the heavenly spheres but to spend itself in the world in outpoured service. It is, as it were, poured *through* our hearts into the world.

In truth, whosoever loveth his brethren not in word only, but as Christ loved him, cannot but be zealous of good works. He feels in his soul a burning, restless desire of spending and being spent for them. . . . The Gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness, but social holiness. *Faith working by love* is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection.⁴⁵

Sanctification—or Christian perfection—is not in the final analysis to be defined negatively, as the absence of sin, but positively, as the active presence of love expressed not only in word but in deed: from God to humanity, from humanity to God; from God through human beings, to their fellow human beings.⁴⁶ This is the power of the Kingdom that begins to exercise its humanizing impact in the present age. Hence Wesley opposes the desire of some Christians to "separate themselves from sinners" in order to avoid commerce with the world as much as possible. Were they to withdraw, how could they fulfill their calling to be "the salt of the earth," he asks. "It is your very nature to season whatever is round about you. . . . This is the great reason the providence of God has so mingled you together with other men, that whatever grace you have received of God may through you be communicated to others."⁴⁷ Sanctification is the enlisting of the individual in God's own work—the redemption of his creation.

Summarizing the effects of Aldersgate, we can say that (a) it did not change the anthropology of Wesley, insofar as both before and after the events of 1738 he understood genuine human existence as being brought to expression through work; but (b) it did expose the alienated nature of his previous works of self-justification; and (c) it did bring about a fundamental reconciliation with God and a genuine concern for others, growing out of the love introduced into Wesley's life by justification and the regenerative power of the Spirit; which in turn (d) placed a new foundation of grace under sanctification while linking justification to the continuing drive for the transformation of the individual and society.

Now we are in a position to see, in comparison with the Reformation, Wesley's unique understanding of the way justification and sanctification are united, and why he must insist both on "justification by faith without works" as the foundation, and on works as the condition for "final justification." He approvingly quotes Bishop Bull, who in his *Harmonica Apostolica*, "distinguishes our first from our final justification, and affirms both inward and outward good works to be the condition of the latter, though not the former."⁴⁸

From the standpoint of the Reformers this notion of final justification seems to abandon the essential point of justification by faith, since it takes works into account. Even though he adds the proviso "Those fruits are only necessary *conditionally*, if there be time and opportunity for them,"⁴⁹ Wesley appears to undermine the security given with Calvin's understanding of divine election, and Luther's notion of the justification of the ungodly, putting the burden again on the creature to justify him- or herself by achievements in the world. The interpretations of Luther and Calvin offer security because justification by faith preempts final judgment by anticipating it in the present, facing its terror and invoking the mercy of God manifested

in the love of Christ, which covers the accused and guarantees divine acceptance and eternal life. The "faith that justifies" is so important, in that through it, one grasps the indispensable condition of eternal life: reliance on divine mercy. For Luther, therefore, justification provides the substructure for heaven and our relationship with God—but not for life in this world, which is left to be dealt with on grounds other than faith. To suggest the possibility of a second justification would seem to question the sufficiency and certainty of the initial divine act.

Wesley disagrees. Like the Reformers, he insists on the sole sufficiency of divine mercy. Faith is the trust that allows God's own mercy in Christ to define and provide the basis of the relationship. This is the kind of trust the Spirit quickens within a heart that is confronted by the love of God in Christ. Reconciliation is therefore not without work. But the work is God's. *Our* works are excluded—not because they are of no value, but because, in strict adherence to the Reformation insight, at no point are they the source of our certainty or security, either initially or finally. When Wesley uses the term "final justification," therefore, he is not speaking of a justification on a basis different from the first. Justification by grace through faith remains the only foundation for the divine human relationship throughout the whole course of sanctification. What is new is a modification of the *telos*—the inherent goal and purpose of justification. No longer is it directed primarily toward heaven. This is not to say that Wesley does not have the traditional concern for heaven.⁵⁰ But the direction is reversed. Heaven is brought to earth—not in utopian, humanistic fashion, but in the way that justification provides the substructure for refashioning life in this world through sanctification. Typically, Protestants see justification, or conversion, as the decisive, revolutionary event. Wesley would agree. But then, just as typically, the revolution becomes the maypole around which the rest of

life is danced, rather than a bench mark that sets the course of the future that is to be built.

