Pursuing Christian Love According to the Theology of John Wesley

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Abstract

The University of Manchester
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In this project, we will be exploring John Wesley’s view of pursuing Christian love, the greatest goal of Christian living. When exploring this matter, an important theme emerges. It is the theme of gift. Over the course of this project, it will be argued that according to the view of John Wesley, a person’s pursuit of the greatest goal of Christian living is an expression of God’s gift and that the giftedness of this blessing is illuminated by a critical examination of the work of the Spirit with respect to the active and passive dimensions of a human being.

In order to support this thesis, we will carry out two general tasks. The first task will be to clarify the features of the soul. For Wesley, the soul includes a person’s spirit composed of understanding, will, and liberty. In order to illuminate the work of God’s grace as a person pursues the highest end of Christian living, one must first clearly show what the features of the soul are and how they work. This is because such a pursuit is rooted in the interplay of the features soul.

The second task of this project will be to consider in more depth how the features of the soul relate to each other as an agent performs right action and pursues the highest goal of Christian living. For Wesley, the gospel is foundational for the pursuit of the highest end. It is through Christ’s atonement that one is able to receive the grace necessary for spiritual transformation. This spiritual transformation is integral to a person’s pursuit of the highest goal. During the Christian life, a person’s soul spiritually develops depending on his or her location along the “way of salvation,” Wesley’s roadmap for the Christian journey. In other words, the Christian life involves stages. Therefore, the second task of this project will consider Wesley’s view of the pursuit of the highest goal for each of the various stages of the Christian life. Once these steps are complete, it will have been shown to a greater degree how for Wesley, the pursuit of the greatest goal of Christian living is an expression of God’s gift.
Declaration

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Dedication

For my parents Michael and Susan Browder, who brought me up in the life of the church.
Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank my primary supervisor Dr. Kenneth J. Collins and my secondary reader Dr. Stephen Wright. Their guidance, stimulating conversation and careful critique of my thought and writing was invaluable. I would also like to thank Randy L. Maddox and James A. Harris for helpful guidance.
Chapter 1: Introducing Wesley’s Aims

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is no other commandment greater than these.¹

-Jesus, Mark 12:30 - 31

In these words, Jesus, the One believed to be God in the flesh, sums up the greatest commandment for human living. As we will explore, it is this love that serves as the ultimate goal for John Wesley’s ministry and theology. For Wesley, it is a love that is not reachable by secular means or by a lazy kind of discipleship. It is a love that, as it is rooted in Christian faith, shows power and rigour. This love is the image of God and the mark of holiness. Greater levels of such love are pursued only by and with the empowering presence of the Spirit, made possible by Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. Exploring Wesley’s understanding of how to pursue the highest form of Christian love will be the main focus of this project. As will be shown, a consideration of this subject calls for a new and improved interpretation of Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction that goes beyond previous discussions in secondary literature.

Over the course of this project, it will be argued that according to the view of John Wesley, a person’s pursuit of Christian love is an expression of God’s gift and that the giftedness of this blessing is illuminated by a critical examination of the work of the Spirit with respect to the active and passive dimensions of a human being. This thesis has significance for several reasons. It is important because it advances recent discussions in secondary literature. That is, it offers a new consideration for interpreting an aspect of Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction. This consideration regards the active and passive dimensions of a person. Second, the thesis is important because it strengthens the case that Wesley succeeds in offering a reasonable defence against Pelagianism or semi-Pelagianism. For Wesley, fruitful moral actions are never a reflection of human merit but are always an expression of God’s gift. While this is an important point, the aim of this project will be more concerned with the first matter.

¹This is quoted from Wesley’s Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament. Throughout his writings, Wesley makes many references to these verses. As we will show in chapter 7, he claims that the fulfillment of this commandment is a defining representation of his view of Christian perfection.
Recent discussions in the secondary literature of Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction fail to offer a careful consideration of Wesley’s view of how the Spirit works with regard to the active and passive dimensions of a person. Such discussions either do not identify these concepts of active and passive or do not distinguish them adequately. When we speak of “active” and “passive” here, we are referring to concepts that are, to some degree, universally recognisable. For example, the raising of my arm is active and the feeling of someone tapping my shoulder is passive. Anybody can recognize this basic conceptual difference. What is meant by active and passive will be elaborated more in chapter 2.

The previous failures in secondary literature to clarify Wesley’s view of the active and passive dimensions of a person has led to some blurring and muddling of Wesley’s “way of salvation,” his roadmap for the Christian life. While Wesley acknowledges much mystery and uncertainty in the Christian life, he believes that it is important to respond to what can be known. For Wesley, clarifying the roadmap of the Christian life as much as possible is important because the purpose of the roadmap is to give a follower of Christ a clear view of how to live one’s life and what to expect in the future regarding spiritual development. The Christian life itself involves an array of active and passive experiences and so to confuse active and passive results in a blurring of Wesley’s guide for living. In one sense, clarifying the active and passive dimensions helps to show how the roads of the roadmap differ from the landmarks so to speak.

Wesley also wants to protect his thought against those who argue it implies that there is human merit in spiritual matters. Such critics tend to describe Wesley’s account of pursuing Christian love as semi-Pelagian or as diminishing the glory of God. Wesley does not understand his thought to be Pelagian or semi-Pelagian as the terms are commonly understood in Western theology. A more careful consideration of Wesley’s

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2 As will become clear in the chapters ahead, this meaning of “passive” is different from other meanings of passive that Wesley uses such as when he speaks of “passive righteousness.” Wesley, “The Lord our Righteousness,” Works (BE), 1:453.

3 Such criticism was common among people with Calvinist sympathies. An example of such criticism may be found in the work of the Calvinist Methodist Richard Hill (Richard Hill, A Review of all the Doctrines Taught by the Rev. Mr. John Wesley (Second Edition, London: E. and C. Dilly, 1772), 103). “Pelagianism” here means the view that right action may be done without God’s grace. “Pelagianism” here does not necessarily refer to the view of the historical figure Pelagius who was the object of Augustine’s critique.

4 Outler points out that Wesley believes that Augustine slandered Pelagius such that the Western tradition does not properly represent Pelagius’ view. Wesley rejects Pelagianism, as commonly understood by the Western tradition after Augustine. But Wesley may see the actual thought of Pelagius in a different light. In any case, Wesley himself does not hold that it is possible for humans to do right without grace. For more of a discussion of Wesley’s view of Pelagius, see Maddox, Responsible Grace, 285, footnote 2. Albert Outler,
view of the work of the Spirit in active and passive dimensions of a person in relation to moral actions helps to protect Wesley’s thought against such charges. While this work offers a perspective that may strengthen Wesley’s position against these critics, the purpose of this project is not to address Wesley’s critics or to explore their arguments in great depth. Rather, the purpose of this project is to argue for an interpretation of Wesley’s thought that until this point, has not been given adequate attention. As the primary aim of this work is to offer an interpretation of Wesley’s thought, this work is situated within the field of historical theology.

As we will show, the aim of this project will require some engagement with Wesley’s view of the soul, an aspect of his larger anthropology. A number of scholars have discussed either Wesley’s view of the soul or his anthropology. For example, Kenneth Collins speaks of Wesley’s view of a human as an “embodied spirit” and Charles Christian describes Wesley’s anthropology as showing “a great deal of the body/soul dualism of his day.” Randy Maddox also discusses Wesley’s anthropology and gives one of the most detailed accounts of Wesley’s view of the soul. Maddox argues that while Wesley distinguishes between the soul and spirit on some occasions, he often equates them or views them together in one category. Thus, for Maddox’s interpretation of Wesley, the soul and spirit together make up one of two dimensions in Wesley’s anthropology. Maddox says, “For all intents and purposes, then, Wesley assumed a two-dimensional anthropology: humans exist in the world as embodied soul/spirits.”

The body is one dimension and the soul/spirit is the other. Laura Bartels Felleman observes that for Wesley, these separate dimensions interrelate.

As indicated above, at times, Wesley seems to use the words “soul” and “spirit” interchangeably. For this current project, we will use the word “soul” to refer to a

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6 Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 70 – 72. See also the relevant sources in the bibliography below.

7 Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 71.


9 On one occasion, Wesley describes the soul as “a spirit.” On another occasion, he describes it as “an immortal spirit made in the image of God, together with all the powers and faculties thereof.” He speaks of the soul as having a principle of inward and outward motion and as including affections, passions, and tempers. Wesley, ‘The Imperfection of Human Knowledge,’ *Works* (BE), 2:576; Wesley, ‘The Good Steward,’ *Works* (BE), 2:284; Wesley, ‘Original Sin,’ *Works* (BE), 2:175.
person’s total consciousness. In chapters 2 – 4, we will engage Wesley’s view of the features of the soul in depth and consider relevant discussions in secondary literature.

For this current chapter, we will begin by considering a background to Wesley’s ministry. Then we will consider a brief overview of Wesley’s view of pursuing the highest goal of Christian living. After this, we will observe some of the key debates in secondary literature. Last, in this chapter, we will summarize the steps that will be taken in the upcoming chapters in order to defend the thesis.

Background to Wesley’s View of Ministry: A Search for True Religion

In England in the seventeenth century, there were a number of people who sought to express their devotion to God by means of creating or participating in religious societies. Some such societies were supported and sponsored by the Church of England. The purpose of the societies was to promote “real holiness of heart and life.” The emphasis of holiness of heart found in these religious societies was similar to the concern for “heart theology” in the colleges of piety in Germany that arose in the seventeenth century even earlier than the English religious societies of the same century. These colleges of piety were a mark of German pietism and were similar to the English religious societies in that they included time for small group Bible study and prayer.

John Wesley’s father, Samuel Wesley, shared the vision of religious societies and started his own religious society in Epworth in 1700, about three years before John’s birth. Samuel used a set of rules and practices as a guide for his religious society in their quest for promoting holiness of heart and life. These rules and practices were similar to those used by the London societies. The orders of one society included a long list of practices, which included daily prayer, partaking of the Lord’s Supper, censuring others, being holy in conduct, daily self-reflection concerning spiritual matters, fasting, and the reading of pious books. The impact of Samuel’s religious society is difficult to assess given the records available. However, it is clear that many other societies succeeded in matters of social justice, as charitable schools were built and efforts were

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11 Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodists, 19.
12 Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodists, 20.
13 Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodists, 27.
14 Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodists, 27.
16 Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodists, 30.
made to try to increase education and standards of living for the poor. The purposes of the religious societies and the role of Samuel Wesley in promoting them foreshadowed similar efforts of John Wesley in the eighteenth century. The ministry of John Wesley would later become one of the highlights of a period of history known as the “First Great Awakening” and lead the rise of a Methodist movement that would involve over 120,000 people in religious societies before his death.

Throughout his entire ministry, Wesley remained a committed Anglican priest. During his life, Wesley had numerous influences that helped to shape how he viewed religion. From his upbringing at Epworth, to his time at Oxford as an undergraduate, graduate student, and fellow of Lincoln College, to his many travels, including his mission to Georgia during his 30s, Wesley read many books and corresponded with a wide variety of people. Wesley’s development as a minister and theologian continued at a remarkable pace throughout his adult life, as he took control of the Methodist movement in the 1740s and in the decades that followed as he defended and clarified many aspects of the Methodist identity in the form of his prolific publications and letters. Such writing included dialogues and debates with figures from many kinds of theological perspectives and church traditions.

In the early stages of his ministry, Wesley faced what he considered to be an urgent problem. This was what he saw as the lack of true Christianity in society. In his assessment of English society, Wesley says, “We see (and who does not?) the numberless follies and miseries of our fellow-creatures. We see, on every side, either men of no religion at all, or men of a lifeless, formal religion. We are grieved at the sight; and should greatly rejoice, if by any means we might convince some that there is a better religion to be attained.” This concern is part of what inspired Wesley’s ministry. In this same passage, Wesley goes on to define what he means as the goal of true religion. The goal of true religion is “the loving of God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, as having first loved us, as the fountain of all the good we have received, and of all we ever hope to enjoy; and the loving every soul which God hath made, every man on earth, as our own soul.”

17 Heitzenrater, Mirror and Memory, 39.
18 Annual Minutes of Some Late Conversations, 1790,’ Works (BE), 10:733.
20 Wesley, ’An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,’ Works (BE), 11:45.
21 Wesley, ’An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,’ Works (BE), 11:45.
There is no surprise that Wesley makes loving God and one’s neighbour the greatest goal of religion. These are the greatest commandments of scripture, as shown in the Old Testament, New Testament, and from the mouth of Jesus himself. A few lines later, Wesley says in reference to reaching this love: “Wherever this is, there are virtue and happiness going hand in hand.” These statements—concerning virtue and the greatest end of Christian living—are placed at the very beginning of his An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion in 1743, which is an early defence of the Methodist movement. Wesley will repeatedly maintain this goal throughout the rest of his ministry. This is the search for true religion, a pursuit different from the claims of religion shown by a troubled society of disinterest and a lack of sincerity.

For Wesley, the highest goal of ministry is outwardly directed: it is to love God and neighbour to one’s fullest potential. However, there must be a way to hold Christians accountable for seeking and reaching what is truly the highest end as opposed to this highest end in disguise. With scripture as his supreme guide and following the example of many religious societies before him, Wesley holds that the barometer for gauging one’s progress in fulfilling the true Christian mission involves experimental consideration of the heart and works that flow from the heart. As we will explore in the chapters ahead, the heart and the works that flow from it are intimately related.

As argued by scholars such as T. A. Noble, Richard Heitzenrater, Randy Maddox, Henry Knight, Kenneth Collins, and others, a Wesleyan pursuit of the highest end of Christian love is a matter of relationship building. According to Wesley, owing to the fall of humankind and the condition of total depravity, God sent his Son Jesus to the world in order to redeem humankind from sin and death. Because of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, God offers to each person salvation from sin and death, a restoring of the image of God, the capability of performing good actions, and the opportunity to love God for all eternity. By God’s free grace, the process of relationship building begins. God touches the heart in a manner that is perceptible to the human recipient, and a person is

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23 Wesley’s theology is not self-interested for the sake of being self-interested. It is self-reflective in reaction to a widespread mindset of complicity for a practice of religion that lacks the power of religion and the example of “true religion.”
able to respond to this first move by seeking Christian love and by performing fruitful action.

Concerning his understanding of Christian thought, Wesley had read a vast range of sources, consulted with an immense range of people, and had an enormous number of experiences in ministry settings. Wesleyan scholars have attempted to determine how Wesley’s sources have influenced him. Often, this task has been quite complex and difficult, if not impossible in some cases. For this project, the approach will be to focus more on the actual content of Wesley’s thought and less on how his sources influenced him. In this project, when we compare Wesley’s thought to his sources, predecessors, and contemporaries, it will be for the sake of bringing clarity to Wesley’s thought rather than to offer a link for how his sources may have caused the shaping of his thought. We will make exceptions to this approach for certain cases in which Wesley explicitly gives his sources and explains how he uses them. One such exception is Wesley’s use of the Bible. Unlike his use of other sources, Wesley openly claims that the Bible is what he considers to be the source with the highest authority.

In the section that follows, we will elaborate more Wesley’s view of the highest goal of Christian living. After this, we will highlight some discussions in secondary literature that are relevant to the thesis. Then we will summarize the steps that will be taken in the chapters throughout this project.

The Goal of Christian Living

As noted in the previous section, Wesley believes that there is a highest goal for Christian living. This highest goal is the loving of God and neighbour at a maximum level. Wesley also describes this love as “Christian perfection.” Such love is the basis of happiness. Christian perfection often does not come according to a person’s preferred schedule. Sometimes a person must pursue the highest goal for many months and years before reaching it. Furthermore, even when the highest goal is reached, the effort of the pursuit should not stop. Wesley believes that a person’s love of God and neighbour will

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25 Wesley says, “We believe the written word of God to be the only and sufficient rule both of Christian faith and practice” (Wesley, ‘The Character of a Methodist,’ Works (BE), 9:33).
26 Wesley’s view of Christian perfection will be explored in more depth in chapter 7.
27 This point will be explored more in chapter 4.
28 This point will be discussed more in chapter 7.
continue to grow throughout eternity, with always more room for growing in love.\textsuperscript{29} During life on earth, pursuing or maintaining the highest goal involves practicing the means of grace such as prayer, attending worship, being involved in a weekly class meeting, taking the Lord’s Supper, reading the scriptures, and serving those in need.

The point that Wesley’s practical theology has a main goal is also evident in secondary literature. For example, William Cannon says that for Wesley:

Christian perfection, or full sanctification, is ‘the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodist; and for the sake of propagating this chiefly he appeared to have raised us up.’ It is the end of which justification is the beginning—the final goal toward which all ethical development moves.\textsuperscript{30}

In other words, for Wesley, the “final goal” for Christian living is perfect love. It is the target for which sincere believers think, act, and live their lives. Note that Cannon uses the word “ethical” in reference to Wesley’s thought. Since Wesley rarely uses “ethics” or “ethical” in reference to his own thought, these words will not be used in this project.

Other scholars highlight that Wesley believes there is a highest goal in Christian living. In her essay “Happiness, holiness, and the moral life in John Wesley,” Rebekah Miles underscores the teleological nature of Wesley’s thought. She shows how Wesley believed that there is a goal in the Christian life and that this goal is happiness, as found in Christian love.\textsuperscript{31} Albert Outler also highlights this point. Outler says,

But take a closer look at Wesley and a surprising fact emerges (at least it surprised me when I first realized what I was seeing, after all these years!). This man was a \textit{eudaemonist}, convinced and consistent all his life. All his emphases on duty and discipline are auxiliary to his main concern for human \textit{happiness} (blessedness, etc.).\textsuperscript{32}

As Outler is saying, Wesley’s purpose in ministry is for people to seek happiness, known as \textit{eudaimonia} (εὐδαιμονία). This happiness is present only in Christian love and is inseparable from it. Wesley was not a deontologist like Kant who emphasizes duties and

\textsuperscript{29} As noted by Thomas Noble, since perfection is dynamic rather than having a final arrival, it may be better to use the translation of “perfecting” rather than “perfection.” Noble, \textit{Holy Trinity: Holy People}, 24 and 95.


is not as concerned with pursuing a highest goal. Wesley saw a need for following rules but he generally saw these in connection with the larger goal of finding happiness, i.e. loving God and neighbour to the fullest degree possible.

In summary, there is widespread agreement among scholars that Wesley’s theology has a highest goal and that this goal is to love God and neighbour at the highest level possible. There is also widespread agreement among scholars that although critics sometimes accuse Wesley of being Pelagian or semi-Pelagian, Wesley does not see himself as being Pelagian, as this term is commonly understood in Western theology. In other words, Wesley does not allow for any circumstance in which doing right is the result of human merit alone. While these points remain true, there has been ongoing confusion and debate in secondary literature regarding Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction as it relates to moral action. Interpreters do not agree in every respect on Wesley’s view of the manner in which God works as a person pursues the highest goal of human living. How this debate is addressed may in fact have implications for how Wesley’s thought may be protected against outside critics. We will now consider the debate in secondary literature concerning Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction as it relates to moral action.

Debates in Secondary Literature

Since the early part of the twentieth century, scholars have debated Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction. There have been numerous contributors to this debate. Instead of giving an exhaustive list of every contributor, we will highlight some of the cases that have been most prominent or are most relevant to the concerns of this work.

In 1935, George Cell produced The Rediscovery of John Wesley. In this book, Cell argues that Wesley is a “monergist” and not a “synergist” when it comes to the divine-human interaction. Cell says that Wesley takes “particular pains to reaffirm in the most complete and unequivocal manner a monergistic and in the same manner to deny a synergistic view of faith and repentance, of justification and sanctification.” While Cell acknowledges that Wesley opposes Antinomianism and rejects the Calvinist notion of absolute predestination, he argues that “Wesleyan theology apprehended historically” was “a conscious return to and reorientation in the faith of the first Reformers.” He claims

33 See footnote 4 above.
35 Cell, The Rediscovery of John Wesley, 265.
that Wesley made “a wholehearted reaffirmation of the Luther-Calvin idea of a God-given faith” and remarks about “how small a place the specifically anti-Calvinistic element actually occupied in the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian experience.”

For Cell, “monergism” and the idea of human cooperation in salvation are compatible. He says, “Wesley has not deviated from the conviction of both Luther and Calvin in his doctrine that man’s power to co-operate with the divine will is itself moment by moment the pure gift of God.” Thus, Cell is not denying that for Wesley, the human active power has a role in salvation. Cell underscores the graciousness of fruitful human action by quoting Wesley: such action is only possible by “free, almighty grace, first preventing us and then accompanying us every moment.” Although Cell portrays Wesley as promoting good actions, Cell de-emphasizes if not rejects the place of “free will” or freedom of choice in Wesley’s thought.

Parts of Cell’s representation of Wesley, both in regard to Cell’s discussion of monergism and other points, would be met by some opposition in the years ahead. For example, Herbert McGonigle says “By practically ignoring many anti-Calvinist publications over a period of more than thirty years, Cell failed to distinguish between Calvinism’s doctrine of justification by faith, which Wesley embraced, and Calvinism’s ‘Five Points’ which Wesley rejected.” William Cannon, a graduate of the Ph.D. program at Yale University who would go on to become a Methodist bishop, offers a more extensive critique of Cell’s work in the book *The Theology of John Wesley With Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification*, published in 1946.

Before showing the disagreement between Cannon and Cell, it is helpful to highlight an important point of agreement between the two. Like Cell, Cannon argues that there is an equivalence between Wesley’s view of the act of justification and the views of Calvin and Luther. Cannon says, “In regard to the justifying act itself, Wesley is at one with Luther and with Calvin. At this point, he does not differ with Whitefield in the least.” Cannon would also agree with Cell that the timing of the start of faith is outside of a person’s control and that the giving of faith is not a human act. The crucial point of

disagreement between Cannon and Cell is not in regard to the actual act of justification but in regard to Wesley’s understanding of the relevance of the events surrounding it, especially to those coming before it. Here Cannon, unlike Cell, wants to emphasize Wesley’s belief in a person’s free will, which is a power of liberty, also known as a power to choose.\textsuperscript{43} While Cell interprets Wesley to allow for a role for human cooperation in salvation, Cell does not extensively examine the role of human actions before justification in Wesley’s thought.

For Cannon’s rendition of Wesley, what a person does before justification is key. Yet, Cannon’s interpretation does not make Wesley’s view Roman Catholic or even like some of the opinions of certain Anglicans. On the one hand, the Roman Catholic Church, like Wesley, rejects Pelagianism as this concept is traditionally understood. However, on the other hand, in Wesley’s view, the Roman Catholic Church rejects the doctrine of justification by faith alone, a doctrine that Wesley holds. The Roman Catholic church makes the idea of justification more complex and holds that justification is more directly connected to works such as taking the sacraments and obeying the moral law.\textsuperscript{44}

Cannon also observes that Wesley’s view of the events surrounding justification is different from some of the opinions of certain Anglican thinkers. In general, Wesley views himself as affirming Anglican theology, including the \textit{Articles of Religion}, the \textit{Homilies}, and the \textit{Book of Common Prayer}. In the \textit{Articles of Religion}, in a manner that some view as contradictory to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, there is a clear affirmation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone and a clear rejection of the role of good works before justification.\textsuperscript{45} Nevertheless, to Wesley’s disapproval, some Anglican thinkers such as Bishop George Bull go to an extreme in emphasizing the importance of works before and during justification. For them, the performance of works is part of what the concept of faith actually means.\textsuperscript{46}

As Cannon notes, Wesley disagrees with the position of Bull. Wesley would acknowledge that faith without works is dead, but he would not go as far as to say that the performance of works is a necessary part of the definition of faith. For Wesley, fruitful actions before justification are only necessary if there is time and opportunity.\textsuperscript{47} As we see in the case of the man on the cross next to Jesus and in other cases, God is free to give

\textsuperscript{43} Cannon, \textit{The Theology of John Wesley}, 106.
\textsuperscript{44} Cannon, \textit{The Theology of John Wesley}, 245.
\textsuperscript{45} Article XI and XIII of the \textit{Articles of Religion}.
\textsuperscript{46} Cannon, \textit{The Theology of John Wesley}, 41.
\textsuperscript{47} This will be discussed more in chapter 6.
the gift of faith without any prior fruitful actions. For Wesley, God is even free to give faith irresistibly for a limited period, although this is not typical. As we will show more in the chapters ahead, Wesley promotes doing fruitful actions before justification, and he is able to avoid contradicting Article XIII of the Articles of Religion because he argues that fruitful works before justification are in one sense good but not good strictly speaking. Wesley is also able to accept and follow what he considers to be the scriptural teaching of justification by works, as found in the book of James. He is able to do this in a consistent manner by arguing that justification by works refers to final justification of the end times and not to first justification, which is the reception of God’s pardon. This point will be discussed more in chapter 7.

The writings of Cannon and Cell show disagreement on whether to emphasize the role of the human active power before and surrounding the time of justification. In reference to Cell, Cannon says:

Yet he does not see that to deny predestination and to affirm free and universal grace is at once automatically to lift man into the picture and to make him an integral part, if not the actual part of his own justification, at least of the conditions relative to its execution.

Cannon also says, “in the very act of man’s willingness to receive the gift of faith he becomes an active factor in the fulfilment of the necessary conditions which God has set for his justification” Such an active willingness, presumably, is reflected in the practice of “fruits meet for repentance” or at least in an active decision to want Christian faith.

Although Cannon acknowledges that Wesley believes prevenient grace is necessary for anything fruitful that a person does, Cannon also says that, in regard to justification, “Wesley always begins with man” and that a person’s moral liberty is of “tremendous importance.” He says in regard to Wesley’s view of justification that “the deciding factor in its attainment does not lie with God but remains solely within the bounds of man’s own decision.” Since the deciding factor of much of salvation rests “solely” with a person, Cannon is led to conclude: “ Wesleyan ethics is, in the last analysis, an ethics of Christian self-realization.”

48 This point will be discussed more in chapters 5 and 6.
49 Cannon, The Theology of John Wesley, 106.
50 Cannon, The Theology of John Wesley, 106.
51 Cannon, The Theology of John Wesley, 246 and 106.
52 Cannon, The Theology of John Wesley, 246.
53 Cannon, The Theology of John Wesley, 236.
Cannon also prefers different language to Cell. As discussed above, Cell opts to use the term “monergism” to describe Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction. Cannon rejects the use of this term. He prefers the language of “synergist” to describe Wesley, and this difference in preference is related to his disagreement with Cell regarding what to emphasize.\(^{54}\) This difference in preferred language sets up a flurry of debates and discussions in the decades that follow.

Even if Albert Outler did not agree with Cannon on every point, he agreed with Cannon’s practice of referring to Wesley’s thought as “synergistic.” Outler says, “That Wesley was a synergist can scarcely be denied unless ‘synergism’ be defined in terms exclusively Pelagian.”\(^{55}\) Yet, Outler does not see Arminius as the originator of synergism. Outler says “this is the nerve of my thesis, that there was a native-born tradition of Christian synergism in Europe and England long before Arminius and the Synod of Dort—and that it was this tradition that nourished Wesley.”\(^{56}\) According to Outler, Wesley followed a “transactional synergism” before his Aldersgate experience. After Aldersgate, Wesley’s synergism is best described as “covenantal synergism.”\(^{57}\) This synergism is “covenantal” because “both prevenient and saving grace are recognized as coordinate providential activities of the one true God of love who, in divine love, makes and keeps covenant with the faithful.”\(^{58}\) In his discussion of “covenantal synergism,” Outler’s work contributes to the ongoing discussion regarding Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction.

In his book *Shaping the Wesleyan Message* first published in 1987, Allan Coppedge responds to the debate concerning whether Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction is monergistic or synergistic. Coppedge makes the following remark:

The point of departure will determine one’s conclusion on this matter. If one begins with Wesley’s doctrine of God, who is responsible for all of salvation, including man’s ability to respond to grace, then Wesley will be viewed as a monergist. However, if one begins with Wesley’s doctrine of man, who is responsible before God for his moral choices, then Wesley will be perceived as a synergist. The fact that Wesley’s doctrine of prevenient grace allowed him to hold both views simultaneously means that Wesley would be more accurately described as a synergist within a monergistic framework. Man can act responsibly and with

\(^{54}\) Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 115.

\(^{55}\) Outler, “Methodism’s Theological Heritage,” 200.

\(^{56}\) Outler, “Methodism’s Theological Heritage,” 199. Outler argues that medieval nominalism showed a theology of faith and good works. This was a form of synergism that long preceded Arminius.

\(^{57}\) Outler, “Methodism’s Theological Heritage,” 201.

\(^{58}\) Outler, “Methodism’s Theological Heritage,” 201. 
freedom because God has already acted in the atonement to provide him with the grace that makes his choices possible.\textsuperscript{59}

Here we see an attempt to integrate both interpretations, “synergist” and “monergist,” together in a harmonious fashion. From these remarks, it is clear that Coppedge is trying to uphold Wesley’s view that God deserves all the glory and merit for a person’s salvation while at the same time accounting for human cooperation in salvation. Coppedge is also implying that what Wesley chooses to emphasize sometimes depends on the context. If Wesley is arguing against figures such as Bishop Bull, for example, his defence will look more like monergism. If he is arguing against the Moravians, his defence will look more like synergism.

In his book \textit{Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology} published in 1994, Randy Maddox suggests discarding altogether the use of the terms “monergism” and “synergism” in reference to Wesley’s thought. He says:

\textit{It would probably be best, however, to avoid either of these terms in describing Wesley, for their prototypical meanings are framed within debates between Continental Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. By contrast, the major sources of Wesley’s basic understanding of Divine/human interaction were Anglican and Early Church (particularly Greek).}\textsuperscript{60}

While on other matters, Maddox makes some of the same key arguments as Outler, he does not share Outler’s preference for using the word “synergism.” This is not to deny that for Maddox, one could possibly use the terms “monergist” or “synergist” if one defines them in a certain way.\textsuperscript{61}

Maddox does, however, share with Outler a preference for describing Wesley’s view of grace as “co-operant.” Outler says in reference to Wesley’s view of grace: “It can be ‘resisted’; hence it is co-operant rather than irresistible.”\textsuperscript{62} Maddox supports this point by stating, “Wesley understood grace (in good Anglican form) to be resistible or co-operant.”\textsuperscript{63} Although Maddox at times, describes Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction as involving “co-operant grace,” he also says that he prefers using the phrase

\textsuperscript{60} Maddox, \textit{Responsible Grace}, 91.
\textsuperscript{61} Maddox, \textit{Responsible Grace}, 91.
\textsuperscript{63} Maddox, \textit{Responsible Grace}, 86.
“responsible grace” because it highlights divine initiative and the universality of grace.\textsuperscript{64} Since grace is available to all people, all people are responsible.

For Maddox, Cannon’s view of the role of a human being in the divine-human interaction comes near to being a misconception, if such a view is not fully wrong.\textsuperscript{65} It seems that for Maddox, Cannon goes too far when he makes remarks such as that justification “always begins with man” and that the deciding factor in the attainment of justification is “solely within the bounds of man’s own decision.” For Maddox’s portrait of Wesley, there is less emphasis on the person and more emphasis on God’s initiative.

One of the effects of Maddox’s work is that the language “co-operant grace” becomes more prevalent. By the 1990s, there is a range of vocabulary that scholars use to describe Wesley’s thought that are at the same time, not actually in Wesley’s writings. The terms “synergism,” “monergism,” “responsible grace,” and “co-operant” are rarely if ever used in Wesley’s writings. This, of course, is not to deny that some of these terms can be helpful in academic discussions.

In his book \textit{The Theology of John Wesley, Holy Love and the Shape of Grace} published in 2008, Kenneth Collins offers important critiques of both Cell and Maddox in regard to their interpretations of Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction. First, Collins argues that Cell does not do enough to recognize the catholic aspect of grace in Wesley’s thought. Collins says that more recent “discussions of Wesley’s views of repentance and works along the way already reveal that he also had a ‘catholic’ understanding of grace, one that embraced a divine/human cooperation, whereby one grows incrementally, and by degrees, as one responds to the initiatives of God.”\textsuperscript{66} Yet, like Cell, Collins finds preference in using the term “monergistic” even if Collins does not use this term in exactly the same way. Collins says, “Wesley did indeed think it appropriate to affirm the monergistic views at least in one sense because he recognized it carried meanings that are ever crucial to the proclamation of the gospel aright.”\textsuperscript{67}

What Collins argues against Maddox is that Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction is not characterized only by responsible grace.\textsuperscript{68} Collins associates Maddox’s view of responsible grace with a synergistic paradigm.\textsuperscript{69} Collins does not reject that

\textsuperscript{64} Maddox, \textit{Responsible Grace}, 92.
\textsuperscript{65} Maddox, \textit{Responsible Grace}, 301, footnote 87.
\textsuperscript{66} Collins, \textit{The Theology of John Wesley}, 289.
\textsuperscript{67} Collins, \textit{The Theology of John Wesley}, 164.
\textsuperscript{68} Collins, \textit{The Theology of John Wesley}, 14.
\textsuperscript{69} Collins, \textit{The Theology of John Wesley}, 164.
responsible grace is part of Wesley's thought. Rather, Collins’ new contribution to the
discussion is to claim that a proper interpretation of Wesley’s thought must include both
responsible grace and what Collins calls “free grace.”70 In this way, Collins argues that
Wesley’s thought is conjunctive.71 It holds Catholic and Protestant views of grace
together in tension.72

“Free grace” corresponds to what Collins considers to be the “monergistic” aspect
of Wesley’s thought.73 “Free grace” refers to the “work of God alone,” a concept that
Collins does not find in Maddox’s work.74 For Collins, Wesley’s view of “free grace”
refers specifically to the Spirit’s work at the two foci of salvation, the onset of justification
and the onset of Christian perfection.75 Collins argues that at these two discrete points in
the Christian journey, there is a kind of working that is different from that which is
observed at other times. Such spiritual work is not pronounced outward actions such as
serving the poor and attending church. Such outward action is synergism, cooperation,
and the expression of responsible grace. During the operation of free grace, a human work
is “hardly a work at all”: it is simply a person’s active reception of a gift.76 This
“receiving” is different from “responding.”77

A point where Collins’ model may need some further clarification is in regard to
his choice of using the phrase “free grace” to refer to only parts of Wesley’s way of
salvation. This is because there is a question as to whether Wesley intends the phrase
“free grace” to refer to all grace, not confined to grace in certain contexts. There is one
instance in which Wesley uses the phrase “free grace” to refer to what Collins regards as
cooperation, something to which, by Collins’ model, free grace is not applicable. Wesley
says that a person has an “utter inability . . . to perform one good action but through his
free, almighty grace, first preventing us and then accompanying us every moment.”78 In
other words, from this quotation, we observe the continual presence of free grace is
necessary for human cooperation in the form of good action. This is not to claim that
Collins’ model is problematic but is simply a request for further clarification.

