

Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies  
Oxford, England  
Ecumenical Studies Working Group  
August 16, 2018

## John Wesley and Mysticism

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### I. Introduction

Many Christians have a great interest in mysticism today than ever before. In response to this situation, Christian theologians need to consider mysticism more seriously today. What is mysticism? Bernard McGinn defines mysticism in terms of “union with God,” and “immediate consciousness of the presence of God.”<sup>1</sup> It has been claimed and widely believed that the one who has a mystical experience of God usually undergoes a process of radical transformation. The transformation in its high stage is often called “deification” by the Eastern Christian tradition.<sup>2</sup>

Mysticism as an immediate experience of God is often accompanied by mystical theology as “its theological interpretation.”<sup>3</sup> A Mystical theology can be formed by the mystics themselves, that is, by those who have had mystical experience themselves. Or it can be formed by those who do not have mystical experience themselves but have an mediated access to it through witnesses of it by mystics. Although mystical theology in itself is not a mystical experience, it may lead us to expect it and furthermore help us to interpret it appropriately once we have it.

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), xix.

<sup>2</sup> Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (London: James and Clark, 1957), 9 f. St John of the Cross who belongs to the Western Church tradition also expressed the radical transformation in terms of becoming “God by participation in God.” *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, tr. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1979), 608

<sup>3</sup> Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, xiii.

There is no doubt that John Wesley personally had a great interest in mysticism and read many mystical books. What he learned from the mystics seems to have influenced his theology, especially his theology of Christian perfection of love, to a certain extent. He included many mystical works in his *Christian Library*, and recommended his fellow Methodist people to read them. However, Wesley's attitude towards mysticism was not always positive. He once in a while made harsh criticisms of the theological thoughts of some mystics.

Wesley happened to have a living relationship with one mystical theologian, William Law. John Wesley knew Law both by reading his books and also through a personal contact with him. Concerning their personal relationship, Robert Tuttle says,

John made his first trip to visit Law in Putney in July 1732. As a result of this and subsequent visits, he was persuaded to read *Theologia Germanica* and other mystical works ... For Wesley, William Law at this time personified mysticism."<sup>4</sup>

In this essay, I will undertake a thoughtful reflection on John Wesley's theological encounter with William Law, and consider its possible theological implications for doing theology today.

## II. John Wesley's Encounter with William Law on Salvation

John Wesley, while being engaged in his missionary work in Georgia, sent a letter to his brother Samuel Wesley. The letter was dated November 23, 1736. In the letter, John Wesley said,

I think the rock on which I had the nearest made shipwreck of faith was the writings of the mystics.<sup>5</sup>

Mysticism, after all, is a form of religion. And religion is primarily concerned with

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<sup>4</sup> Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1989), 77, 115.

<sup>5</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol 25 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 487.

salvation. When Wesley came to challenge William Law theologically later, the issue was about Law's theological understanding of salvation. All Christians share the common belief that salvation is ultimately grounded on the grace of God. The saving grace of God is understood to be mediated decisively by Jesus Christ. Salvation is understood as a blessed existential state free from fear and guilt and full of love, peace and joy. A fully reflective understanding of salvation must include theological, Christological and existential dimensions.

Wesley wrote a letter to William Law on May 14, 1738. In that letter, Wesley challenged Law theologically as follows.

For two years (more especially) [I] have been preaching after the model of your two practical treatises; and all that heard allowed, that the law is great, wonderful, and holy. But no sooner did they attempt to follow it than they found that it is too high for man, and that by doing the work of this law should no flesh living be justified ...

Under this heavy yoke I might have groaned till death had not an holy man to whom God lately directed me, upon my complaining thereof, answered at once: 'Believe, and thou shalt be saved. Believe in the Lord Jesus with all thy heart, and nothing shall be impossible to thee. This faith, as well as the salvation it brings, is the free gift of God. But seek, and thou shalt find. Strip thyself naked of thy own works, and thy own righteousness and fly to him ...'

Now, sir, suffer me to ask, How you will answer it to our common Lord, that you never gave me this advice? ... Why did I scarce ever hear you name the name of Christ? Never, so as to ground anything upon faith in this blood? ... I know I had no faith. Unless the faith of a devil, the faith of a Judas, that speculative, notional, airy shadow which lives in the head, not in the heart. But what is this to the living faith in the blood of Jesus? The faith that cleanseth from all sin ...

I beseech you, sir, by mercies of God, to consider deeply and impartially whether the true reason of your never pressing this upon me was not this, that you had it not yourself? Whether that man of God were not in the right who gave this account: 'I began to speak him of faith in Christ, he was silent, then began to speak of mystical matters ... I saw his state at once.' And a dangerous

one in his judgment, whom I know to have the Spirit of God.<sup>6</sup>

In the letter, interestingly, Wesley opposed “the living, justifying faith in the blood of Jesus” to “mystical matters,” and blamed Law for not teaching him “the living, justifying faith.”

Wesley sailed for Georgia in October, 1735. His missionary work at Savannah in Georgia turned out to be a failure. And Wesley, in his letter to Law, surprisingly ascribed the main reason for his failure in Georgia to his preaching after Law’s theology, as presented in Law’s two works, *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection* (1726) and *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1729).

On May 19, 1738, William Law replied to Wesley’s letter that had been sent to him on May 14, 1738. In that letter, Law stated that “two common, fundamental, unchangeable maxims of our Lord” are “Without me ye can do nothing,” and “If a man will come after me, or be my disciple, let him take up his cross, and follow me.”<sup>7</sup> By citing “Without me ye can do nothing” as the first maxim, Law as a mystical theologian implied that he shared the fundamental Protestant conviction that no human being can be saved without faith in God’s grace as revealed in the crucified Christ. For Law, the way of mysticism did not oppose the way of Protestantism. Rather they are one. In his reply to Wesley, Law claimed that “faith in Jesus Christ,” which is the essence of Protestantism, was “the very sum and substance of what is meant by mystical religion.”<sup>8</sup> Law himself fully recognized the soteriological significance of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In his work, *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection*, Law said,

The Saviour of the World has purchased Mankind with his Blood.<sup>9</sup>  
Christ’s Sufferings are a full Atonement for Sin.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, in face of Wesley’s challenge that Law did not teach him “the living, justifying faith in the blood of Jesus,” Law replied that he did according to his own understanding of the matter.