Accountability cannot end with justification, therefore. To eliminate further accountability is to make justification the equivalent of the eschaton and to collapse history into insignificance. But the process of sanctification is the purification of history, overcoming the elements of society and in the life of the individual that cannot stand at the latter day. Accountability must continue, for justification, though it is the revolution that provides a different base, does not mean that the struggle is over. An analogy may help to elucidate this: In Marxism the new economic substructure does not exist for its own sake but for the sake of the superstructure that is built upon it. The purpose of the revolution is not merely to defeat the sources of alienation in the previous system but to enable a new society and culture to be erected. Those revolutionaries who believe that everything has been completed when the revolution is successful constitute one of the main obstacles to further progress. The revolution, and the new economic base which it makes possible, are requisite to everything that follows. In that sense, the revolution never grows obsolete, since it is taken up and expressed in everything built upon it. But the foundation is laid in order that the superstructure might be built.

This analogy shows that Jürgen Weissbach is incorrect when he suggests that for Wesley justification is "only a temporary stage in the process of salvation"—a stage that is superseded.⁵¹ On the contrary, justification is taken up and incorporated into everything that proceeds from it. The motto "the substructure is reflected in the superstructure" is as applicable to soteriology as it is to economics.

In evaluating a Marxist society, one would need to take into account not only the revolutionary efforts that

brought it into existence but the extent to which the goals of the revolution were being effected. In the same way, justification does not stand by itself apart from the history it initiates. When the God who justifies has a stake in this history, it means, as Wesley knew, "A charge to keep I have." The fact that there is "a strict account to give," does not result in legalism or fear, however, because in final justification, one stands before the same God with whom one is reconciled in initial justification. Wesley's *doctrine of assurance* makes certain that the radical love of God that is encountered at the cross remains the experiential content of sanctification, as well as of justification. His notion of final justification serves to preserve that accountability appropriate to the stewards of the good news of the kingdom.

Pursuing a line independent of the Reformation, Wesley is also conscious of the necessity to distinguish himself from a position on the other flank, which seeks to build the sanctified life on the old foundation, without benefit of justification and new birth. This is illustrated in his criticisms of his former spiritual guide, William Law, whom Wesley accuses of having a "philosophical religion," which answers all questions within the web of its own speculations and "inner light."⁵² Thus Law is not open to the renewing grace associated with judgment, repentance, and justification.

Consequently, we find Wesley battling two forms of *mysticism* that are opposed in many respects: the "Lutheran" mysticism of the Moravian quietists, with their exclusive emphasis upon forensic grace; and the "rationalistic" mysticism of Law, with his virtual neglect of community and the means of grace. Neither has a place for works. These are two fronts against which he has to maintain his understanding of justification and sanctification. And this struggle provides us with a final

comparison with Marx and Marx's criticism of Feuerbach's "mysticism."

Wesley and Marx Versus the Mystics and Feuerbach

Wesley's controversy with the Moravians was really a dispute with Lutheran orthodoxy's forensic doctrine of sanctification and the quietist form of pietism that resulted from it. Advocates of "stillness" asserted that good works bring with them the temptation to trust in what one can do, rather than exclusively in Christ and the "alien righteousness" he bestows. In a conversation with Wesley, Moravian leader Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf maintained, "From the moment one is justified he is entirely sanctified. . . . Till death he is neither more holy nor less holy." Zinzendorf understood both justification and sanctification to be entirely imputed, covering the saved person like a cloak of righteousness that God sees, rather than seeing the sinner beneath. Because righteousness is required for salvation, and because "the best of men are miserable sinners till death," the only righteousness that counts is that assigned to one from the merits of Christ. Zinzendorf continues, "I know of no such thing as inherent perfection in this life. This is the error of errors, I pursue it everywhere with fire and sword! . . . Christ is our only perfection. . . . Christian perfection is entirely imputed, not inherent. We are perfect in Christ; never perfect in ourselves."⁵³