70 Collins, The Theology of John Wesley, 164.
71 Collins, The Theology of John Wesley, 291.
72 Collins, The Theology of John Wesley, 291.
73 Collins, The Theology of John Wesley, 162 – 163.
74 Collins, The Theology of John Wesley, 162.
75 Collins, The Theology of John Wesley, 162, 290.
76 See the section entitled “Free Grace,” pages 160 – 165. See especially the chart on p. 165. Collins, The
Theology of John Wesley.
77 Collins, The Theology of John Wesley, 14.
With the publication of *From Faith to Faith: John Wesley’s Covenant Theology and the Way of Salvation* in 2013, Stanley Rodes provides another noteworthy contribution to the discussion of how to interpret John Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction.\(^{79}\) Rodes follows the example of Cell, Robert Monk, and others in examining how aspects of Wesley’s thought compare to the Reformed tradition. Rodes builds on the thesis of Monk that some of Wesley’s thought resembles in some degree a modified version of a Puritan form of covenant theology.\(^{80}\) As Rodes notes and as observed above, Outler also claimed that Wesley has a connection to covenant theology. Although Monk shares Cell’s interest in comparing Wesley’s thought to Reformed thought, the former is willing to admit qualifiedly that there is a “synergism” in the teachings of Wesley.\(^{81}\) Rodes does not speak much of “synergism” but offers a creative solution for areas where Cell and others were later critiqued.

Rodes argues that although Wesley’s theology has some differences from some brands of covenant theology, there is nonetheless a covenant theology embedded in Wesley’s thought. In reference to Wesley, Rodes says: “in concert with classic covenant theology, he centered everything on the mediatorial work of Christ as ‘the lamb slain from the foundation of the world,’ and affirmed the Incarnation and outpouring of the Spirit as the culmination of God’s saving activity in and for the world.”\(^{82}\) The greater emphasis in Wesley’s covenant theology is not on what a person can do alone but in what God has done through Jesus Christ in order to save people and fulfil the covenant that God has made.

According to Rodes’ interpretation of Wesley’s covenant theology, God’s initiative in salvation unfolds in a sequence of dispensations within the covenant of grace that continually brings a person to a fuller level in salvation.\(^{83}\) Viewing one part of this sequence of dispensations, Rodes highlights the transition from the dispensation of a “servant” to the dispensation of a “son.” For Wesley, a servant has not yet received the new birth. However, a servant, is encouraged to perform fruits meet for repentance if there is time and opportunity.\(^{84}\) While Cell does not thoroughly treat this aspect of Wesley’s thought, Cannon indicates that these actions are a condition of faith, which is a

\(^{81}\)Monk, *John Wesley, His Puritan Heritage*, 75.
\(^{82}\)Rodes, *From Faith to Faith*, 76.
\(^{83}\)Rodes, *From Faith to Faith*, 146.
\(^{84}\)This will be discussed more in chapter 6.
condition of justification and therefore such actions of repentance have bearing on justification and the new birth.\textsuperscript{85} For this reason, according to Cannon’s interpretation, a person’s decision and actions play a central role in salvation.

Yet, Rodes’ analysis of covenant theology in Wesley’s thought suggests it is inaccurate to portray a person as having the primary focus and being the sole factor in the attainment of salvation in the manner that Cannon depicts. For Rodes, the stage of being a “servant” must be understood as a soteriological phase that is part of God’s larger plan for salvation. While for Rodes’ interpretation of Wesley, it is important for the servant to do righteous actions frequently and press forward on the way of salvation, the focal point of the servant is not his or her decision or action but the narrative of God’s initiative in salvation and faithfulness to the covenant. This is a narrative in which God appoints a special place for the servant within the narrative. In other words, the servant is not in an exterior narrative that is governed by the human self, as some of Cannon’s comments imply. In this way, Rodes’ work can be used to avoid possible weaknesses of the interpretations of Cell and Cannon: Rodes’ interpretive work shows how to treat the role of fruitful actions before the new birth without having to conclude that a person is the primary focus and sole factor in salvation.

In summary, we have highlighted some important treatments of Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction. What complicates many of these efforts is a tendency to try to show how aspects of Wesley’s thought compare and contrast with prior traditions of Christian thought, especially for cases in which Wesley does not explicitly indicate that he is being influenced by something or that he intends for there to be a resemblance in the manner that a scholar is proposing. For Cell, the effort was to show Wesley’s links to Calvinism; for Monk and Rodes, covenant theology; for Maddox and Outler, a complex integration of multiple traditions, at times including the ante-Nicene Fathers; and for Collins, a conjunction of catholic thought and Reformed thought, which includes monergism. The list, of course, does not end here. Just to name a few more of a larger list: Hildebrandt argues for a connection to Lutheran thought and Maximin Piette and John Todd argue for links to Roman Catholicism.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{85}Cannon, \textit{The Theology of John Wesley}, 110-111.

In this current work, we will intentionally minimize any attempt to argue for how Wesley’s thought was influenced by or resembles distinctive prior Christian traditions such as Lutheranism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Calvinism, etc. This is because attempting to make such connections is often prone to leading to confusion or conceptual entanglement. Furthermore, we will not use words such as “synergism” or “monergism” in this project. This is because: (a) these terms have links to complex theological discussions and can lead to confusion and disagreement, (b) they are not necessary for Wesley’s chief concern of explaining the divine-human interaction for the sake of providing a practical guide for Christian living, (c) scholars tend to have preferred views of what these terms should mean, and these views conflict and (d) these terms are not in Wesley’s writings.

The intent for this current work is not to give an exhaustive account of Wesley’s theology or even an attempt to offer an exhaustive account of Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction. Rather, the primary focus will be to look at Wesley’s understanding of the pursuit of the highest goal of Christian living and how his thought in this regard is illuminated by viewing it from a certain angle. This angle is what Wesley understands to be the typical experience of those people who pursue the highest goal of Christian living with sincerity and diligence. This typical experience is clarified in a consideration of what we will call the “active” and “passive” dimensions of a person. It is my hope that this approach will serve to help disentangle some of the confusions and misunderstandings regarding Wesley’s thought that have occurred especially in those who have undertaken the difficult (if not at times impossible) task of trying to show how Wesley’s thought resembles other Christian traditions. This approach will also show in more depth an effective way of avoiding the difficulties that sometimes come with using terms such as “monergism” or “synergism.”

**Summary of this Project**

For this project, we will be exploring John Wesley’s view of the pursuit of the highest goal of Christian living. When examining this topic, an important theme emerges. It is the theme of gift. Over the course of this project, it will be argued that according to the view of John Wesley, a person’s pursuit of the highest goal of Christian living is an expression of God’s gift and that the giftedness of this blessing is illuminated by a critical examination of the work of the Spirit with respect to the active and passive dimensions of a human being. In order to support this thesis, we will take up two tasks. The first task is
to clarify the features of the soul as understood by Wesley. In order to understand properly the graciousness of God in moral agency, one must first clearly understand what the features of the soul are and how they work. By “moral agency,” we mean a consideration of the forces that are involved as a person pursues the greatest goal of human living.

The second task is to consider in more depth how the features of the soul relate as an agent performs right action and pursues the highest end of Christian living. For Wesley, the gospel is foundational for human agency. God plays the leading role in a person’s salvific transformation. A person’s soul changes depending on where one is along the “way of salvation” (Wesley’s roadmap for the Christian journey). Therefore, the second task will require a consideration of Wesley’s view of the various stages of the Christian life.

Chapters 2- 4 will assist the first task. In chapter 2, we will clarify what this project means by differentiating “active” and “passive.” Although Wesley rarely uses the words “active” and “passive,” these concepts are at the core of his theology of human agency. It will be shown that these concepts are crucial for clarifying Wesley’s view of the soul. As mentioned above, Wesley teaches that a person is endued with the powers of understanding, will, and liberty. In chapter 2, we will begin clarifying Wesley’s view of liberty. In chapter 3, we will continue investigating Wesley’s view of liberty and also explore his understanding of the will. In chapter 4, we will explore Wesley’s understanding of the heart, with its desires, tempers, and affections. We will also consider here Wesley’s view of practical reason and how it relates to the heart.

Chapters 5 to 7 will address the second task. In chapter 5, we will begin to consider in more depth how God has a foundational role in human agency. We will consider the shape of Wesley’s theology and show the various ways that the Holy Spirit works in human action. When a person acts in a way that is right, this is “fruitful” action. In chapters 6 and 7, we will explore the relationship between God and person all along the various stages of the Christian life. Chapter 6 will explore the journey from sin to the new birth. Chapter 7 will explore the journey from the new birth to perfect love and the rewards of heaven. Finally, in chapter 8, we will give a conclusion of the discussion.

87 Examples of places where Wesley does use the terms “active” and “passive” include: Wesley, ‘The Good Steward,’ Works (BE), 2:284; Wesley, ‘What is Man?’ Works (BE), 4:22-24; Wesley, ‘Thoughts on Memory’ Works (BE), 13:480.
Chapter 2: Active and Passive

In this chapter, we will begin the task of clarifying John Wesley’s view of the features of the soul. However, before doing this, it will be helpful for us to consider what is meant by the concepts of “active” and “passive.” As will be shown in this chapter and chapters 3 and 4, these concepts are directly related to how Wesley understands the features of the soul. In order to clarify these concepts of active and passive, we will look at how these concepts were understood in periods before and during Wesley’s time. We will also consider some illustrations that will help clarify what these concepts mean. In this chapter, it will also be shown that these concepts of active and passive illuminate John Wesley’s understanding of two types of spiritual growth, as well as his understanding of liberty, which is one of his features of the soul. At the end of this chapter, we will consider a critique of D. Stephen Long’s interpretation of John Wesley’s view of liberty.

A Mighty Typology

In order to prepare for a clarification of what is meant by active and passive, it is helpful first to consider the relevance of these concepts to an important debate. The typology of active and passive was at the very core of intense discussions and debates between libertarians and necessitarians in Great Britain in the eighteenth century. This was a debate in which Wesley was involved. Using this typology appealed to many libertarians because they believed it supported a core doctrine of libertarianism. In secondary literature, James Harris explores the concepts of “libertarian” and “necessitarian” in great depth. By “libertarian” is meant one who holds the doctrine of free will as opposed to the philosophical necessity that is presupposed in absolute predestination. For a libertarian, a human is free, in at least some cases, to choose for or


against the perceived strongest motive. John Wesley is an example of a libertarian. Yet, in order to be a libertarian, one does not have to believe in God’s foreknowledge of human decisions in the same way as John Wesley and Jacob Arminius.

A “necessitarian” is one whose system of thought presupposes that every human choice must be caused by the strongest motive, which in turn is the effect of a chain of causes and effects that originates from forces outside of a person. The theory of absolute predestination is an example of necessitarianism. A “compatibilist” is a necessitarian who argues that moral responsibility is consistent with necessitarianism. Libertarianism refers to a belief in free will and rejection of philosophical necessity, also known in some cases as absolute predestination. In this section, we will consider why some libertarians believed this typology was advantageous and how necessitarians tended to respond to it. The typology is “mighty” not because there is a unanimous winner in the debates but because many libertarians found it to be central to the debates.

Many libertarians also preferred using the typology of active and passive because they believed it helped to support a core doctrine of libertarianism. This core doctrine is the idea that human action is not fully caused by the “strongest motive,” in which this strongest motive is understood as the effect of a chain of causes and effects that originates from forces external to a person. In disagreement with libertarians, necessitarians hold that human conduct is entirely the result of such a strongest motive, something that exists for every situation. Since necessitarians argue this, many libertarians accuse them of making humans out to be purely passive creatures. This is why in libertarian essays,

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5 According to a necessitarian view, if a man chooses to raise his arm at time $t_1$, then if history were to rewind and playback in a manner that provides the same external conditions, the man must raise his arm at time $t_1$. This is because every choice is determined by a strongest motive connected to one path of history. Necessitarians believe that the flow of history, including the interaction of all the forces of the universe, only has one trajectory. By contrast, for a libertarian, if history is rewound and played back with the same external conditions, the man is free to lower his arm or perform a different act at $t_1$. This is because the universe has contingency and choice does not by necessity depend on the strongest motive.

6 For a discussion of compatibilism, see, for example, Harris, Of Liberty and Necessity, 20.

7 According to a libertarian view if a man chooses to raise his arm at time $t_1$, then if history were to rewind and playback in a manner that provides the same external conditions, the man would be free to lower his arm or perform a different action at $t_1$. This is because choice is not determined by a strongest motive connected to one path of history. By contrast, for a necessitarian, every time history is rewound and played back, the man must by necessity perform the same act of raising his arm at $t_1$. This is because the flow of history, including the interaction of forces, only has one trajectory.
libertarians sometimes charge necessitarians with making humans to be like “clocks” or “stones.” For libertarians, the claim that human action is entirely passive is not correct. This is because humans, unlike clocks, have consciousness of self-directed action. Furthermore, many libertarians argue that the consciousness of human action makes it seem that a person is the cause of his or her action. Libertarians think it is to their advantage to use a typology of active and passive because they think it helps to accentuate the error in the necessitarian view that human conduct is entirely passive.

For necessitarians, libertarians’ use of the typology of active and passive does not succeed in defending libertarianism. For some of them, the libertarian charge of making humans out to be like clocks and stones is at some level unfair. Many necessitarians would acknowledge that in a certain respect, human beings—unlike stones and clocks—have both an active and passive dimension. What must be emphasized, and what many libertarians tend to fail to acknowledge, is there are two meanings of “passive” that relate to this discussion. For our purposes here, one will be called “the first meaning of passive” and the other will be called the “typeX” meaning of passive. Both of these distinct meanings relate to human consciousness in some way. Diagram 2.1 gives an overview of the various meanings of passive. These meanings will pertain to much of the discussion that follows throughout rest of this project.

Most libertarians and necessitarians seem to agree on some of the meanings of passive. For example, both libertarians and necessitarians agree that there is a basic distinction in human consciousness between inclination and choice. If this point is not explicitly stated by every necessitarian, it is at least often implied by the distinctions that are made in related discussions.


The label “typeX” is an arbitrary name given by the author. One could use the name “x” or “y” it does not matter. The concept to which it refers is readily apparent in eighteenth century discussions.

The page numbers for the diagrams are listed right after the table of contents.

For example, Joseph Priestley make a clear distinction between an inclination and choice, and Thomas Hobbes seems to do so as well. Jonathan Edwards makes a clear distinction between motive and choice, and it seems that what he means by motive may include an inclination(s). In one instance, Anthony Collins distinguishes between choice and the impressions of passions, appetites, and senses. It seems that these impressions include impressions of inclinations. Of course, Hobbes, Collins, Edwards, and Priestley are all leading necessitarians of their time. See Thomas Hobbes, A letter about liberty and necessity written to the Duke of Newcastle (London: J. Grover, 1676); Joseph Priestley. The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity Illustrated (London: J. Johnson, 1777), 27; Jonathan Edwards, The Works of Jonathan Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 141; Anthony Collins. A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty (Glasgow: R. Urie, 1749), 70.
perceived differently in consciousness, one could describe the former as “passive” and the latter as “active.” It seems that many libertarians and necessitarians would agree that the consciousness of an inclination is passive (see Diagram 2.1). We will call this the first meaning of passive.

While many libertarians and necessitarians agree that there is a distinction in consciousness between inclination and choice, the key point of disagreement between most libertarians and necessitarians is whether or not with respect to consciousness, choice must—by necessity—follow the suggestion of the strongest motive. For necessitarians, every human choice is fully caused by a strongest motive, which in turn is the effect of a chain of causes and effects that fully originates outside of a person. This point itself is one meaning of passive. We will call this view of passive “typeX” (see Diagram 2.1). It is a meaning of passive that necessitarians hold and that libertarians reject. One could devise an experiment in order to attempt to show, using consciousness, which view is correct. However, history has shown that such approaches have failed to produce a unanimous view. Many libertarians argue that consciousness shows that a person may choose against the strongest motive and/or known greatest good.\footnote{Harris says, “The libertarian of the eighteenth century is a believer in what philosophers of today call ‘agent causation.’ In other words, he holds that there is an alternative to regarding motives as the causes of choices and actions.” Harris, Of Liberty and Necessity, 7.} On the other hand, necessitarians argue that consciousness does not show this.\footnote{For example, see Anthony Collins’ long discussion of consciousness. Also note that Harris says “Most necessitarians from Hobbes onwards take motives to be causes.” Collins, A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty, 11; Harris, Of Liberty and Necessity, 92 and 7.}

In order to clarify further this well-known debate concerning the typeX meaning of passive, consider the following illustration involving a hungry person. Note that such an illustration of hunger is a somewhat popular source of reference for libertarians and necessitarians in the eighteenth century who are trying to clarify their views.\footnote{Note, for example, the comments of a libertarian defender of John Wesley named John Whitehead. Whitehead uses an illustration of hunger and says, “Being hungry, or tired, is no action, ’tis a mere passive sensation, and can have nothing to do with the freedom of action, being different, toto genere, from it.” Examples from Joseph Priestley and Joseph Fisher are noted below. Whitehead, An Essay on Liberty and Necessity: in Answer to Augustus Toplady’s Tract, 23.} An illustration of a man in an orchard is used both by the necessitarian Joseph Priestley and by the libertarian Joseph Fisher.\footnote{Priestley, The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity Illustrated, 27; Fisher, “A Review of Dr. Priestly’s [sic] Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity,” 11:424 and 11:646.} A man is in an orchard that has peaches and apples. He has an aversion to peaches and a fondness for apples. The fondness for apples here is the最强的 motive. The man may choose no more than one piece of fruit. For Priestley, the
man must choose to eat the apple. There is no other possibility. For Fisher, the man has the option of choosing to eat either the apple or the peach. For Fisher, the man may choose against the strongest motive, which is in this case the inclination to eat an apple.\(^{16}\)

What must be emphasized is that in this illustration, both the necessitarian (Priestley) and the libertarian (Fisher) share a clear view of a perceptible difference between inclination and choice. For both, the impression of an inclination—the feeling of hunger to eat—is by its nature passive. In this way, they would both agree on this “first meaning of passive.” However, they disagree on whether or not the man is free to choose against his strongest motive. For Priestley, the answer is no. For Fisher, the answer is yes. This concerns the typeX meaning of passive. For Priestley, the choice of eating the apple is itself passive because it is caused by the strongest motive (the inclination to eat an apple). For Fisher, there is no such passiveness. In taking these positions, they both appeal to consciousness and experience. For Fisher—as for Clarke, Jackson, and other libertarians—, it is wrong to claim that something consciously passive (an inclination) causes in a necessary way something that is consciously active (the choice to eat). Necessitarians disagree, and here lies a crucial point of debate for libertarians and necessitarians in the eighteenth century. Harris shows the magnitude of the debate in the eighteenth century and Nicholas Jackson shows the significance of the debate both in the academic discussion and politics in the seventeenth century.\(^{17}\)

If we put aside for a moment the question of whether there is a typeX meaning of passive, we find a distinction that is fairly easy to recognize. This is that there is a fundamental difference with respect to consciousness between choice and other modes of consciousness such as inclination (see again Diagram 2.1). This difference should be fairly obvious for anyone to see. To illustrate this, let us revisit the previous illustration: any person can distinguish between a feeling of hunger to eat apples (an inclination) and the actual choice to eat an apple. Both libertarians and necessitarians generally agree on this point. Choice here corresponds to the active power (understood in a certain sense for

\(^{16}\) For a necessitarian, there are motives other than hunger that can serve as the strongest motive in a parallel situation. Returning to the example of the man in the orchard: suppose a different man comes to the orchard and faces the same situation. After deliberating, he realizes that he has already exceeded the amount of food that he is allowed to eat for that day. In this case, this reason turns out to be the strongest motive and so, this second man does not eat any fruit. The feeling of hunger is disregarded. The point is that for necessitarians, the choice is always caused by the perceived strongest motive—whether it is a feeling of hunger or the result of extensive deliberation.

necessitarians as shown in Diagram 2.1). In this way, there is a clear line of demarcation between active and passive.

Yet, as a goal of this chapter is to prepare to consider the moral agency of John Wesley, who is a libertarian himself, the meaning of the active power must also incorporate a more debated element: the doctrine of freedom of choice and the rejection of the typeX meaning of passive. In other words, Wesley’s view of action must include: (1) a widely understood notion shared by both libertarians and necessitarians that choosing is active in a certain sense [in contrast to modes of consciousness such as inclination, etc.] and (2) the debated doctrine of freedom of choice that rejects the typeX meaning of passive. This second element is the view that one is free to choose against the suggestion of the strongest motive or clearly-known greatest good. Some opponents of philosophical necessity, such as Ramsay and Burlamaqui, reject this second element for certain cases. ^18^ Necessitarians reject this second element for all cases. Yet there is evidence that suggests that libertarians such as Clarke, Reid, Fisher, and Wesley view this second element as pertaining to most if not all cases. ^19^

In this section, we have considered libertarians’ view of the typology of active and passive and why they believe it to support their defence of libertarianism. For libertarians, it is wrong for what is consciously passive (such as the feeling of hunger) to cause by necessity something that is consciously active (such as the choice to eat an apple). Furthermore, libertarians think that it is wrong to claim that human conduct is entirely passive. Necessitarianism shows agreement at one level with libertarians’ typology of active and passive. Both parties accept the passiveness of modes of consciousness such as inclination. However, as mentioned, many necessitarians welcome libertarians’ charge of the former, making humans out to be entirely passive. This is with respect to the typeX meaning of passive. Furthermore, such necessitarians believe that the libertarians’ typology of active and passive fails to disprove the typeX meaning of passive.

In the upcoming investigation of Wesley’s view of the features of the soul, we will show how Wesley’s view of the soul relates to a libertarian view of active and passive.

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But before we take up this task, we will consider more insights from eighteenth century libertarians regarding the concepts of active and passive. This will help clarify further what this project means by active and passive.

**Highlights from Eighteenth Century Libertarians**

In this section, we will observe more insights from eighteenth century libertarians concerning what is meant by active and passive with respect to human consciousness. No argument will be made that Wesley thinks of himself as inheriting his own views directly from such libertarians. However, it should be noted that these are libertarians that Wesley in fact read.

The typology of active and passive is very important for the eighteenth century libertarian and Anglican Samuel Clarke. Clarke is a leading libertarian during the first part of the eighteenth century. This is a person that Wesley has read. For Clarke, “liberty” and “action” are identical. Also, the idea of choice has close resemblance (if not equivalency) to these two. For instance, Clarke says, “Man is indued with Liberty and Choice, which alone is the Power of Acting.” He also says, “Whereas the whole essence of liberty, consists in the power of acting. Action and liberty are identical ideas.” The italics in this statement are from Clarke, and he makes this point on many occasions.

Therefore, for Clarke liberty is defined as action, and so, it must be something that is different from the passive dimension of the soul. For Clarke, as for other libertarians, motives are examples of what is commonly thought to be passive. This is evident in the following statement:

There is no similitude between a balance being moved by weights or impulse, and a mind moving itself, or acting upon the view of certain motives. The difference is, that the one is entirely passive; which is being subject to absolute necessity: the other not only is acted upon, but acts also; which is the essence of liberty… The motive, or thing considered as in view, is something extrinsic to the mind: the impression made upon the mind by that motive, is the perceptive quality, in which the mind is passive: the doing of any thing, upon and after, or in consequence of, that perception; this is the power of self-motion or action: which in all animate

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20 Through a correspondence with Randy Maddox, it was confirmed that Wesley records in his Oxford diaries that he read *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes* in September of 1725. He recommends it to clergy in his ‘Address to Clergy,’ *Works* (Jackson), 10:492. Wesley mentions his reading of the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence in his journal on May 22, 1775. See Wesley, ‘Journal,’ *Works* (BE), 22:451.

21 Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, 47.

22 Clarke, *Remarks upon a book, Entituled, A Philosophical Enquiry Concerning Human Liberty*, 15. The italics of this quote are Clarke’s.
agents, is spontaneity; and, in moral agents, is what we properly call liberty. The not carefully distinguishing these things, but confounding the motive with the principle of action, and denying the mind to have any principle of action besides the motive, (when indeed in receiving the impression of the motive, the mind is purely passive;) this, I say, is the ground of the whole error.  

This passage by Clarke is a helpful preparation for the task of this chapter to clarify what is meant by the active and passive dimensions of a person. We observe here an example of the kind of rhetoric that libertarians use in their presentation of the typology of active and passive as a defence against necessitarianism. For Clarke, the necessitarians’ approach of making the mind entirely passive is “the ground of the whole mistake.” Yet, what is more important for our purpose is Clarke’s emphasis that there is a division in consciousness between active and passive. For Clarke, the impressions of motives are consciously passive, and the consciousness of action is something different.

What then are these motives that are perceived in a passive way? Clarke does not go in great depth in comparing motives to affections and tempers. In fact, he rarely if ever uses the terms “affections” or “tempers.” However, he does make it clear that while passive motives do not cause action, these passive motives do influence action. It is precisely for this reason that contemporary scholar James Harris describes Clarke’s portrayal of the soul as a “middle view,” positioned between necessitarianism on the one side and the doctrine of the liberty of indifference on the other side.  

Libertarians after Clarke in the eighteenth century offer opinions as to what is meant by passive motives. For example, as published in the Arminian Magazine, Joseph Fisher says, “Our will appears to be in the power of the mind to determine upon action or non-action at pleasure, though love, hatred, fear, &c. are passions or affections of the mind, and the mind so far as influenced by them appears to be wholly passive.” Here we observe an explicit reference to the “affections” and the claim that affections influence the mind and appear “wholly passive.” Since they influence the mind, presumably the affections are a class of motives. Fisher makes the point explicitly that “an inclination or affection” does not determine by necessity the choice of the mind.

Other eighteenth century libertarians also describe motives as passive. John Jackson makes the following comment: “And tho’ the motives or reasons upon which the

23 Alexander, editor, The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence, 97.
24 Harris, Of Liberty and Necessity, 13.
mind acts are *out of our power*, and the judgment form’d upon them is *necessary*, yet the *act following* them is not a *necessary* consequence, but matter of *choice.* Some libertarians make judgments out to be passive. Jackson himself holds that the process of reasoning involves action but that many judgments are passive. Others claim that some judgments are active while other judgments are passive. Regardless, it seems that most libertarians of the eighteenth century British context agree that at least some motives are passive.

Many libertarians in the eighteenth century leave out a discussion of at least some of the following: affections, tempers, emotions, passions, desires, reasons, judgments, and motives. Many libertarians do not give an extensive account of how these terms overlap, relate, or whether they are all thought to be passive. One point remains true. Many libertarians distinguish between active and passive in some way, and in just about all cases in the eighteenth century, liberty is in some way related to the active dimension of a person. As we will show, Wesley’s view has a striking resemblance to Clarke’s model.

Our exploration of libertarian views of active and passive has prepared us for considering more illustrations of the active and passive dimension. Some of these illustrations come directly from the writings of libertarians in the eighteenth century. Others do not. The illustrations in the following sections will serve as the basis for clarifying what is meant by active and passive for this project. To this matter we now turn.

**Approach for Clarifying Active and Passive**

The method of this work for clarifying what is meant by active and passive is to draw some from the views of John Wesley’s predecessors and contemporaries and to consider also other illustrations.

The meaning of active offered by the following illustrations is compatible with John Wesley’s doctrine of freedom of choice. The purpose of this chapter is to clarify a meaning of action in order to prepare for a consideration of John Wesley’s thought in the

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27 Jackson, *A Defense of Human Liberty*, 100. The italics are Jackson’s.
30 It is hard to find a case where this is not observable.
chapters that follow. As we shall see, for Wesley, action and free choosing are inseparable.

In this discussion, we will define “active” and “passive” from the point of view of human consciousness. Other meanings of action are not considered here. God’s creation of the universe was an action, and this is an important example of action. However, for this project, God’s creation of the universe is obviously not what we mean by “human action” or the “active dimension of a person.” This is because such an action is not active with respect to human consciousness (a human person is not the performer of the action).

In order to clarify what this work means by the active and passive dimensions of a person, we will begin by considering some preliminary illustrations. We will then move to some illustrations that will serve more as the centre of focus. As mentioned, some of these illustrations are based on illustrations from libertarians that Wesley has read. In one case, we will revisit the illustration of a hunger, an illustration that was fairly popular in eighteenth century discussions relating to the human mind.

Preliminary Illustrations

In this section, we will consider some preliminary illustrations that will help clarify what is meant by active and passive. We will begin by considering illustrations that help clarify what is meant by the active dimension. Next, we will move to consider illustrations that will help clarify what is meant by the passive dimension.

Illustrations of the Active Dimension

The illustrations that we are about to consider appear to provide the following insights concerning action. Action includes: (a) a power of the human mind to select a final outcome and (b) a power to determine when this final outcome is completed. The illustrations that we consider will show that some actions are more complex than others. Many of the following illustrations come from eighteenth century libertarians. For this project, the idea of choice and the idea of action are interchangeable. In other words, there is never an action that is not also in some way a choice. We will now turn to some illustrations to clarify what is meant by action.

31 For cases when a person believes a final outcome is reachable according to a self-determined time but the attempt is unsuccessful, then part b here is simply: the power to determine when the attempt to achieve the final outcome carries on. Note the illustration of the stopped mouth below.
An example of a simple action is the power to present a simple image to one’s imagination. As Thomas Reid says, “Every man knows that he can turn his attention to this subject or to that, for a longer or a shorter time, and with more or less intenseness, as he pleases. It is a voluntary act and depends upon his will.”\(^{32}\) Consider the following situation, which I will call the “illustration of the purple elephant.” A person is free to bring a purple elephant to his mind for contemplation or instead imagine a yellow house or a black book. This type of action can be performed in almost any situation regardless of external circumstances. This illustration exemplifies both features of the aforementioned description of action: the person elects a final outcome (such as the visualization of a purple elephant) and the person determines when the final outcome occurs.

As should be evident to any reflective person, some actions require the availability of external conditions in one’s environment. This is why eighteenth century libertarian Isaac Watts argues that for many kinds of actions to occur, there must be both liberty of choice and liberty of the executive powers.\(^{33}\) Watts give an example of a man whose mouth is “stopped.”\(^{34}\) In this situation the man’s mouth is forced shut but the man does not know it. Such a man has the freedom to choose to speak and does so but when he is unable to produce audible words, he realizes that his mouth is stopped. From this illustration, it is clear that the action of opening the mouth never occurs. However, some action does occur. The choice to open one’s mouth (even though the attempt was unsuccessful) was itself an action. A choice to pursue an end that is believed to be in reach is itself an action. One has the power to determine when such a choice is made. However, given the restricted external environment, the identity of the action in this case was not what was expected.

Consider additional illustrations from eighteenth century British libertarian John Jackson: “Cannot I open or shut my Eyes; sit down, or walk; lie down, or rise; move any of my limbs, or not move them, merely because I will to do so?”\(^{35}\) Isaac Watts gives similar illustrations: “So I feel myself at liberty, and I chose to stand or walk, I am free, and I choose either to speak or keep silence, to point upward or downward.”\(^{36}\) Similarly, libertarian Jean Burlamaqui says “I find, for instance, that it depends entirely on myself to

\(^{32}\) Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*, p. 80.
\(^{35}\) Jackson, *A Vindication of Human Liberty*, 46.
stretch out or draw back my hand; to sit down or to walk; to direct my steps to the right or left, &c.”  

37 Here we observe examples of illustrations that allow for both features of action. In each case, one has the power to choose the final outcome to be completed and also to determine when the final outcome is complete.

Not all actions are as simple as these. Consider an illustration where a wealthy merchant decides to buy a horse for an impoverished family in her village.  

38 Here, a chain of events must take place for the final outcome to be achieved. The wealthy merchant must give her servant resources and instructions. The servant must then travel a certain number of miles to another village in order to find a horse to purchase. The horse must then be delivered to the impoverished family. Although the chosen action of giving a horse to the needy family is more complex than some of the previous illustrations that we have considered, the wealthy merchant still has enough handle on the situation to determine approximately when the deed will be complete. We may call this action a “complex” action.

Illustrations of the Passive Dimension

Besides offering illustrations to show what is meant by action, we will also consider illustrations to help clarify what is meant by the passive dimension. We will consider three groups of passive perceptions. These groups correspond to the format given in Diagram 2.1. First, there is what this project will call “inclination.”  