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<sup>6</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol 25, 540–542.

<sup>7</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol 25, 544

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 545.

<sup>9</sup> William Law, *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection* (London: Printed for William and John Innys, at the West-End of St. Paul’s, 1726), 32.

<sup>10</sup> William Law, *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection*, 81.

The second maxim Law mentioned was “If a man will come after me, or be my disciple, let him take up his cross, and follow me.” According to my view, Law here expressed his understanding of salvation in terms of a synergistic cooperation between God and human beings.<sup>11</sup> The first maxim refers to God’s grace for us, what God does for humanity in Christ. The second maxim refers to what human beings are supposed to do in response to God’s prevenient grace in Christ. Law expressed the appropriate human response to God’s prevenient grace in terms of “taking up the cross.” “Taking up the cross” meant for him “Self-denial” insofar as “Self” is understood as a “Life of Sin.”<sup>12</sup> Taking up the cross or self-denial was nothing but “preparing” oneself for God’s saving grace like a farmer who “prepares” his “Land” for “the best Seed.”<sup>13</sup> Thus for Law the two fundamental maxims meant “the absolute Necessity of Divine Grace” and constant “Self-denial.”<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, the cross of Jesus Christ had two meanings For Law. On the one hand, it meant God’s grace for humanity. On the other hand it meant an appropriate human response to God’s salvific work. For Law, “Christ’s Sufferings” as God’s grace for humanity “are full Atonement for Sin,” and there was nothing we could do to make it “*more complete*.”<sup>15</sup> The cross of Jesus Christ as God’s grace for humanity belongs to the realm of the first maxim. The cross of Jesus Christ also has a second meaning, which consists in an appropriate human response to God’s prevenient salvific activity. It belongs to the realm of the secondary maxim. We are called to follow and imitate Jesus Christ in connection not with the first, but the second meaning of the cross of Jesus Christ. When Law, in his reply to Wesley, objected to “separating the doctrine of the cross from following Christ, or faith in him,”<sup>16</sup> Law was criticizing the erroneous theological view that knew only the first maxim to the neglect of the second maxim. Law seems to have thought that Wesley was making this theological error in the year of 1738 when Wesley was under the strong influence of Peter Boehler.<sup>17</sup>

John Wesley, on May 20, 1738, sent his second letter to Law responding to Law’s

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 135, 138.

<sup>12</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Prayer*. Part I (London: Printed for M. Richardson, Pater-noster-Row, 1749). 43.

<sup>13</sup> William Law, *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection*, 138.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 80 f.

<sup>16</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol 25, 544

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

reply to him. In this letter, Wesley appeared once again as the one who firmly believed the propitiation of God through the blood of Jesus Christ. In connection to Law's two maxims, Wesley said, "Those two maxims may imply but do not express that third, 'He is our propitiation, through faith in his blood.'"<sup>18</sup> Concerning *Theologia Germanica* that Law recommended Wesley to read, Wesley said that in it "I remember something of Christ our pattern, but nothing express of Christ our atonement."<sup>19</sup>

Law In his second reply to Wesley, made a relatively short response to Wesley as follows.

You say the two maxims I mention imply, but do not express, 'He is our propitiation, through faith in his blood.' Is this not, therefore, a mere contest of words and expressions? ... When Christ says, 'Without me ye can do nothing;' when the Apostle says, 'There is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved;' when he says 'We are sanctified through faith in blood', and 'through faith in him', is there anything here but a difference of words, or one and the same thing imperfectly and only in part expressed?<sup>20</sup>

The first theological encounter between Wesley and Law in May 1738 thus took place with two letters by each party sent to the other. Concerning the personal relationship between Law and Wesley, Brazier Green says,

Wesley and Law never met in person after 1735, when the former left for America, and there was no correspondence between them, after the exchange of letters in May 1738.<sup>21</sup>

Law's two works that Wesley mentioned as "your two practical treatises" in his letter to Law in 1738 were *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection* (1726) and *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1729).<sup>22</sup>

There are some scholars who are of the opinion that Law's two works, *A Practical*

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 547.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 548 f.

<sup>21</sup> J. Brazier Green, *John Wesley and William Law* (London: The Epworth Press, 1945), 74.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 51-67.

*Treatise upon Christian Perfection* and *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, are not mystical works. For example, Brazier Green said that these two works belong to “the ‘ethical period’ of Law’s writings,” and thus they are “ethical works” rather than mystical works.<sup>23</sup> The main reason why they think so is that these two works emphasize the human effort to “imitate the example of Jesus Christ.”<sup>24</sup>

I have a different opinion. I have found many mystical ideas in these two works. For example, *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection* understands “redemption” or “perfection” in terms of “Participation of the Divine Nature” or “Union with Christ in God.”<sup>25</sup> As I already pointed out above, it is true that *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection* emphasizes the importance of denying oneself and imitating the example of Christ. Chapter 13 of the work, in particular, is titled “All Christians are required to imitate the Life and Example of Jesus Christ.”<sup>26</sup> However, the mere fact of the presence of the call to imitate Christ in the work does not entitle one to understand it merely as an ethical work. Most mystical works usually include the ethical exhortation like imitating Christ as a part of the whole system of the mystical thought. We have to consider the context in which the ethical call to imitate Christ is given in the writing. Law’s *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection* calls us to imitate Christ in chapter 13 only after it emphasizes “the absolute necessity of divine grace” in chapters 9 to 12. Law understood our duty of bearing sufferings in connection with the classical three stages of mystical way of “purification,” “illumination,” and attainment of “perfect holiness.”<sup>27</sup> Law said that there was no happiness “but the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghost, which form us to a greater Likeness of God.”<sup>28</sup> He understood the great change called “new birth” in terms of becoming “members of that Mystical Body of which Christ is the Head.”<sup>29</sup> All these ideas are frequently found in classical mystical works. For these reasons I understand Law’s two early writings as mystical works.