While Wesley held no brief for the kind of inherent perfection Zinzendorf attacked, he did insist that righteousness is imparted as well as imputed. Christians are not just *declared* righteous, they are regenerated—endowed by the Spirit and nurtured through the means of grace actually to become what they are declared to be. According to the stillness doctrine, "one must *do nothing*, but quietly attend the voice of the Lord," avoiding reliance on any of the usual means of grace, such as the sacraments, prayer, and reading

of the Scriptures, and one must not do any outward work, lest one be tempted to trust that which is of this world.⁵⁴ Wesley was no stranger to radical trust, but from his vantage point, the stillness doctrine could present only a truncated view of salvation. In effect, it collapsed sanctification into justification, though it did not understand the proper purpose of justification, and it left no room for the actualization of righteousness in the world and the fullness of salvation. For the quietists, justification sealed for heaven, sanctification purified for heaven, and both were accomplished extrinsically to the person, hence bracketing out actual existence in the world lest it contaminate the heavenly status of the saved soul. Wesley eventually withdrew from the Moravian influences at the Fetter Lane Society and formed a new society at the Foundery.⁵⁵

The other mysticism with which Wesley broke was that of his onetime mentor, William Law, as Law came increasingly under the influence of the German mystic, Jacob Boehme. Law's *Christian Perfection* and *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* had made important contributions to Wesley's early development and, with Jeremy Taylor's theories, had formed him in the tradition of Anglican "practical mysticism." Now Law had come to espouse a withdrawal parallel to that of the quietists, reducing the Christian life to mystical devotion, and insisting that the mark of genuine faith can be tested by the following "infallible touchstone."

Abstain from all conversation for a month. Neither write, nor read, nor debate anything with yourself. Stop all the former workings of your heart and mind, and stand all this month in prayer to God. If your heart cannot give itself up in this manner to prayer, be fully assured you are an infidel. . . . Be retired, silent, passive and humbly attentive to the inward light.⁵⁶

We may safely assume that this kind of mysticism held some attraction for Wesley, and certainly for his followers, for we find him writing,

I think the rock on which I had nearest made shipwreck of the faith was the writings of the Mystics; under which term I comprehend all and only those who slight any of the means of grace.⁵⁷

All the other enemies of Christianity are triflers; the Mystics are the most dangerous of its enemies. They stab it in the vitals, and its most serious professors are most likely to fall by them.⁵⁸

But he also grasped the essential inconsistency between these forms of piety and the understanding of Christian perfection he affirmed. The Moravians look to heaven; Law looks to the inner light; yet both fail to see that the existence given in faith is social and must therefore issue forth in action. A piety that does not result in works is alienated from its source in the redemptive activity of the God whose love toward all his creatures cannot remain within himself, but must be expressed.

What is it to worship God, a Spirit, in spirit and truth? . . . To obey him . . . in thought, and word, and work . . . to glorify him, therefore, with our bodies, as well as with our spirits; to go through outward work with hearts lifted up to him; to make our daily employment a sacrifice to God; to buy and sell, to eat and drink, to his glory;—this is worshipping God in spirit and in truth, as much as praying to him in a wilderness.⁵⁹

This is why

Christianity is essentially a social religion; . . . to turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it. . . . 'Ye are the light of the world: A city set upon a hill cannot be hid.' . . . Love cannot be hid any more than light; and least of all, when it shines forth in action, when ye exercise yourselves in the labour of love. . . . It is not only impossible to conceal true

Christianity, but likewise absolutely contrary to the design of the great Author of it.⁶⁰

When he calls Christianity a social religion, Wesley is of course not using the term in the full-blown, twentieth-century sense of the social gospel—that is, the application of the Christian message to social, political, and economic institutions and the structures of corporate life; he is arguing in his own eighteenth-century context, in opposition to Law and the quietists, whose views had infected the Methodist movement.