39 The meaning of inclination is illustrated by the aforementioned illustration of a man in the orchard. The inclination in this illustration is not the choice in regard to eating the fruit but it is only the feeling hunger. As we will explore in the next section, an inclination may also be a desire of love, such as what Abraham feels for his son Isaac in the Biblical account of Genesis 22. In this case, an inclination is not Abraham’s choice to sacrifice Isaac by ending his life, but rather it is the feeling of love that Abraham has for his son.

The second group of passive perceptions refers to feelings that sometimes spring from an inclination. Consider, for example, what will be called here the “illustration of the fisherman.”  

40 A fisherman on a remote island must catch fish or else he dies of hunger.

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38 There is no source for this illustration. A source is unnecessary here. This illustration is used in order to aid understanding. This is a common approach in any discussion that deals with philosophical writing.

39 This meaning of “inclination” is no more than what is clarified by the illustrations of hunger and love. Wesley also at times uses the word “inclination,” but these instances are rare.

40 There is no source for this illustration. A source is unnecessary here. This illustration is used in order to aid understanding. This is a common approach in any discussion that deals with philosophical writing.
Fish are the only safe food source. His inclination is a feeling of hunger, which leads to an inclination to want to try to catch a fish. Yet other feelings emerge based on the fisherman orientation to the target of his inclination, which is his goal of eating fish. Such other feelings emerge in this way. If he catches a fish, he has a feeling of joy. If he fails to catch a fish, then he has a feeling of disappointment. If another fisherman comes along and has more success at fishing, he may have a feeling of jealousy. If, out of spite, his companion intentionally damages his only fishing pole, then he has a feeling of anger. If one day, his older brother promises to give him all the fish he ever needs, then he is likely to have feelings of gratitude. In the various scenarios just considered, it should be evident that feelings of joy, disappointment, jealousy, anger, gratitude, etc. are all passive in nature. These feelings spring from the fisherman’s inclination to catch a fish. The second group of passive perceptions may refer to any other temper or feeling that springs in some way from an inclination.

The third group of passive perception simply refers to all remaining kinds of perceptions that are not active in nature. It is not possible to list all these here. They include but are not limited to: feelings of warmness, coldness, all the sensations that come through the five senses, and sensations that come through one’s spiritual sense, as felt by the heart or other aspects of the soul.

Illustrations of Focus

Now that we have considered some preliminary illustrations, we are ready to consider some focal illustrations that will clarify further what is meant by active and passive for this project. We will consider four illustrations for this purpose.

The first illustration is the illustration of what will be called “the hungry scientist.” Suppose there is a scientist who has learned how to train himself to predict exactly when he will be hungry. He does this by regulating his external environment, including how much food he eats and times for eating. In some sense then, the practice of making himself hungry is in fact an action. He has selected a final outcome (hunger) and determined exactly when this feeling of hunger will emerge.

41 This point foreshadows, to some degree, our later consideration of God the Father and His gift of salvation.
42 There is no source for this illustration. A source is unnecessary here. This illustration is used in order to aid understanding. This is a common approach in any discussion that deals with philosophical writing.
Yet, what must be emphasized is that while the practice of making himself hungry is an action at one level, the actual feeling of hunger itself is passive, when viewed in its bare sense. It should be evident from common sense that the feeling of hunger in its bare form is an inclination and is something different in its conscious nature from action. In this particular illustration, the emergence of hunger may be caused by action, and it may cease by action (the scientist can end his hunger at any time by simply eating). But during the time that it is allowed to remain, this feeling of hunger imposes itself on human consciousness in a way different from the consciousness of human action. Again, the feeling of hunger is passive with respect to consciousness in a bare sense. Yet, it is important to observe that this illustration shows a reflexive behaviour. In a reflexive behaviour—such as if one were to burn oneself with a hot object—, action cannot occur alone. There must be both action and passiveness involved. As it is reflexive, the process of making oneself hungry in this case involves both active and passive elements.

Consider a second illustration, one that does not involve full reflexivity such as in the previous example. This will be called the illustration of Abraham. Consider the story of Abraham and Isaac from Genesis, chapter 22. Abraham believes that God is calling Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Isaac is Abraham’s beloved son and the heir of God’s promise. Abraham has a strong affection for his son. This affection is a strong love. It should be self-evident that Abraham’s feeling of love involves an inclination that is passive. Nevertheless, Abraham maintains a power to act against his passive inclination of love for his son. Abraham’s choice to end Isaac’s life is active with respect to Abraham. According to the story, Abraham would have ended Isaac’s life, if it were not for the angel who stopped him.

Although Abraham’s feeling of love seems to be passive in a bare sense, there is a context in which it may be viewed as “not altogether” passive. The phrase “not altogether” is not to deny that feelings of hunger or love are fully passive in a bare sense. Rather, the phrase “not altogether” here is simply to account for a degree of reflexivity that may apply when viewing the situation in a larger context. It seems that when such feelings are viewed in a context involving reflexive behaviour—and only in this context—then at times they may be described as “not altogether” passive or even perhaps active in some cases. The example of the hungry scientist is a case of fully reflexive conduct. In this case, creating feelings of hunger may be called active in accordance to the level that there is fully reflexive behaviour. The case of Abraham is different. Abraham cannot rid himself of his strong feelings for his son, but he can to some degree direct his attention
away from these feelings by his own power. To some degree (but not to a full-degree), he has the freedom to block out his feelings of love for his son in order to prepare to sacrifice him. He can do this by choosing to try to think about something else. In this way, one may describe Abraham’s feelings of love for his son as “not altogether” passive.

It seems that the idea of reflexivity and how it relates to feelings that are passive in a bare sense may help illuminate one of John Wesley’s comments. In his essay *Thoughts Upon Necessity*, Wesley says that a person is “not altogether” passive in receiving impressions. Given the nature of active and passive and how such dimensions are verifiable to each and every person’s everyday experience, it is reasonable to suggest that Wesley would not deny that some impressions are passive in a bare sense. However, from a larger context, these same impressions are “not altogether” passive. This is due to partial reflexivity, as similarly observed in the illustration of Abraham. In other words, an impression such as Abraham’s love for his son, may be passive in a bare sense while also simultaneously “not altogether” passive when viewed from a larger context. From this larger context, for example, one may decrease the impression through reflexive conduct by attempting to direct one’s attention away from it. The same appears true for Wesley’s understanding of certain impressions.

Consider a third illustration. We will call this the illustration of the flaming dart. A man meets with his pastor and shares that he has never had feelings of love for his neighbour. But the man says he believes such feelings (and the corresponding inclination) are possible, and he hopes to one day have them. The pastor replies that if you maintain a constant resolution for this love, God will definitely give you at a future unknown time the love that you seek. The pastor informs the man that the future time of experiencing this love is unpredictable but that he should expect it as possibly coming now because God can do it now if God chooses. After meeting with the pastor, and not

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44 Compare this idea of resolution with the resolution to serve God that Wesley encourages all people to have (Wesley, ‘On Family Religion,’ *Works* (BE), 3:334).
45 Compare this point with these comments from Wesley: “God can give the end without any means at all; but you have no reason to think he will. Therefore constantly and carefully use all these means which he has appointed to be the ordinary channels of his grace. Use every means which either reason or Scripture recommends as conducive (through the free love of God in Christ) either to the obtaining or increasing any of the gifts of God” (Wesley, ‘The Nature of Enthusiasm,’ *Works* (BE), 2:59-60). At another time, Wesley says that one should expect Christian perfection by faith and therefore, it cannot hurt to expect it now (Wesley, ‘The Scripture Way of Salvation,’ *Works* (BE), 2:169). Presumably, the same principle also applies for seeking the first moments of being born of God. This point does not undermine the importance of waiting for God’s gifts by performing fruitful actions such as the means of grace, if there is time and opportunity. If such a constant resolution of action is not performed, then God’s gifts will likely not come. He says in reference to such fruitful action: “Insomuch that if we willingly neglect either we cannot
experiencing God’s love now as he initially hoped, the man decides to continue to maintain the resolution. He shows the fruits of this resolution by performing deeds of service for his neighbour whenever he has the opportunity. It should be clear that the resolution is active with respect to the man because it is made (and maintained) at moments *whenever* the man determines. The man has the power to end the resolution at any moment of choice. Clearly the deeds that follow the resolution are also active. Because the man maintains his resolution for love for his neighbour, God appears at an unpredictable time and pricks the man with a flaming dart of love. Upon impact, the effects of the dart are immediately perceived by the man. The impact of the dart changes the man’s heart and gives him feelings of true love for his neighbour, including feelings of joy that he has never before experienced! The impact of the dart and its effects are clearly passive in a bare sense with respect to the man. After the encounter, God warns the man that if he chooses to mistreat his neighbours, the man’s feelings of love will soon disappear.

While the impact of the dart is clearly passive in a bare sense with respect to the man, there are a number of contexts from this illustration in which the effects of the dart may be described as “not altogether” passive. This is because, again, reflexivity can play a role in the situation. There are at least two courses of action that the man can take in order to alter the effects of the dart. First, the man may choose ahead of time to end permanently his resolution to serve his neighbour. If this is done, the flaming dart of love will never come, and the feelings of love and joy will never be felt. Alternatively, the man can choose to keep the resolution until the dart of flaming love arrives but choose to discontinue the resolution after the impact of the dart. In this case, for example, when the man continually mistreats his neighbour, the man therefore loses the feelings of love for his neighbour that had been first given by the impact of the dart. In summary, as the impact of the dart is fully passive from a bare context, it is “not altogether” passive when viewed from a larger context involving a degree of reflexivity. The illustration of the flaming dart is different from an illustration of cupid (or of a dart) that one could use to describe absolute predestination. In such an illustration of cupid, no degree of reflexivity is possible.

reasonably expect to be justified at all?" (Wesley, ‘Scripture Way of Salvation, ’ *Works* (BE), 2:162) and “Yea, are not these so necessary that if a man willingly neglect them he cannot reasonably expect that he shall ever be sanctified in the full sense, that is, ‘perfected in love’?" (Wesley, ‘Scripture Way of Salvation, ’ *Works* (BE), 2:164).
Consider a fourth illustration. This illustration will be called the illustration of the fit woman. The fit woman is not fit at first. She begins a practice of exercising while out of shape and with only a small interest in exercising. However, she finds that the more she exercises, day by day and week by week, her inclination for exercising increases and she feels an increased level of pleasure in exercising. This inclination strengthens and builds gradually over time. After a long period of consistent and focused work, exercise becomes a kind of good addiction. Generating an inclination to exercise is something that is largely reflexive. This is because any person can count on the fact that each instance of exercise nurtures the inclination to a small degree. The magnitude of this perceived inclination increases gradually over time. This inclination—in virtue of being an inclination—is in a bare sense passive. However, when viewed in light of reflexive action, the method of building this inclination may be thought of as largely active.

Two Kinds of Spiritual Growth in John Wesley’s View of Moral Agency

John Wesley’s understanding of spiritual growth has one important difference from all the illustrations considered in the last section. For John Wesley’s understanding of spiritual growth, there is no such thing as natural human reflexivity. For Wesley, the active component of reflexive behaviour concerning spiritual growth is only possible by grace. Also, such action is never the human acting alone but rather, it is a co-operating action between God and person. This graciously-empowered reflexivity is a kind of fruitful action, and this will be explored in more depth in chapter 5 of this project.

With this point in mind, we may observe that John Wesley’s view of moral agency involves two kinds of spiritual growth that in some degree resemble the illustrations that we have considered in this section. The first kind of spiritual growth pertains to a gradual process of growth. It is what commonly occurs as one performs fruitful actions such as practising the means of grace. Such practices are channels through which God’s grace

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46 Keep in mind that the practice of exercising for the purpose of fitness is as old as humankind. This illustration is not anachronistic.

47 Consider, for example, Wesley’s statement in which he says a person knows of the “need he had to be watered of God every moment; so he continued daily in all the ordinances of God, the stated channels of his grace to man: ‘in the Apostles’ doctrine,’ or teaching, receiving that food of the soul with all readiness of heart; in ‘the breaking of bread,’ which he found to be the communion of the body of Christ; and ‘in the prayers’ and praises offered up by the great congregation. And thus, he daily grew in grace, increasing in strength, in the knowledge and love of God.” Wesley, ‘Scriptural Christianity,’ Works (BE), 1:164. See also: Wesley, ‘Sermon on the Mount III,’ Works (BE), 1:520; Wesley, ‘The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,’ Works (BE), 2:19; Wesley, ‘The Law Established Through Faith, II,’ Works, (BE), 2:43; Wesley, ‘The Nature of Enthusiasm,’ Works (BE), 2:60; and Wesley, ‘Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations,’ Works (BE), 2:235.
flows. This process of gradual growth is comparable to the illustration of the fit woman, as in both cases there is both reflexive behaviour and a gradual nurturing of one’s inclination. Important differences should also be noted. For the case of Wesley, the inclination of the heart that develops through the means of grace is more outward directed than in the case of the fit woman. Its object is God and neighbour.

The second kind of spiritual growth evident in John Wesley’s thought may also involve the use of fruitful action and the means of grace. This second type of spiritual growth is comparable to the illustration of the flaming dart. On multiple occasions, including one in 1788, Wesley does in fact describe God’s giving of love as like the impact of a flaming dart. This second kind of spiritual growth includes what happens at the beginning of the new birth and Christian perfection. It is evident that the effects of what occurs at the beginning of the new birth and perfection are not active in nature because, for one, they do not occur according to the time at which a person determines. Their timing is unpredictable. In this way, the second type of spiritual growth is not fully reflexive and is to be distinguished from the first type of spiritual growth, which is fully reflexive. Furthermore, there is a bare context in which the beginning of the new birth and perfection may be viewed as fully passive. This resembles how at one level, in the illustration of the flaming dart, the impact of the dart and the effects of its impact are fully passive in a bare sense.

However, from a larger context, similar to the illustration of the flaming dart, a degree of reflexivity does apply even in regard to the onset of the new birth and perfection. Maintaining a constant resolution to serve God by performing fruitful actions such as the means of grace positions one to receive, in an instantaneous manner and at an

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48 Obviously, they are not identical. But they are in a sense comparable.
49 In addition to the evidence given in this paragraph, see the footnotes pertaining to the illustration of the flaming dart.
50 For example, Wesley says “He darted in to all (I believe, hardly one excepted) the melting flame of love, so that their heads were as water and their eyes as fountains of tears” (Wesley, ‘Journal,’ Works (BE), 20:21; see also footnote 94). On several other occasions in his journal, he quotes a poem from the Hymns and Poems of John and Charles Wesley in describing what he is observing directly in his ministry: “Dart into all the melting flame Of love, and make the mountains flow” (Wesley, ‘Journal,’ Works (BE), 21:25 and footnote 94; and Wesley, ‘Journal,’ Works (BE), 24:87).
51 This is considered “growth” because the condition of the heart improves at each of these events. It seems that an instantaneous action does not preclude the possibility of growth in an instant.
52 Note that Wesley describes the moment of conversion as seeming irresistible. See, for example, Wesley, ‘Journal,’ Works (BE), 19:332; Wesley, ‘Thoughts Upon God’s Sovereignty,’ Works (BE), 13:550. Wesley rejects the Calvinist notion of irresistible grace as having by necessity permanently-lasting effects. Rather, he offers that irresistibility is only for one moment. Resistance is possible before and after these moments. See also Wesley, ‘The General Spread of the Gospel,’ Works (BE), 2:489-490. The exception of which Wesley speaks here is “for the time” (longer than a moment). That God works irresistibly at the moment of giving the faith of a child of God seems to be more typical rather than the exception.
unknown future time, future blessings such as the new birth and perfection. Without such fruitful actions, these blessings are less likely to occur. From this context, the receiving of gifts such as the new birth and perfection may be viewed as “not altogether” passive. These points will be explored in more depth in chapters 6 and 7.

When exploring John Wesley’s two types of spiritual growth in the largest context, the theme of gift in John Wesley’s view of moral agency becomes increasingly evident. Because of the meritorious work of Christ in His life, death, and resurrection, free grace is offered to all. As we will explore more in chapter 5, the fruitful actions mentioned above (active resolution, etc.) are only possible by God’s grace, and they are expressions of God’s grace. Also, they are only possible in response to the prior work of God alone in the soul. It is because of the work of the Spirit in the active and passive dimensions of a person that one is able to pursue the greatest end of Christian living and grow spiritually, according to either of the two types of growth. This pursuit itself is an expression of God’s gift. These matters will be explored in more depth in the chapters that follow.

What is important to highlight from these illustrations is that John Wesley’s portrayal of spiritual growth involves some nuance. Consistent with this point, as Albert Outler and Kenneth Collins rightly show, John Wesley’s theology is “conjunctive.” In this case, we observe the conjunction of two types of spiritual growth in John Wesley’s view of moral agency.

For Wesley, Liberty is Action

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to clarify what this project means by active and passive. The method for this task has been to provide a consideration of Wesley’s libertarian context and explore various illustrations. Illustrations considered include the following: the hungry person, the purple elephant, the stopped mouth, the managing of one’s eyes and limbs, the wealthy merchant, the fisherman, the hungry scientist, the story of Abraham and Isaac, the flaming dart, and the fit woman. In each of the illustrations, we observed the following features of action: it involves (a) the selecting of a final outcome and (b) the determination of when the outcome is complete. We distinguished the consciousness of action from the consciousness of passive inclinations.

54 The conjunctive nature of Wesley’s theology is explored in Kenneth Collins’ The Theology of John Wesley, Holy Love and the Shape of Grace. See, for example, p. 4. See also Albert Outler, John Wesley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), viii.
such as a feeling of hunger or a feeling of love. We also explored the nature of reflexive behaviour in certain cases. It is the hope of this author that the illustrations explored here provide to any ordinary person a clear meaning of active and passive, as these concepts will be used in this project.

John Wesley defines “liberty” as the power of choice, which appears quite similar if not equivalent to the active power as clarified using the above illustrations. This meaning of liberty is different from other meanings of liberty that Wesley uses in other contexts. Consider one of Wesley’s discussions concerning liberty:

I am conscious to myself of one more property, commonly called liberty. This is very frequently confounded with the will but is of a very different nature. Neither is it a property of the will but a distinct property of the soul, capable of being exerted with regard to all the faculties of the soul, as well as all the motions of the body. It is a power of self-determination which, although it does not extend to all our thoughts and imaginations, yet extends to our words and actions in general, and not with many exceptions. I am full as certain of this, that I am free with respect to these, to speak or not to speak, to act or not to act, to do this or the contrary, as I am of my own existence. I have not only what is termed a ‘liberty of contradiction’, a power to do or not to do, but what is termed a ‘liberty

55 As will be argued more extensively in chapter 2, Wesley’s understanding of this type of liberty is that it is the same as human action, understood as the power of choosing (Wesley, ‘The General Deliverance,’ Works (BE), 2:439 and 2:440; Wesley, ‘The End of Christ’s Coming,’ Works (BE), 2:475; Wesley, ‘On the Fall of Man,’ Works (BE), 2:401; Wesley, ‘The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law,’ Works (BE), 2:6; Wesley, ‘God’s Approbation of His Works,’ Works (BE), 2:399; Wesley, ‘The General Spread of the Gospel,’ Works (BE), 2:489. Such action may refer to comparatively neutral human action or action explicitly related to moral matters. It may pertain to action relating to the choice of civil or religious matters (See Wesley, ‘Some Observations on Liberty,’ Works (Jackson), 11:91. It should be noted here that Wesley does not like Richard Price’s bringing moral liberty to bear on matters of civil liberty, even though they both involve the power choosing. Wesley is not claiming that the two are unrelated but that their comparison is unhelpful for Price’s specific purpose). See also Wesley’s discussion of free agency and shutting or opening one’s eyes here: Wesley, ‘The Signs of the Times,’ Works (BE), 2:531.

56 It must be stressed that Wesley at times intentionally uses other meanings of liberty different from the idea of liberty defined as equivalent to action and choice. One such alternative meaning is when Wesley speaks of the liberty from Romans 8:21, often described as “glorious liberty.” Whereas the first type of liberty is applicable to all people at all stages, this second type of liberty is possessed only by children of God. This second type of liberty means freedom from the bondage of sin.

57 Wesley’s distinction between will and liberty will be considered in more depth in the next chapter.

58 This term “self-determination” is quite popular among libertarians. It fits the core doctrine of libertarians that causes of human action do not fully originate outside the self. Necessitarians tend not to use this term. This is because for necessitarians, the first cause of determination is not inside the self but is always outside the self.


60 Compare this with the following comments from an Anglican libertarian of the Seventeenth Century named John Bramhall in his argument against Thomas Hobbes: “But all this abuse groweth from the misunderstanding of liberty. I take it for a power to act or not to act, and he taketh it for an absence of outward impediments.” With respect to this subject of liberty, Wesley is closer to Bramhall than Locke. Both Locke and Hobbes share the view that liberty can mean the absence of outward impediments.

of contrariety’, a power to act one way or the contrary.\textsuperscript{61} To deny this would be to deny the constant experience\textsuperscript{62} of all human kind. Everyone feels that he has an inherent power to move this or that part of his body, to move it or not, and to move this way or the contrary, just as he pleases.\textsuperscript{63} I can as I choose (and so can everyone that is born of a woman), open or shut my eyes,\textsuperscript{64} speak or be silent,\textsuperscript{65} rise or sit down,\textsuperscript{66} stretch out my hand or draw it in,\textsuperscript{67} and use any of my limbs according to my pleasure,\textsuperscript{68} as well as my whole body. And although I have not an absolute power of my own mind, because of the corruption of my nature, yet through the grace of God assisting me I have a power to choose and do good as well as evil.\textsuperscript{69} I am free to choose whom I will serve, and if I choose the better part, to continue therein even unto death.\textsuperscript{70}

As discussed in the footnotes attached to this passage, it is apparent that much of this passage echoes the views of many libertarians before and during the time of Wesley. The illustrations in these comments involve both features of action: (a) determination of final outcomes and (b) the determination of \textit{when} the outcomes are complete. One can speak or not speak, act or not act, open and close one’s eyes, rise or sit down, stretch out one’s hand or draw it in, or use one’s limbs as one wishes. In an environment free of outward restraints, an agent has the power to determine \textit{when} each of these actions occurs. We also observe in this passage a reference to complex action, comparable to the illustration of the wealthy merchant from above. The power to “choose and do good” and to “choose whom I will serve” can involve elaborate schemes of events, such as feeding the needy, attending a society meeting, visiting orphans and those in jail, participating in

\textsuperscript{61} The concept of the “liberty of contradiction” and “liberty of contrariety” go at least as far back as the Scholastics. See, comments by Scotus in John Duns Scotus, \textit{Duns Scotus on the Will & Morality} (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 150. Boler argues that Scotus is a libertarian. See: Lagerlund and Yrjonsuuri, \textit{Emotions and Choice from Boethius to Descartes}, 129.

\textsuperscript{62} Again, drawing from experience is a common approach for philosophers in the eighteenth century. Such a method was especially valued by a libertarian named James Beattie. John Wesley read Beattie’s essay on liberty and wrote a positive review of Beattie’s larger book at a crucial time in Wesley’s own development concerning how to view liberty. This is after the start of the 1770s controversy with the Calvinist necessitarians and before the publishing of “Thoughts Upon Necessity” in 1774. Wesley, ‘Journal,’ \textit{Works} (BE), 22:321.

\textsuperscript{63} The libertarian Jackson speaks of a power to “move any of my limbs, or not move them.” Jackson, \textit{A Vindication of Human Liberty}, 46.

\textsuperscript{64} Both Jackson and Fisher speak of this power to open and shut one’s eyes. Jackson, \textit{A Vindication of Human Liberty}, 46; Fisher, “A Review of Dr. Priestley’s \textit{sic} Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity,” 12:87.

\textsuperscript{65} This is Wesley’s second reference to “speaking” in this paragraph. Please see the footnote for the first instance.

\textsuperscript{66} For a reference to rising or lying down, see Jackson, \textit{A Vindication of Human Liberty}, 46.

\textsuperscript{67} Compare this to Burlamaqui’s comment regarding Burlamaqui’s discussion of liberty: “I find, for instance, that it depends entirely on myself to stretch out or draw back my hand.” Burlamaqui, \textit{The Principles of Natural Law}, 21.

\textsuperscript{68} Compare to comments by Jackson concerning the movement of limbs: Jackson, \textit{A Vindication of Human Liberty}, 46.

\textsuperscript{69} These are the descriptions Wesley often gives concerning liberty. Liberty involves a power of choice and a power to choose between good and evil.

\textsuperscript{70} Wesley, ‘What is Man?’, \textit{Works} (BE), 4:23.
communion, attending a love feast and watch night service, studying the scriptures, etc. Yet, in regular circumstances free of restraints, all of these acts are performed more or less *when* the agent chooses to do them.

In the above quotation, Wesley makes an important distinction between “liberty” and “will.” He also makes this distinction about fourteen years earlier in his essay, “Thoughts Upon Necessity.” What does Wesley mean by this distinction? How have other libertarians made this distinction? Could this distinction between liberty and will reflect a division between the active and passive dimensions of a person? Answers to these questions will be considered in the next chapter.

**Responding to Secondary Literature: Harris v. Long**

In his book *John Wesley’s Moral Theology, The Quest for God and Goodness*, D. Stephen Long discusses Wesley’s view of liberty. Long attributes the liberty of indifference to Wesley. Long believes Wesley’s primary motive for accepting the liberty of indifference is protecting his thought from absolute predestination and necessity. Long concludes that the result is that Wesley’s theology is internally inconsistent. The charge is that there is an internal contradiction in Wesley’s thought because the doctrine of the liberty of indifference and Wesley’s commitment to aspects of the Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition are not compatible. In this section, we will consider whether Long’s charge of Wesley holding the liberty of indifference is fair. It will be shown, against Long, that Wesley’s view of liberty more closely resembles what James Harris calls a “middle way,” a position in *between* the liberty of indifference and determinism. For this reason, Long does not succeed in showing conflict in Wesley’s thought.

The first concern regarding Long’s argument is that he does not make adequately clear what he means by the liberty of indifference. From the medieval period to the time of Wesley, there are a variety of articulations of the liberty of indifference. How one defines the “liberty of indifference” has bearing on whether or not the doctrine of the liberty of indifference is in fact clearly contradicting other parts of Wesley’s thought.

Let us first consider several articulations of the liberty of difference that Wesley clearly rejects. First, Wesley’s view of liberty is not like Long’s representation of Locke’s liberty of indifference. Long says, “The emphasis on the liberty of indifference provides

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the basis of the modern notion of the freedom of the will, which John Locke developed and to which John Wesley appeals whenever he explains anthropology.”73 Later in the book, Long says, “Wesley… affirms Locke’s liberty of indifference.”74 There are several problems with these comments. First, Locke does not have a notion of the liberty of indifference in this way. For Locke, “indifferency” refers to that which may come only after the final judgment and after the exercise of the will.75 Locke’s liberty of indifference does not refer to choice, but it refers to a state in which there are no restraints or compulsions in circumstances that are exterior to a person. Second, Wesley’s view of liberty is different from Locke’s.76

There is a second view of the liberty of indifference that Wesley rejects. Wesley’s view of liberty is not like the story of Buridan’s ass.77 In this story, a donkey is placed midway between two bales of hay and has no reason to choose one or the other. While the donkey is unable to choose a bale of hay, a human being in the same situation can. This is because, according to the story, humans have an arbitrary power to choose, which is a liberty of indifference. While Wesley might allow such a liberty of indifference in neutral matters, this type of liberty is not compatible with Wesley’s view of liberty concerning the choice between virtue and vice. For Wesley, the power of liberty as choosing virtue is only possible in response to a previously perceived motivating influence from the heart provided by the Spirit.78 Such motivation from the heart does not necessitate choosing virtue. However, choosing virtue is not possible without it.

A third view of the liberty of indifference that Wesley rejects is the model of liberty provided by Anglican Archbishop William King. It is clear that Wesley as a young adult has read King’s comments on the liberty of indifference, as Wesley summarizes such parts of King’s Origin of Evil in a letter to his father in 1731.79 In a letter to Thomas Taylor in January of 1791, Wesley seems to imply that he thinks Thomas Reid’s discussion of moral liberty is “far better” than William King’s.80 For King, one chooses a...

73 Long, John Wesley’s Moral Theology, 41.
74 Long, John Wesley’s Moral Theology, 61.
75 Harris, Of Liberty and Necessity, 19 and 33. See the analogy in chapter 3 concerning a man named John who was led to prison. See also Peter Nidditch, editor, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 283-284.
76 The evidence for this point will be presented in chapter 3.
77 C.F. Long, John Wesley’s Moral Theology, 39.
78 See chapters 5-7.
80 Wesley, Letters, 8:254. Note that the editor references Wesley’s affirmation of Reid’s view of moral liberty, suggesting that this is that to which Wesley refers when Wesley says “a far better tract.”
thing not because it is expected to bring pleasure. Rather the chooser is pleased with the thing only because it is chosen.\(^{81}\) For Wesley this is not the case. For Wesley, one’s choice to serve God and neighbour is done after an awareness of one’s motivation, which derives in large part from feeling the tempers of the heart to love God and neighbour. The pleasure that comes from loving God and neighbour is not the consequence of the human choice in isolation but rather a fulfilment of the desires of the heart, forces of motivation that were perceived before choosing.\(^{82}\) King argues that one’s chief happiness is from one’s elections or choices, and the more one resists appetites, senses, and reasons, the better.\(^{83}\) Wesley differs on both these points. For Wesley happiness includes feeling the love of God in one’s heart in relationships; it is not confined to only choice. Secondly, for Wesley, what is stressed in a definition of virtue is not resisting inclinations but rather affirming them. Virtue is choosing to follow the motivation from the heart that is directed at loving God and neighbour.\(^{84}\) Such a heart-founded account of virtue is not found in King’s view of moral agency.\(^{85}\)

Wesley does speak of a freedom of “indifference” in his sermon “The Image of God,” published in 1730.\(^{86}\) However, one reason that we cannot take this portrayal of liberty as his standard view is because it is published in 1730, before the time in which Wesley himself says that his thought is consistent. Near his death, Wesley says: “To conclude, I defy any man living to prove that I have contradicted myself at all in any of the writings which I have published from the year 1738 to the year 1788.”\(^{87}\) In 1730, Wesley’s thought had not yet been influenced by his relationship with the Moravians and his experience at Aldersgate.

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\(^{82}\) See chapters 3-7.


\(^{84}\) For example, see Wesley, ‘An Israelite Indeed,’ *Works* (BE), 3:280; Wesley, “Justification by Faith,” *Works* (BE), 1:192; Wesley, ‘On Zeal,’ *Works* (BE), 3:320; Wesley, ‘Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, V,’ *Works* (BE), 1:568; Wesley, ‘Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, VI,’ *Works* (BE), 1:573; Wesley, ‘Heaviness through Manifold Temptations,’ *Works* (BE), 2:232. Wesley sometimes also uses the word “virtue” to refer to qualities that do not involve choice. See for example, Wesley, ‘Circumcision of the Heart,’ *Works* (BE), 1:403, in which he uses “virtue” to refer to fruits such as faith and humility.

\(^{85}\) It is clear that for Wesley, virtue often requires choice. This is evident from his frequent statements that without choice (liberty), there would be no virtue and vice. Yet, for Wesley, virtue properly understood presupposes the possession of Christian faith with the love of God shed abroad in the heart. In these cases, virtue requires both right tempers and right choice.


\(^{87}\) Wesley, *Letters*, 8:179.
James Harris, a prominent scholar regarding eighteenth century British philosophy, remarks that a number of defenders of free will shift away from holding the liberty of indifference. One such example is the case of Samuel Clarke. Harris says:

King is a defender of the liberty of indifference: he believes that freedom is most purely realized in the exercise of a capacity to choose to act in a certain way regardless of the recommendations of the understanding. Clarke, like Locke, believes that to define freedom in this way is a serious mistake; and, following Bramhall, he seeks to negotiate a middle way between the indifference of the will, on the one hand, and the literal determination of the will by motives, on the other. This notion of ‘moral necessity’, as distinct from ‘literal’ or ‘physical necessity’ is at the heart of Clarke’s theory of freedom. It allows him to connect free choice with rationality (and goodness) without conceding that, at any one time, the influence of the understanding makes only one choice possible.88

Samuel Clarke holds a view of moral agency that, following Harris, I will describe here as “a middle way.” According to Harris, this view is not the “liberty of indifference,” as we see in the case of King. And yet it is not the same as a necessitarian view, in which an agent’s choice must be determined by the strongest motive. In other words, according to the view of Clarke, one has the power to choose against what is perceived as the strongest motive and/or known greater good.89 At the same time, motives are not ignored as in the case of the liberty of indifference. The strongest motive influences a person and is usually followed. This is what is meant by “moral necessity.”90

An abundance of evidence suggests that Wesley has read Clarke’s comments on these matters.91 As mentioned by Sean Greenberg, Clarke is “one of the chief advocates of libertarian freedom.”92 But regardless of whether or not Wesley consciously inherits his view directly from Clarke, one conclusion remains clear: Wesley holds this “middle way” of moral liberty. Wesley’s view of liberty is not the liberty of indifference as in the case of King or Buridan’s ass, and it is not an absolute necessitarian scheme such as say

88 Harris, Of Liberty and Necessity, 13.
89 See, for example, Alexander, editor, The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence, 45. Harris says that for Clarke, “We retain the capacity to ignore what the understanding tells us, and to choose the worse thing, while knowing the better.” Harris, Of Liberty and Necessity, 51.
90 See, for example, Clarke, A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, 73; Clarke, Remarks Upon a Book Entitled Enquiry Concerning Human Liberty, 16 and 23-24.
91 Through a correspondence with Randy Maddox, it was confirmed that Wesley records in his Oxford diaries that he read A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes in September of 1725. He recommends it to clergy in his Address to the Clergy (Wesley, ‘Address to the Clergy,’ Works (Jackson), 10:492). Wesley mentions his reading of the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence in his journal on May 22, 1775. See Wesley, ‘Journal,’ Works (BE), 22:451.
Hobbes. For Wesley, motives in the form of tempers and affections play an important and indispensably helpful role for moral agency.\textsuperscript{93} Virtuous action is when the choice of an agent follows the suggestion of motivational input from the holy tempers and affections of the heart.