To recognize these two early works of Law as mystical does not mean that there was no growth or change during the period between the earlier and the later phase of his

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 46 f.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>25</sup> William Law, *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection*, 16.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 31.

Law's mystical journey. It seems to me that Law had studied Christian spirituality very hard throughout his life and made a great progress both in spirituality and theology. According to Brazier Green, "William Law became more and more absorbed in mystical studies, especially after 1736, the year of his first encounter with the works of Boehme."<sup>30</sup> When I compared Law's earlier works with the later ones, I was able to see some significant changes or developments made in the meantime. For one example, Law in his later stage of life came to see the new birth not only as the birth of a new human being but also, at the same time, as the "Birth" of "the Holy Trinity," "the life-giving Operation of the Triune God within you."<sup>31</sup>

Among the Law's later works of theological maturity are *The Spirit of Prayer*, Part I (1749), *The Spirit of Prayer*, Part II (1750), *The Spirit of Love*, Part I (1752), and *The Spirit of Love*, Part II (1754). Wesley commented on Law's *The Spirit of Prayer* in his Journal dated July 24, 1749 as follows.

I read Mr. Law on the Spirit of Prayer. There are many masterly strokes therein, and the whole is lively and entertaining, but it is another gospel. For if God was never *angry* (as this tract asserts) he could never be *reconciled*. And consequently the whole Christian doctrine of *reconciliation by Christ* falls to the ground at once. An excellent method of converting Deists! By giving up the every essence of Christianity.<sup>32</sup>

A few years later in 1756, Wesley offers a massive theological criticism on Law's *The Spirit of Prayer* and *The Spirit of Love* through an open letter.<sup>33</sup> Brazier Green, evaluating Wesley's open letter, says "the letter is perhaps the most effective statement of his most cherished theological beliefs that John Wesley ever produced."<sup>34</sup>

In 1738, Law took pains to reply to Wesley's two letters. In 1756, however, when Wesley sent an open letter to Law on January 6, criticizing his theology, Law did not

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<sup>30</sup> Green, 60.

<sup>31</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Love*. Part II (London: Printed for M. Richardson, Pater-noster-Row, 1754), 133.

<sup>32</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol 20 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 292 f.

<sup>33</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol IX. Reprinted from the 1872 edition issued by Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, London (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1979), 466-509.

<sup>34</sup> J. Brazier Green, *John Wesley and William Law*, 160.



respond. Law's understanding and evaluation of Wesley's open letter can be found in his letter to Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, on February 16, 1756. In that letter Law said concerning Wesley's open letter as follows .

It does not admit of a serious answer, because there is nothing substantial, or properly argumentative in it ... It was owing to his unwillingness, or inability to give up his own spirit, that he was forced into this false, and rash censure which he published in print against the Mystics.<sup>35</sup>

Wesley's open letter revealed the theological difference between him and Law on the subject of salvation more clearly. One particular issue Wesley was concerned with was how to understand the meaning of the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ with respect to human salvation.

In *The Spirit of Prayer* and *The Spirit of Love*, Law presented his mature theological understanding of the meaning of Jesus Christ for human salvation. Wesley read them. And Wesley came to know more clearly how Law's theology of salvation was different from the prevalent theology accepted in those days by many including Wesley himself. As a way of criticizing Law's theological view, Wesley quoted the following part of *The Spirit of Love*.

The satisfaction of Christ is represented in all our systems of divinity, as a satisfaction made to God, and the sufferings and death of Christ, as that which could only avail with God, to have mercy on man. Nay, what is still worse, if possible, the ground, and nature, and efficacy of this great transaction between God and Man, is often explained by debtor and creditor: man, as having contracted a debt with God, which he could not pay, and God as having a right to insist upon the payment of it.<sup>36</sup>

When I compared Wesley's above quotation of Law with Law's own text, I found that Wesley did not quote Law's text exactly as Law himself wrote. Law himself wrote as follows.

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<sup>35</sup> J. Brazier Green, *John Wesley and William Law*, 163.

<sup>36</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol IX, 488.

And yet it is as true, that all our Systems of Divinity give quite another Account of this most important Matter. The *Satisfaction* of Christ is represented as a Satisfaction made to a wrathful Deity, and the Merit of the Sufferings and Death of Christ, as *that* which could only avail with God, to give up his *own Wrath* and think of Mercy towards Man. Nay, what is still worse, if possible, the Ground, and Nature, and Efficacy of this great Transaction between God and Man, is often explained by *Debtor* and *Creditor*: Man, as having contracted a Debt with God that he could not pay, and God, as having a Right to insist upon the Payment of it, and therefore, only to be satisfied by receiving the Death and Sacrifice of Christ, as a valuable Consideration, instead of the Debt that was due to Him from Man.<sup>37</sup>

To mention a few significant cases of Wesley's alteration of Law's original text, Wesley changed Law's "a wrathful Deity" simply into "God." Wesley changed "to give up his *own Wrath*" that was placed in the Law's original text after "as that which could only avail with God" into "to have mercy on man." Wesley cut off the last part of the paragraph under consideration. The last part is "and therefore, only to be satisfied by receiving the Death and Sacrifice of Christ, as a valuable Consideration, instead of the Debt that was due to Him from Man." This last part is very important in that it reveals clearly how Law differed from the prevalent view that God was "a wrathful Deity" who was only "satisfied by receiving the Death and Sacrifice of Christ."