If thou wilt be perfect, say they, "trouble not thyself about outward works. . . . He hath attained the true resignation, who hath estranged himself from all outward works, that God may work inwardly in him, without any turning to outward things . . ." Directly opposite to this is the Gospel of Christ. Solitary religion is not to be found there. "Holy solitaires" is a phrase no more consistent with the Gospel than holy adulterers. The Gospel of Christ knows . . . no holiness, but social holiness.⁶¹

When I say, [Christianity] is essentially a social religion, I mean not only that it cannot subsist so well, but that it cannot subsist at all, without society—without living and conversing with other men.⁶²

And he attacks those who "have advised us 'to cease from all outward action,' wholly to withdraw from the world; to leave the body behind us; to *abstract ourselves from all sensible things*."⁶³

Wesley's differences with the mystics provide intriguing parallels to Marx's critique of Feuerbach—parallels that reinforce a basic contention of this introduction that the anthropology implicit in Marx's doctrine of alienated labor can provide a helpful perspective—in spite of the seeming contradictions—from which to view the anthropology implied in Wesley's doctrine of sanctification.

Feuerbach's critique of the alienating nature of religion

provided the basic model, which Marx then applied to the alienation of labor; and Marx remained indebted to his fellow left-wing Hegelian for this insight. Feuerbach is essentially correct, says Marx, in describing religion as an alienating process in which humans reify their inner life by projecting it onto a cosmic screen, from whence it is reflected as an alien and oppressive judgment upon their existence. According to Feuerbach,

Religion . . . is abstraction from the world; it is essentially inward. The religious man leads a life withdrawn from the world, hidden in God, still, void of worldly joy . . . But he thus separates himself only because God is a being separate from the world, an extra and supramundane being. . . . God, as an extramundane being, is however nothing else than nature of man withdrawn from the world and concentrated in itself, freed from all worldly ties and entanglements, transporting itself above the world and positing itself in this condition as a real objective being. . . . Religion is the disuniting of man from himself; he sets God before him as the antithesis of himself. God is not what man is—man is not what God is. . . . God is the absolutely positive, the sum of all realities; man the absolutely negative, comprehending all negations. . . . To enrich God, man must become poor; that God may be all, man must be nothing.⁶⁴

While agreeing with Feuerbach's analysis of religion as alienating, in his "Theses on Feuerbach," Marx claims that Feuerbach stops short of dealing with the real issue—Why do human beings engage in such self-deprecating projection?—because Feuerbach remains captive to his own kind of mysticism, even though he claims to be a materialist.

[Feuerbach's] work consists in the dissolution of the religious world into its secular [substructure]. He overlooks the fact that after this work is completed the chief thing still remains to be done. For the fact that the secular foundation detaches itself from itself and establishes itself in the clouds as an independent realm is really only to be explained by the self-cleavage and self-contradictoriness of this secular basis. The latter must itself, therefore, first be understood in its

contradiction, and then revolutionized in practice by the removal of the contradiction.⁶⁵

Marx claims that Feuerbach, in spite of his avowed materialism, sees the contradictions primarily as wrong ideas in the mind. His materialism is still an idea, a system of thought, not praxis. The correct view (*Anschauung*) of things will supposedly free human beings from the wrong notions that constitute their bondage. Feuerbach is still operating from a mentalism that does not realize that it is because humans are caught in economic deprivation that they engage in flights of fantasy and construct supernatural worlds of perfection, nor does he understand that a change in mental attitude is not enough. These material circumstances must be changed before alienation can be overcome effectively. The solution is to be found, therefore, at the level of *work*, not simply in the "contemplation" of material conditions (Theses 1, 5, and 9). Though an atheist, Feuerbach is still operating in an essentially pietistic framework. He has transposed the alienation from heaven to earth in order to "understand" it. But, as Marx adds in his familiar eleventh thesis, understanding and interpretation are insufficient. "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it." What is missing in Feuerbach is *praxis*, and without praxis, theory remains theory and never becomes incarnate; knowledge without practice is deficient and is not yet genuine knowledge. Genuine knowledge must include human activity to change circumstances and therefore "can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionizing practice*" (Thesis 3).

I am suggesting that an important way to grasp what is involved in Wesley's doctrine of sanctification is to see it as "revolutionizing practice," which refuses to "abstract [itself] from all sensible things," but understands divine salvation to be working itself out in the relationships of this

world. This is not to deny the deep divide between Wesley on one side, and Feuerbach and Marx on the other. But, given the fundamental differences, the fascinating parallels cannot be denied either. Like Feuerbach, Wesley accuses the Moravian quietists of projecting the work of God away from this world and into a doctrinal heaven, where it is abstracted from the "sensible world" and society—the very objects to be saved. But, like Marx, Wesley is not content with a description of an error in thinking; his concern is for actual transformation. Righteousness is not merely imputed; it is imparted in such a way as to bring about not only "a relative, but a real change" in the human condition.