If what Long means by the “liberty of indifference” is the view of King or the above illustration concerning Buridan’s ass, then Long’s charging Wesley for the liberty of indifference is unfair. However, if what Long means by the “liberty of indifference” is what is summarized here as the “middle way” of moral liberty, that which is between absolute necessitarianism and certain types of liberty of indifference, then Long’s interpretation is correct but a bit awkward since the middle way does not refer to typical notions of indifference. But Long does not make clear what he means.

The question is now whether Long is correct in claiming that Wesley’s view of liberty is in conflict with other aspects of Wesley’s thought that may resemble the Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition. The brief answer is that Long has not demonstrated such an inconsistency in Wesley’s thought in part because he has not tested an adequate interpretation of Wesley’s view of liberty. The “middle way,” unlike the liberty of indifference, requires that the tempers and affections have a central role in moral agency (as claimed by Aquinas, Aristotle, and others), without demonstrating necessitarianism. Wesley’s view of liberty and his view of the central role of the affections in moral action are held together in harmony. Aquinas’ intellectualism, something that Wesley rejects, is not required for this harmony.\textsuperscript{94} There still seems to be room in Wesley’s thought for the doctrine of participation, the connection between God and goodness, and much of what Long thinks is at stake. The conclusion that we offer from this discussion is that Wesley’s understanding of moral agency, specifically his understanding of liberty, exemplifies a “middle way,” more similar to Harris’ portrait of Clarke than to common notions of the liberty of indifference such as that of King.

\textsuperscript{93} See chapters 3-7.
\textsuperscript{94} For Aquinas, one cannot choose against a clearly known option for the greatest good and thus, Aquinas is the epitome of intellectualism (Lagerlund and Yrjonsuuri, \textit{Emotions and Choice: from Boethius to Descartes}, 14). For Wesley, unlike for Aquinas, it is possible to choose a clearly known evil instead of the clearly known highest good. This is indicated in his view that by conscience, one knows the difference between good and evil and has the liberty to choose either one. It is also implied in his view that a perfected person has the choice to backslide. Also, see Wesley, ‘Thoughts upon Necessity,’ \textit{Works} (BE), 13:544. In this way, Wesley’s view of moral agency is different from Aquinas. For many commentators, it seems that for Aquinas, evil is only possible through an error in judgment. In other words, when wrong is chosen it is because the chooser did not sincerely know ahead of time that it is wrong (Lagerlund and Yrjonsuuri, \textit{Emotions and Choice: from Boethius to Descartes}, 136).
In this chapter, we have attempted to clarify what this project means by active and passive. We have also introduced two types of spiritual growth in John Wesley’s view of moral agency. Next, we introduced John Wesley’s understanding of liberty, which represents the active dimension of a person. Last, we offered a critique of Long’s interpretation of Wesley’s view of liberty and argued that Wesley’s view of liberty more nearly resembles Harris’ “middle way.” In the next two chapters that follow, we will continue with the first task of the project, which is to clarify John Wesley’s understanding of the features of the soul.
Chapter 3: The Will and Liberty

As we explore Wesley’s view of moral agency and test the thesis of this project, we begin with the task of clarifying Wesley’s view of the features of the soul. Wesley’s features of the soul are in fact connected with his understanding of creation. Wesley says, “It was free grace that ‘formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into him a living soul’, and stamped on that soul the image of God.”

God created human beings in the image of God. Wesley’s view of the image of God will be explored more in chapter 6. Theodore Runyon speaks of how for Wesley, each person has a “natural image” of God.

Wesley clearly indicates that after the fall, God restores for all people (including impenitent sinners) the part of the natural image that corresponds to having a spiritual nature—a nature that is still endued with understanding, will, and liberty.

As shown at the end of the last chapter, Wesley says that the will is often confused with the concept of liberty. Interpreters such as Richard Steele, Randy Maddox, and Kenneth Collins have observed that for Wesley, there is a difference between liberty and will. However, in secondary literature, there has not been adequate clarity as to what these terms mean and how they differ. For this reason, much of our attention in this chapter will focus on how for Wesley the will compares to (or differs from) this power of liberty.

Other Views of the Will

Before clarifying Wesley’s view of liberty and will, we will consider briefly several models of the will from figures before and during his time. Such models are chosen based on the degree to which it is judged that their consideration will help clarify Wesley’s view of the will.

We will consider first the view of Augustine. For Augustine, one meaning of the will corresponds to what Wesley attributes to the heart. For example, for Augustine, the will (voluntas) refers to “appetite, fear, joy, and grief.” For Augustine—at least at one

1 Wesley, ‘Salvation by Faith,’ Works (BE), 1:117.
stage of his life—, another meaning of will refers to the power of choice, which is, as we observed in the last chapter, something different from passive feelings. This is evident in his discussion of the “free choice of the will” (liberum arbitrium voluntatis). As we will consider more below, Wesley’s view of the will “properly speaking” does not resemble Augustine’s view of the will as the power of choice, but it does resemble Augustine’s meaning of the will that refers to fear, joy, etc.

The theology of John Duns Scotus, a scholastic theologian of the thirteenth century, is not the same as Wesley’s theology, but there is a degree of similarity in how they use the word “will” (voluntas for Scotus) to name passive elements of the soul. Henrik Lagerlund and Mikko Yrjonsuuri offer the following claim: “The first to develop a more systematic way the idea that the will itself has passions in the emotional sense of the term was perhaps John Duns Scotus.”

Scotus distinguishes between active and passive and claims that the will “is a twofold tendency in the one power, one active, and the other passive.” This point is in some degree echoed by Samuel Clarke in the eighteenth century when he states: “As to Willing, this word (as I before observed) has a great ambiguity in it, and signifies two distinct things… The one is entirely passive, belonging to the understanding only and has nothing to do with the question about liberty; the other is truly active.”

Presumably, for Scotus, the tendency of the will that pertains to the emotions is the “passive” tendency of the will. As will be discussed below, this passive tendency resembles Wesley’s view of the will “properly speaking.”

6 Perceptions such as appetite, fear, joy, and grief are not active as defined in this project because one often cannot determine when they occur. For cases in which one may determine the time of these feelings—such as in the illustration of the hungry scientist from chapter 2—, it is because of reflexivity, which is the mutual occurrence of the active and passive powers of mind. Even in this case, it seems that such feelings in their bare sense are only passive.

7 For more information on Augustine’s view of the “will,” see the discussion given by the renowned Richard Sorabji. Sorabji makes reference to Augustine’s use of the “free choice of the will” on p. 321 of Emotion and Peace of Mind.

8 Also, of course, Wesley would disagree with a Calvinist reading of Augustine that would favour necessity over libertarianism.

9 Wesley does seem to have some awareness of Scotus’ thought as evident from comments in his address to clergy. Wesley, ‘Address to the Clergy,’ Works (Jackson), 10:492.

10 Lagerlund and Yrjonsuuri, Emotions and Choice: from Boethius to Descartes, 18.


12 Clarke, Remarks upon a Book, Entituled, A Philosophical Enquiry Concerning Human Liberty, 21-22. On multiple occasions, Clarke clearly claims the following equation: active component of will = liberty = human active power: Clarke, Remarks upon a Book, Entituled, A Philosophical Enquiry Concerning Human Liberty, 7-9, 15, 21-22

“active” tendency of the will is that which is “free.” Although Scotus’ active tendency of the will does not resemble Wesley’s view of the will “properly speaking,” it does appear to share a similarity with Wesley’s (and Clarke’s) view of liberty. One reason for this is because for both Scotus and Wesley, a person may use his or her active power to choose against the clearly known greatest good. Consistent with this point, most commentators interpret Scotus’ thought to be libertarian. While Wesley’s thought differs from that of Scotus, and while Wesley does not openly claim to adopt Scotus’ view on any of these points, such resemblances are apparent.

For the purpose of illuminating Wesley’s view of the will, it is also helpful to distinguish Wesley’s view from the view of an eighteenth century writer from Geneva named Jean Burlamaqui. Like Wesley, Burlamaqui describes the soul as having the features of “understanding, will, and liberty.” Also like Wesley, Burlamaqui holds that there is a meaning of will that refers to “passions” and “inclinations.” As mentioned in chapter 2, Wesley differs from Burlamaqui in that the former believes that a human has a power of liberty to choose against the clearly known greatest good, whereas the latter does not. In this way, Burlamaqui, unlike Wesley, must disjoin liberty from action in some cases.

14 Frank, ed., Duns Scotus on the Will & Morality, 155.
15 Frank, ed., Duns Scotus on the Will & Morality, 158. Scotus says the will of a pilgrim “does not of necessity will happiness either in general or in particular.” It is assumed here that happiness is the greatest good. Concerning the point that Wesley believes that a person has the power to choose against the strongest motive and/or clearly-known greatest good, see Wesley’s essay “Thoughts upon Necessity,” especially p. 544 of Works (BE). Wesley’s comments on conscience reflect his belief that all people have the power to a degree to know accurately what is good and bad (Wesley, ‘On Conscience,’ Works (BE), 3:481), and his comments on liberty reflect his view that one is always free to choose the clearly-known actual bad instead of the clearly-known actual good (see just about any one of Wesley’s discussions of liberty after 1774).
16 Lagerlund and Yrjonsuuri, Emotions and Choice: from Boethius to Descartes, 131.
17 Wesley read Burlamaqui’s The Principles of Natural Law. However, it appears that the only feedback that Wesley offers for this book is negative. See: Wesley, ‘The Unity of the Divine Being,’ Works (BE), 4:68.
18 Burlamaqui, Principles of Natural Law, 5. Wesley quotes this verbatim. See, for example, Wesley, ‘Thoughts Upon God’s Sovereignty,’ Works (BE), 13:548.
20 Burlamaqui, The Principles of Natural Law, section vi-viii, especially 19 and 22. Burlamaqui’s view of liberty is somewhat similar to Aquinas’ view in that it involves: (a) a freedom to choose between particulars and (b) a freedom to choose between cases where the benefits of options are not clearly evident. See section vi-viii, especially p. 20 and 22. For an analysis of Aquinas’ view, see Lagerlund and Yrjonsuuri, Emotions and Choice: from Boethius to Descartes, 14.
21 Since Burlamaqui holds that a person does not have liberty when he or she is presented with two options in which one is clearly a greater good, Burlamaqui must disjoin liberty from the active power in some cases. This is because, in such cases, one must choose (= act) by necessity (not liberty) the option that is clearly perceived to be the greater good. In this way, Burlamaqui’s view of liberty is different from Wesley’s. Yet, as will be shown in the next paragraph, for Burlamaqui, every instance of action is an occurrence of willing, even if it is not an act of liberty in some cases.
In contexts where they are giving explanations for their views of the features of the soul (understanding, will and liberty), Wesley and Burlamaqui differ in how they define the will. This is the context in which Wesley often italicizes the word “will” and defines it as the affections and passions.\textsuperscript{22} This is the will “properly speaking.” In this context, for Burlamaqui, the will means more than passive affections: it also includes “an active principle” and is a power whereby a person is “capable to act or not to act.”\textsuperscript{23} In all contexts where he discusses “understanding, will, and liberty,” Wesley, unlike Burlamaqui, never describes the will as including the active power.\textsuperscript{24} Rather, in these contexts,\textsuperscript{25} Wesley attributes the active power only to the concept of liberty. There is a variety of other discussions of the will in the period preceding Wesley as shown in Herbert McGonigle’s discussion of Arminius and the Dutch Remonstrants.\textsuperscript{26}

For a significant number of thinkers before and during Wesley’s time—which of course include but is not limited to Augustine, Scotus, and Burlamaqui—the word “will” (\textit{voluntas}) refers to a twofold tendency of active and passive, in which the passive tendency corresponds in some way to ingredients of Wesley’s view of the heart and the active tendency corresponds to action and the power of choice (Wesley’s view of liberty). This convention of using the word “will” becomes somewhat less prevalent in the modern era. Consider the following quotation from the eighteenth century by Thomas Reid:

\begin{quote}
In the general division of our faculties into understanding and will, our passions, appetites and affections are comprehended under the will; and so it is made to signify, not only our determination to act or not to act, but every motive and incitement to action.

It is this, probably, that has led some Philosophers to represent desire, aversion, hope, fear, joy, sorrow, all our appetites, passions and affections, as different modifications of the will, which I think, tends to confound things which are very different in their nature.

The advice given to a man, and his determinations consequent to that advice, are things so different in their nature, that it would be improper to call
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{24} This is different from what Wesley does before 1774, in which he sometimes describes a person as having “understanding, will, and affections” instead of “understanding, will, and liberty.” See: Wesley, ‘The Doctrine of Original Sin,’ \textit{Works} (BE), 12:281; Wesley, \textit{ENNT}, Mark 12:30; and Wesley, ‘The Love of God,’ \textit{Works} (BE), 4:331. Before using the model of “understanding, will, and affections,” Wesley once referenced the typology of understanding, will, and freedom in a sermon from 1730.
\textsuperscript{25} Below, it will be shown that there is a separate context in which Wesley uses a different meaning of will for the active power.
\textsuperscript{26} See, for example, Herbert McGonigle, \textit{Sufficient Saving Grace}, 17 and 21.
them modifications of one and the same thing. In like manner, the motives to action, and the determination to act or not to act, are things that have no common nature, and therefore ought not to be confounded under one name, or represented as different modifications of the same thing.

For this reason, in speaking of the will in this Essay, I do not comprehend under that term any of the incitements or motives which may have an influence upon our determinations, but solely the determination itself, and the power to determine.27

Thus, for Reid, the will refers to the active power alone.28 The will does not refer to the passive dimension of the soul, which includes affections, passions, appetites, etc. That is, for Reid, the will does not refer to any of what Wesley sees as ingredients of the heart. Thus, Wesley and Reid differ in that they do not practice the same method for naming the will.29 And yet, as Wesley is a strong opponent to absolute predestination, Wesley finds Reid’s discussion of moral liberty to be a helpful support of this larger cause.30

The Will “Properly Speaking”

From the discussion so far, it should be clear that with regard to describing the will, John Wesley does not entirely follow Reid or any of the other mentioned thinkers. Before giving a more detailed account of Wesley’s view of the will, it is helpful to observe that in the English language both in the eighteenth century and today, the word “will” has many different meanings. The Oxford English Dictionary gives nine different meanings of “will,” with each of many of these meanings having multiple variations.31

27 Reid, Essays on the Active Powers of Man, 60.
28 See also: Reid, Essays on the Active Powers of Man, 37-38.
29 As mentioned by Maddox, Wesley and Reid also differ on another important matter of moral agency, namely regarding how to define virtue and the importance of the affections in the religious life. Reid’s moral agency is not as holistic as Wesley’s. See the last section of Maddox’s essay in the book “Heart Religion” in the Methodist Tradition and Related Movements, edited by Richard Steele. Reid says, “While a man does what he really thinks wisest and best to be done, the more his appetites, his affections and passions draw him the contrary way, the more he approves of his own conduct, and the more he is entitled to the approbation of every rational being (Essay on the Active Powers of Man, 86).” This point stands in direct contrast to Wesley’s view of virtue, which presupposes correct choice must flow from the right affections and passions rather than oppose them. See, for example: Wesley, ‘Justification by Faith,’ Works (BE),1:192; Wesley, ‘On Zeal,’ Works (BE) 3:320; Wesley, ‘Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, V,’ Works (BE), 1:568; Wesley, ‘Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, VI,’ Works (BE), 1:573; Wesley, ‘Heaviness through Manifold Temptations,’ Works (BE), 2:232.
30 Wesley puts an extract of Reid’s discussion of liberty in volume 14 of the Arminian Magazine. Wesley’s use of this extract for the purpose of defending free will against absolute predestination is apparent. Wesley says as a preface to this extract, “I do not remember to have ever seen a more strong and beautiful treatise on moral liberty than the following: which I therefore earnestly recommend to the consideration of all those who desire ‘To vindicate the ways of God with man.’” Thomas Reid, “An Essay on the Liberty of Moral Agents,” The Arminian Magazine, 14, (1791): 3.
Thus, it should not be surprising that Wesley’s view of the will includes more than one meaning. For this project, we will focus on two of Wesley’s meanings of will. It will be shown that one of these meanings is passive and the other is active. After 1774, it appears that the will “properly speaking” refers only to the passive dimension. After 1774, Wesley still uses the active meaning of will, even though this meaning is not the will “properly speaking.” We will now consider briefly these two important meanings of will that Wesley uses.

The first meaning of will pertains to when Wesley is speaking of the “passions” or “affections,” ingredients of the heart. This is the will “properly speaking.” Consider the following comments from Wesley:

This inward principle, wherever it is lodged, is capable not only of thinking, but likewise of love, hatred, joy, sorrow, desire, fear, hope, etc., and a whole train of other inward emotions which are commonly called ‘passions’ or ‘affections.’ They are styled, by a general appellation, ‘the will.’

When using this meaning of will, Wesley either italicizes the word “will,” puts it in quotation marks, or is using it in a context where he is speaking of “understanding, will, and liberty” together. What must be emphasized here is that, unlike Burlamaqui, there is never an instance in any of these three cases where Wesley describes the will as referring to the active power or power of choice. On several occasions, falling under one of these three conditions, Wesley does in fact speak of this meaning of will as “exerting itself in various affections and passions.” However, it does not seem that the word “exerting” here exemplifies what this project means by action, as clarified in chapter 2. In centuries preceding Wesley, words such as “movements” and “exertions” were sometimes used to refer to feelings that are passive as understood in this project. These forces may be thought to be active with respect to exterior forces and passive with respect to human consciousness, as by analogy my neighbour’s tapping of my shoulder is active with respect to my neighbour and passive with respect to me.

Near the end of the previous chapter we highlighted the following comments from Wesley in 1788: “I am conscious to myself of one more property called liberty. This is

33 Wesley, ‘What is Man?’, Works (BE), 4:22.
35 Cf., for example, Augustine’s comments (Richard Sorabji, Emotions and Peace of Mind, 335). Cf. also, for example, Hirvonen’s analysis of Ockham. Lagerlund and Yrjonsuuri, Emotions and Choice: from Boethius to Descartes, 158.
very frequently confounded with the will but is of a very different nature. Neither is it a property of the will but a distinct property of the soul.” Notice here that the word “will” is in italics, which as mentioned above, is common when Wesley is using will to refer to the affections and passions of the heart. The distinction between liberty and will in this passage is not a reflection of the distinction between liberty and will found in Locke or Burlamaqui, nor is it a reflection of the distinction between liberty and will found in Reid. It seems most likely that this statement is simply distinguishing the human active power (liberty) from the components of the heart such as the passions and affections (what Wesley describes as the italicized will). Indeed, it seems that Wesley is speaking here of a dividing line between active and passive: the line between liberty and will. Although the will does not constitute the entire spectrum of human passive experiences, it seems that the occasions of the will—hatred, joy, sorrow, etc.—are passive in nature. In the above paragraph where he distinguishes between liberty and will, Wesley goes on to give various illustrations of what he means by liberty as the active power: opening and shutting one’s eyes, rising and sitting, etc. Such illustrations reinforce the point that for Wesley, liberty is the active power. It is no surprise that Wesley also calls liberty a “self-moving,” “self-governing,” and “self-determining” principle.

Free Will

In addition to the meaning of the will just considered—i.e. the will “properly speaking,” Wesley has a second important meaning of the will. This meaning tends to be used when Wesley is speaking more colloquially. In contrast to the first meaning of will, this meaning never involves the use of italics, and it is never used in discussions of

36 Wesley, ‘What is Man?’, *Works* (BE), 4:23.
37 For the reasons why this differs from Locke, please see below in this chapter. For reasons why this differs from Burlamaqui, see the discussion above. For Reid, there are several distinctions between liberty and will: (1) Liberty is what gives humans a power that animals do not have (Reid, *Essays on Active Powers of Man*, 205-206 and 308, in which Reid claims that liberty requires reason). Like humans, animals have the power of willing but unlike humans, they cannot reason. Unlike Reid, Wesley does not require that liberty involve human reason. Thus, for Wesley, even animals have a degree of liberty (Wesley, ‘The General Deliverance,’ *Works* (BE), 2:440), and (2) Certain kinds of choice that follow from the force of habit are not examples of liberty (Reid, *Essays on Active Powers of Man*, 270). By contrast, Clarke and Wesley hold that, under normal circumstances, liberty pertains to all instances of choice (action). For Wesley, one has the liberty to follow or choose against the force of habit.
39 “Second” here does not mean chronologically. This adjective is a way of distinguishing one meaning of “will” from the other meaning discussed.
“understanding, will, and liberty.” Interestingly enough, this meaning of will appears to be similar if not identical to Wesley’s understanding of liberty as the power of choice. It also appears to refer to that which this project means by active, as developed in chapter 2. Both of Wesley’s meanings of will considered so far are distinguished in the following comments: “Whereas we do not properly ‘take up our cross’ but when we voluntarily suffer what is in our power to avoid; when we willingly embrace the will of God, though contrary to our own; when we choose what is painful because it is the will of our wise and gracious Creator.” Clearly in this passage, we observe an active meaning of the will in the use of the phrase “willingly embrace.” The passage indicates that it is “in our power” to avoid or embrace the will of God. Here, the choice of the active will may work contrary to the inclination of the passive will. The passive will is the first meaning of will that we have considered in this section. It deals with the passions and affections. The passive will here is referenced by the phrase “our own.”

Another example of using will to refer to the active power is apparent in the following comments from Wesley: “By a single act of my will I put my head, eyes, hands, or any part of my body into motion.” Notice here that the word “will” is not italicized or put in quotes. It is clear from these comments that the will is referring to the active power here because a person has the power to determine when to put such body parts into motion. There are other instances of Wesley’s use of the word will to refer to action that will not be observed here. However, we will consider the following comments from Wesley:

To say every man can believe to justification or sanctification when he will is contrary to plain matter of fact. Every one can confute it by his own experience. And yet if you deny that every man can believe if he will, you run full into absolute decrees. How will you untie this knot? I apprehend very easily. That every man may believe if he will I earnestly maintain, and yet that he can believe when he will I totally deny.

From this passage we may make a number of observations. First, it is clear that Christian belief is itself not active in the sense that is clarified in chapter 2 of this project. One reason why this is clear is because a person cannot determine when this believing occurs.

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40 Wesley, ‘Self-Denial,’ *Works* (BE), 2:244.
41 Wesley, ‘What is Man?,’ *Works* (BE), 4:23.
Although Christian believing is not active, the will\textsuperscript{44} to believe is active. Believing must be distinguished from the will to believe. It should be evident to any person’s experience that the will to believe is active. This is because one may will to believe, or not will to believe, at any time one chooses.

For Wesley, willing an openness that invites God to give Christian belief is not possible by natural means but is only possible through prevenient grace.\textsuperscript{45} This act of willing (choosing) is an example of moral liberty. As mentioned in chapter 1, for Wesley, liberty is identical to the power of choosing. Some acts of choosing, such as opening or closing one’s eyes, may be thought as more neutral. Other kinds of choosing, such as that which deals with the choice regarding spiritual matters or regarding the choice of good or evil, is moral choosing which is moral liberty. For Wesley, it seems that this moral liberty is identical to his notion of “free will.”\textsuperscript{46} The will in this sense, refers to the human active power—Wesley’s second meaning of will—that is made possible only by grace with regard to moral matters.\textsuperscript{47} For Wesley, free will is only possible by free grace. This is one way in which we may observe that for Wesley, the language of free will is compatible with the language free grace.\textsuperscript{48} “Free will” describes that of which Wesley

\textsuperscript{44} These are my italics, not Wesley’s. When Wesley italicizes the word “will,” he is using the other meaning of will.
\textsuperscript{45} For a discussion of grace that is necessary for free will, see: Wesley, ‘Predestination Calmly Considered,’ Works (BE), 13:287 and Wesley, ‘Some Remarks on Mr. Hill’s “Review of all the Doctrines Taught by John Wesley.”’ Works (BE), 13:460 and for a discussion of grace that is necessary for liberty, see for example, Wesley, ‘The General Deliverance,’ Works (BE), 2:489 and Wesley, ‘What is Man?,’ Works (BE), 4:24.
\textsuperscript{46} Since, as it seems, free will is identical to moral liberty, free will must be understood as a power by grace to choose between good and evil, including the power to choose for God to give Christian faith or reject it. (Several important examples of Wesley’s discussion of this power of choosing are found here: Wesley, ‘The General Deliverance,’ Works (BE), 2:489 and Wesley, ‘The Important Question,’ Works (BE), 3:197). One of Jonathan Edwards’ comments shows that Edwards believes that many opponents of necessity equate “free will” with “liberty.” The title of one of the major parts of Edwards’ book on free will speaks of the “Freedom of Will, as that wherein Arminians Place the Essence of Liberty of All Moral Agents.” If Wesley does in fact equate free will with liberty, as it seems that he does, he is taking a position that appears common among Arminians. Wesley speaks of free will and liberty in Wesley, ‘Predestination Calmly Considered,’ Works (BE), 13:290 (see also 13:287 - 288). See also his comments on free will in his review of Mr. Hill (Wesley, ‘Some Remarks on Mr. Hill’s Review,’ Works (BE), 13:460). Without some role of the active power in salvation (Wesley’s second meaning of will, i.e. free will), grace would be eternally irresistible. Please see chapter 5 for a more detailed account of how Wesley understands the relationship between grace and the human active power.
\textsuperscript{47} For a more detailed account of Wesley’s view of how grace relates to the active power, please see chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{48} Wesley does not hold a doctrine of free grace in a purely Calvinist sense, but he does give his own view of free grace that is compatible with free will. Concerning his view of grace and free will, Wesley says: “Natural free-will, in the present state of mankind, I do not understand: I only assert, that there is a measure of free-will supernaturally restored to every man, together with that supernatural light which ‘enlightens every man that cometh into the world.’” Wesley, ‘Predestination Calmly Considered,’ Works (BE), 13:287.
speaks in the above quotation⁴⁹: one is free to will that God gives Christian faith or not will it.

In the passage above, Wesley makes it clear that he avoids the doctrine of “absolute decrees.”⁵⁰ This is because not only some but any person, by grace, is free to will to believe. Such an act of willing is certain to precede some future unknown time in which God gives the person Christian belief. This freedom to will to believe is “free will.” It is free because any person can choose heaven or hell. This is different from Jonathan Edwards’ view of the soul, in which a person may not choose against the strongest motive.⁵¹ The result of such a premise in Edwards’ view is that some people are forced to hell and have not freedom to choose against this fate. Edwards’ view that some people are not free to choose heaven is in direct contrast to Wesley’s view of free will. For Wesley, if there is no liberty—that is, if there is no free will—, then there is no power of choosing good or evil, no virtue or vice. For Wesley, Edwards’ attempt to reconcile the power of performing virtue and vice with a system of necessity is a failure.⁵²

Thus, we have observed two different meanings that Wesley uses for the word “will.” The first meaning we observed refers to the affections and passions, which appear to be passive. The second meaning refers to the power of choosing, the exercise of liberty, which is an active power. To some, such a practice for using the word will may seem a bit confusing. In one place in his writing, Wesley is strongly distinguishing between liberty and will, such as in the cases where “will” is italicized.⁵³ In other cases, such as in his discussion of “free will,” Wesley seems to be making the will to be identical to liberty. Why would Wesley not opt to follow Reid and simply confine his meaning of will to the power of choosing, thus separating the word “will” from the affections and passions? Although there is no certain answer, there is one strong possible answer. As we will now explore, one possible answer to this question concerns Wesley’s response to Edwards in 1774.

Responding to Edwards?

For a period of time in his life, Wesley did in fact summarize his view of the soul in a manner more like Reid. At least once in 1733, twice in the 1750s, and once in 1760,

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Wesley would describe a person as having “understanding, will, and affections.” It seems that Wesley does not often modify this practice until 1774, at which time he begins using on a more regular basis the language of “understanding, will, and liberty.” In his writing of *Thoughts Upon of Necessity*, first published in 1774, it seems that Wesley needed a way to respond effectively against Edwards’ system of necessity and absolute predestination. Secondly, on the other hand, according to scholar Richard Steele, it is evident that he admired at some level Edwards’ view of the affections. These factors together could be part of why we observe in 1774 the use of “understanding, will, and liberty” instead of “understanding, will, and affections.”

In response to Edwards in 1774, Wesley says, “there can be no moral good and evil, unless they have liberty as well as will, which is entirely a different thing. And the not adverting to this seems to be the direct occasion of Mr. Edwards’s whole mistake.” In this response to Edwards, Wesley’s opposition to the doctrine of necessity is not new. However, what appears different here is that Wesley is now using the word “liberty” to describe one of the three major features of the soul. It seems that the introduction of the language of “liberty” is useful to Wesley because it provides a more overt way to contrast himself from necessitarians such as Edwards in regard to how to describe the human active power. For Edwards, “the will” includes the active power, the power of choice. In 1774, Wesley transitions from using the “will” as the name for his formal definition of the active power to using “liberty” as the name for his formal definition of the active power. For Wesley, it may be that he thinks that the word “liberty” helps observers more easily recognized the view—*contra* Edwards—that a person is free to choose against the strongest motive and that one is free from the constraints of necessity. However, like Edwards, Wesley now uses the “will” to refer to the affections.

In the same section of *Thoughts Upon Necessity* Wesley goes on to make a revealing comment. Wesley provides insights regarding how his practice of naming has changed:

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It seems, they who divide the faculties of the human soul into the understanding, will, and affections, unless they make the will and affections the same thing; (and then how inaccurate is the division!) must mean by affections, the will, properly speaking, and by the term will, neither more nor less than liberty. This point is interesting because Wesley appears to be referring at least to himself, namely his prior practice of describing a person as having “understanding, will, and affections.” Kevin Lowery explores this transition in some depth. With respect to those later occasions when Wesley is summarizing the features of the soul (starting in 1774), Wesley’s new use of the word “liberty” is the same as his old meaning of “will.” The following comment should make this clear: “by the term will, neither more nor less than liberty.” Also, Wesley’s new meaning of will is the same as his old meaning of the affections.

Although Wesley reveals this change in how to name the soul in 1774, he still maintains in more colloquial contexts the second meaning of “will,” the active power of choosing. Now in 1774, however, such an active meaning is no longer the will “properly speaking.” The will “properly speaking” is the first meaning of will that we considered in this section. It refers only to the passions and affections, components of the heart. The idea of “free will,” the power for any person to choose good or evil and the power to choose for God to give Christian faith, remains in Wesley’s thought, but the name of “free will” is not as important after 1774, and this name is rarely used during this period. After 1774, Wesley most often uses the name of “liberty” in order to describe this moral power of choosing. For a summary of Wesley’s view of the will and how it compares to the aforementioned thinkers, please see diagram 3.1.

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58 What Wesley appears to be saying here is that if one were to use the model of “understanding, will, and affections,” and make will and affections the same thing, then the model would be in effect: “understanding, affections, and affections.” Thus, Wesley comments, how this would be an “inaccurate division!”

59 Wesley, ‘Thoughts Upon Necessity,’ Works (BE), 13:540. Notice that the italics here are Wesley’s.

60 In most such cases, Wesley speaks of “understanding, will, and affections.” In one case, he speaks of “understanding, freedom of will, and various affections” (Wesley, ‘The New Birth,’ Works (BE), 2:188).

61 Kevin Lowery, Salvaging Wesley’s Agenda, a New Paradigm for Wesleyan Virtue Ethics (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 159. Unfortunately, Lowery’s discussion is a bit off target in some areas because it uses a muddled interpretation of Locke’s view of the will and liberty. For a proper interpretation of Locke’s view of the will and liberty and how this view compares to the view of Wesley, please see below. Lowery also makes an unsubstantiated connection between Wesley and Aristotle, whose concept of choosing comes far earlier than the more refined definitions of liberty in the modern period. Lowery, Salvaging Wesley’s Agenda, 161.

62 See, for example, Wesley, Letters, 6:287 and his comment in 1788: “By a single act of my will I put my head, eyes, hands, or any part of my body into motion.” Wesley, ‘What is Man?’, Works (BE), 4:23.

63 As noted in noted in chapter 1, this is a different meaning of liberty from another meaning that Wesley uses when he speaks of the “glorious liberty” of the sons of God as in Romans 8:21.
We have now concluded our investigation of Wesley’s view of the will. For Wesley, the will “properly speaking” includes the affections and passions. This meaning of the will is used in contexts in which Wesley italicizes the word “will” or discusses together the three features of a person—understanding, will, and liberty. This meaning of the will is passive in nature and something very different from liberty, which is the active power. However, Wesley also uses a second meaning of will. He uses this meaning more often in contexts that are less formal. This meaning of will is the power of choosing or “free will.” It seems to be equivalent to Wesley’s meaning of liberty.