Wesley in his open letter also quoted the following text of Law.

There is no wrath in God, no fictitious atonement, no folly of debtor and creditor.<sup>38</sup>

Wesley, objecting to Law's theology in *The Spirit of Prayer* and *The Spirit of Love*, also said,

*'What is still worse, if possible! Folly of debtor and creditor!'* Surely I would not

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<sup>37</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Love*. Part II (London: Printed for M. Richardson, Pater-noster-Row, 1754), 72.

<sup>38</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol IX, 488.

have spoken thus, unless I had been above the Son of God.<sup>39</sup>

Wesley in the open letter summarized Law's theology in the following three points.

You say, (1.) There is no vindictive, avenging, or punitive justice in God. (2.) There is no wrath or anger in God. (3.) God inflicts no punishment on any creature, neither in this world, nor that to come.<sup>40</sup>

Wesley, after quoting a lot of biblical passages in which the term "wrath" appears, said, "Now, which am I to believe? God or man?"<sup>41</sup>

For Wesley, our sin was like a debt to God. The debt of sin caused wrath in God. God could be free from his wrath caused by our sin only when the debt was payed by the sufferings of Christ. Wesley quoted the following passages from Matthew and Luke in order to prove that his theology of "debtor and creditor" was scriptural.

"After this manner pray ye, Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."  
(Matthew vi, 9, 12)

"And Jesus said, There was a certain creditor who had two debtors." (Luke vii. 41)<sup>42</sup>

Wesley also quoted "the parable of the unmerciful servant" from "Matthew xviii. 23, &c."<sup>43</sup> Wesley then presented his theological position quite confidently as follows.

Is not man here represented as having contracted a debt with God which he cannot pay? and God as having, nevertheless a right to insist upon the payment of it? and a right, if he hath not to pay, of delivering him to the tormentors? And is it not expressly asserted, that God will, in some cases, claim this right, and use it to the uttermost? Upon whom, then, lights this imputation of folly, and of "what is still worse?" "Lord, lay not this sin to their

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<sup>39</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol IX, 488.

<sup>40</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol IX, 486.

<sup>41</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol IX, 487.

<sup>42</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol IX, 488.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

charge! Forgive them, for they know not what they do.”<sup>44</sup>

Wesley seems to have believed that the biblical passages quoted above proved his view to be “the scripture doctrine of justification.”<sup>45</sup> We will see if Wesley’s view is really biblical in terms of modern biblical theology.

For Law, the theological notion that “the Sufferings and Death of Christ” meant “a Satisfaction to a wrathful Deity” was “a Vanity of Philosophy,” and was “contrary to the plain Text of Scripture.”<sup>46</sup> He believed that “from Eternity to Eternity, no Spark of Wrath ever was, or ever will be in the holy Triune God.”<sup>47</sup> Law was aware that “Wrath in the Scriptures is ascribed to God,” although it really “cannot belong to the Nature of the Deity.”<sup>48</sup> Law understood the language of “Wrath of God” in the Scriptures in the following way.

God is not changed from Love to Wrath, *but the Creatures have changed their own State in Nature*, and so *the God of Nature can only be manifested in them, according to their own State in Nature.*<sup>49</sup>

For Law, the biblical language of the “Wrath of God” did not represent “any Wrath in the Deity itself” but only the existential fearful state of “Hell” of “the Life of fallen Man,” who was estranged from God through sin.<sup>50</sup>

Law presented his soteriological understanding of God, Christ, and human beings in a more positive way as follows.

His redeeming love began with our Fall, and kindles itself as a Spark of Heaven in every fallen Soul. It calls every Man to Salvation, and every Man is forced to hear, though he will not obey his Voice. God has so loved the World, that his only Son hung and expired, bleeding on the Cross not to atone his *own* Wrath

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<sup>44</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol IX, 488 f.

<sup>45</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol IX, 487.

<sup>46</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Love*. Part II, 72.

<sup>47</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Prayer*. Part I (London: Printed for M. Richardson, Pater-noster-Row, 1749), 14.

<sup>48</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Love*. Part II, 55.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

against us, but to extinguish our *own Hell* within us, to pour his heavenly Love in us, to show us that Meekness, Suffering, and Dying to our own Fallen Nature, is the *one, only possible* Way, for fallen Man to be alive again in God.<sup>51</sup>

Law believed that his theology of the wrathless God, of unconditional love, was really biblical. For example, Law quoted John 3:16 as a biblical text supporting his theological view of God as infinite love, without wrath.

The Apostle says, 'God so loved the World, that He gave his only begotten Son, that all who believe in Him should not perish but have eternal Life.' What becomes now of the philosophy of Debtor and Creditor, of a Satisfaction made by Christ to a Wrath of God ... But when did He so loved it? Why, before it was redeemed, before He sent, or gave his only Son to be the Redeemer of it. Here you see, that all Wrath *in* God, *antecedent* to our Redemption, or the Sacrifice of Christ for us, is utterly excluded, there is no Possibility for the Supposition of it, it is as absolutely denied as Words can do it. And therefore the infinite Love, Mercy and Compassion of God towards fallen Man, are not *purchased*, or *procured* for us by the Death of Christ, but the Incarnation and Sufferings of Christ come from, and are given to us by the infinite *antecedent* Love of God for us, and are the gracious Effects of his own Love and Goodness towards us.<sup>52</sup>

In this passage, Law presented his theology of God as "the infinite love, mercy and compassion" in a clear and definite way. For Law, God had no "wrath" that made him incapable of love until it was satisfied by the antecedent sufferings of Christ. God did not begin to love us only after Christ suffered on the cross to satisfy God's wrath. The reverse was true. That is to say, "The Incarnation and Sufferings of Christ come from, and are given to us by the infinite *antecedent* Love of God for us, and are the gracious Effects of his own Love and Goodness towards us."