Wesley was not unaware of the functions of ideology and the relations of theory to praxis. His impatience with the fine points of doctrinal dispute and his usual tolerance toward those with whom he had doctrinal differences "which do not reach to the marrow of Christian truth," was not because he was indifferent to the substance of doctrine, but because he knew that the substance can never be contained adequately in finite words, which are only the representation of the reality; the substance must be worked out in practice.⁶⁶ Therefore it was to the practice that he looked for the indication of adequacy of belief. Where he saw deficient practice—in the followers of Jacob Boehme, or in some of the Moravians, or in the antinomians within his own movement—his immediate concern was the doctrinal understanding that lay behind this deficiency. He would have found congenial the liberationist insistence that *orthopraxis* is a more reliable clue to faith than is *orthodoxy*.⁶⁷

Wesley not only sides with Marx against Feuerbach's mentalism, he also turns Feuerbach's (and Marx's) notion of religion on its head. The God of Feuerbach absorbs all human labors and virtues into himself in heaven and dries them up on earth. According to Wesley, the reverse is the case: God pours himself into the world to renew the creature

after his image and the creation after his will. The "design of the great Author" is that love "shine forth in action" until all things in the created order are restored to their glorious state.

Suppose now the fulness of time to be come. . . . What a prospect is this! . . . Wars are ceased from the earth . . . no brother rising up against brother; no country or city divided against itself and tearing out its own bowels. . . . Here is no oppression to "make" even "the wise man mad;" no extortion to "grind the face of the poor;" no robbery or wrong; no rapine or injustice; for all are "content with such things as they possess." Thus "righteousness and peace have kissed each other;" . . . And with righteousness, or justice, mercy is also found. . . . And being filled with peace and joy in believing, and united in one body, by one Spirit, they all love as brethren, they are all of one heart, and of one soul. "Neither saith any of them, that ought of the things which he possesseth is his own." There is none among them that lacketh; for every man loveth his neighbour as himself.⁶⁸

Hence, in contrast with the present order of things, Wesley envisions a society of economic justice, where, in striking anticipation of the Marxist formula, they "cannot suffer one among them to lack anything, but continually give to every man as he hath need."⁶⁹ Religion is not to be viewed, therefore, as alienated humanity's means of escape to a more tolerable, heavenly realm, but as participation in God's own redemptive enterprise, transforming alienated servants into liberated sons and daughters, whose works are at one and the same time the expression of their own life in the Spirit and the sign of the new age of justice and love that is to come.

This grand vision of the renewal of creation is the context within which Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection, culminating in entire sanctification, must be understood. Unfortunately Wesley himself was responsible for much of the confusion surrounding this doctrine. His definitive

statement, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," is not a closely reasoned, comprehensive presentation, but a series of polemical, largely defensive arguments, assembled over many years in reply to attacks and published under one cover, in which Wesley spends most of his time attempting to convince his readers of the plausibility of perfection in this life.⁷⁰ To do so, he is forced to hedge "perfection" with casuistic distinctions, carefully calculated to claim neither too little or too much. Too often in the past sanctification has been considered only within the parameters of "A Plain Account." As a result the doctrine has not been seen in the context of Wesley's larger scheme of the divine renewal of fallen creatures and creation, with entire sanctification (which Wesley espoused because it seemed to be a scriptural promise and because he believed he had seen empirical evidence of it in the lives of others—though he never claimed it for himself) as an eschatological sign, a kind of first fruits of the age that is to come and an indication of what God through his Spirit can do in the world, "working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight" (Heb. 13:21).