Responding to Secondary Literature: Outler on Liberty

In The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley, in a footnote concerning Wesley’s comments on liberty in his sermon “The General Deliverance,” Albert Outler makes the claim that Wesley’s view of moral liberty “had been directly influenced by Locke” regarding Locke’s An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. It is clear that Wesley read Locke and may have been influenced by Locke in a number of ways. However, the above statement implies that Wesley’s view of liberty, understood as moral choosing, was directly influenced by Locke’s view. Outler does not provide adequate support for this claim. After closer consideration, there is much evidence that suggests that Outler’s claim on this particular matter is misleading, if not entirely off target.

One point of consideration here is what Outler means by “influence.” If what he means by “influence” is no more than that Wesley has read Locke’s view of liberty, then Outler is correct. But even here, Outler is being misleading because Wesley has read over 20 figures who have written on philosophical liberty, including Thomas Reid whose work on liberty Wesley describes as a “strong and beautiful treatise on moral liberty.” Outler does not acknowledge that Wesley has read these others. If what Outler means by “influence” is that Wesley’s view of liberty resembles Locke’s view, then Outler’s claim is clearly off target. Wesley’s view of liberty more closely resembles the views of other figures that Wesley has read. For example, Wesley’s theology is not identical to the thought of Samuel Clarke, but his view of liberty is more similar to Clarke’s view than it is to Locke’s view.

65 Even in regard to the “liberty of conscience,” it is not clear that Wesley was influenced by Locke. The “liberty of conscience” was a common phrase in the eighteenth century, and it was used before Locke was born.
66 The Arminian Magazine, 14, (1791) 14:3
Wesley publishes an extract of Locke’s *An Essay Concerning the Human Understanding* in bits, starting in the 1782 volume of the Arminian Magazine and continuing for the next two years. Among these many pages, Wesley includes some of Locke’s most important discussions of philosophical moral liberty. In the final posthumous edition of Locke’s *Essay* (published before Wesley was born), a paragraph is added to Locke’s work that gives Locke’s thought a closer resemblance to the recommendations of an Arminian interlocutor named Philipp van Limborch. This paragraph is included in the portion of the work that Wesley opts to include in the *Arminian Magazine*. As we shall see, it is more likely that Wesley included this content more because he wants to include a variety of different views on moral liberty in the *Arminian Magazine* and less because he shares in any way Locke’s view of moral liberty.

Although leading contemporary commentators on Locke consider him most likely a necessitarian or compatibilist, it is possible that the addition of this paragraph led some during Wesley’s time to believe that Locke was a libertarian. By “libertarian,” I mean one who holds the doctrine of free will as opposed to the philosophical necessity that is presupposed in absolute predestination. For a libertarian, a human is free, in at least some cases, to choose for or against the perceived strongest motive. A “necessitarian” is one whose system of thought presupposes that every human choice must be caused by a strongest motive, which in turn is the effect of a chain of causes and effects that originates from outside of a person.

The theory of absolute predestination is an example of necessitarianism. A “compatibilist” is a necessitarian who argues that moral responsibility is consistent with necessitarianism. Even after the final revision of Locke’s work, Locke was not clear on his position concerning the debate of free will v. necessity, and so there was widespread dissatisfaction with regard to Locke’s lack of clarity on this point. It is possible that

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67 The Arminian Magazine, volumes 5 - 7, (1782-1784).
68 Harris, Of Liberty and Necessity, 34.
70 As we shall explore, Wesley also publishes in the Arminian Magazine work on moral liberty by Joseph Fisher, Paul Ramsey, Thomas Reid, and others.
72 Exploring the concept of “libertarian” and “necessitarian” is one of the major tasks of James Harris in Of Liberty and Necessity, The Free Will Debate in Eighteenth Century British Philosophy, published by Oxford University Press. For an account of what is meant by a “libertarian” and “necessitarian,” see p. 7.
73 Harris, Of Liberty and Necessity, 12.
some of the libertarians of the eighteenth century who Wesley has read such as Andrew Michael Ramsay and Isaac Watts are indebted to Locke’s view of the liberty of suspension, but it is difficult to prove that their views are identical to Locke’s.\footnote{Related comments by Andrew Michael Ramsay are found in \textit{The Arminian Magazine}, 8, (1785): 8:316; Watt’s “An Essay on The Freedom of Will in God and in Creatures,” 380. See also \textit{The Arminian Magazine}, 9, (1785): 9:30.}

In any case, what we shall find upon closer examination is that Wesley’s view of liberty is not the same as Locke’s, not even near to the same. If Locke were a necessitarian or compatibilist as leading contemporary commentators argue,\footnote{Garber and Ayers, \textit{Cambridge History of Seventeenth Century Philosophy}, 1245; Harris, \textit{Of Liberty and Necessity}, p. 21, footnote 5.} then Wesley would surely disagree with him, as Wesley is a strong libertarian. But let us suppose for a moment that Wesley read Locke as a libertarian. It must be emphasized that even in this case, the differences between Wesley and Locke with respect to liberty remain crucial. The first crucial difference is with respect to naming. It is true that Locke and Wesley share an emphasis on the difference between liberty and will.\footnote{Wesley, ‘What is Man?’, \textit{Works} (BE), 4:23; \textit{The Arminian Magazine}, 5, (1782): 5:476.} However, they define each of these terms differently. Unlike Locke, Wesley uses the term “will” properly speaking to represent the ideas of affections and passions.\footnote{Wesley, ‘The General Deliverance,’ \textit{Works} (BE), 2:439 and 2:442; Wesley, ‘The End of Christ’s Coming,’ \textit{Works} (BE), 2:474; Wesley, ‘On the Fall of Man,’ \textit{Works} (BE), 2:401; Wesley, ‘On Divine Providence,’ \textit{Works} (BE), 2:540.} Unlike Wesley, Locke uses the term “will” to represent only the idea of choice. Locke says “the Will in truth, signifies nothing but a power, or ability, to prefer or chuse.”\footnote{“Extracts from Locke on Human Understanding with Short Remarks,” \textit{The Arminian Magazine}, 5, (1782): 5:529.}

For Locke, the term “liberty” represents the idea of the absence of exterior restraint or compulsion.\footnote{“Extracts from Locke on Human Understanding with Short Remarks,” \textit{The Arminian Magazine}, 5, (1782): 5:415.} Consider the following illustration to clarify Locke’s understanding of this meaning of liberty. Suppose a man leads his companion into a room. The companion’s name is John. He takes John inside the room and tells John that he will leave John here alone for a few minutes. He tells John that John is free to leave the room any time John chooses. The man leaves, and after a few minutes, John becomes impatient and chooses to leave the room. However, John is not able to act out his choice because to John’s surprise, after turning the knob and pulling on the door, John discovers the room is locked from the outside. To his surprise, John discovers it is a prison. According to Locke’s view, in this scenario, choice occurs, but liberty is absent. Liberty is absent here...
because there is a restraint: John is in a prison and cannot exit. This shows how, according to Locke, choice can take place without liberty. As Locke says “there may be will [choice], there may be volition, where there is no liberty.” For Locke, there is no liberty in this scenario because Wesley, unlike Locke, defines liberty as choice itself. In this illustration, John was free to attempt to leave the room or not attempt to leave. For Wesley, his choice to attempt to leave the room is an exercise of liberty. This is a key difference in meaning between Locke’s view of liberty and Wesley’s view of liberty.

Locke has an additional sense of liberty. Humans have “a power to suspend the execution and satisfaction of any of his Desires, and so all, one after another, is at liberty to consider the objects of them; examine them on all sides and weight them with others.” Locke indicates this is liberty. In a moment, more will be said on how this meaning of liberty compares to Wesley’s view.

The most crucial difference between Locke and Wesley with regard to their views of liberty concerns their understanding of choice. As shown above, for Wesley, choice and liberty are equivalent. This is not true for Locke. For Locke, liberty does not apply to a person’s power to will [choose]. Locke himself put this point in italics: “a man in respect of willing [choosing], or the Act of the volition, when any action in his power is once proposed to his Thoughts, as presently to be done, cannot be free.” He also says “a Man, in respect of the Act of Willing [choosing], is under a Necessity, and so cannot be free.” These remarks are included by Locke after completing the final revision of his work. In a later section, after repeating the point that there is no freedom in choice, he claims that there is a case of exception to the larger rule. This point is made in a paragraph (section 56) that is added to Locke’s book after this death. It will be assumed

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80 Locke’s wording can be tricky. A reader must see the difference in Locke’s intended meaning between: “choosing” and “the power to act out what one chooses.” Liberty, for Locke, refers only to the latter. Hopefully this illustration helps to show this.

81 “Extracts from Locke on Human Understanding with Short Remarks,” The Arminian Magazine, 5, (1782): 5:415. I add choice in brackets since, as shown above, Locke defines the will as the power of choice.


84 Ibid., 5:646.

85 Ibid., 5:332.

86 Ibid., 5:533.

here for Wesley’s purposes, that Locke intended to include this paragraph. Wesley includes this paragraph in his extract of Locke’s book for the *Arminian Magazine*.88

In order to consider what Locke means by this exceptional case for when a person has freedom with respect to willing [choosing], we will consider another analogy. Suppose a woman comes across a horse that she really likes. The thought of purchasing the horse comes to her mind. Here is where Locke would allow there to be freedom of willing [choosing]. There is freedom of the will here in this sense. Since it is not at first clear to her whether to purchase the horse is the greater good, the woman is free to purchase hastily the horse right away without further thought. Or she is free to suspend the act of purchasing in order to think through and weigh all the objects of her desires and potential outcomes that relate to this situation.

Suppose that the woman decides to make such a suspension. After such thinking, the woman realizes she cannot afford the horse and so wills [chooses] not to buy the horse. Thus, returning to the beginning of the scenario, the woman was free to act in one of several ways: either to choose to purchase the horse right away (before carefully weighing her options) or to choose not to purchase it after deliberation. Yet, the will [the power of choosing] of the woman is no longer free after deliberation. At this point, as in Locke’s regular cases of willing [choosing], the woman is necessitated to reject the horse. In other words, if deliberation leads the woman to conclude that rejecting the horse is clearly the greater good, she cannot choose otherwise. In this case, she must choose not to buy the horse.

Unlike Locke, Wesley believes that the power of choice is always free. For Wesley, there is no need to make special exceptions to a general rule. And for this reason, Wesley, unlike Locke, is able to define the power of choice itself as liberty. Another crucial point of difference regarding choice is that for Locke, the choice of a person is “always determined by that which is judged good by his [or her] Understanding.”89 This claim echoes scholastic intellectualism.90 It is a claim that Wesley rejects. For Locke, it is not possible for a person to choose an evil when it is clearly known that such an evil act is in conflict with an available alternative option believed to bring immediate happiness.91

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89 Ibid., 6:137.
90 An argument is made in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth Century British Philosophy* (p. 1252) that Locke’s thought resembles intellectualism, even after revision of his work.
This point is in clear contrast to Wesley who argues that liberty as moral choice is by definition the power to choose either known good or known evil.\textsuperscript{92} For Wesley, because of the gift of conscience, every person has some knowledge of what is good and evil, and every person has the power to choose either of these options. And for Wesley, happiness does not have to be chosen by necessity.\textsuperscript{93} For Locke, the choice of evil results in large part from misjudgement, which sometimes results from a person not using his or her power of suspension to deliberate more about the situation. For Wesley, a person, whether unsaved or perfected, always has the power to use liberty (a power of choice) to select any option, whether an agent rejects a known greater good or accepts it, whether an agent rejects a certain means for happiness or accepts it.\textsuperscript{94}

Thus, it appears that Wesley’s view of liberty does not resemble Locke’s view. Consistent with this claim, there appears to be no place in Wesley’s writings where he indicates that his view of liberty resembles Locke’s view. Wesley gives his first extensive treatment of this type of liberty in his “Thoughts Upon Necessity,” which is published in 1774, eight years before the publishing of his extract of Locke in the Arminian Magazine. There is no mention of Locke in Wesley’s diary or journal near around 1774. It is true that Locke had a large impact on philosophy in the eighteenth century for both proponents of necessity and libertarianism.\textsuperscript{95} In this way, it could be considered that Wesley’s thought is indirectly influenced by Locke. Some of those who Wesley reads in regard to liberty are responding to Locke, modifying, and/or developing Locke’s ideas.

So far, for the first task of the project, we have looked at Wesley’s view of liberty and will. We also examined a misleading claim by Outler. We will now turn to a consideration of Wesley’s view of the heart. As we have shown, the will properly speaking is part of the heart. Yet in the next chapter, we will consider the heart in more depth.

\textsuperscript{92} This point is made on just about every occasion that Wesley discusses liberty. See, for example, Wesley, ‘The End of Christ’s Coming,’ \textit{Works} (BE), 2:475.
\textsuperscript{93} See the discussion above on conscience. See also: Wesley, ‘Thoughts Upon Necessity,’ \textit{Works} (BE), 13:544.
\textsuperscript{94} See, for example, Wesley, ‘Thoughts Upon Necessity,’ \textit{Works} (BE), 13:544.
\textsuperscript{95} Harris, \textit{Of Liberty and Necessity}, 18.
Chapter 4: The Heart

Our first task in examining Wesley’s view of moral agency is simply to examine and clarify the features of the soul. This has been the focus for chapters 2 and 3. In chapter 2, we clarified what is meant in this project by active and passive, and we began exploring Wesley’s view of liberty. In chapter 3, we examined Wesley’s view of liberty and the will. As we have shown, the feature of “liberty” is equivalent to the active power. The will “properly speaking” refers to the affections and passions and is passive in nature. There is also a second meaning of the will which refers to the power of choosing, which is the same as what is meant by “free will” and is equivalent to liberty.1

In this chapter, we will consider in more depth Wesley’s understanding of the heart. In secondary literature, the heart has been a subject of particular interest for scholars such as Gregory Clapper, Randy Maddox, and Kenneth Collins.2 This point will be explored at various places below. For this chapter, the heart will be examined in light of the concepts of active and passive. This will involve a number of steps. We will begin by considering Wesley’s view of the desires of the heart. Then we will consider the relationship of the heart to the pursuit of happiness. Next we will explore Wesley’s understanding of the tempers, dispositions, and affections. After this, we will consider the significance of Wesley’s eyewitness accounts of those people who experience “fire” and “flames” in their heart and how these experiences exemplify passive experiences, involving the work of God alone. Next, we will consider briefly Wesley’s understanding of reason and its role in Wesley’s view of moral agency. After this, we will explore a debate in secondary literature concerning Wesley’s view of the affections.

After finishing these steps, we will have completed the first task of the project. This will prepare us for the second task of the project: exploring how the features of the soul relate to each other as an agent performs right action and pursues the highest end. Such a move will lead us to defend the thesis of this project that for Wesley, a person’s pursuit of Christian love is an expression of God’s gift and that the giftedness of this

1 “Second” and “first” here are not chronological. These adjectives are used as a way of distinguishing the two meanings.
2 See the bibliography below for numerous examples.
blessing is illuminated by a critical examination of the work of the Spirit with respect to the active and passive dimensions of a human being.

For now, we will focus our attention on Wesley’s view of the heart. Gregory Clapper describes John Wesley’s view of the heart as “that core of who we are.”3 We will begin by taking a look at what Wesley means by the desires of the heart.

Desires of the Heart

In chapter 2 of this project, we used the word “inclination” to describe a feature of the passive dimension of a person, and we used a number of illustrations in order to clarify what is meant by inclination. Examples of inclinations include but are not limited to: a feeling of hunger for food, such as in the illustration of the man in the orchard or a feeling of love that a parent may have for a child, such as in the illustration of Abraham and Isaac. Many analysts of moral agency throughout the history of academic thought have identified pleasure and pain as essential features of an inclination.4 In its essence, an inclination involves the conscious feeling of pleasure and/or pain depending on how a person is in relationship to the goal (the target of the inclination). The foreseen prospect of experiencing pain or pleasure is metaphorically the “springs” of human action and the impetus for driving a person to seek the inclination’s goal. As will be discussed more below, for Wesley, the idea for how a holy heart is a “spring” for virtuous action is crucial for his view of moral agency.5

To help clarify how pain and pleasure are the springs of inclination, consider some examples from chapter 2. For a hungry person, the goal is to eat. The fulfilment of the goal, in this case eating, brings a vivid perception of pleasure. The unfulfilling of the goal, in this case not eating, leads to a vivid perception of pain and uneasiness. Thus, a hungry person is impelled to eat. A person is not forced by necessity to eat, but resisting this inclination will result in pain and uneasiness. Similarly, for a child in a healthy family, the goal of the child is to live in the presence of the parents. The fulfilment of this goal brings pleasure and happiness for the child. The unfulfilling of this goal brings pain and uneasiness (a child often cries in the absence of his or her parents). Thus, a child is internally impelled and driven to be in the presence of the parents.

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3 Gregory Clapper, As if the Heart Mattered (Nashville TN: Upper Room Books, 1997), 17.
4 See, for example, Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics and many books on ethics that follow.
5 For examples of Wesley’s use of the metaphor of a “spring” in reference to the heart, see for example: Wesley, ‘Address to the Clergy,’ Works (Jackson), 10:498; Wesley, ‘On Zeal,’ Works (BE), 3:320; Wesley, ‘What is Man?,’ Works (BE), 4:22.
This idea of inclination, as clarified by this project, is apparent in Wesley’s understanding of the heart. First, this idea appears consistent with his actual use of the term of “inclination.” Additionally, this idea is evident in his use of other terms that pertain to the heart. It appears that an enduring form of an inclination, as clarified in chapter 2, is similar if not equivalent to what Wesley means by “desire” in the context of when he is speaking of the force that rules the heart. The question then is how does this inclination/desire relate to the idea of love? Although Wesley at times may portray the idea of love as something more than merely a passive desire/inclination, it is clear that he understands a passive desire/inclination to be a key part of his idea of love. In this project, there will be times when discussing “love,” we speak of only the passive component of love. This is something that Wesley himself sometimes does. For the discussion that follows, the context clues of “desire” and/or “inclination” should make it clear when this is being done. When speaking of love as referring to a “desire” or “inclination,” we are speaking of the passive component of love.

For Wesley, a human being may be subject to one of either two ruling desires: the love of God and neighbour or the love of the world. Such a desire is a key ingredient of Wesley’s view of the heart. For Wesley, the heart may be defined as that which includes one of these two ruling desires and all the passive elements—tempers, affections, dispositions, etc.—that may accompany it. With regard to these two ruling desires: at one end of the spectrum is a perfected person’s love for God. Wesley describes a perfected person as follows: “I know many that love God with all their heart. He is their one desire, in one instance, he contrasts “inclination” with “choice” (Wesley, ‘The Doctrine of Original Sin,’ Works (BE), 12:257). In another piece, he seems to equate it with impulse and desire, in a manner that makes it appear passive. Here, the Spirit is the giver of the feeling of inclination. Wesley, ‘A Letter to a Person Lately Joined with the Quakers,’ Works (Jackson), 10:181.

For clear evidence that Wesley at times speaks of love in a passive sense, see: Wesley, ‘The Doctrine of Original Sin,’ Works (BE), 12:277, 12:338, and 12:339 (especially 12:277). Concerning Wesley’s view of how love and desire compare, a number of observations may be made. In 1737, Wesley says: “What is it to love God but to delight in him, to rejoice in his will, to desire continually to please him, to seek and find our happiness in him, and to thirst day and night for fuller enjoyment of him?” Wesley, ‘On Love,’ Works (BE), 4:383. As we will show, Wesley continues to portray love as including desire, as evident in his 1766 publication (and 1789 publication) of A Plain Account of Christian Perfection. Wesley, ‘A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,’ Works (Jackson), 11:418. On some occasions, it is useful to cite the Jackson edition of this treatise since, unlike the bicentennial edition, the former edition quotes the whole text.

For a clear statement of how these two ruling loves are exclusive of each other, please see Wesley, “Address to the Clergy,” Works (Jackson), 10:498. For places where Wesley distinguishes between Christian love and love of the world, see for example: Outler, editor, Works (BE), 2:88, 2:158, 2:194, 2:132, 2:481, 3:174.

As will be shown below, the ruling desire of Christian love is itself a temper but it is not the only holy temper. There are other holy tempers as well.
their one delight, and they are continually happy in him. They love their neighbours as
themselves. They feel as sincere, fervent, constant a desire for the happiness of every
man, good or bad, friend or enemy, as for their own."\(^{11}\) Just as a child finds pleasure and
happiness in the presence of a parent, so does a perfected person find pleasure and
happiness in the presence of God. A perfected person also has a desire for the happiness
of one’s neighbour.

The alternative ruling desire of the heart is love of the world. Wesley derives this
view of evil love from his reading of 1 John 2:16: “Love not the world, neither the things
that are in the world: if any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For
all that is in the world, the desire of the flesh, and the desire of the eye, and the pride
of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”\(^ {12}\) This love of the world serves as part of
what Wesley means by “original sin.”\(^ {13}\) This scripture shows that the love of the world
includes three desires, and each of these desires has a corresponding pleasure. In this
regard, Wesley’s own teaching follows this scriptural teaching.\(^ {14}\) The “desire of the flesh”
seeks the “pleasure of sense,” which pertains to overindulgences of eating, drinking,
smelling, feeling, and/or any kind of the inferior appetites.\(^ {15}\) The “desire of the eye” seeks
the “pleasure in imagination,” which is an inordinate taste for new and beautiful things
such as beautiful horses, elegant furniture, delightful gardens, music, collecting curious
items, splendid places, favourite animals and/or an inordinate taste for learning such as
relating to poetry, history, art, science, etc.\(^ {16}\) The “pride of life” leads to seeking too
strongly the pleasure that comes from gaining the honour and esteem of other people and
produces shame in things for which one should feel good.\(^ {17}\)

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These comments were included in the 1766 publication (and 1789 publication) of ‘A Plain Account of
Christian Perfection.’

\(^ {12}\) Wesley, ENNT Notes, 1 John 2:16. Wesley says elsewhere: “For whenever we are not aiming at God we
are seeking happiness in some creature. And this, whatever that creature may be, is no less than idolatry. It
is all one whether we aim at the pleasures of sense, the pleasures of the imagination, the praise of men or
riches; all which St. John comprises under the general expression, ‘the love of the world.’” Wesley, ‘A
Single Eye,’ Works (BE), 4:123.

\(^ {13}\) Wesley, ‘Original Sin,’ Works (BE), 2:179.

\(^ {14}\) Wesley makes references to these desires and pleasures fairly frequently. See Wesley, ‘The Way to the
Kingdom,’ Works (BE), 1:226 and footnote 64 of this page.

\(^ {15}\) Wesley, ‘On God’s Vineyard,’ Works (BE) 3:516; Wesley, ‘Sermon on the Mount, VII,’ Works (BE),
1:599; Wesley, ‘Spiritual Idolatry,’ Works (BE), 3:105.

\(^ {16}\) Wesley, ‘On Riches,’ Works (BE), 3:525; Wesley, ‘The Repentance of Believers,’ Works (BE) 1:338;

Like Christian love, love of the world inclines a person to seek a highest end. For both love of the world and Christian love, this highest end is thought to be happiness. Each of the differing loves corresponds to a different vision of what happiness is. To this subject of happiness we now turn.

**Happiness**

As a goal must serve as the target for an individual inclination, the concept of happiness\(^\text{18}\) (a goal in itself) must serves as the target for the ruling inclination/desire of one’s heart. As Wesley says, “The desire of happiness is inseparably [bound] to our nature, and is the spring which sets all our faculties a-moving.”\(^\text{19}\) As we will show, a desire for Christian happiness is given by grace. A desire/love for the world is from a person’s corrupt nature, owing to the fall. As we have shown in previous chapters, for Wesley, there is a power of liberty to choose against the strongest desire, strongest motive, and/or clearly known greatest good. In other words, one is free to choose against a clearly-perceived option for happiness. However, as will be shown more in the chapters that follow, the motivational impact of a person’s inclination for true happiness is an indispensable and key ingredient for Wesley’s view of moral agency.\(^\text{20}\)

For now, we will highlight some important features of Wesley’s view of happiness. First, the idea of happiness as a highest goal is presupposed in the idea of the heart. This is because the heart is understood to include the sum of one’s inclinations, and these inclinations must by their essence have a net target, which is the goal that is understood to be happiness.\(^\text{21}\) Second, while happiness, as a general idea is a single goal, it relates to a web of other goals that serve the larger purpose. In the case of Christian happiness, such goals include but are not limited to the practice of the “means of grace.” Such practices, as they are performed by grace, are a means for an end: they promote the larger goal of loving God and neighbour.

Third, Christian happiness involves feelings of pleasure. For example, Wesley says in reference to Psalms 16:11 and 36:8, concerning one who is born of God: “He

\(^{18}\) The word “happiness” is used frequently in Wesley’s writings. It is often described as involving holiness and sanctification.

\(^{19}\) Wesley, ‘Death and Deliverance,’ *Works* (BE), 4:209.

\(^{20}\) This inclination is of course Christian love. Contrast this point with the views of Reid and Kant that place less importance on inclinations for virtue.

\(^{21}\) As to happiness being the highest end, Wesley says, for example, “Now the best end which any creature can pursue is happiness in God.” Wesley, ‘The Righteousness of Faith,’ *Works* (BE), 1:213. See also Wesley, ‘Spiritual Worship,’ *Works* (BE), 3:100 and Wesley, ‘Sermon on the Mount, VIII,’ *Works* (BE), 1:615.
knows there can be no happiness on earth, but in the enjoyment of God, and in the foretaste of those ‘rivers of pleasure which flow at his right hand for evermore.’”

Fourth, Christian love and happiness are inseparable. Fifth, as may be evident from the fourth point, seeking happiness is primarily outward-focused rather than self-focused. In seeking happiness, one’s mindset is primarily on seeking the love of God and neighbour. As Wesley says: “Singly aim at God. In every step thou takes, eye him alone. Pursue one thing: happiness in knowing, in loving, in serving God.” In this way, happiness is outward-focused.

As the heart includes either the inclination of Christian love or the inclination of worldly love, a person is subject to pursuing one of two differing views of happiness. Those who are not yet born of God often believe that happiness is fulfilling the inclination to love the world. The alternative version of happiness, which is the superior of the two options, is the love of God and neighbour. Owing to original sin, each person begins life with an inclination to love the world. It is only by the work of the Spirit, the work of God alone, that one is able to receive a new heart, in which the ruling inclination for love of the world is replaced with a ruling inclination to love God and neighbour. This transformation is performed in a manner that is passive with respect to a person. Scriptures that Wesley frequently cites in reference to this include but are not limited to: Romans 5:5 and John 3:1-8. In this transformation, which takes place at the new birth, Christian love is now for the first time the ruling inclination of the heart such that the person has power over sin.

Wesley believes that many people who are not born again are deceived about happiness. They are deceived because they wrongly believe that the fulfilling of their love

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22 Wesley, ‘Journal,’ Works (BE), 19:17. Wesley also says, “God shall satisfy them with the blessings of his goodness, with the felicity [happiness] of his chosen”… “He shall give them to drink of his pleasures, as out of the river which he that drinketh of shall never thirst—only for more and more of the water of life.” Wesley, Sermon on the Mount, II, 1:497. I add the word “happiness” in brackets.

23 Wesley says, “And according to the degree of our love is the degree of our happiness.” Wesley, ‘An Israelite Indeed,’ Works (BE), 3:283. See also, for example, Wesley, ‘The Unity of the Divine Being,’ Works (BE), 4:67; Wesley, ‘On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel,’ Works (BE), 3:585; and Wesley, ‘Sermon on the Mount IX,’ Works (BE), 1:635; Wesley, ‘An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,’ Works (BE), 11:45.


26 See above for evidence for how Wesley views that the love of God and happiness are inseparable.

27 See Wesley, ‘On Patience,’ Works (BE), 3:174. See also, for example: Outler, editor, Works (BE), 4:67, 2:158, 8:41, 1:273. This point will be explored in more depth in chapter 6 and 7.

28 See, for example: Outler, editor, Works (BE), 3:500 (Romans 5:5); 4:36 (Romans 5:5); and sermon 45, “The New Birth” (John 3:1-8).

29 This point will be explored in more depth in chapter 6.
of the world will bring happiness. They are also deceived because they mistakenly believe that religion itself is misery. Wesley acknowledges that there are pleasures in fulfilling the love of the world but claims that these are short lasting. He argues that in a manner that is quite opposite to the expectations of most unbelievers, fulfilling the love of the world actually leads to pain and misery. On the other hand, the pleasures of true happiness, which involves love of God and neighbour, are stronger and long-lasting. For Wesley, there is no true happiness (and feeling of fulfilment), except through the love of God and neighbour. Although suffering—as in bearing one’s cross—is sometimes a part of the Christian life, such suffering actually helps to build true happiness.

The Language of Tempers, Dispositions, and Affections

Before we continue with the task of examining Wesley’s view of the heart, let us take a moment to retrace some of the steps already taken. In chapter 2, the author clarified what is meant in this project by active and passive. An example of a passive experience includes but is not limited to the feeling of an inclination. Earlier, in this chapter, it was claimed that this project’s meaning of inclination is apparent in John Wesley’s view of the heart. It was claimed that this meaning of inclination is similar if not identical to Wesley’s understanding of a ruling desire of the heart, as exemplified either by the love of the world or Christian love. After this, we went on to analyse further the nature of inclination by examining happiness, which is, for a Christian, the target of the sum of the inclinations of the heart.

Yet, although we have begun looking at Wesley’s view of the ruling inclinations of the heart and his understanding of happiness, our task of examining Wesley’s view of the heart is not complete. In order to serve our greater purpose of the first task of this project,
which is to clarify Wesley’s view of the features of the soul, we must clarify further other aspects of what Wesley means by the heart. In his discussions of the heart, Wesley often uses the language of “tempers,” “dispositions,” and “affections.” Thus, one question for consideration is: how does each one of these terms—temper, disposition, and affection—compare and contrast with the others? Another important question is: how does each of these terms compare and contrast with what we have described so far as a “ruling inclination/desire?” Based on Wesley’s writings, we cannot give exhaustive answers to these questions, but we can give partial answers. It will be shown that what can be said helpfully assists our larger purpose.

We will begin by considering the second question. Instead of considering each of the terms together—affection, disposition, and temper—, we will first consider only the idea of a temper. Some of how these other terms relate may be inferred. So then how does Wesley’s view of a ruling inclination/desire relate to his understanding of a temper? As should be clear, the ruling desire for a Christian is Christian love. On multiple occasions, Wesley describes this love itself as a temper. In his sermon “On Charity,” Wesley speaks of “love” as the “ruling temper of my soul.” Yet, it is also clear from his discussions that love (a temper) is not identical to other tempers. This is evident from the illustration of concentric circles that he gives in his sermon “On Zeal.” According to this illustration, the temper of love is in the centre, while the other tempers—longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness, fidelity, temperance—are implied to be different and are thus identified in a circle exterior to love. Wesley speaks of these other tempers on many occasions. The scriptures on which Wesley bases these tempers include but are not limited to “the fruits of the Spirit” from Galatians 5:22-23 and some of

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43 See, for example, Outler, editor, Works (BE), 4:147, 3:75. When discussing the tempers, Wesley does not always give exactly the same list. Other tempers include but are not limited to: joy, peace, and patience (Wesley, ‘On Perfection,’ Works (BE), 3:75 and Wesley, ‘A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,’ Works (BE), 11:269).
the beatitudes from Matthew 5. Love and these other holy tempers exemplify what Wesley means by “virtues.”

The same distinction between the temper of the ruling inclination and other separate tempers is also true in the case of evil. For one not born of God, the ruling desire is love of the world. This produces other evil tempers of “anger, hatred, malice, revenge, envy, jealousy, evil surmisings.” It seems that Wesley bases these unholy tempers on at least Galatians 5:20 and Colossians 3:5-8.

The distinction between the temper of Christian love and the other holy tempers is also made in contexts where Wesley is speaking of the latter as “springing” or “flowing” from the former. It seems that each of these other tempers—long suffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness, fidelity, temperance, etc.—is the fruit of love and describes a loving person, but each of these tempers by itself is not identical to love. Although the temper of love and these other tempers are not identical, they come in a package. They are given by God at the new birth and strengthened by God in various ways throughout the rest of the Christian life. As will be discussed more below in this section, these other holy tempers, like the passive component of love, are often passive.

We have shown that for Wesley, the ruling desire of the heart is a temper and that a temper may refer to other forms of consciousness such as long-suffering, meekness, etc.

The other question of this section is: how does each one of these terms— temper, disposition, and affection—compare and contrast with the others? As to this question, our focus will begin with considering how Wesley’s view of tempers compares with his view of affections. In some cases, Wesley appears to make a distinction between a temper and affection. In reference to a remark in scripture concerning friends’ devotion of love (1 Thessalonians 2:17), Wesley describes a temper as a “fixed posture of the soul,” something different from “transient” affections. Consistent with this point, in another piece, Wesley offers tentatively that a temper is a “state,” something that is a “lasting

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44 Pertaining to “fruits of the Spirit,” see for example, Wesley, ‘On Perfection,’ Works (BE), 3:77. Pertaining to beatitudes, see for example, Wesley, ‘Sermon on the Mount, I,’ Works (BE), 1:475.
45 See, for example, Wesley, ‘Circumcision of the Heart,’ Works (BE), 1:403. As we will discuss more in the chapters ahead, virtue may also involve the active power. Virtue is not confined to passive qualities.
46 For the point that many of these are tempers, see Wesley, ‘The Important Question,’ Works (BE), 3:194. For the point that these spring from the love of the world (the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life), see Wesley, ‘The Way to the Kingdom,’ Works (BE), 1:227.
48 Wesley, ENNT, comments on 1 Thessalonians 2:17.
sensation” and is “rooted.”