Was Law quoting the Johannine passage appropriately in the given context? How is God understood according to the Johannine text, "God so loved the World, that He gave his

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 72.

only begotten Son, that all who believe in Him should not perish but have eternal Life” (Jn. 3:16)? Will this passage support Law’s theological view that God is wrathless, infinite love? According to Craig Keener, the meaning of this passage is understood as follows.

“This is *how* God loved the world”; the cross is the ultimate expression of his love ... here God gives the gift of his Son to the world ... This love is of the same sort as the Father’s love for the Son.”<sup>53</sup>

According to Keener’s interpretation, Jesus Christ is far from being a payment given to a wrathful God. Jesus Christ is rather God’s gift for the world given as an “expression” of God’s own unconditional, infinite love for it. God gives the gift of “life and light” to the world in Jesus Christ (Jn. 3:16, 19).

In my judgment, Law’s theological claim that “the Incarnation and Sufferings of Christ come from, and are given to us by the infinite *antecedent* Love of God for us, and are the gracious Effects of his own Love and Goodness towards us” harmonizes well with the meaning of John 3:16 as interpreted by Craig Keener. In my opinion, Law’s view of “the infinite *antecedent* Love of God for us” is supported not simply by a few scriptural passages including the one just dealt with but is widely supported by the Scriptures, especially by the teachings and life of Jesus Christ.

Now let us consider the biblical passages Mt. 6:9, 12 and Lk. 7:41, and Mt. 18:23-35 that Wesley quoted in connection with his theological notion of wrathful God, or “debtor and creditor.” Will these texts support Wesley’s notion of the satisfaction of the wrathful God?

The Matthean passage quoted by Wesley is “After this manner pray ye, Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:9, 12). This is part of the Lord’s prayer. “Debts” in Mt. 6:12 is a Aramaic expression for “sins.”<sup>54</sup> The Lord’s prayer is situated within the sermon on the mount. The passage, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt. 5:48) is very important in that it reveals the essential meaning of the sermon on the mount as a whole. According to Charles Talbert, “perfect” in “be perfect” means “inclusive in one’s love,” and “behind such a call is the conception of imitation of God.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Vol. I (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 567 f.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1982), 312.

<sup>55</sup> Charles H. Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2004), 96.

In Mt. 5:43-48 Jesus mentions loving one's enemies as a way one imitates God's perfection. Dale Allison also says, "In loving the enemy the disciple is only imitating God," whose "generous actions break the rule of reciprocity and cost/benefit analysis."<sup>56</sup> If God's "generous actions break the rule of reciprocity and cost/benefit analysis," it means that God forgives sinners unconditionally without asking anything as a condition of forgiveness. Contrary to Wesley's view, no prior satisfaction of God is necessary in order for God to be able to forgive sinners.

One possible way to misunderstand the teaching, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," is to consider our forgiving fellow human beings as the condition of God's forgiving us. That is not the meaning of the passage. The meaning of the passage is rather that, although God's forgiving love is given to us unconditionally, we are not able to receive it if we are in the spirit of not forgiving others. As Robert Guelich says, "At issue is not the deserving of forgiveness but the capacity to experience forgiveness as indicated by one's behavior."<sup>57</sup> Mt. 6:12, contrary to Wesley's expectation, does not support his view that the sufferings and death of Christ were a satisfaction to a wrathful Deity.

Will then the parable of "the two debtors" (Lk. 7:41-43) support Wesley's notion of the sufferings of Christ as a satisfaction of the wrathful God? Arland Hultgren explains the parable in the following way.

Within a theological context, however, the moneylender will be a metaphor for God, to whom everyone is indebted. This is confirmed by the view that "debts" is a metaphor for sins against God ... The reason for their being forgiven as debtors is simply their inability to pay what they owe ... The forgiveness is pure grace.<sup>58</sup>

As the parable of "the two debtors" is about God's pure grace, it has nothing to do with Wesley's notion of the suffering of Christ as a satisfaction to the wrathful God.

Wesley, in his open letter to Law, also mentioned "the parable of the unmerciful

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<sup>56</sup> Dale C. Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999), 100 f.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, 313.

<sup>58</sup> Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 214.

servant”(Mt. 18:23-35) to claim that his view of redemption through satisfaction of God was biblical. According to the parable, a slave owed the king ten thousand talents. This is a huge amount of money. Brad Young says, “If a day worker who received a denarius a day could work every day of the week and save all of his wages, it would have taken him over 150 years to obtain this kind of money.”<sup>59</sup> The king forgives the slave the huge amount of debt simply out of his compassion for him. According to Arland Hultgren, the Greek term “spranchnizomai” is used in Mt. 18:27 to express “the divine compassion of God that is revealed in Jesus.”<sup>60</sup> The king who is a metaphor of God does not demand anything from the slave as a condition of forgiveness. Even “forgiving others” is not “a precondition or means for gaining God’s forgiveness.”<sup>61</sup> God’s forgiveness is given unconditionally regardless of whether we forgave others beforehand or not. However, when we receive God’s forgiveness, we are naturally supposed to forgive others. If we do not, it simply means that we are not in the appropriate existential state in which we can receive and enjoy God’s unconditional forgiveness. Thus meaning of “the parable of the unmerciful servant”(Mt. 18:23-35) also does not harmonize with Wesley’s view about the suffering of Christ as a condition for God’s forgiveness of humanity.

John Wesley’s “The Scripture Way of Salvation” (1765), has been widely recognized as a sermon that includes the essential points of his mature soteriology. Concerning the importance of this sermon Albert Outler said, “If the Wesleyan theology has to be judged by a single essay, this one would do as well as any and better than most.”<sup>62</sup> In “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” Wesley said concerning justification as follows.