Therefore, without denying Wesley's interest in the individual—which after all was the bright new discovery of Pietism and the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century—much of the foregoing would appear to argue against the common notion that Wesley's doctrine of sanctification is culture-bound to individualism and to his own time. This is not to say that Methodists have not interpreted it as such. What this introductory chapter seeks to demonstrate, however, is that when Wesley is approached from the vantage point of liberation theologies, and especially from the perspective of the Marxist critique, his theology not only can be freed from the confines of pietistic individualism, it can counteract that individualism and offer resources for the responsible rethinking of theology in a time when both neo-Reformation and liberal models no longer suffice. Like Marx, Wesley reminds us that a theory must lead to a new

praxis. Only a theology that is transformationist can do justice to the Christian doctrine of sanctification and to the quality of salvation which that doctrine seeks to express.

In a sense, this book is an exercise in theory and praxis. In the chapters that follow, the theory of sanctification criticizes the practice; and the new context of practice raises questions as to the adequacy of previous formulations of the theory. If in this process the ambiguities and inconsistencies of the tradition come to light, so much the better. Those committed to sanctification cannot afford to be content with the past.

Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification From a Liberationist Perspective

José Míguez Bonino

Using "liberation" as a transcription of the biblical concepts, which the theological tradition has usually rendered by "salvation" or "redemption," is not new and should not be startling. Nor is it new with regard to the Bible—though it may be new for a good part of the theological tradition—to understand the meaning of such liberation not merely in transcendent (mystical or eschatological) terms or in subjective terms, but also in the politicohistorical context. What *is* perhaps new is the theological attempt to think through the totality of the faith from that perspective.

Such an attempt did not originate primarily in the sphere of academic theology. Its roots must be sought in the experience of a growing number of Christians from different traditions, geographical areas, and sectors of society, who have begun to rediscover their faith as active commitment to the struggle for human liberation—sociopolitical and economic, as well as cultural and spiritual. As this active faith "seeks understanding" in order to deepen and purify and strengthen its commitment, some theological issues are bound to emerge.

Most of these issues have a long tradition; again and again they have engaged the thought of theologians. We must, therefore, interrogate the theological tradition. But a radical process of reconception and reformulation is necessary if such a quest is to have real significance, since the nature of the theological questions is determined by the

Notes

Chapter 1. Theodore Runyon

1. Moltmann, *Religion, Revolution and the Future* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), pp. 138, 93-107.
2. Cf. *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), p. 224 (hereafter cited as *Works*).
3. John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1952), p. 22, Matt. 3:2 (hereafter cited as *Notes*).
4. *Works*, 5, p. 337.
5. *Ibid.*, 11, pp. 74, 72.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
7. *The Letters of John Wesley*, ed. John Telford, vol. 8 (London: Epworth Press, 1931), p. 265 (hereafter cited as *Letters*).
8. *Works*, 7, pp. 125-26.
9. Halévy, *England in 1815: A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1 (London: T. F. Unwin, 1924; New York: Peter Smith, 1949).
10. Elie Halévy, *The Birth of Methodism in England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 1, 70.
11. Cf. Robert F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Working-Class Movements of England 1800-1850* (London: Epworth Press, 1937).
12. Semmel, *The Methodist Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1973; London: Heinemann, 1974).
13. This is substantially the claim of the German edition of Garth Lean's *John Wesley, Anglican*, trans. and intro. by Klaus Bockmühler as *John Wesley: Model einer Revolution ohne Gewalt* (Giessen: Brunnen Verlag, 1969).
14. Cf. E. J. Hobsbawm, "Methodism and the Threat of Revolution in Britain," *History Today*, vol. 7 (February 1957), pp. 119ff.
15. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1964), p. 36.
16. *Works*, 9, pp. 191-465.
17. Cf. "The End of Christ's Coming," *Works*, 6, pp. 267ff.