He describes it as something that is not “fleeting” but something that we “habitually feel.” Yet, his comments on this matter are scarce, and he does not give a thorough explanation.

Consider now one possible interpretation of Wesley’s view of how tempers compare with affections that is consistent with the last point that tempers have a “lasting” nature. The key point of this interpretation is that “affection” is a broader term than “temper.” Under such a view, all tempers are affections but not all affections are tempers. In other words, all the lasting and firmly rooted affections are tempers, but all the short-lived affections are not tempers. There are some clues in Wesley’s writings that suggest that he could allow for such an interpretation. Yet, one point remains clear: regardless of what Wesley may think, he does not emphasize on many occasions any distinctions between tempers and affections. We will not consider in as much depth how Wesley’s view of tempers compares with his view of dispositions. However, we will observe that leading Wesleyan scholars agree that for Wesley, tempers may be thought of as dispositions. Please see diagram 4.1 for a summary of Wesley’s view of the heart.

Although Wesley does not often give a thorough account for how to distinguish between tempers, affections, and dispositions, the following point is in fact clear: Wesley frequently makes the point that all of these elements—tempers, affections, and dispositions—apply to the inward dimension, not the outward dimension of the person.

49 Wesley, Letters, 5:200.
50 Wesley, Letters, 5:200. Wesley also says here that he does not think that he has the authority to distinguish between a frame of mind and a state. His statement is tentative.
51 For clarity, consider the truth: all rabbits are animals but not all animals are rabbits.
52 Clues that support this possibility include those places in Wesley’s writings where he uses “temper” and “affection” to refer to the same idea. For example, he indicates that both “love” and “joy” are both tempers and affections (he calls “love” a temper here: Outler, editor, Works (BE), 3:301, 3:422; 3:77; Wesley, ‘Address to the Clergy,’ Works (Jackson), 10:498; he calls “love” an affection here: Outler, editor, Works (BE), 2:420, 2:474, 4:22; he calls “joy” a temper here: Wesley, ‘On Perfection,’ Works (BE), 3:77; he calls “joy” an affection here: Wesley, ‘What is Man?’, Works (BE), 4:22). Interestingly, in one case, Wesley speaks of love as a “filial affection from which spring every good temper, and word, and work” (Wesley, ‘On Predestination,’ Works (BE), 2:420). This is an example of how for Wesley, an “affection” may sometimes refer to a lasting state rather than a transient feeling. This Christian love is both an affection and a temper. That tempers are affections is also apparent in his comment that the “affections” are the “only spring of action” (Wesley, ‘What is Man?’, Works (BE), 4:22). If it is true that the affections are the “only springs of action,” then affections must include tempers. This is because Wesley elsewhere says tempers are springs (see, for example, Wesley, ‘On Zeal,’ Works (BE), 3:320). From this evidence, it appears that “affections” sometimes refer to tempers (lasting inclinations and/or feelings) and other times refer to certain transient conditions.
54 Wesley speaks of all three—tempers, dispositions, and affections—as inward and contrasts them from action here: Wesley, ‘Sermon on the Mount, VI,’ Works (BE), 1:572. Another occasion in which he speaks
This leads to the question of whether Wesley thinks of tempers, affections, and dispositions as passive, as clarified in chapter 2 of this project.

While it may be a stretch to claim that all tempers and dispositions are passive in their entirety, it seems that for Wesley it is generally the case that tempers and dispositions are passive, as clarified in chapter 2 of this project. Evidence for this is found in Wesley’s critical dialogue with John Taylor, most notably represented in Wesley’s longest published work, *The Doctrine of Original Sin*. Please consider the following comments from this work:

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

You ‘think, on the contrary, it is demonstration, that we cannot be righteous or holy, we cannot observe what is right, without our own free and explicit choice’. I suppose you mean, practice what is right. But a man may be righteous before he does what is right, holy in heart before he is holy in life. The confounding these two all along seems to be the ground of your strange imagination that Adam ‘must choose to be righteous, must exercise thought and reflection before he could be righteous’. Why so? ‘Because righteousness is the right use and application of our powers.’ Here is your capital mistake. No, it is not. It is the right state of our powers. It is the right disposition of our soul, the right temper of our mind.55

Wesley is making a clear distinction in these comments between active and passive. The temper of love and the other holy tempers—bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, longsuffering—are passive because they do not require the “concurrence of one’s active power” or one’s “explicit choice.” Tempers and dispositions of all three together as inward is where he makes the comment regarding God’s judgment of the “inward working of every human soul: every appetite, passion, inclination, affection, with the various combinations of them, with every temper and disposition that constitute the whole complex character of each individual.” (Wesley, ‘The Great Assize,’ Works (BE), 1:363) (It appears that he is listing here together many commonly-understood ingredients of the heart, regardless of overlap in meaning among at least some of them). Other occasions include the mention of inward tempers (Outler, editor, Works (BE), 1:304, 1:339, 2:317, 3:424) and inward dispositions (Wesley, ‘Sermon on the Mount, V,’ Works (BE), 1:568).

55 Wesley, ‘The Doctrine of Original Sin,’ Works (BE), 12:277. All italics are Wesley’s.
are “states.” They are something different from the power of choosing, as this choosing is action as defined in chapter 2 of this project.

Later, in the same treatise, Wesley makes additional comments that argue this same point that tempers and dispositions are often passive. He says,

Nay, ‘Righteousness is right action.’ Indeed it is not. Here (as we said before) is your fundamental mistake. It is a right state of mind, which differs from right action as the cause does from effect. Righteousness is properly and directly a right temper or disposition of mind, or a complex of all right tempers.

And cannot God by his almighty power infuse any good tempers into us? You answer: ‘No. No being whatever can do for us that which cannot be at all if be not our own choice, and the effect of our own industry and exercise. But all good tempers are the effect of our own industry and exercise. Otherwise they cannot be at all.’

Nay then, it is certain they cannot be at all. For neither lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, nor any other good temper, can ever be the effect of my own industry and exercise. But I verily believe they may be the effect of God’s Spirit, working in me whatsoever pleaseth him.

In the first paragraph, Wesley clearly distinguishes tempers and disposition from “action.” In the second and third paragraph, Wesley is once again distinguishing tempers from one’s “own industry and exercise” and from “choice.” One’s own industry and exercise is active, and one’s power of choice is also active. Tempers are something different from this. Tempers are passive. Holy Tempers are given by the work of God alone, that is, by the Spirit.

We have illuminated Wesley’s view of the heart, as we explored his understanding of the ruling desire of the heart, as well as tempers and affections. We will now turn our attention to accounts of how Wesley observed the work of the Spirit in the hearts of people participating in the life of the church.

The “Fire” and “Flames” of the Heart

57 Notice the phrase “cause does from effect.” Wesley does not mean by this comment that tempers cause choice in a fashion that exemplifies necessity. If this were true, he would be guilty of a philosophical necessity that he spends all of his essay “Thoughts Upon Necessity” arguing against. What Wesley probably means here is that because of the motivational impact of tempers—as they involve pains and pleasures—human choice usually (not by necessity) follows the suggestion of the ruling temper. This point underscores the holistic nature of Wesley’s view of moral agency. Compare this point to Samuel Clarke’s idea of “moral necessity” discussed in chapter 1.
58 Wesley, ‘The Doctrine of Original Sin,’ *Works* (BE), 12:338. All italics are Wesley’s.
59 Wesley, ‘The Doctrine of Original Sin,’ *Works* (BE), 12:339. All italics are Wesley’s.
In his journal, Wesley frequently gives an account of heart-felt experiences in the life of the Methodist revival. As A. Skevington Wood argues, the “burning heart” was a central idea in Wesley’s ministry.60 Wesley often describes these kinds of heart-felt experiences that he observes in himself and others by using the terms “fire” and/or “flame.” Such experiences took place in various forms of religious social practice, such as in society meetings, band meetings, love feasts, preaching, praying, and/or other kinds of religious contexts. For Wesley, some of these observable feelings were often fleeting and not as lasting tempers. On the other hand, often such feelings marked a person’s experience of the new birth or Christian perfection, and in this way, they marked the arrival of lasting Christian tempers.

In 1744, around five years after the start of the revival, Wesley gives the following report: “In the society, God did sit upon his people as a refiner’s fire. He darted into all (I believe hardly one excepted) the melting flame of love; so that their heads were as water, and their eyes as fountains of tears.”61 Clearly from these comments, we observe the work of the Spirit with respect to a person’s passive dimension. That is, we observe here the work of God alone, something separate from the concept of human action, as clarified in chapter 2. God is touching powerfully the hearts of those in Christian community as a “melting flame.” The presence of God is something that is clearly and powerfully felt.

In 1749, after about a decade of the Methodist revival, Wesley makes the following report: “At the meeting of the Select Society, such a flame broke out as was never there before. We felt such a love to each other that we could not express.”62 Once again, Wesley is using the language of “flame” to describe the passive experience of God’s love in the human heart. In February of 1761, Wesley gives an account of a remarkable occasion of God’s work. He says, “After preaching at the Foundery in the evening, I met the Bands as usual. While a poor woman was speaking a few artless words out of the fullness of her heart, a fire kindled, and ran, as flame among the stubble, through the hearts of almost all that hear: So, when God is pleased to work, it matters not how weak, or how mean, the instrument.”63 Here Wesley is speaking of “fire” to describe the passive feelings of God in the hearts of those at the band meeting. Once again the

60 See, for example, A. Skevington Wood, John Wesley: The Burning Heart (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1967), 68 – 69.
Spirit is acting alone on human hearts. The human participants are active in their decision to gather and have a band meeting, but the actual touching of the heart itself is something that is passive in a bare sense.

Wesley’s use of the language of “fire” and “flame” to describe human perceptions of God in the heart is something that continues on a regular basis in his journals throughout his life, including his later years. Indeed, the elderly Wesley speaks of the “fire” and “flame” of the Spirit in the heart on a number of occasions. In 1784, at the age of 81, John Wesley gives the following account: “After preaching to an earnest congregation at Coleford, I met the society. They contained themselves pretty well during the exhortation; but when I began to pray, the flame broke out. Many cried aloud, many sank to the ground, many trembled exceedingly; but all seemed to be quite athirst for God, and penetrated by the presence of his power.” Note that Wesley says, “the flame broke out.” He is speaking once again of the passive feeling of God’s love in the human heart. In this particular instance, the effects were rather dramatic: people cried aloud and trembled, etc. In 1787, Wesley described the testimony of a woman in a religious class meeting as follows: “her words were as fire, conveying both light and heat to the hearts of all her heard.” This “heat” is no doubt something that is felt in a passive way.

On occasions of giving pastoral counsel, Wesley comforted those seekers who did not in fact experience the love of God in a dramatic way. Although he believed the passive feelings of the Spirit were typical for the Christian life, he did acknowledge that the Spirit worked in a variety of way in regard to how the Spirit is felt. In 1785, he wrote to one inquirer:

There is an irreconcilable variability in the operations of the Holy Spirit on the souls of man, more especially to the manner of justification. Many find Him rushing upon them like a torrent, while they experience ‘The o’erwhelming power of saving grace.’ This has been the experience of many; perhaps of more in this late visitation than in any other age since the times of the Apostles. But in others He works in a very different way: ‘He deigns His influence to infuse, Sweet, refreshing, as the silent dews.’ It has pleased him to work the latter way in you from the beginning; and it is not improbable He will continue (as He has begun) to work in a gentle and almost insensible manner.

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66 Wesley, Letters, 7:298.
For Wesley, the Christian life must involve in some degree a passive experience of God’s love in the heart. Yet, as he explains here, there is variation in how this is felt. In some, the experience is calm and not dramatic. In other cases, it is as a strong fire. Nevertheless, in general, whether strong or faint, there is an experience that is in some degree felt. Regardless of the degree of feeling, Wesley frequently makes observation of the Spirit working as “fire” and “flame.” There are dozens of such instances in his journals throughout his entire ministry after the start of the revival in the late 1730s.

Therefore, for Wesley, the heart is something that has a ruling desire, with happiness as the target. It is also the locus of other forms of consciousness, involving the feeling of tempers and affections. Many of these are passive in nature. The heart is a cherished dimension of how human beings sense and perceive God. By touching the heart, God gives many sincere seekers feelings of fire and flames of love, which include feelings of joy and pleasure.

**Practical Reason and the Heart**

Wesley places less emphasis on reason than on the heart for the attainment of what he calls “true religion.” In this way, one who is unintelligent and uneducated has just as equal access to true religion and Christian salvation as one who is educated, highly intelligent, and privileged. This is because all people—whether poor, rich, smart, unintelligent, or whatever else—may receive just as easily the gift of Christian faith and the transforming tempers of the heart, the result of the work of God alone. Wesley is clear to state that reason alone cannot produce any of the following: Christian faith, hope, the love of God, virtue, and happiness. Yet Wesley gives much value and importance to reason. He sees it as having an important role in the Christian life.

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67 Wesley, ‘The Way to the Kingdom,’ *Works* (BE), 1:220. There are many occasions in which Wesley emphasizes the importance of the heart for true religion. It is hard to miss them. Several examples include: Outler, editor, *Works* (BE), 2:530, 3:448 and Wesley, ‘An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,’ *Works* (BE), 11:45.


69 In regard to reason, Wesley describes himself as using “a middle way” (Wesley, ‘The Case of Reason Impartially Considered,’ *Works* (BE), 2:600). He is not one to deny any value of reason, but he is also one not to give it exclusive privilege in matters of religion. Reason is valuable in religion for explaining the scriptures and for keeping conscience void of offense (Wesley, ‘The Case of Reason Impartially Considered,’ *Works* (BE), 2:592). Also, he makes it clear in his *Address to the Clergy* that he has high expectations for clergy to use their reason by means of studying (Wesley, ‘Address to Clergy,’ *Works* (Jackson), 10:492). His high regard for reason is evident in the curriculum he helps establish for the Kingswood school and in the advice that he gives to Methodists.
Wesley says that reason is “much the same with understanding.” It exerts itself in three ways: simple apprehension (the barely conceiving of something in the mind), judgment (determining whether conceptions agree or disagree with one another), and discourse (the motion of progress of the mind from one judgment to another). Reason appears to involve at least some role for the active power, as clarified in chapter 2 of this project. This is especially evident in the aforementioned idea of discourse. One is generally free to determine when to begin this discourse of reason, and one is generally free to determine how long to continue it. For Wesley, choosing to use it as much as possible is the preferred option. Moreover, reason should be used as much possible because it is part of what it means to love God with all of one’s mind, as commanded in scripture.

Consistent with this point, Wesley sees reason as important for matters of moral agency. This is practical reason. In a person’s pursuit of the greatest end of Christian living, Spirit-empowered reason works not alone but in conjunction with the Spirit-empowered heart. As mentioned above, the heart provides the “spring” of action. This spring derives in large part from the motivational impact of pleasures and pain. The spring of the heart points a person towards the ultimate end, which is happiness in the love of God and neighbour. Thus, without the heart, reason is aimless. A person may know the greatest end and reason well concerning the greatest end, but without the holy tempers of the heart, one is weak and powerless in pursuit of it.

Practical reason is the faculty whereby one may effectively determine the means to the greatest end of Christian love. In this way, practical reason for Wesley involves the planning and execution of what he calls the “means of grace.” These are practices from which one waits in order to receive the grace that leads to the highest end of loving God and neighbour. Many of the means of grace are active in nature, and they are instances of using one’s power of liberty. Practical reason involves calculating when to use these means of grace.

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72 For an example of how Wesley thinks that the Spirit works in human reason, see Wesley, ‘A Letter to a Person Lately Joined with the Quakers,’ *Works* (Jackson), 10:181.
73 Wesley says in regard to the means of grace, “But we allow that the whole value of the means depends on their actual subservience to the end of religion.” Wesley, ‘The Means of Grace,’ *Works* (BE), 1:381.
practices and how frequently to use them. It also involves calculating how to budget one’s time and resources for the purpose of performing various kinds of means of grace.\textsuperscript{75}

In some cases, knowing how to use and apply the means of grace are not immediately clear. In many such cases, it is important to use practical reason. Consider Wesley’s comments as follows:

You seem not to have observed, that the Scripture, in most points, gives only general rules; and leaves the particular circumstances to be adjusted by the common sense of mankind. The Scripture, for instance, gives that general rule, ‘Let all things be done decently and in order.’ But common sense is to determine, on particular occasions, what order and decency require. So, in another instance, the Scripture lays it down as a general, standing direction: ‘Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.’ But it is common prudence which is to make the application of this, in a thousand particular cases. 11. ‘But these,’ said another, ‘are all man’s inventions.’ This is but the same objection in another form. And the same answer will suffice for any reasonable person. These are man’s inventions. And what then? That is, they are methods which men have found, by reason and common sense, for the more effectually applying several Scripture rules, couched in general terms, to particular occasions.\textsuperscript{76}

In this passage, Wesley stresses how it is impossible for scripture to give instructions for every specific occasion. Quite often, the scripture will give a “general rule” or principle of conduct, and it will be up to each person to use common sense and reason to the best of his or her ability in order to know how to apply such rules and principles. This is prudence, a kind of practical reasoning. Also, as we see from these comments, there is never an idle moment. By grace, one may always use one’s prudence to determine how best to use one’s time and resources for whatever situation one faces. In harmony with this point, Wesley says, “Use every means which either reason or Scripture recommends as conducive (through the free love of God in Christ) either to the obtaining or increasing any of the gifts of God.”\textsuperscript{77}

For Wesley, another power of the soul related to practical reasoning is conscience. Conscience involves multiple features of the soul, including an interplay between practical reasoning and the heart. Conscience is “a kind of silent reasoning of the mind whereby those things which are judged to be right are approved of with pleasure; but those which

\textsuperscript{75} See, for example, Wesley’s comments in his sermon “The More Excellent Way,” sermon 89 in Outler’s Works (BE) and his sermon “The Good Steward,” sermon 51 of Outler’s Works (BE).

\textsuperscript{76} Wesley, ‘A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists,’ Works (BE), 9:263.

\textsuperscript{77} Wesley, ‘The Nature of Enthusiasm,’ Works (BE), 2:59.
are judged evil are disapproved of with uneasiness.”

In this way, we see that conscience involves both reasoning and a regard for feelings of pleasure and uneasiness in the heart. The key aspect of conscience concerning Wesley’s thought is that it is a power to a certain degree, to judge whether a past, current, or proposed action is right or wrong. Much of conscience is not given by intentional learning. God gives a degree of conscience to every human being. Because of Wesley’s understanding of conscience, Wesley can claim that all people are to some degree morally accountable.

**Responding to Secondary Literature: Clapper, Maddox, and Collins on the Affections**

Gregory Clapper, Randy Maddox, and Kenneth Collins have all proposed interpretations of John Wesley’s view of the affections and tempers of the heart. In *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* published in 1994, Randy Maddox says that Wesley “traded on a slight—but significant—distinction between affections and tempers.” Maddox says that for Wesley, a temper is a “habitual disposition of a person.” Collins, like Maddox, agrees that there must be a distinction between the tempers and affections. They both use Wesley’s comments in reference to 1 Thessalonians 2:17 as support for this claim. In these comments, Wesley speaks of “transient affections of holy grief, desire, or joy” on the one hand, and he speaks of “calm standing tempers” as a “fixed posture of the soul” on the other hand. This leads Collins to conclude that “The affections, on the other hand, as well as the ‘passions’ which constitute intensified affections, are less enduring and habituated than the tempers.”

In the essay “John Wesley’s language of the heart” published in 2009, Gregory Clapper responds to Maddox and Collins. Clapper says in reference to them: “Two recent interpreters of Wesley have asserted that there is an important difference in the way that Wesley uses the terms ‘affections’ and ‘tempers.’” He summarizes the claims made by Maddox and Collins and observes how they use Wesley’s comments on 1 Thessalonians 2:17 in support of their claims. Clapper then says in reference to their comments on Wesley’s view of 1 Thessalonians 2:17: “I think, however, it is problematic to lay so

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79 Wesley, ‘On Conscience,’ *Works* (BE), 3:481
80 Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 69.
81 Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 69
82 Wesley, *ENNT Notes*, 1 Thessalonians 2:17.
much conceptual weight on this one quote, especially since ‘calm’ and ‘standing’ are not fixed characterizations of ‘temper’ in Wesley’s work, as ‘transient’ is not a fixed characterization of ‘affection’ in his usage.”

In other words, Clapper is rejecting the point shared by Maddox and Collins that Wesley distinguishes the meanings of temper and affection on a regular basis. Clapper explores some passages in Wesley’s writings and then concludes at the end of the essay that there is a “rough equivalence of the terms ‘affections’ and ‘tempers’ in Wesley’s usage.”

All of these contributors offer helpful insights in regard to Wesley’s view of the tempers and affections, but it is possible that none of them gives the best explanation for how to interpret Wesley’s view. As mentioned above, the best solution may be simply to recognize a broader range of meanings to which the term “affection” refers. Wesley says (as noted by Maddox and Collins), “affection” refers to “transient” or short-lasting effects such as grief, joy, etc. But in other contexts, Wesley describes an “affection” as something that is more fixed and longer-lasting. For example, Wesley describes love as an “affection.” He also describes love as a “temper.” The fact that he describes love as both an affection and a temper gives support to Clapper’s argument that a temper and affection are sometimes equivalent. Such equivalency is also apparent in Wesley’s comment that the “affections” are the “only spring of action.” If it is true that the affections are the “only spring of action,” then affections must include tempers. This is because Wesley elsewhere says tempers are springs.

But this is not to reject the insights offered by Collins and Maddox. Collins is correct in pointing out that there can also be a distinction between a temper and a short-lasting affection. How is this possible? The solution here is simply to recognize that the concept of an “affection” refers to a broader range of meanings than temper. In other words, the point is that all tempers are affections but not all affections are tempers. The affections that are fixed postures and longer-lasting are tempers and the affections that are transient and short-lasting are something different. Again, it is unfortunate that Wesley does not give much discussion of this point. However, such an interpretation appears possible.

85 Clapper, “John Wesley’s Language of the Heart,” 95.
89 Wesley, ‘What is Man?,’ Works (BE), 4:22.
90 See, for example, Wesley, ‘On Zeal,’ Works (BE), 3:320.
Summarizing the First Task of this Project

As we have reached the end of this chapter, we have completed the first task of this project. That is, we have completed our quest to clarify Wesley’s understanding of the features of the soul. In chapter 2, we clarified what this project means by active and passive. It was also shown that for Wesley, there is a meaning of liberty that is equivalent to the human active dimension. In chapter 3, we explored Wesley’s view of the will properly speaking and contrasted it with his view of liberty. The will properly speaking is the composite of the passions and affections of the heart. This is passive and not active like liberty. “Will” may be used in a second sense that is equivalent to liberty. Such a meaning of the will is the same as free will or the power of choosing. This meaning of the will is active.

In chapter 4, we explored Wesley’s view of the heart. Carlton Young describes the religion of the heart as a key element of the Methodist sensibility during Wesley’s time.\textsuperscript{91} It was shown that the heart is passive in nature. For Wesley, the will properly speaking is part of the heart. The heart includes a ruling desire, along with other tempers, dispositions, and affections. In the final section of chapter 4, we briefly considered Wesley’s view of the understanding, particularly his view of reason. Reason has an active element. A person generally may regulate when and how long to use reason. The correct use of reason is possible when reason works in conjunction with the motivating spring of the heart. Practical reason involves the planning and execution of the means of grace conducive to the end of loving God and neighbour. It involves prudence, knowing how to effectively apply general rules and principles from scripture to particular circumstances. It is also involved in the operation of one’s conscience.

Thus, in summary, for Wesley a person is endowed with understanding, will (part of the heart), and liberty. The understanding includes the power of reason. The understanding pertains to all matters of consciousness and so must also relate to the consciousness of the will properly speaking and liberty. The will properly speaking includes one’s passions and affections. It includes the feelings of inclinations/desires and other tempers of the heart. Liberty is one’s active power. It is the power of choosing. It may determine such tasks as rising and sitting down, opening or closing one’s eyes, the

will to believe or not to believe, choosing to follow God’s commandments or rejecting them, or anything that is active in nature. It is only by grace that liberty may be used for moral matters. In reference to such moral liberty Wesley says, “I have not an absolute power over my own mind, because of the corruption of my nature, yet through the grace of God assisting me I have a power to choose and do good as well as evil. I am free to choose whom I will serve, and if I choose the better part, to continue therein even unto death.”

In the chapters that follow, we will embark on the next task of this project: explore more how the features of the soul relate as an agent performs right action and pursues happiness. This will involve more of a consideration of Wesley’s account of true Christianity, how God has a leading role in Wesley’s view of moral agency, and how the Spirit works in human action. The pursuit of happiness, seeking the highest form of perfect Christian love, continues but is not the same at all points in the Christian life. For this reason, in the second task of this project, we must consider John Wesley’s roadmap for the Christian life. Wesley’s roadmap is the “way of salvation.” This roadmap is central and indispensable for understanding Wesley’s view of moral agency. However, before treating Wesley’s roadmap, it is helpful to first consider Wesley’s understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit with respect to the human active power. We will consider this point in the next chapter.

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Chapter 5: Fruitful Action and the Holy Spirit

In the last 3 chapters, we performed the first task of this project by clarifying Wesley’s view of the features of the soul. For the second task of this project, we will consider more how these features relate with regard to the performance of right action and the pursuit of the highest end of Christian living, which is loving God and neighbour to one’s full potential. For Wesley, this second task necessarily requires a consideration of God’s leading role in moral agency. This is because Wesley’s view of moral agency is theological. The thesis of this project is that according to John Wesley, a person’s pursuit of the greatest goal of Christian living is in fact an expression of God’s gift and that the giftedness of this blessing is illuminated by a critical examination of the work of the Spirit with respect to the active and passive dimensions of a human being. Although the role of the Spirit in both passive and active dimensions will be considered in this chapter, this chapter will devote special attention to the role of the Holy Spirit in human action (the active dimension of a person). As we will show, exploring in more depth the role of the Spirit in human action illuminates the gracious nature of fruitful human action in John Wesley’s account of moral agency.

In order to show Wesley’s view of the role of the Spirit in human action, we will take a number of steps. First, we will consider a general overview of Wesley’s theology. This is helpful because it provides a context for considering Wesley’s view of the Holy Spirit in human action. Second, we will briefly consider Wesley’s view of grace. Third, terminology will be defined. We will consider what is meant by the terms “fruitful action” and “passive operation.” These terms will guide us in considering Wesley’s view of the work of the Holy Spirit in moral agency with regard to the active and passive dimensions of a person. Fourth, we will explore in more depth the work of the Spirit with respect to the active dimension of a person. This will involve an investigation of the features of Wesley’s view of fruitful action and how these features are important for Wesley’s view of moral agency. Fifth, we will explore the nature of fruitful action by considering how it is consistent with Wesley’s view of free-will. Next, we will consider

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how the work of this chapter has bearing on the thesis of this project. Last, in light of the progress of the foregoing chapters, we will respond to discussions of “monergism” and “synergism” in secondary literature.

The Shape of Wesley’s Theology

A central focus of Wesley’s theology is the love of God and neighbour. This is the “true religion” of the heart and “faith [Christian faith] working by love.” This is the greatest end of Christian living. It is also the fulfillment of the greatest commandment of the Bible. This true religion of the heart requires the bearing of outward fruit (the performance of good action or limitedly good action), if there is time and opportunity. Without this “religion of the heart,” a commitment to Christian orthodoxy—correct doctrines and opinions—falls short. Indeed, Wesley speaks of this “Christianity”; not as it implies a set of opinions, a system of doctrines, but as it refers to men’s heart and lives. For Wesley, a poor, uneducated, mentally-disabled person who has Christian faith working by love has a better theology than a person who is a wealthy and highly intelligent expert of Christian doctrine but who lacks Christian love.

For Wesley, having the religion of the heart is more important than whether one is Presbyterian, Moravian, Lutheran, Quaker, Methodist, Anglican, Catholic, etc. In this way, Wesley’s theology may be viewed as ecumenical in a Christian sense. For Wesley, it would be preferable to be a Calvinist with Christian faith working by love than to accept all of John Wesley’s views without such love. Wesley affirms the theology of any human being who has Christian faith working by love and describes him or her as “a companion in the kingdom” and a “joint-heir of his [Christ’s] glory.” Although Wesley believes that having Christian faith working by love (the religion of the heart) is more important than

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2 He says “that true religion, the very essence of it, is nothing short of holy tempers” (Wesley, ‘On Charity,’ Works (BE), 3:306). In a letter in 1790, the mature Wesley says in regard to religion: “the greatest thing of all—religion. I do not mean external religion, but the religion of the heart” (Wesley, Letters, 8:218). Yet, this religion of the heart must involve the performance of good action lest it not have authentic love. For the point that this true religion in its highest form involves loving God and neighbor with all one’s capacity, see: Outler, editor, Works (BE), 3:585, 4:106 and Wesley, ‘The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained,’ Works (BE), 9:229.

3 This is a common expression for Wesley.

4 For an example of how Wesley cautions against having only orthodoxy of belief without the religion of the heart, see: Wesley, ‘The Way to the Kingdom,’ Works (BE), 1:220.

5 Wesley, ‘Scriptural Christianity,’ Works (BE), 1:161.

6 See, for example, Wesley, ‘The Catholic Spirit,’ Works (BE), 2:90.

whether one is Presbyterian, Lutheran, Quaker, Moravian, Anglican etc, he still believes that the Church of England is preferable to the rest.

In 1777, Wesley gives a helpful overview of his theology. He begins by indicating that his theology focuses on the love of God and neighbour. Consistent with this point, he gives three main sources for his theology. First, he mentions the Bible. In one context, he says, “We believe, indeed, that ‘all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God;’ . . . We believe the written word of God to be the only and sufficient rule both of Christian faith and practice.” Second, he mentions the “religion of the primitive church,” and he gives a list of names that he sees as authoritative. Third, he mentions the religion of the Church of England. Of course, there is much overlap in all three. We will now consider in a bit more depth the last source—the religion of the Church of England.

Wesley’s theology is basically orthodox Anglican. In 1777, Wesley says that he believes the Church of England to “come nearer the scriptural and primitive plan than any other national church upon earth.” During the beginning stage of Methodism, “orthodox” is Wesley’s own self-description. In reference to the early Methodists, Wesley said: “They were all orthodox in every point; firmly believing not only the three creeds, but whatsoever they judged to be the doctrine of the Church of England, as contained in her Articles and Homilies.” During the remainder of his life, Wesley remains a devoted and loyal Anglican priest. However, near the end of his life, Wesley’s sympathies decline for what are perhaps some of the less-important doctrines of Anglicanism.

During the later stages of his life, Wesley maintains faithfully what is basically the core of orthodox Anglican theology. For example, in his Sunday service sent to the American Methodists in 1784, he recommends with esteem the Nicene and Apostles’ Creeds, the doctrine from the Council of Chalcedon, much of the Book of Common Prayer, and most of the Anglican Articles of Religion. From this package, it is clear that he is continuing to recommend doctrines upholding the authority of scripture for matters

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8 Wesley, ‘On Laying the Foundation of the Chapel,’ Works (BE), 3:585.
9 Wesley, ‘The Character of a Methodist,’ Works (BE) 9:34.
13 Wesley, ‘On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel,’ Works (BE), 3:582.
15 This is evident in 1784 when he revises the Anglican Book of Common Prayer and sends this to the Methodists in North America. For more information on Wesley’s preparing of the Sunday Service, see Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodists, 289.
of salvation, the Trinity, the virgin birth, the Person of Christ (including the resurrection, Incarnation, and the atonement), the Person of the Holy Spirit, original sin, free will, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, the nature of the sacraments, the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and more. Wesley maintains at least all of these commitments throughout the rest of his life. Apparently, trimming Anglican Articles of Religion for American Methodists is something that Wesley would not have normally performed for anyone had it not been for the extraordinary circumstances regarding the American Revolution. However, what took place reflected his preferred Anglican doctrines.

Consistent with his commitment to the Bible, the primitive church, and Anglican theology, he also sees his standard sermons (Sermons), Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament (ENNT), and Large Minutes of the Conference (Minutes) as authoritative for theology. Through the “model deed” established in 1763, Wesley prohibited the preachers of his movement from preaching any doctrine other than what is contained in his Sermons and ENNT. Also, in a letter to the American Methodists in 1783, he instructed them to follow the doctrine and discipline as found in Wesley’s Sermons, Minutes, and ENNT.

Wesley’s theological commitments led him to hold the doctrine of the Trinity in esteem, despite the difficulties of some Anglican theologians of this time period regarding the doctrine of the Trinity. As Jason Vickers points out, some theologians working on the doctrine of the Trinity adopted some terms for discussion that led to conceptual confusion, and so this type of theological discourse lost some momentum. However, in the practical life of the church, especially among the Methodists in some contexts, the language of the Trinity functioned well. In regard to his practical doctrine of assurance, John Wesley makes the comment:

But I know not how anyone can be a Christian believer till ‘he hath’ (as St. John speaks) ‘the witness in himself’; till ‘the Spirit of God witnesses with his spirit that he is a child of God.’ —that is, in effect, till God the Holy Ghost witnesses that God the Father has accepted him through the merits of God the Son—and having this witness he honours the Son and the blessed Spirit ‘even as he honours the Father’.