Justification is another word for pardon. It is the forgiveness of all our sins and, what is necessarily implied therein, our acceptance with God. The price whereby this has been procured for us (commonly termed the ‘meritorious cause’ of our justification) is the blood and righteousness of Christ: or, to express it a little more differently, all that Christ has done and suffered for us, till ‘he poured out his soul for the transgressors.’<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Brad H. Young, *The Parables* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 126.

<sup>60</sup> Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary*, 26.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>62</sup> Albert Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 271.

<sup>63</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 157 f.



Wesley's assertion that "The price whereby this has been procured for us (commonly termed the 'meritorious cause' of our justification) is the blood and righteousness of Christ" indicates that he held on to the theological notion of "debtor and creditor," or the notion of the sufferings and death of Christ as "a satisfaction to a wrathful Deity" when he published the sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation" (1765) and most probably throughout his life.

John Wesley confessed God as "Pure, unbounded love."<sup>64</sup> However "Pure unbounded love" as conceived by Wesley is severely qualified by his theological conception of God's "wrath" and "satisfaction." In the end, it turns out that Wesley's "Pure, unbounded love" is not literally "pure" or "unbounded." In contrast, Law believed "the infinite Love, Mercy and Compassion of God" towards the fallen humanity. In my view, this is the scriptural truth.

In my view, most responsible theologians today will not agree with John Wesley in connection with his theological notion of a wrathful God who can be satisfied only by the sufferings of Christ. I rather find many theologians whose theological views are very close to Law's notion of God who loves all human beings unconditionally. For example, a modern theologian, Paul Tillich, held a view that is quite similar to Law's. Tillich said,

If the Mediator is a third reality between God and man, God is dependent upon him for his saving activity. He needs someone in order to make himself manifest, and – even more misleading – he needs someone in order to be reconciled. This leads to the type of doctrine of the atonement according to which God is the one who must be reconciled. But the message of Christianity is that God, who is eternally reconciled, wants us to be reconciled to him and reconciles us to him through the Mediator.<sup>65</sup>

Tillich here implies that there are two kinds of christology. One kind of christology believes that "God is the one who must be reconciled" to humanity by Jesus Christ before God is able to forgive and redeem humanity. An example of this kind of Christology is found in Anselm's theory of satisfaction. The other kind of Christology believes that God, who is "eternally reconciled," acts to reconcile the whole humankind to God Him or Herself through the Mediator. The cross of Jesus Christ is not the condition of God's love for the

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<sup>64</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 7 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 545.

<sup>65</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 169 f.

fallen humanity. It is rather the manifestation, of God's everpresent and prevenient love for all human beings.

Wesley's Christology is close to the first kind of Christology, while Law's Christology to the second one. When Law said, "the Incarnation and Sufferings of Christ come from, and are given to us by the infinite *antecedent* Love of God for us, and are the gracious Effects of his own Love and Goodness towards us,"<sup>66</sup> his Christology shows a great affinity with Paul Tillich's Christology. Another strong exponent of this second kind of Christology can be found in a Methodist theologian, Schubert Ogden. According to Ogden, the event of Jesus Christ represents "the prevenient love of God," or "the primordial and everlasting love of God that is the sole primal source and the sole final end of all things."<sup>67</sup>

Soteriology includes not only the theological or the Christological dimension but also the existential dimension. One of the expressions that apparently shows the existential dimension of Law's soteriology is "new birth." It is true that the expression of "new birth" also appears in Wesley's soteriology. Although both Law and Wesley use the same expression, "new birth," what each of them meant by it is substantially different from one another. Wesley said concerning the new birth as follows.

And at the same time that we are justified, yea, in that very moment, *sanctification* begins. In that instant, we are 'born again', 'born from above', 'born of the Spirit'. There is a *real* as well as a *relative* change. We are inwardly renewed by the power of God. We feel the 'love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given to us, producing love to all mankind.'<sup>68</sup>

For Wesley, the moment that we are born again is the moment we are justified. It is also the moment that our sanctification begins. The new birth is "the first point of sanctification,"<sup>69</sup> the beginning of a "real change." For Wesley, the subject of the new birth is a human being who has faith. The agent of it is the Holy Spirit. One who believes is born again by the power of the Holy Spirit. For Wesley, while justification is through "the merits of Christ,"

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<sup>66</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Love*. Part II, 72.

<sup>67</sup> Schubert M. Ogden, *Doing Theology Today* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 149, 182.

<sup>68</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 2, 158.

<sup>69</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 3 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 507.

regeneration or sanctification is by “the power of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>70</sup>

What is interesting in Law’s soteriology is that not only a human being but also God or Christ becomes the subject of the new birth. On the one hand, regeneration means a human being’s “new Birth in Christ,” his or her being “changed into the Spirit and Temper of the Holy Jesus.”<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, the new birth is “a new Birth of the Son and the Spirit of God in the Soul.”<sup>72</sup> It is “the *Birth* of Christ” that is “to be effected in thee.”<sup>73</sup> Law uses “new birth,” “regeneration,” “salvation” and “redemption” interchangeably as diverse ways of expressing the same reality.<sup>74</sup> Law understood redemption as an event of “an inward Christ, inwardly formed, and generated in the Root of the Soul.”<sup>75</sup>

Law’s understanding of the new birth as both the divine and the human event is also expressed in terms of his understanding of it as “the *Union* of the Divine and human Nature,” “the *Union* of the Divine and human Life,” or the union “between God and the Soul.”<sup>76</sup> In other words, the new birth of Christ in me and my new birth in Christ happen simultaneously. The new birth is a reoccurrence of the event of incarnation.<sup>77</sup> Law said, “And therefore the *Word was made Flesh*. and must be made Flesh, if Man is to have an heavenly Nature.”<sup>78</sup> Salvation meant for Law “nothing else but to be made like unto Him [Christ]; it is to have his Humility and Meekness ... his Love of God, his Desire of doing God’s Will, and seeking only his Honor.”<sup>79</sup> The new birth or salvation conceived by Law is “the twofold Life,” that is, “the life of *Nature*” and “the Life of *God* in it” at the same time.<sup>80</sup> It is a coincidence of incarnation and deification.