NOTES FOR PAGES 18-30

18. Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 16.
19. Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), pp. 142, 145, 147, 150.
20. *Works*, 10, p. 456; 8, p. 68.
21. *Letters*, 2, p. 189.
22. George C. Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (New York: Henry Holt, 1935), p. 361; John Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), p. 21.
23. Gordon Rupp, *Principalities and Powers* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952), p. 97; Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), p. 175.
24. At least one scholar, Jürgen Weissbach, is convinced that this in fact is what Wesley did. Cf. *Der neue Mensch im theologischen Denken John Wesleys, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Methodismus*, No. 2 (Stuttgart: Christliches Verlagshaus, 1970), p. 218.
25. Cf. *Works*, 12, p. 399.
26. Cf. Joseph Petulla, *Christian Political Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1972), p. 12.
27. Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, intro. by Dirk J. Struik (New York: International Publishers, 1964), p. 24.
28. The usual translation of *sinnlich* in Marxist literature is "sensuous," a term with misleading overtones for most English readers. *Sinnlich* refers to the empirical world known by the senses. Wesley's own term, "sensible world," would be a more felicitous translation, were it not archaic English.
29. Note the parallel to the Hegelian notion of fulfillment through self-expression by positing the "other," a process that begins with God himself in creation.
30. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, pp. 113-14.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 110, 111, 109.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
33. Weber, *Grundlagen der Dogmatik*, vol. 2 (Neukirchen-Moers: Neukirchener Verlag, 1962), p. 363.
34. This goal of the renewal of the race and of the very cosmos is reiterated in a teleologically oriented series of sermons (*Works*, vol. 6)—"God's Love to Fallen Man," "The General Deliverance," "The Mystery of Iniquity," "The End of Christ's Coming," "The General Spread of the Gospel," and "The New Creation"—as well as his long "Treatise on Original Sin" (vol. 9).
35. *Works*, 6, pp. 512-13.
36. Jeremy Taylor, *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., n.d.), p. 3.
37. Piette, *John Wesley and the Evolution of Protestantism* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1937), pp. 306-7.
38. *Works*, 5, p. 202. Cf. 11, p. 367.
39. *The Journal of John Wesley*, ed. Nehemiah Curnock, vol. 2 (London: Robert Culley, 1909), p. 467 (hereafter cited as *Journal*).

NOTES FOR PAGES 31-45

40. *Luther's Works*, vol. 6 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1932), pp. 451-52.
41. *Journal*, 1, pp. 475-76. Curnock's suggestion that it may have been Luther's "Preface to Galatians" rather than "Preface to Romans" that was read seems unlikely. While it is true that the Galatians preface was circulating at the same time and was read by Charles Wesley, there is no section in that preface that would as readily fit John's account: "... while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ." Moreover, there is so much in the "Preface to Galatians" that would have offended Wesley—and did offend him three years later—it is unlikely that he could have heard any gospel word coming through it (cf. *Luther's Works*, vol. 26 [St. Louis: Concordia, 1963], pp. 4-12).
42. *Letters*, 1, p. 188.
43. *Journal*, 1, p. 423.
44. *Works*, 7, p. 236.
45. *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, vol. 1 (London: Wesleyan Methodist Conference Office, 1868), p. xxii (hereafter cited as *Poetical Works*).
46. This often-made point of the activity of love is given fresh interpretation by Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1972).
47. *Works*, 5, p. 299.
48. *Letters*, 5, p. 264.
49. *Works*, 6, p. 48.
50. Cf. *Works*, 5, p. 3, regarding traditional concern.
51. Weissbach, *Der neue Mensch*, p. 217.
52. *Works*, 9, pp. 466-509.
53. Albert Outler, ed. *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 367ff.
54. See *Journal*, 2, p. 499, for Wesley's description of this quietism.
55. Cf. John Simon, *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies*, 2nd ed. (London: Epworth Press, 1937), pp. 9-15.
56. As quoted by Wesley, *Works*, 9, pp. 502ff.
57. *Letters*, 1, p. 207.
58. *Journal*, 1, p. 420.
59. *Works*, 5, pp. 305-6.
60. *Ibid.*, pp. 296, 302.
61. *Poetical Works*, 1, p. xxii.
62. *Works*, 5, p. 296.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 295. (Italics mine.)
64. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, foreword by H. Richard Niebuhr and intro. by Karl Barth (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), pp. 66, 33, 26.
65. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *On Religion*, intro. by Reinhold Niebuhr (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), pp. 69ff.
66. Cf. Outler, *Wesley*, pp. 28, 345-449. Note the frequency of such phrases as "we quibble over words," e.g. Outler, *Wesley*, p. 369; *Works*, 8, pp.