16 Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodists, 290.
17 Wesley, ‘Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and others,’ Works (Jackson), 8:331. See also Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodists, 213.
18 Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodists, 285.
20 For example, it appeared prevalently in the hymns, sermons, and prayers of Charles Wesley. These were fairly widespread in the Methodist movement. See Vickers, Invocation and Assent, 171.
The witness of the Spirit here is John Wesley’s doctrine of assurance. It is integral to Wesley’s understanding of Christian faith. This statement shows how for Wesley, Christian faith is interwoven with knowledge of the Trinity. Wesley cautions against the danger of assenting to the Trinity while forgetting and/or neglecting the true religion of the heart. Nonetheless, Wesley describes the Trinity as having “close connection with vital religion.” The economic Trinity is certainly discernible in Wesley’s theology of love. He says in reference to those who are perfect in love: “Ye have known both the Father and the Son and the Spirit of Christ in your inmost soul.”

For this chapter, we will be exploring John Wesley’s view of the role of the Holy Spirit in human action. Thus, one could describe what will be done here as falling under the category of pneumatology. According to orthodox theology—to which Wesley adhered—, all pneumatology is in fact Trinitarian. This is because, according to the creeds held by both Wesley and the Church of England, the Spirit never acts apart from the Father and the Son. This point is especially important in regard to human salvation. Due to the fall, humankind suffers from sin and death and a condition of total depravity, with a carnal nature of corrupt affections and tempers. Without God’s grace, humankind is separated from God and cannot do anything right. It is for the sake of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection that God the Father lovingly offers salvation to humankind through the Spirit. In every instance in which “God” or the “Spirit” is mentioned in this project we are presupposing that the Trinity is at work.

For the first task of this project, we clarified Wesley’s view of the features of the soul. We distinguished between active and passive dimensions, as clarified in chapter 2. It was shown that the desires, tempers, and affections of the heart and the will properly speaking pertain to the passive dimension and liberty pertains to the active dimension. As the understanding is thought to pertain to all instances of consciousness, one may infer that the understanding pertains to both active and passive dimensions. For this current chapter, we will focus on the work of the Spirit mostly with respect to the active dimension—which is different from but intimately related to the passive dimension. As

23 Wesley, ‘Christian Perfection,’ Works (BE), 2:105. He also says that such people have known “the eternal Three-One God” (Wesley, ‘On the Discoveries of Faith,’ Works (BE), 4:37). Also, Wesley frequently uses Trinitarian language in his discussion of the new birth when he quotes Galatians 4:6: “God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (See, for example, Wesley, ‘On the Discoveries of Faith,’ Works (BE), 4:36).
24 It is “first” in the sense of order considered, not in the sense of priority.
we have shown in previous chapters, Wesley has a meaning of ‘liberty’ that is equivalent to the human active power. “Fruitful action”\textsuperscript{25} is a subcategory of exercising one’s liberty.\textsuperscript{26} That is, liberty (understood as the power of choosing) is a broader category than fruitful action. Not all actions, exercises of one’s liberty, are fruitful. An example of this is sinful action. As we will show, when the Holy Spirit works with respect to the active dimension of a person, this and only this is fruitful action.

**Wesley’s View of Grace**

Our focus on the work of the Spirit leads us to Wesley’s view of grace. For Wesley, grace is a relational idea that includes how the Spirit impacts a human being. Grace involves the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. Its effects include how the Spirit impacts the forensic part of salvation (what God does for us) and also in regard to the features of the soul, including the understanding, will, and liberty (what God does in us). Wesley says:

> By ‘the grace of God’ is sometimes to be understood that free love, that unmerited mercy, by which I, a sinner, through the merits of Christ am now reconciled to God. But in this place it rather means that power of God the Holy Ghost which ‘worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure’. As soon as ever the grace of God (in the former sense, his pardoning love) is manifested to our soul, the grace of God (in the latter sense, the power of his Spirit) takes place therein. And now we can perform, through God, what to man was impossible.\textsuperscript{27}

The effects of Christ’s merits go beyond only pardoning for past sins. As the merits of Christ take effect, the Spirit of God is manifest to one’s soul (including understanding, will, and liberty) in other perceivable manners, as the Holy Spirit works in a person “both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”\textsuperscript{28} Thus, for Wesley, the meaning of grace includes the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

As Joseph Cunningham points out, Wesley’s understanding of the Holy Spirit has practical implications. Wesley is not concerned only with the immanent God but also the economic God, including how God relates to humankind on earth. “Perceptible inspiration” is a model by which one may discuss the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

\textsuperscript{25} What is meant by this phrase and how it relates to Wesley will be considered more below.

\textsuperscript{26} Virtue involves both holy tempers and correct choice flowing from these holy tempers. Yet, “fruitful action” of a child of God refers only to the active component of virtue.

\textsuperscript{27} Wesley, ‘The Witness of Our Own Spirit,’ *Works* (BE), 1:309.

\textsuperscript{28} This is in reference to Philippians 2:12-13. One of Wesley’s key sermons on these verses is “On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” sermon 85 of Outler, editor, *Sermons*, volume 3.
Spirit in the economy of salvation. Cunningham says, “Perceptible inspiration marks Wesley’s emphasis upon the Spirit’s economic operation which fosters relational participation in the divine life.” To the degree that the Holy Spirit works in a “perceptible” way, God has practical relevance. The perceptible effects of the Spirit on salvation are not the concern of only the most advanced experts of divinity. Rather, such work of the Spirit is the concern of any and every sincere follower of Christ. As we will show in the chapters that follow, the perceptible inspiration of the Spirit constitutes much of Wesley’s roadmap of the Christian life and serves as a key aspect of the relationship between God and person. As we will show, one key way in which the Spirit is “perceptible” is through the passive dimension of a person.

Active and Passive Work of the Spirit

Over the course of the next three chapters, as we conduct the second task of this project, we will explore how the Spirit works with regard to the features of the soul. For this purpose, we will use two terms to assist the discussion. We will use the phrase “passive operation” to refer to John Wesley’s understanding of the work of the Spirit with respect to the passive dimension of a person (including the heart and the will properly speaking), and we will use the phrase “fruitful action” to refer to John Wesley’s understanding of the work of the Spirit with respect to the active dimension of person (the exercise of one’s liberty or the act of choosing).

The phrases “passive operation” and “fruitful action” are rooted in Wesley’s own language. Notice Wesley’s use of the word “operations” in the following comment.

’By feeling, I mean, being inwardly conscious of. By the operations of the Spirit, I do not mean the manner in which he operates, but the graces which he operates in a Christian.’ And again: ‘We believe that love, joy, peace, are inwardly felt, or they have no being; and that men are satisfied they have grace, first by feeling these, and afterwards by their outward actions.’

30 These comments are a direct quote from Wesley’s letter to Dr. Rutherforth (Works (Jackson) 14:355). This quote includes pasted comments from Wesley’s earlier work A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion and also comments from a letter to the Rev. Mr. Downes. See Jackson, editor, The Works of Wesley, 8:78 and 9:104. In the second sentence of the above quote, Wesley is distinguishing between the operations of the Spirit that are beyond human understanding versus the operations of the Spirit that are perceivable by a person.
From these comments, it is clear that for Wesley, operations of the Spirit produce “feeling,” which includes the feelings of love, joy, peace, etc. In these comments, Wesley is clearly distinguishing these feelings from “outward actions.” Indeed, these feelings are passive, as clarified in chapters 2-4 of this project. It is not clear from Wesley’s writings that he limits such operations of the Holy Spirit to only the passive dimension (the aforementioned feelings, etc.). Nevertheless, for this project, when we speak of “passive operation,” we are speaking only of the passive aspect of such operations. The adjective “passive” should make this clear. “Passive operation” includes but is not limited to the Spirit’s production of the feelings of desires, tempers, and affections of the heart. It also includes the Spirit’s giving of conscience and anything else that is done passively with respect to a person.

The phrase “fruitful action” is directly inspired by Wesley’s own language. Fruitful action is action that brings forth “fruits meet for repentance.”

It is possible only by grace. For Wesley, this concept is inspired by Isaiah 1:16-17, Matthew 3:8, and Luke 3:9. Consider the following comments from The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained. Wesley says that he means “by ‘fruits meet for repentance,’ forgiving our brother, ceasing from evil, doing good, using the ordinances of God, and in general, obeying him according to the measure of grace which we have received.” Notice that fruitful action is active, as clarified in chapter 2 of this project. Notice also that “ceasing from evil, doing good, using the ordinances of God” are the same as following Wesley’s General Rules. Also, Wesley says here that fruitful action refers to “in general, obeying him according to the measure of grace which we have received.” Presumably, this refers to obeying all the moral commandments of scripture as much as possible and using the means of grace as much as possible. Therefore, in summary, fruitful action refers to doing all of the following as much as possible (when there is time and opportunity):

follow the General Rules, obey all moral commandments of scriptures, and practice any other remaining means of grace. Andrew Thompson and Henry Knight show that

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35 For an example of how Wesley links “fruits meets for repentance” with some specific examples of means of grace, see: Wesley, ‘The Scripture Way of Salvation,’ Works (BE), 2:166.
Wesley’s view of the means of grace refers to a wide range of activities. For Wesley, fruitful action is any morally preferable action. It is exercising one’s liberty, one’s power of choosing, to do what is right.

Wesley makes further clarifications regarding fruitful action. He says explicitly in regard to fruits meet for repentance before the new birth: “These I cannot as yet term good works, because they do not spring from faith and the love of God.” Although the same works are then good, when they are performed by ‘those who have believed’.

In this sense, fruitful action has two types. The first type is fruitful action that is performed before the new birth and justification. This is not good works (or good action) properly speaking. However, as we shall show in the next chapter, such action is good in a limited sense. The second type of fruitful action is right action that is performed after the new birth. Wesley clearly identifies this second type. This is virtue properly speaking. It is action that flows from a loving heart. This includes good works (or good action) properly speaking. Wesley consistently maintains this point after 1738, and it allows him to remain consistent with article 13 of the Articles of Religion of the Church of England, “Of Works Done Before Justification.”

For Wesley, it seems that even if one is not yet justified or born of God, and even if one cannot yet do good works properly speaking, one is always by grace capable of “doing good.” In other words, there is a distinction between “good works” and “doing good.” The former refers to the action in itself and the latter refers to the effects of an action. That is, Wesley makes a distinction for how some actions are not “good in


37 Wesley, ‘The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained,’ Works (BE), 9:176. There are quotes within quotes because Wesley is quoting himself.

38 For Wesley’s discussion of fruitful actions after the new birth, see Wesley, ‘The Scripture Way of Salvation,’ Works (BE), 2:166.

39 See Wesley, ‘An Israelite Indeed,’ Works (BE), 3:280 and the relevant footnotes from chapter 1 of this project.

40 See the appendix entitled, “Consistency in Wesley’s Thought.”

41 Wesley, ‘A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,’ Works (BE), 11:113. The distinction between good works properly speaking and action that is good in a limited sense helps Wesley avoid a contradiction regarding his use of scripture (Wesley, ‘Some Remarks on Mr. Hill’s “Farrago Double-Distilled”,’ Works (BE), 13:509 and 10:523). In his sermon “Justification by Faith” Wesley focuses on Romans 4:5, which he translates: “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness (Wesley, ‘Justification by Faith,’ Works (BE), 1:182).” Here one “worketh not” in the sense that one is not capable of performing any good works “strictly speaking” (Wesley, Justification By Faith, Works (BE), 1:192). In other words, one who “worketh not” is one who still should perform fruitful action (the first type mentioned above) as much as possible, if there is time and opportunity.
themselves” on the one hand but are still “good and profitable to men” on the other hand.  All people can by grace do good, but only those who are born of God can do “good works,” actions that are good in themselves. Good works are both good in themselves and have positive effects. For those who are not yet justified and born of God, only the latter applies to doing good. For this reason, one who is not yet justified cannot do good works but can “do good,” as stated in the General Rules. This point will be discussed more in chapters 6 and 8. In either case, whether before the new birth or after, the action that is performed is fruitful action.

These concepts of passive operation and fruitful action are crucial for Wesley’s theology and view of moral agency. The concepts that these terms represent are that which Wesley clearly recognizes, frequently uses, and highly values. A consideration of the pneumatological dimensions of passive operation and fruitful action will help to clarify Wesley’s “way of salvation,” his practical roadmap for Christian living. We will show how it helps to distinguish the roads from the landmarks so to speak.

There is difference between passive operation and fruitful action on the one hand and the two types of spiritual growth mentioned in chapter 2 on the other hand. Each of these two types of spiritual growth have elements of both fruitful action and passive operation. At the same time, the type of spiritual growth comparable to the fit woman described in chapter 2 has a larger degree of fruitful action and the type of spiritual growth analogous to the flaming dart typically has more noticeable effects of passive operation. The illustrations in chapter 2 concerning the two types of spiritual growth should help make this clear.

As we will show, the concepts of active and passive provide clarity that helps to underscore the thesis of this project. To restate this thesis: for Wesley, the active pursuit of the highest end of Christian living is an expression of God’s gift and the giftedness of this blessing is illuminated by a critical examination of the work of the Spirit with respect to the active and passive dimensions of a human being. This important emphasis in Wesley’s practical thought is often misinterpreted or missed altogether when Wesley’s view of passive operation and fruitful action are confused, improperly mixed together, misunderstood, and/or overlooked.

43 We know that it was in fact Wesley’s expectation for those who are not yet justified to follow the General Rules.
44 Wesley does not use the words “passive operation” often but he uses the concept often. One may handle a concept without using specific words.
Key Features of Fruitful Action

For Wesley, in order for a human action to be a fruitful action, it must involve the work of the Holy Spirit. Fruitful action is always the effect of God’s grace. For this project, fruitful action is defined so as to describe the largest category regarding Wesley’s view of any action that has positive moral value. It refers to all such actions that have a positive moral value. Fruitful actions include all righteous actions and all good actions. Any human action that is not fruitful must either be sinful or neutral in nature.

It is evident from Wesley’s writings that his view of fruitful action includes the following important features: (1) it may occur only in response to the motivational force of affections of the heart that have received the transforming work of the Holy Spirit alone (passive operation) in some way during a previous occasion, (2) human effort alone—even in response to the work of the Spirit on the heart — is not enough for fruitful action to occur, and (3) the Holy Spirit and the person always act simultaneously from the beginning of a fruitful action until the end.

Consider now the first feature of Wesley’s view of fruitful action: it may occur only in response to the motivational force of affections that have received the transforming work of the Holy Spirit alone (passive operation) in some way during a previous occasion. That is, although fruitful action itself is completely distinct from the passive operation of the Spirit, it may only occur only in response to the effects of passive operation of the Spirit. This view is apparent in many of Wesley’s theological discussions, including his discussion of Phil 2:12-13 in his sermon, “On Working Out Our own Salvation.” Here Wesley says, “God worketh in you; therefore you can work—otherwise it would be impossible.” He is also clear that for people who are not yet born of God, any fruitful action must be preceded by and flow from the spiritually-affected desires produced by prevenient grace and repentance. For those already born of God, such fruitful action must be preceded by and flow from the transformed heart of the new birth.

45 For two of Wesley’s most extensive discussions of the co-working nature of God and person, see: Wesley, ‘Predestination Calmly Considered,’ Works (BE), 13:288, and Wesley, ‘On Working Out Our Own Salvation,’ Works (BE), 3:199.
46 Please see the discussion of fruitful action above.
47 It is assumed here that affections include tempers. Please see the diagram of the heart from chapter 4.
49 Jackson, editor, The Works of Wesley, 8:428. C.F. Jackson, editor, The Works of Wesley, 8:47, 8:288 and 9:111. See also chapter 6 for an account of how Wesley understands prevenient grace to affect the desires of every person.
The Holy Spirit’s previous work alone on the affections is an important precondition for there to be any fruitful action in part because of the motivational impact that this work provides. For Wesley, the affections of the heart are different from human action but are intimately related to it. Unlike the view of absolute predestination (or necessitarianism), for Wesley, affections do not necessitate a particular human action. However, they do provide motivational impact. This is to say that the affections of the heart make certain actions easier or more difficult. As observed in chapter 4, an enduring inclination (a temper or kind of affection) makes doing a certain action easier by bringing pleasure to a person who completes the suggested action. Such an inclination makes doing a contrary certain action more difficult by bringing uneasiness or pain to the person who completes this action. This is how the person’s perception of holy affections is different from but intimately related to fruitful action. This helps to show why the heart is a key to Wesley’s view of moral agency and a centrepiece for Wesley’s view of “true religion.” For Wesley, without the prior perception of Spirit-empowered affections of the heart (passive operation), the performance of fruitful works is impossible.

A second feature of fruitful action is as follows: human effort alone—even in response to the work of the Spirit on the heart—is not enough for a fruitful action to occur. Wesley believes “all power to think, speak, or act right is in and from the Spirit of Christ.” If one’s right action is “in” Christ, then it seems that it is not being performed alone. Wesley speaks of one’s “utter inability to do all good unless he [God] ‘water thee every moment.’” From this, it is clear that fruitful action cannot exist without uninterrupted watering of the Spirit. This second feature of fruitful action refers even to people who have not gone through the heart-changing effects of the new birth and perfection. Although such people cannot perform good works properly speaking, they are still able to “do good” because the Spirit is “watering thee every moment.”

The second feature of fruitful action also applies to those who have received either the new birth or perfection. Suppose that one were to try to argue that a Christian could in fact do fruitful action alone. According to such an argument, God transforms the tempers of the heart at the new birth, and a person is then able to respond by acting alone in the

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50 The meaning of “alone” here is somewhat contextual. By “alone,” I mean that during the moment of an act, the action is a purely human action. It is possible to imagine that a purely human action may occur even after God transforms the heart and makes it holy. As we will show, Wesley rejects this model.


52 Wesley, ‘Sermon on the Mount, XIII,’ Works (BE), 1:696.

53 See the discussion above concerning the distinction between good works and doing good.
performance of good works. This in fact is a version of semi-Pelagianism. Wesley is clearly not a semi-Pelagian in this sense, and it is also evident that he would reject that a human (even one who is born of God and perfected) is ever capable of doing fruitful action alone in this sense. That Wesley believes a person who is born of God is never capable of doing a fruitful action alone is evident from the following comment. Wesley speaks of “our helplessness, of our inability to think one good thought, or to form one good desire; and much more to speak one word aright, or to perform one good action but through his free, almighty grace, first preventing us, and then accompanying us every moment.”

Notice here the phrase “accompanying us every moment.” It is not enough for the Holy Spirit only to “prevent” or work on the heart before a person acts. The semi-Pelagians claim this point. For Wesley, *in order for a fruitful action to take place*, the Holy Spirit must both act before the action by means of touching the heart (passive operation) *and* accompany during the entire action.

This point leads to the third feature of fruitful action: the Holy Spirit and the person act simultaneously from the beginning of the act until the end. Wesley says, “Whatsoever good is in man, or is done by man, God is the author and doer of it.” If God is the doer of a fruitful act done by man, there does not seem to be any opportunity for this act to be done by the human alone. God and the human must be acting during the entire time. Wesley also says “no good is done, or spoken, or thought by any man without the assistance of God, working together in and with those that believe in him.” Here, Wesley uses the phrase “working together in and with.” During a fruitful action, God is “working together in and with” the human. Each one is never alone during a fruitful action. Human action and God’s action are simultaneous during the entire fruitful act. In his sermon “On Working Out Your Own Salvation,” Wesley says that God does the work of “preventing, accompanying, and following.” Consider here the phrase “accompanying.” This underscores the simultaneousness of the active partnership between God and the person during the fruitful act.

Wesley says that God will “prevent them that believe in all their doings, and further them with his continual help’, so that all their designs, conversations, and actions are ‘begun, continued, and ended in him.” The important phrase here is “continual

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help.” This “continual help” implies that there is never a moment when the human acts alone in a fruitful act; God’s active role is continuous and unbroken. An emphasis on God’s involvement during the entire time frame of the fruitful act is evident from the phrase “begun, continued, and ended.” In other words, there is no taking turns when it comes to a fruitful act. During the entire time frame of a fruitful action, from the beginning until the end, God is acting and the person is acting simultaneously. 59

Given the co-working nature of fruitful action, involving both the agency of God and the person, it is helpful to now consider the question of how Wesley can hold such a view of fruitful action while also rejecting absolute predestination. If God is involved in all fruitful action, how is such action not a matter of necessity?

**Fruitful Action and Free Will**

One could raise an objection to Wesley’s view of fruitful action by asking how such a view may be consistent with Wesley’s doctrine of free will. In other words, how can the claim that God is the doer of human fruitful action avoid the consequence of absolute predestination? Could it be that Wesley is contradicting himself?

Perhaps there are multiple ways of showing how absolute predestination (or necessitarianism) is not a necessary consequence of Wesley’s view of fruitful human action. One possible solution could draw on an analogy of mules used by a contemporary philosopher in his analysis of the view of John Duns Scotus on human causation. 60 However, what will be offered here is just to claim that if Wesley’s two views (the co-working nature of fruitful action and the doctrine of free will) are capable of existing in harmony, an explanation of this harmony is in some ways beyond human understanding. Of course, not all things that are logically believed to exist are explicable by the human mind. Claiming mystery is not in every case simply a retreat from a mistake, a sign of inconsistency or the failure to solve a solvable problem. Claiming mystery is sometimes the best and only logical move. As it stands, Jerry Walls claims that Wesley’s view of freedom is “widely shared.” 61 See Diagram 5.1 for an illustration of how Wesley’s view of fruitful action contrasts with his understanding of a necessitarian view.

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59 See also: ‘Wesley, Sermon on the Mount, XIII,’ *Works* (BE), 1:696.
Although Wesley would argue that his view of free will is superior to the view of absolute predestination, he would admit it is difficult to explain free will fully. The subject of free will v. absolute predestination is one that has been fiercely debated by leading intellectuals for centuries. Even for those who adhere strongly to one side, mystery is often acknowledged. Wesley describes his discussion of this subject as a “clumsy way of cutting the knot which we are not able to untie.” Yet, taking the side of free will is not arbitrary for Wesley, but is of high importance since he believes the character of God as love (something that is offered to all people) is at stake.

Further Analysis

Over the course of this chapter, we showed Wesley’s view of the role of the Spirit in human action. In order to do this, we took a number of steps. First, we considered a general overview of Wesley’s theology. Wesley is committed to the teachings of the Bible, teachings of the primitive church, and the doctrines of what is basically orthodox Anglicanism. Most importantly, for him, theology is not possible without a “true religion” of the heart, a religion that requires the bearing of outward fruit if there is time and opportunity. This consideration of the shape of Wesley’s theology helps to provide context for exploring the role of the Holy Spirit in regard to Wesley’s view of moral agency, particularly in regard to human action. Later, terminology was defined. We considered what is meant by the terms “passive operation” and “fruitful action.” Passive operation is the work of the Holy Spirit with respect to the passive dimension of a person, and fruitful action is the work of the Holy Spirit with respect to the active dimension of a person. After this, we explored the various features of fruitful action. It was shown how Wesley’s use of these features is evident from a consideration of his writings and his treatment of scripture. Next, we explored the nature of fruitful action by considering how it is consistent with Wesley’s view of free-will. Now we will begin to consider some of the practical implications of the discussion.

Our discussion of Wesley’s understanding of the role of the Spirit with respect to the active dimension is significant for several reasons. First, it is helpful to the extent that it protects against a common misunderstanding that in the thought of John Wesley, there

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63 For Wesley, if there is no free will, then some people are destined for hell, regardless of their effort. For Wesley, this undermines the character of God as loving. If God is love as the Bible says, then God would not allow for the creation of human beings who are destined to hell from their birth. See for example, Jackson, editor, *The Works of Wesley*, 10:227 and 10:473.
are moments when a human acts alone in the performance of fruitful action. Wesley’s view of salvation is not a dynamic interplay of God acting alone and the human responding alone. The Holy Spirit plays a role in all positive transformations of the heart (passive operation) as well as in all fruitful action that a person does. There is never a moment of fruitful action in which a human acts alone.

Second, this discussion is significant for how one is to view the glory of God. The view that a human may do fruitful action alone diminishes the glory of God. One could argue that it is impossible for God to have the whole glory if at any point after God alone begins the work of human salvation, a person may do fruitful work alone in response. Since for Wesley, there is never a moment when a human may do a fruitful action without the simultaneous assistance of the Spirit, it is easier for him to make an argument that God deserves the whole glory. For Wesley, the character of a divine human-interaction where God first acts alone and afterwards the person acts simultaneously with the Spirit to perform an active response represents a model that is sufficient for God deserving the whole glory. Whether one may direct a criticism against this point or not, it is clear in Wesley’s own mind. To the degree that the clarification in this chapter protects against a misreading of Wesley that holds that a person may at times do fruitful work alone, the argument of this chapter underscores the importance of the glory of God for Wesley and offers insight for the practical benefit of any follower of Christ.

Fruitful action is distinct from passive operation and yet, as we have shown it is intimately related to it. Passive operation concerns the work of the Spirit on the human heart, which is a central focus for John Wesley’s view of moral agency. The love of God shed abroad in the heart is the premier condition of the Christian life and is the only source of virtuous action, but the Spirit can work in human action before such love is given. As shown above, fruitful action also applies to actions before both justification and the new birth. These actions flow from a spiritually-affected heart of a lower magnitude. In each instance of fruitful action (before or after the new birth), God acts before the act (in the form of passive operation on the desires and affections of the heart) and during the act. Our work in previous chapters concerning clarifying what is meant by active and passive and what is meant by the features of the soul positions us now to see this point.

64 To see an example of Wesley’s portrayal of this principle, please see his comments on Phillipians 2:13: Wesley, On Working Out Our Own Salvation, 3:202. Note also, that for Wesley, one may understand God to deserve the whole glory for human salvation in this way without needing to presuppose absolute predestination. See for example paragraph 46 and 47 of Wesley, Predestination Calmly Considered, Works (BE), 13:288.
vividly. Because of what the Trinitarian God has done through Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, and through the restoring work of the Spirit in salvation in both active and passive dimensions of a person, Wesley can claim that God deserves the whole glory for each fruitful action, and it also for this reason, the theme of gift emerges mightily in the centre of view. The performance of fruitful action and the pursuit of the highest end of Christian living is itself an expression of God’s gift. For Wesley, free will and choice are not opponents to grace, as some interpreters of theology worry. When used for fruitful action, the act of choosing is the embodiment of God’s gift.

Responding to Secondary Literature: the challenge of using “Monergism” and “Synergism”

In chapter 1, we considered a brief summary of how interpreters of Wesley have debated his view of the divine-human interaction. George Cell argues for a “monergism” in Wesley’s thought; while Cannon, Outler, Monk, and others argue for a “synergism” in his thought. Collins and Coppedge offer models in which both are held together harmoniously. On the other hand, Maddox suggests that it is best to try to avoid using these terms but that either term can be used depending on how it is defined.

Since chapter 1, we have elaborated more what is meant by active and passive and showed how these concepts relate to Wesley’s thought, particularly to the features of the soul and to two kinds of spiritual growth. In this chapter, we have continued to explore Wesley’s pneumatology in light of the concepts of active and passive. In this chapter, for the first time, we have clarified what is meant by “passive operation,” the work of the Spirit with respect to the passive dimension of a person and “fruitful action,” the work of the Spirit with respect to the active dimension of a person. In light of the steps taken since chapter 1, we will briefly revisit the the critique of using the terms “monergism” and “synergism.”

A typology that captures Wesley’s practical concerns relating to pneumatology better than previous discussions of monergism or synergism is a typology that concerns how the Spirit works with respect to the active and passive dimensions of a person. Discussions in secondary literature in the past either do not identify the concepts of active and passive in Wesley’s thought or do not distinguish them adequately. Yet, considering the work of the Spirit with respect to the passive dimension of a person (passive operation) and the work of the Spirit with respect to the active dimension of a person
(fruitful action) is not necessarily in conflict with using a term such as monergism or synergism. The compatibility depends on how the latter terms are defined.

If “monergism” is simply defined as the view that everything good is done by grace and with the empowering presence of the Spirit, then it applies to Wesley’s thought since, as shown above in this chapter, all fruitful actions (including good actions) are the work of the Spirit. If monergism is defined as the view that grace is always irresistible, then it does not apply to Wesley’s thought. If synergism is defined as the view that people must “work out their own salvation” in cooperation with God’s grace and in response to God’s initiative, then it applies to Wesley. If synergism is defined as the view that God works alone and then the human works alone in a later response, then it does not apply to Wesley. This is because, as shown above, there is never a moment in which a person acts alone for the sake of salvation. These are just a few of the many ways these terms “monergism” and “synergism” can be defined.

Alternatively, monergism could be defined as passive operation and synergism could be defined as fruitful action. Or monergism could be defined as the kind of spiritual growth that pertains to the first moment of the new birth and the first moment of perfection, while synergism could be defined as the more gradual kind of spiritual growth that is characteristic of the period before the new birth, between the new birth and perfection, or during the period after perfection. This is similar to how Collins proposes using the terms monergism and synergism. In this case, monergism and synergism are each referring to one of the two types of spiritual growth described in chapter 2.

As should be clear, passive operation and fruitful action depicted in this chapter do not perfectly correspond to the two types of spiritual growth elaborated in chapter 2. Each of the two types of spiritual growth have elements of both fruitful action and passive operation. Nevertheless, the type of spiritual growth comparable to the fit woman described in chapter 2 has a larger degree of fruitful action and the type of spiritual growth comparable to the illustration with the flaming dart typically has larger effects of passive operation. The point is that there are multiple ways in which an attempt can be made to define the terms “monergism” and “synergism” so that they are both used and appear as harmonious descriptions of Wesley’s thought. Here we have mentioned only several of many possible ways that this can be done.

Yet, as Maddox notes, one of the challenges of using terms such as monergism or synergism is that they have links to complex theological discussions. For example, these terms have often been associated with debates between Continental Protestantism and
Roman Catholicism. We mentioned in chapter 1 how it is often difficult to try to argue an interpretation of how Wesley integrates and synthesizes the thought of other church traditions. In any case, problems with using the terms “monergism” and “synergism” are: (a) these terms have links to complex theological discussions and can lead to confusion and disagreement, (b) they are not necessary for Wesley’s chief concern of explaining the divine-human interaction for the purpose of providing a practical guide for Christian living, (c) scholars tend to have preferred views of what these terms should mean, and these views conflict and (d) these terms are not in Wesley’s writings. For these reasons, while we do not reject the possibility of using these terms if defined in a certain way, these terms will not be used for this project.

The advantage of using a typology that regards the work of the Spirit with respect to the active and passive dimensions of a person is that these concepts help to illuminate precisely the landscape of Wesley’s roadmap for the Christian life. These concepts distinguish the roads from the landmarks, so to speak. Passive experiences (or in some cases, almost passive depending on the scope of view) include, for example, the heart strangely warmed at the new birth, the direct witness of the Spirit, the feeling of passive tempers (as discussed in chapters 3 and 4) or the feelings of the “fire” of love in the heart (as explored in chapter 4). Active experiences include, for example: practicing the fruits meet for repentance such as performing the means of grace, following the General Rules, obeying the moral commandments of scripture, and actively affirming gifts such as the new birth and Christian perfection. Such active and passive experiences are at the center of Wesley’s practical concern for ministry, a concern on which he places a high value.

When an interpreter uses terms such as “monergism” or “synergism,” Wesley’s roadmap is prone to become blurred if the discussion is entangled in confusing language and does not clearly show the common experiences of people in the Christian life, i.e. how the Spirit works with respect to the active and passive dimensions of a person. With the typology of active and passive as a guide, we will now examine in more depth Wesley’s view of the way of salvation. For each stage of the way of salvation, we will show that according to the view of John Wesley, a person’s pursuit of growing in love is an expression of God’s gift and that the giftedness of this blessing is illuminated by a critical

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65 Maddox, Responsible Grace, 91.
66 See chapter 2 for an account of what is meant in this project by passive.
examination of the work of the Spirit with respect to the active and passive dimensions of a human being.
Chapter 6: From Sin to New Birth

For the next two chapters, we will consider Wesley’s moral agency for each stage along the way of salvation, his roadmap for the Christian life. For each stage, we will consider how right action is performed (or not performed) and how the highest end is pursued. It will be argued that regardless of the stage, according to the view of John Wesley, a person’s pursuit of the greatest end is an expression of God’s gift and that the giftedness of this blessing is illuminated by a critical examination of the work of the Spirit with respect to the active and passive dimensions of a human being.

The approach taken here will continue to regard God’s role in moral agency as foundational. This will require a consideration of the work of God in both active and passive dimensions of the soul. For Wesley, “the way of salvation” is a phrase that describes the entire path on which God initiates and assists one’s growth in holiness of heart and life. Please see diagram 6.1 for a portrayal of Wesley’s way of salvation. The way of salvation conveys a progression of stages, often moving sequentially in time in this order: servant of God, newborn child, perfected child, and inhabitant of heaven. For this chapter, we will start by considering Wesley’s view of an “impenitent sinner,” a stage prior to salvation. After this, we will begin exploring the early stages of Wesley’s way of salvation, including the servant of God and the child of the new birth. Finally, in this chapter, we will consider some debates in secondary literature relevant to Wesley’s view of these stages of salvation.

The Impenitent Sinner

For John Wesley, the least preferable stage of human existence during life on earth is being an “impenitent sinner.”¹ In regard to impenitent sinners, Wesley says: “I entirely agree that hell was designed only for stubborn, impenitent sinners.”² In general, an impenitent sinner refers to those who fully resist the grace that God has given in order to grow in salvation. This person does not have the faith of either a servant of God or child of God. He or she does not at the minimum fear God and work righteousness.