This way of understanding the new birth is quite different from the prevalent view of it, either Catholic, Protestant or Eastern. If a similar soteriological view is to be found, it

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<sup>70</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 309.

<sup>71</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Prayer*. Part I, 24.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 19, 21.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Love*. Part I (London: Printed for G. Robinson and J. Roberts, Pater-noster-Row, 1752), 22; William Law, *The Spirit of Love*. Part II, 43, 131.

<sup>77</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Love*. Part I, 30; William Law, *The Spirit of Love*. Part II, 131.

<sup>78</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Love*. Part I, 22.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>80</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Love*. Part I, 43.

is usually among the mystics. Meister Eckhart is one of them. Eckhart said,.

We celebrate here in temporality with a view to the *eternal* birth, which God the Father accomplished and accomplishes in eternity, so that this same birth has now been accomplished *in time* within human nature. What does it avail me if this birth takes place unceasingly and yet does not take place within myself? It is quite fitting, however, that it should take place within me ... May the God who was reborn today as a human being help us in this birth! May he eternally help us weak human beings so that we may be born in him in a divine way. Amen.<sup>81</sup>

Both Law and Eckhart understood the new birth as my birth in God and God's birth in "me" taking simultaneously.

St. John of the Cross is another mystic who had a similar soteriological view. Similar to Law's view of the new birth as both a human being's new birth in God and "a new Birth of the Son and the Spirit of God in the Soul," St. John of the Cross understood the highest stage of salvation not simply in terms of our awakening in God but also God's awakening in the soul. St. John of the Cross said,

And thus it is as though the soul were to say: How gentle and loving (that is, extremely loving and gentle) is Your awakening, O Word, Spouse, in the center and depth of my soul, which is its pure and intimate substance, in which secretly and silently, as its only Lord, You dwell alone, not only as in Your house, nor only as in Your bed, but also as in my own heart, intimately and closely united to it.<sup>82</sup>

Law mentioned the parable of "the vine and the branches" (Jn. ch. 15) in order to show that his conception of the new birth as "the twofold Life" of Christ and the human soul was Scriptural. For Law, the new birth was at the same time the life of "Vine" which referred

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<sup>81</sup> Matthew Fox, *Passion for Creation* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2000), 293, 301.

<sup>82</sup> St John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, tr. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1979, 643 f.

to Christ and the life of the “branches” which referred to his disciples.<sup>83</sup> He also mentioned the Pauline passage “Yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me”(Gal. 2:20) for the same purpose.<sup>84</sup> For Law, the new life is my life in Christ and Christ’s life in me at the same time.

Law’s regeneration-centered soteriology entails a corresponding way of understanding how one is freed from sin. As we saw above, Wesley associated the new birth with sanctification rather than with justification, seeing it as “the first point of sanctification.”<sup>85</sup> Although Wesley did not separate justification and sanctification from one another, he still distinguished them quite substantially in terms of “relative change” and “real change,” or in terms of justification “through the merit of Jesus Christ” and sanctification “by the power of the Holy Spirit.” For Wesley, it is justification, not sanctification, that points to the existential state of being forgiveness of one’s sin. Thus justification is distinguished from sanctification.

In contrast to Wesley, Law’s concept of new birth did not mean sanctification only. It covered what Wesley meant by both justification and sanctification together, i.e., both freedom from sin and transformation into an authentic being of love. How come that the new birth as understood by Law mean freedom from sin? For Law, salvation or redemption meant “a new Birth of the Light and Spirit of God” in a human being, and this state inescapably implied “his Deliverance from his fallen State”<sup>86</sup> After all, “the Light and Spirit of God” necessarily overcome the darkness of sin. What Wesley meant by justification and sanctification were so closely bound together in Law’s conception of the new birth. They are two aspects of one event of the new birth.

In Law’s theology, justification and sanctification as the two aspects of the new birth were not respectively ascribed to “the merits of Jesus Christ” and “the power of the Holy Spirit” as in Wesley’s theology. Instead they were conceived to be closely united in the new birth and were ascribed to the united work of the Triune God, “the inward, living, life-giving, Operation of the Triune God within you, creating, quickening, and reviving in your fallen Soul that Birth and Image, and Likeness of the holy Trinity, in which the first Father of Mankind was created.”<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Prayer*. Part I, 22.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>85</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 3, 507.

<sup>86</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Prayer*. Part I, 19.

<sup>87</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Love*. Part II, 133.

Law's mystical understanding of the new birth as "the *Union* of the Divine and human Nature," or "the *Birth* of Christ" in me, or "the twofold Life" of Christ and the human soul is a very interesting and challenging idea. It needs to be carefully studied, understood, and evaluated towards the formation of an adequate mystical theology in the future.

### III. Concluding Remark

Wesley read a lot of mystical works. And he at times made critical theological comments on the mystical works that he read.<sup>88</sup> In my opinion, we must be careful not to passively and uncritically accept Wesley's theological judgments on the mystical writings. I have shown above that Wesley's criticisms of Law's soteriology in 1738 and 1756 were not theologically convincing. We need to go beyond John Wesley and study mysticism in a more thoughtful and responsible way. As is already shown in our consideration of the theological encounter between Wesley and Law, Wesley's notion of the nature of God's love for the world need to be radically revised and expanded in the direction of affirming the literal infinity of God's love. It is noteworthy that understanding of God as pure infinite love is frequently appears in most mystical writings including Law's. John Wesley learned from the mystics only to a limited extent for his theology of perfection. For example, Wesley's theology of Christian perfection has no room for such ideas as infused contemplation or intimate union with God. Mysticism has a lot of valuable theological insights that are still waiting to be excavated and used by the theologians today.