- 340-41; *Letters*, 5, p. 264. Cf. Peter Brown's essay on "Human Understanding," which Wesley reprinted as an appendix to his own *Compendium of Natural Philosophy*, vol. 2 (New York: Bangs and Mason, 1823): "Divine metaphor is the substituting our ideas of sensation, which are direct and immediate with words belonging to them, for the things of heaven, of which we have no direct idea, or immediate conception. . . . The words, figuratively transferred from one thing to another, do not agree with the things to which they are transferred, in any part of their literal sense" (pp. 436-37). To be sure, this stricture does not apply to "revealed truth." But theology as such is always an admixture of revelation and human analogy and metaphor and therefore an inexact science at best.
67. Cf. *Works*, 9, pp. 513-14. Wesley was also aware of the human tendency to project, and the inadequacy of those projections, e.g. Peter Brown's comments in Wesley's *Natural Philosophy*: "The multiplying and enlarging our own perfections in number or degree only, to the utmost stretch of our capacity, and attributing them so enlarged to God, is no more than raising up an unwieldy idol of our own imagination, without any foundation in nature" (p. 434). Cf. Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology*, p. 81.
68. *Works*, 5, p. 46.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
70. *Ibid.*, 11, pp. 366-446.

Chapter 2. José Miguez Bonino

1. *Journal*, 2, p. 488 ff.
2. "Sicut non potest discerni Christus in partes, ita inseparabilia sunt haec duo, quae simul et coniunctim in ipso percipimus; iustitiam et sanctificationem," Calvin, *Institutes*, 3: 11, 6. (The English translation quoted leaves out the last words, "justice and sanctification," which I have added in the text.)
3. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4:2, p. 504.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 508.
5. Semmel, *Methodist Revolution*, p. 8.
6. Barth, *Dogmatics*, 4:2, p. 502.
7. John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology: An Interpretation* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University, 1960), p. 78. I disagree with Deschner's implicit presupposition that an evangelical theology must make justification the absolute norm. This forces Deschner to decide on a question Wesley would not allow and thus tends to distort the perspective of the evaluation.
8. This is how G. C. Berkouwer summarizes Wesley's concern in the discussion with Zinzendorf in *Faith and Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 51. Berkouwer himself is in sympathy with Wesley at this point. At another point, he gives a good characterization of his own position with the same emphasis:

- "Sanctification, if it is to be at all, must not take place merely on some underground level of psychic life, quite in defiance of all outside disturbance, but must be the redemptive touch of our faith on all of life" (p. 13).
9. *Works*, 11, p. 53 ff.
 10. Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962). The original German was published in 1845.
 11. Quoted by Semmel, *Methodist Revolution*, p. 162.
 12. Barth, *Dogmatics*, 4:2, p. 520.
 13. *Letters*, 4, p. 158; 6, p. 175.
 14. *Works*, 6, p. 2.

Chapter 3. Rupert E. Davies

1. *Works*, 5, p. 60-61.
2. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 15.
3. Cecil Cone, *The Identity Crisis in Black Theology* (Nashville: AMEC, 1975), pp. 92-122.
4. James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: Seabury Press), pp. 138-52.
5. *Works*, 7, p. 347.
6. James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1970).

Chapter 4. John Kent

1. Semmel, *Methodist Revolution*. Cf. R. R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, vol. 2 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 466.
2. See, for instance, Thompson, *English Working Class*, 2nd ed., (1968). Also Perkins, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).
3. When he visited England in the 1840s and 1860s, Finney did not seem to be particularly interested in social reform, as it is said that he was in America (see ch. 6 and 7 in this volume).
4. Cf. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men* (London: Wiederfeld & Nicholson, 1964); also his "Methodism and Threat of Revolution," *History Today*, pp. 115-24.
5. Sarah Hennell and her brother Charles, together with Charles Bray (an ex-Methodist), were the center of the group of Coventry rationalists who helped to educate the young George Eliot. The passage quoted is from Hennell's *Thoughts in the Aid of Faith* (London: G. Manwaring, 1860).
6. William Reginald Ward, *Early Victorian Methodism: The Correspondence of Jabez Bunting* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 303, 309.