Mystics need to be understood correctly and evaluated fairly. I do not think that it was factually grounded when Wesley, in his letter to his brother Samuel Wesley in 1736, criticized mystics claiming that they "slight the means of grace."<sup>89</sup> When Wesley wrote the letter, he was struggling in his failure in the missionary work in Georgia. Wesley might have lost his composure due to this failure when he was writing the letter to his brother. Robert Tuttle says,

Wesley's failure to understand fully the real nature of his problem simply

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<sup>88</sup> We can find the names of the mystics that Wesley read in Robert Tuttle, *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1989), 25-63.

<sup>89</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 25, 488.

meant that his second year in Georgia would be no more successful than his first. Furthermore, since his failure was attributed largely to the mystical denial of means (although there is no evidence to suggest that Wesley himself denied such means apart from the statement “the rock on which I had the nearest made shipwreck”), he tended to exaggerate this lesser problem.<sup>90</sup>

Most mystics that I know recognized the great importance of the means of grace for our salvation. William Law, for example, claimed that “Sacraments, Prayers, Singing, Preaching, Hearing” are “many Ways of being fervent in the Spirit, and of giving up ourselves more and more to the inward working, enlightening, quickening, sanctifying Spirit of God within us”<sup>91</sup> St. Teresa of Avila understood the Eucharist as “heavenly bread,” saying that “Our good master saw that with this heavenly bread everything is easy for us, save through our fault.”<sup>92</sup> Teresa also said that God placed in the sacraments some “power,” that the sacraments are like “a medicine and ointment for our wounds.”<sup>93</sup>

Wesley claimed in his letter to Samuel Wesley that some mystics thought that “Having thus attained the end, the means must cease.”<sup>94</sup> In my view, some mystics might rather understandably have said, “Having thus attained the end, the means *may* cease. The means is like a channel through which the end is attained. I accept the belief of most mystics that a person who has reached the stage of contemplation of, and union with, God does have a direct, unmediated enjoyment of God’s grace. Therefore the mystic who has attained this stage can freely choose to enjoy God’ grace either immediately without any means of grace or mediately through some means of grace. Therefore the mystics *may* or *may not* choose to use the means. To my knowledge, the mystic is not likely to say that “Having thus attained the end, the means *must* cease.”

According to Runyon, while Wesley was studying at Oxford, Aristotelian thought was dominant there and thus influenced Wesley to question the possibility of “immediate and mystical knowledge of God” or the possibility of choosing to forgo “the means of grace”

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<sup>90</sup> Robert Tuttle, *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition*, 89.

<sup>91</sup> William Law, *The Spirit of Love*. Part II, 113.

<sup>92</sup> St. Teresa of Avila, *The Collected Works of Avila*, Vol. II (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1980), 177.

<sup>93</sup> St. Teresa of Avila, *The Collected Works of Avila*, Vol. I (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1987), 167.

<sup>94</sup> *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 25, 488.

under some condition.<sup>95</sup> Wesley's thought in this respect is contrary to most mystics' view. Wesley's Aristotelian thought seems to have led him to have a too negative attitude toward the mystical notions such as infused contemplation or birth of Christ in the soul, and so on. In my view, Wesleyan theologians today need to consider the possibility of mystical contemplation and union more seriously.

According to St. John of the Cross, "infused contemplation" refers to the state in which "the loving knowledge is communicated directly to the spirit, without particular images and ideas."<sup>96</sup> The nature of contemplation as being "without images and ideas" corresponds to the fact that "God has no form or likeness."<sup>97</sup> "The term "infused" in "infused contemplation" refers to the fact that it is not a state that a human being can attain by his or her own power at will but a state that is only "infused" or given by God's grace into the soul. The divine "light" and "fire," or a supernatural "knowledge" and "love," are infused into the contemplative.<sup>98</sup> As the divine light and the divine fire belong to God, infusion of the divine light and the fire is not different from an "inflow of God" Him or Herself into the contemplative. Therefore St. John of the Cross says, "contemplation is nothing else than a secret and peaceful inflow of God, which, if not hampered, fires the soul in the spirit of love."<sup>99</sup>

Many Wesleyan theologians have noted that, for Wesley, "works of piety" and "works of mercy" cannot be separated from one another.<sup>100</sup> I believe that Wesleyan theologians can contribute greatly to the formation of the future mystical theology particularly in connection with the Wesleyan common belief that the love of God and the love of the world are closely connected to one another. It is true that most mystics also

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<sup>95</sup> Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 110.

<sup>96</sup> Kieran Kavanaugh, *John of the Cross: Doctor of Light and Love* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999), 114.

<sup>97</sup> St. John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, 152.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 148 f., 610.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>100</sup> For example, see Theodore W. Jennings, "Transcendence, Justice, and Mercy: Toward a (Wesleyan) Reconceptualization of God," and M. Douglas Meeks, "Sanctification and Economy: A Wesleyan Perspective on Stewardship," in *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), chs. 4 and 5; Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 215; Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation*, 106 f.



share the belief that the two parts of the great commandment are inseparably bound together. What is frequently lacking in those mystics is an appropriate theological conceptuality through which the two parts of the great commandment can be appropriately explained in their mutual inseparable correlation. In this connection, I attend in particular to process theism as developed by several Methodist theologians such as Schubert Ogden, John Cobb, David Griffin.<sup>101</sup> According to process theism, the reality of God and the world are not only distinguished from one another, but also are inseparably connected to one another. I believe that the panentheistic idea of process theism can be a useful conceptuality for future mystical theology in which the love of God and the love of the world can be understood in close mutual connection.

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<sup>101</sup> Schubert M. Ogden, *The Reality of God and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); Schubert M. Ogden, *Faith and Freedom: Towards a Theology of Liberation*. 2d ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989); John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976).

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