¹ Examples of Wesley’s discussions of “impenitent sinners” include: Wesley, ‘Of Hell,’ Works (BE), 3:43; Wesley, Letters, 2:133.
² Wesley, Letters, 2:133.
Many—if not all—people are impenitent sinners at some period in their life. For Wesley, this stage even refers to some of those people who have already been baptized. Wesley indicates that many people who are baptized, either as infants or later in life, lose some of the effects of their baptism. He says “Lean no more on the staff of that broken reed, that ye were born again in baptism. Who denies that ye were then made ‘children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven’? But notwithstanding this, ye are now children of the devil; therefore ye must be born again.”

**The Image of God**

In order to explore Wesley’s view of an impenitent sinner, it is helpful to first consider Wesley’s view of the image of God. Wesley teaches that before the fall, humankind possessed the image of God. This image of God includes three components: the natural, moral, and political image. The natural image means that each person has a human spirit. For Wesley, the essence of a spirit is being endued with understanding, will, and liberty. Thus, Wesley links the natural image of God with understanding, will, and liberty. The moral image means that a person has righteousness and holiness. The political image means that humankind is given the power to govern the planet, including the animals that inhabit it.

Wesley teaches that owing to the fall, there is death and that humankind faces the “entire corruption of our nature.” For all humankind after the fall—including impenitent sinners, the moral image (righteousness and holiness) is fully lost and the natural image is partly lost. Wesley indicates that after the fall, God provides for all people (including impenitent sinners) the part of the natural image that corresponds to having a spiritual nature—a nature that is still endued with understanding, will, and liberty.

**Prevenient Grace**

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5 See, for example, Wesley, ‘The End of Christ’s Coming,’ *Works* (BE), 2:474-475.
Wesley holds to the doctrines of original sin and total depravity, which mean that it is impossible for any person after the fall to have a holy heart or to perform any level of right action by his or her own natural power. But after the fall, no person suffers a purely natural state, a condition of inescapable corruption. Wesley says, “For allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by nature, this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God.” By His free grace, God gives to all people after the fall certain spiritual gifts that help to direct them towards God and the highest goal of Christian living. Such gifts are the effect of what Wesley calls “prevenient grace.” It is only because of prevenient grace that all people after the fall—including impenitent sinners—continue to possess part of the natural image of God that is free of total corruption.

Wesley bases the doctrine of prevenient grace on his interpretation of John 1:9 that says the following in reference to Christ: “This was the true light, who lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” For Wesley, some of the effects of prevenient grace include the passive operations of the Spirit. The passive nature of such occasions of prevenient grace is evident from the following comment explicitly in reference to prevenient grace: “Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man.”

For Wesley, such passive operations of prevenient grace include the giving of “conscience,” the slight touching of the desires of one’s heart, and at times the giving of a slight conviction of having done wrong. Prevenient grace also allows a person to use his or her active power in a manner that is free from the necessity of sin. That is, because of prevenient grace, all people have a power of liberty, which is a power of free will.

\[11\] See, for example, his sermon Original Sin (Wesley, ‘Original Sin,’ Works (BE), volume 2) and his treatise The Doctrine of Original Sin (Wesley, ‘The Doctrine of Original Sin,’ Works (BE), volume 12).
\[12\] The word “natural” here does not refer to the image of God but to the totally-depraved state of humankind that must manifest if there is no assisting grace.
\[14\] See, for example, ‘On Working Out Our Own Salvation,’ Works (BE), 3:207 and Wesley, Letters, 6:239.
\[15\] In regard to how prevenient grace affects the natural image (understanding, will, and liberty): God’s giving of conscience relates to the understanding; God’s touching on the desires relates to the will properly speaking; furthermore, God provides the power of liberty. This will be explored more below.
\[16\] This is the English translation of John 1:9, as it appears in Wesley’s 1788 ENNT. Places where Wesley associates this verse with prevenient grace include but are not limited to: Wesley, ‘On Working Out Our Own Salvation,’ Works (BE), 3:207 and Wesley, ‘Predestination Calmly Considered,’ Works (BE), 13:288.
\[17\] For more of a discussion of the passive operations of the Spirit, see chapter 5 of this project.
\[18\] Wesley, ‘On Working Out Our Own Salvation,’ Works (BE), 3:207. Italics are added by me.
\[19\] This point will be explored more below.
\[20\] Wesley, ‘Free Grace,’ Works (BE), 3:560; Works (Jackson), 10:392 and 10:229. For an account of the equivalence of liberty and free will in Wesley’s thought, see chapter 3.
Without this prevenient grace, due to total depravity, all people would be necessitated to act only according to sin. It is because of this liberty, enabled by prevenient grace, that an impenitent sinner is capable of performing at some level fruitful actions, including actions that are good in a limited sense.21

Every person is given the gift of conscience.22 Wesley defines conscience as follows:

Conscience, then is that faculty whereby we are at once conscious of our own thoughts, words, and actions, and of their merit or demerit, of their being good or bad, and consequently deserving either praise or censure. And some pleasure generally attends the former sentence, some uneasiness the latter.23

From these comments, it is clear that conscience includes the power to know correctly what is good and what is bad. That is, it involves some knowledge of the moral law. It also involves the passive experience of pleasure and pain that arises in consequence to one’s perception of whether a proposed action is good or bad.

Wesley also indicates that prevenient grace touches an impenitent sinner’s desires. In regard to prevenient grace, Wesley says that “everyone has sooner or later good desires, although the generality of men stifle them before they can strike deep root or produce any considerable fruit.”24 In another place, Wesley says that prevenient grace produces “the first wish to please God.”25 To the extent that a wish is a desire, one may see clearly from these comments that the Holy Spirit through prevenient grace touches in a small degree the desires of everyone. Also, through prevenient grace, God gives a slight conviction of having done wrong.26

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21 Wesley makes it clear that all human beings have liberty, and thus all human beings—even impenitent sinners—are capable of action that is in a limited sense good (Outler, editor, *Works* (BE), 4:163 and 1:192). Below, it will be shown how this action that is limitedly good contrasts with good action strictly speaking.


24 Wesley, ‘On Working Out Our Own Salvation,’ *Works* (BE), 3:207. This desire is different from those of one who is “born of God.” God works on the desires and affections of all people, even those people who are impenitent sinners.


26 Wesley, ‘On Working Out Our Own Salvation,’ *Works* (BE), 3:203. Also, Wesley makes the following comment that seems to apply to many impenitent sinners: “As the Spirit of God does not ‘wait for the call of man’, so at some times he will be heard. He puts them in fear, so that for a season at least the heathen ‘know themselves to be but men’. They feel the burden of sin, and earnestly desire to flee from the wrath to come. But not long. They seldom suffer the arrows of conviction to go deep into their souls; but quickly stifle the grace of God, and return to their wallowing in the mire” (Wesley, ‘The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption,’ *Works* (BE), 1:265). Impenitent sinners often reject the passive operations of the Spirit.
For Wesley, an impenitent sinner does not have the power to perform good works strictly speaking. However, such a person does have the power to perform fruitful actions that are in a limited sense good. In answer to a question of how a person may do good before he or she is justified, Wesley says,

If it is objected, ‘Nay, but a man, before he is justified, may feed the hungry, or clothe the naked; and these are good works,’ the answer is easy. He may do these, even before he is justified. And these are in one sense ‘good works’; they are ‘good and profitable to men’. But it does not follow that they are, strictly speaking, good in themselves, or good in the sight of God. All truly ‘good works’ (to use the word of our Church) ‘follow after justification’, and they are therefore ‘good and acceptable to God in Christ’, because they ‘spring out of a true and living faith’.27

For Wesley, an impenitent sinner has the power to feed the hungry or clothe the naked, etc. However, such action is not “truly ‘good works’” and are not “properly good.”28

As shown in the last chapter, Wesley makes a distinction between “good works” and “doing good.” An impenitent sinner can do the latter without having the capability of the former. Yet, even when an impenitent sinner is “doing good,” such action is in “one sense” good. The limited degree of goodness of such action is only possible because of the power given to all people by prevenient grace. As mentioned above in this section, prevenient grace gives an impenitent sinner a Spirit-affected desire and a conviction of wrong doing from which such fruitful action flows.29

However, it seems that Wesley would not allow that this action is “acceptable of God” in the same manner as the works of righteousness that are performed by a servant of God, which we will explore below. Much less does this action of an impenitent sinner meet the standard of virtue, which is only the fruit of one who has experienced the new birth. The key difference between good action properly speaking and good action that is in a limited sense good is that good action properly speaking must flow from a holy heart (the heart of the new birth).30 This is the mark of proper virtue.

The Moral Agency of an Impenitent Sinner

30 This point will be explored more below.
In summary, the moral agency of an impenitent sinner works as follows. By means of prevenient grace, this person has a conscience, some degree of knowledge of what is good and bad, and is blessed with a small desire to do good, at least until the person stifles it. By grace, such a person is also endued with a power of free will, a power of choosing between doing evil and doing good. From this deposit of gifts, an impenitent sinner may respond to God’s prevenient grace with the performance of action that is in some sense good. As shown in chapter 5, such action, even at this stage, requires the assistance of the Spirit. Indeed, the performance of action that is in a limited sense good is even possible for one who does not believe in God. However, given the sinful nature of the impenitent sinner’s heart and the unwillingness to obey many of God’s commandments, the performance of sinful action far exceeds any action that is in a limited sense good.

For Wesley, of course, an impenitent sinner does not possess all of the same blessings of a servant of God or a child of God. As will be shown, the impenitent sinner is different from a servant of God because the former does not both fear God and work righteousness. According to Wesley, a common problem for an impenitent sinner is that a lack of cooperation with God’s prevenient grace leads to the “quenching” of the little prevenient grace that is received. If not intentional about having a single eye for obeying God, an impenitent sinner can fall into a deep spiritual sleep, making it difficult to escape.

And yet, for Wesley, the condition of an impenitent sinner is not hopeless. Unlike John Calvin, Wesley rejects that such a state is ever irresistible. In general, Wesley allows that the power of liberty (the power of free will) remains in the impenitent sinner. Therefore, such a person may choose to continue in evil or choose to do good in a limited sense. In his discussion of liberty, Wesley says, “through the grace of God assisting me,” “I am free to choose whom I will serve, and if I choose the better part, to continue therein even unto death.” The moment that an impenitent sinner, by prevenient grace, acknowledges his or her own sin and chooses to serve God by performing works of righteousness, the transition to becoming a servant of God has begun.

31 Wesley, ‘On Working Out Our Own Salvation,’ Works (BE), 3:207
32 See, for example, Wesley, ‘A Call to Backsliders,’ Works (BE), 3:211.
33 Wesley, ‘What is Man?’, Works (BE), 4:24.
34 It seems that all people, including impenitent sinners, will experience the passive aspect of repentance to some degree (Outler, editor, Works (BE), 3:203 and 1:265). What keeps impenitent sinners in their state is an unwillingness to respond to it. The impenitent sinner does not fear God and perform fruits meet for repentance.
The Servant of God

Characteristics of a Servant of God

John Wesley recognizes a certain stage of living that he describes as a “servant of God.” This view is inspired by Galatians 4:5-7, Romans 8:14-16, and the account of Cornelius in Acts 10.35 One of the most common descriptions of a servant of God is that he or she “fears God and works righteousness.”36 This is what distinguishes a servant from an impenitent sinner. While the label “servant of God” can refer to an aspiring follower of Christ, it can also refer to a Jew, which is part of why Joe Gorman says, “Wesley recognized that God’s presence gratuitously springs up throughout human cultures and even in religions other than Christianity.”37

For Wesley, the meaning of the word “servant” is nuanced. As Rodes observes, Wesley sometimes uses the word “servant” to describe a child of God.38 At other times, Wesley clearly distinguishes a servant from a “son” of God—also known as a “child” of God.39 This distinction between servant and son is inspired by Romans 8 and Galatians 4:7. A child of God is one who has experienced the new birth, the entering of Christ into the heart, the love of God shed abroad in the heart, the witness of the Spirit that one is a child of God, Christian faith of a child of God, the Spirit of adoption, and freedom from the power of sin. On the other hand, a servant of God has not yet possessed these gifts. In this project, when the word “servant” is used, it is being used to refer to a servant who is not yet a child of God.

According to Wesley, a servant of God is also “accepted of God,”40 and no longer has the wrath of God abiding.41 The servant of God has faith “in its infant state,”42 but such faith does not involve a consciousness of the forgiveness of sins and that Christ has died for oneself (it is not the faith of a child of God). Nevertheless, the faith of a servant

35See the scripture for sermon 9 of Outler, editor, Works (BE), 1:249. See also Wesley’s commentary on these passages in his Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament, including his comments on Act 10:4 and 10:35 (ENNT, 1788).
38Rodes, 17.
39See, for example, Outler, editor, Works (BE), 3:497 and 4:35.
40Wesley uses Acts 10:35 as the basis of the phrase “accepted of him” in reference to God’s acceptance of a servant of God. See Wesley, ‘On Faith,’ Works (BE), 3:497.
of God is “properly saving.” In his diary, in reference to his state during the days right before his experience at Aldersgate on May 24, 1738, Wesley describes himself as having the faith of a servant rather than the faith of a son.

A servant of God is one who has received repentance in addition to all of the gracious effects of prevenient grace offered to all people (conscience, a touching of one’s desires, and a measure of free-will). For Wesley, repentance involves a conviction of sin. This includes self-knowledge or awareness that one is corrupt in his or her inward nature, including total corruption in every faculty of the soul. It includes an awareness of inward and outward sin, of utter guiltiness and helplessness, and of certain affections such as sorrow of heart, remorse and self-condemnation, and fear of wrath.

Wesley’s view of repentance involves both active and passive operations of the Spirit. The passive operation of repentance is evident from his comment that the “Spirit of God does not ‘wait for the call of man’” in regard to giving a feeling of the “burden of sin” and imposing “arrows of conviction.” The image of “arrows” underscores the passiveness of this aspect of repentance. Yet, in order to avoid losing the positive effects of such passive operation, it is often necessary for a person to respond with action. This action includes “fruits meet for repentance.”

Although a servant of God is “accepted of God,” Wesley seems to indicate that a servant of God is not capable of virtue or performing works that are good “strictly speaking.” This is because good action strictly speaking only flows from the heart of someone who has experienced the new birth, a state that has not yet arrived for a servant of God. And since virtue often involves a two-part process—good action flowing from a holy and transformed heart of love (as evident at the new birth)—, servants of God are not capable of virtue in a proper sense.

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44Wesley, Works (BE),18:235. See footnote a. These comments were added in 1775.
45Wesley makes it clear that a servant of God has already received the convincing of sin. See Wesley, ‘On the Discoveries of Faith,’ Works (BE), 4:34-35.
48See the discussion of passive operations of the Spirit in chapter 5.
51These will be discussed more below.
52For the distinction between good works “strictly speaking” and works that are good in a limited sense, see comments from earlier in this chapter.
There is much evidence that suggests that Wesley believes that the performance of virtue and good works strictly speaking are necessarily conjoined with a state of the new birth. For example, in 1785, Wesley says that the Christian revelation affirms “the love of God to be the true foundation both of the love of our neighbour and all other virtues,” and he says, “benevolence itself is no virtue at all, unless it spring from the love of God.”53 Also, when speaking of fruitful action, Wesley says in a clear manner on repeated occasions that fruitful actions before the new birth are not “good works, because they do not spring from faith and the love of God.”54

Although a servant of God is not capable of good action properly speaking, he or she, like the impenitent sinner, is capable of performing action that is good in a limited sense. And yet, of course, the action of a servant of God has an improved effect in comparison to any fruitful action of an impenitent sinner. This is partly because the action of a servant of God flows from the fear and respect of God, something that the impenitent sinner chooses not to nurture. Also, presumably, the fruitful action of a servant of God usually far exceeds in abundance the fruitful action of an impenitent sinner because the servant of God is committed to obeying all of God’s commandments. Such action leads to a daily growing in grace, propelling the servant of God further along on the way of salvation.55 For a servant of God, the performance of fruitful action is the same as working righteousness. Such action of an orthodox servant of God is similar in nature to the righteous work of a Pharisee (unorthodox in the Christian sense) and lacks the power of the good works of a child of God. Nonetheless, unlike for the case of the impenitent sinner, the fruitful action (works of righteousness) of a servant of God is “accepted” by God.

In order to protect against confusion, it is helpful here to consider a point regarding Wesley’s view of the timing of justification. While it is clear that servants of God have not experienced the new birth (being born of God), one could raise the question of whether Wesley holds that a servant of God is justified in the Christian sense.56 In other words, this question concerns whether or not Christian justification and the new birth are normally conjoined. While the evidence seems to suggest that the elderly Wesley does in

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54Works (Jackson), 8:428. CF: Works (Jackson), 8:47, 8:288 and 9:111.
55For an example of this kind of spiritual growth, see for example, Wesley, ‘Scriptural Christianity,’ Works (BE), 1:164.
56This question could be prompted by the point that a servant of God is both accepted by God and avoids the wrath of God (as shown above). One could ask: how can a servant of God have these and not be justified in a Christian sense? See also the discussion below concerning debates in secondary literature.
fact hold that these events are normally conjoined, the answer to this question seems not to have bearing on the discussion of this section. Both views (a servant of God is justified in the Christian sense or not) are compatible with what is being highlighted here. That is: Wesley teaches that before the new birth arrives, fruitful action that is good in a limited sense is necessary if there is time and opportunity. Good works “strictly speaking” do not come until after the new birth. This is because, as mentioned above, Wesley seems to hold that along with virtue, the new birth and good works are normally conjoined.

On a number of occasions, Wesley stresses the importance of performing fruitful action (limitedly good action) before the new birth, if there is time and opportunity. This is evident by the following advice that Wesley gives to a servant of God:

Exhort him to press on by all possible means, till he passes ‘from faith to faith’; from the faith of a servant to the faith of a son…He will then have ‘Christ revealed in his heart’, enabling him 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’—the proper voice of a child of God. He will then be ‘born of God’, inwardly changed by the might power of God from ‘an earthly, sensual, devilish’ mind to ‘the mind which was in Christ Jesus’.

Notice the phrase “by all possible means.” This includes the performance of fruitful action in the form of practicing the means of grace. It includes performing the “first type” of fruitful action mentioned in chapter 5. Such “fruits meet for repentance” include: “forgiving our brother, ceasing from evil, doing good, using the ordinances of God, and, in general, obeying him according to the measure of grace which we have received.” If such action is neglected, then a person is at risk of not moving forward in the way of salvation or even losing the grace already received. As Wesley says, “God does undoubtedly command us both to repent and to bring forth fruit meet for repentance; which if we willingly neglect we cannot reasonably expect to be justified at all.” Wesley encourages people of all stages of the way of salvation to follow his guide for fruitful action which includes participating in Christian fellowship, following the General Rules of the Methodist Societies, and obeying the moral commandments of scripture.

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57 Wesley, ‘On God’s Vineyard,’ Works (BE), 3:506-507; Wesley, ‘On Patience,’ Works (BE), 3:174. Also, Wesley makes such statements published earlier in his life that he never retracts. Also, several years before his death, he claims that he has not contradicted himself between 1738 and 1788 (Wesley, Letters, 8:179).
For Wesley, the situation of a servant of God is comparable to the illustration of the flaming dart from chapter 2. For a servant of God, the faith of a child of God and the love of the new birth has not yet come, but it is certain that they will come at some unpredictable future time if one persists in seeking God and performing fruitful action. According to Wesley, it is fine for a servant of God to expect (and hope for) such faith and love of the new birth to come now. This is because even in his oldest years, Wesley maintained that the new birth and justification are through faith alone. The faith of a child of God is the only indispensable condition for the new birth. Such faith alone is sufficient for the new birth. In support of this point, Wesley gives the illustration from Luke 23:40-43 of the thief on the cross who had no opportunity for any fruitful action except asking Jesus to remember him when Jesus comes in his kingdom. Also, as Christine Johnson points out, in 1784, Wesley gives the report of criminals who heard Wesley’s preaching soon before their execution. From this report, it seems that the criminals who heard his preaching were blessed right away with the new birth and the faith of a child of God. Wesley says that in response to his preaching: “The power of the Lord was eminently present, and most of the prisoners were in tears.” It seems that in 1784, Wesley preached with the expectation that God could give the new birth this quickly.

In chapter 3, we explored Wesley’s second meaning of the will, also known as “free will.” This meaning of the will is equivalent to his understanding of liberty, a power of choosing. If by grace, a servant of God chooses to serve God but does not have time to follow through with this resolution (by performing fruitful action) because of an unfortunate accident that ends his or her life early, this servant of God will nevertheless avoid God’s wrath, and God will save him or her for all of eternity. If there was not time

63 In 1738, in his sermon “Salvation by Faith,” Wesley gives his commitment to “salvation or justification by faith only” (Wesley, ‘Salvation By Faith,’ *Works* (BE),1:125). He is not speaking here of final justification (see chapter 7). That is different. In 1790, Wesley says, “Only about fifty years ago, I had a clearer view than before of justification by faith: and in this from that very hour I never varied, no not an hair’s breadth” (Wesley, *On the Wedding Garment*, 4:147). See also Wesley, ‘Some Remarks on Mr. Hill’s “Review,”’ *Works* (BE), 13:473 - 474.
for this servant of God to receive the faith of a child of God and the new birth before death, then presumably God will give them after death.

Just as in the illustration of the flaming dart in chapter 2, it is acceptable for a servant of God to expect and hope for now the impact of the flaming dart (corresponding to the faith of a child and the love of the new birth). This is because of the point that the new birth comes alone through the faith of a child. It is best to hope that the flaming dart (the new birth) comes now, while also practicing fruitful action while there is opportunity. This is more preferable than other approaches such as: (a) doing fruitful action while assuming that the new birth must come later and (b) expecting the new birth to come now without doing any fruitful action. According to Wesley, in all stages of human living, it is important for fruitful action to be constantly performed, even if such fruitful actions are never in themselves sufficient for the new birth. If a servant of God persists in seeking God and performing fruitful action, then it is certain that God will at a future unknown time perform the new birth and give His love in the heart, just as God provides the impact of the flaming dart in the illustration.

The Moral Agency of the Servant of God

In summary, the moral agency of the servant of God is as follows. Like the impenitent sinner, the servant of God possesses all of the gifts of prevenient grace. However, a number of factors crucially distinguish the moral agency of a servant of God from the moral agency of an impenitent sinner. The most crucial differences are that unlike impenitent sinners, servants of God are committed to a belief in and fear of God and are committed to obeying all of God’s commandments. Also, for those committed to the Christian tradition, a servant of God intentionally seeks the greatest end of Christianity, which is to love God and neighbour. In pursuit of this end, a servant of God seeks Christian love and performs fruitful action, if there is time and opportunity. It is here that we observe the theme of gift that is evident in the pursuit.

According to Wesley, the pursuit by a servant of God of the greatest end of Christian living is an expression of God’s gift and that the giftedness of this blessing is illuminated by a critical examination of the work of the Spirit with respect to the active and passive dimensions of a human being. It is through the work of the Spirit with respect to the active dimension of fruitful action (as explained in chapter 5) flowing from passive operation (the light of conscience, touches on the desires of the heart, and the feelings of the arrows of repentance) that a servant of God is able to performs works of righteousness.
and pursue the greatest end of Christian living, which is to love God and neighbour to one’s full potential. A servant of God is not free from the power and bondage of sin and has not yet been given the gift of new birth. In other words, sinful desires and affections often dominate the consciousness of a servant of God. For this reason, the works of righteousness of a servant of God are typically not as abundant or as powerful as the good works of a child of God. Nonetheless, the works of righteousness (limitedly good actions) that are performed by a servant of God are made possible by the assistance of the Spirit and have some good effects. In this way, a servant of God’s performance of fruitful actions and pursuit of Christian love is a reflection of God’s gift, according to His mysterious and all-powerful plan of salvation for the world.

We showed that the situation of a servant of God is comparable to the illustration of the flaming dart from chapter 2. God can give now the gifts of the new birth. However, if God does not gives these now, as Wesley observes is often the case, it is necessary for a servant of God to continue performing fruitful action as there is time and opportunity. According to Wesley, in all stages of human living, it is important for fruitful action to be constantly performed, even if such fruitful actions are never in themselves sufficient for the new birth.

The arrival of the first moment of the new birth (analogous to the impact of the flaming dart) involves events that are passive in a bare sense. However, as discussed in chapter 2 of this project, when viewed in a larger context, the arrival of the new birth is “not altogether” passive. This is because, if there is time and opportunity, graciously empowered fruitful actions before and after the first moment of the new birth have bearing on whether or not the new birth is received and maintained. Such fruitful actions themselves are a reflection of God’s gift.

The Child of the New Birth

The Beginning of Sanctification

After the first moments of the new birth, a person has transitioned from being a servant of God to being a newborn child. Wesley uses the term “newborn” to refer to a child of God who has experienced the new birth but not yet perfect love. For Wesley, the new birth is the first moment of sanctification. Sanctification, or being made holy, is

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70 See, for example, Outler, editor, Works (BE), 1:124, 2:105, 2:220.
an important branch of salvation. It is distinct from justification. Nevertheless, Wesley says in October of 1787 that justification and sanctification first occur at the same time.\(^71\) Justification is what “God does for us” and sanctification is what “God works in us by his Spirit.”\(^72\) Sanctification includes certain perceivable blessings that God performs on the heart and mind during the new birth and for the rest of the Christian journey.

**Faith of the Newborn Child, Witness of the Spirit, Justification**

The moment that a person transitions from being a servant of God to being a newborn child (marking the occurrence of the new birth), a person possesses for the first time a collection of certain Spiritual gifts: the faith of a child of God, the witness of the Spirit that one is a child of God, the Spirit of adoption, the entering of Christ into the heart, and the love of God shed abroad in the heart.\(^73\) Someone who is born of God also has power over sin.\(^74\) The scriptures that Wesley sees as the basis of the new birth include but are not limited to: John 3, Romans 8:14-16, and Galatians 4:6.\(^75\) When we speak here of the “new birth” (also known as the first moments of being “born of God”\(^76\)), we are referring to the possession of these spiritual gifts that, generally, the Holy Spirit first gives to a person at the same time.\(^77\)

In April of 1788, Wesley says “the faith of a child is properly and directly a divine conviction whereby every child of God is enabled to testify, ‘The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.’ And whosoever hath this, ‘the Spirit of God witnesseth with his spirit that he is a child of God.’”\(^78\) These features are what distinguish the faith of a child of God from the faith of a servant of God. The faith of a child of God involves something that is passive in a bare sense, as clarified in chapter 2 of this project. This is not to deny that one’s active power also plays a role in


\(^{73}\) Wesley shows the conjoining of all six of these elements as early as 1738 (*Salvation by Faith*, paragraphs I.4 and II.7), in 1748 (*Marks of the New Birth*, paragraphs I.3, III.1, and IV.2), and at least as late as June 1788 (*On the Discoveries of Faith*, paragraphs 13 and 14).

\(^{74}\) See, for example, Wesley, ‘The Marks of the New Birth,’ *Works* (BE), 1:419.

\(^{75}\) See, for example, Outler, editor, *Works* (BE), 1:417, 2:187, 4:35-36, and 1:289.

\(^{76}\) Wesley equates the “new birth” with the beginning phase of being “born of God.” For evidence of this, see paragraph 1 of ‘The Marks of the New Birth’ and the remainder of the sermon (sermon 18 of Outler, editor, *Works* (BE)).

\(^{77}\) Wesley shows the conjoining of all six of these elements as early as 1738 (*Salvation by Faith*, paragraphs I.5, II.4, and II.7), in 1748 (*Marks of the New Birth*, paragraphs I.3, III.1, and IV.2), and at least as late as June 1788 (*On the Discoveries of Faith*, paragraphs 13 and 14).

faith. If one chooses to reject faith, one always has the freedom and power to quench the Spirit and rid oneself of any faith he or she has.\textsuperscript{79} Consistent with the above statements, Wesley also describes faith of a child as “not only an assent, an act of the understanding, but a disposition which God hath wrought in his heart; ‘a sure trust and confidence in God that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God.’”\textsuperscript{80} The faith of a child of God is given at an unpredictable time and according to God’s sovereign power. It is the gift of God’s free grace.

Generally, there is overlap in Wesley’s understanding of the faith of a child of God and his understanding of the witness of the Spirit. He bases his view of the witness of the Spirit in part on Romans 8:16 and perhaps also Galatians 2:20, Acts 3:19, and 2 Corinthians 5:20.\textsuperscript{81} The account that Wesley gives of the witness of the Spirit is as follows: “the testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression of the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly ‘witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God’; that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.”\textsuperscript{82} As Joseph Cunningham points out, the witness of the Spirit is part of the Spirit’s economic operation which helps to nurture and develop the relational participation of a human person in the divine life.\textsuperscript{83} By Wesley’s definition of the witness of the Spirit that is stated above, we observe that much of what Wesley means by the faith of a child of God overlaps with his understanding of the direct witness of the Spirit. For Wesley, the witness of the Spirit is a “direct witness”\textsuperscript{84} and involves an “impression of the soul.”\textsuperscript{85} This impression is something that by its nature, must be perceived by human consciousness. This feeling is something that is beyond full explanation and cannot be fully known except by one who experiences it. But for Wesley, it is an experience that is generally available for any person with normal psychological conditions who sincerely seeks it. It is evident from Wesley’s reference to John 3 that the timing of the first experience of the witness of the Spirit is unpredictable and passive in a bare sense with respect to a person, as clarified in chapter 2 of this project. In regard to the witness of the

\textsuperscript{79} CF., \textit{Works} (Jackson), 1:426, 10:363.
\textsuperscript{80} Wesley, ‘The Marks of the New Birth,’ \textit{Works} (BE), 1:418.
\textsuperscript{81} Wesley, ‘The Witness of the Spirit I,’ \textit{Works} (BE), 1:274.
\textsuperscript{82} Wesley, ‘The Witness of the Spirit I,’ \textit{Works} (BE), 1:274.
\textsuperscript{83} Cunningham, \textit{John Wesley’s Pneumatology, Perceptible Inspiration}, 136. See also the discussion of Cunningham’s work in chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{84} Wesley, ‘The Witness of the Spirit II,’ \textit{Works} (BE), 1:288.
Spirit, Wesley says in reference to John 3:8, "'The wind bloweth; and I hear the sound thereof'; but I cannot 'tell how it cometh, or whither it goeth.'"

In addition to the faith of a child of God and the witness of the Spirit, a newborn child also has a testimony of his or her own spirit (knowledge based on one’s own reason and self-observations of being and conduct) that one is a child of God.\(^86\) The testimony of one’s spirit is grounded in a self-observation that one has received the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness (the tempers discussed in chapter 4 of this project) — and also in observing one’s own good works.\(^87\) In summary, confirmation that one is a child of God generally involves testimony from two sources: the witness of the Spirit of God and the witness of one’s own spirit or consciousness.\(^88\)

With regard to justification,\(^89\) Wesley makes a statement in 1790 concerning the consistency of his thought. He says that for the last fifty years, his view of justification has “never varied, no not an hair’s breadth.”\(^90\) In a sermon published in 1787, Wesley reaffirms his commitment to the doctrine of “justification by faith alone.”\(^91\) He defines justification as follows: “The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins.”\(^92\) Justification makes one free from the guilt of sin. Scriptures that Wesley uses for his view of justification include Romans 4:5 and 3:25.\(^93\) Justification is distinct from sanctification. The former is what God does for us; the latter is what God does in us.\(^94\) Interpreters of Wesley agree that for Wesley, all children of the new birth have been justified. It is a gift of God’s free grace.

**The Love of God Shed Abroad in the Heart**

Another important feature of the new birth is the love of God shed abroad in the heart. This of course is pertaining to the same idea in John 3 and also resembles the language of Romans 5:5. It is a defining mark of the beginning of sanctification. The first moment of the shedding of such love involves an instantaneous transformation of a

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\(^89\) For more information on Wesley’s view of justification, see the above section on the servant of God.

\(^90\) Wesley, ‘On the Wedding Garment,’ *Works* (BE), 4:147. See also ‘Some Remarks on Mr. Hill’s “Review,”’ *Works* (BE), 13:473 - 474


\(^92\) Wesley, ‘Justification by Faith,’ *Works* (BE), 1:189.


person’s heart. This involves a significant change of character.\textsuperscript{95} As discussed in chapter 4, this is the event in which one’s ruling inclination for love of the world is replaced by a ruling inclination for love of God and neighbour. Evil tempers are decreased and holy tempers are introduced by the Spirit. One now has power over sin and the “renewing of one’s fallen nature.”\textsuperscript{96} It also involves an experience that is perceptible to one’s consciousness. As discussed in chapter 2, such a transformation is passive in a bare sense but not altogether passive when viewed in a larger context. It is not altogether passive because, if there is time and opportunity, graciously-empowered fruitful action before and after the first moment of the new birth is necessary for receiving and maintaining the state of being born of God.

**Instantaneous, Perceived, and Unpredictable Birth**

For Wesley, the instantaneous nature of the first moment of the new birth (including the love of God shed abroad in the heart) is evident from the following comments:

> Whereas in that moment when we are justified freely by his grace, when we are accepted through the Beloved, we are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit… There is in that hour a general change from inward sinfulness to inward holiness. The love of the creature is changed into the love of the Creator, the love of the world into the love of God. Earthly desires, the desire of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life, are in that instant changed by the mighty power of God into heavenly desires.\textsuperscript{97}

In this passage, Wesley is clearly indicating that sinful desires of the heart are changed into holy desires of the heart by “the mighty power of God.” This transformation is performed in a moment. The transition from sinful desires to holy desires is not done in a week, month, or year but “in that instant.” In 1787, Wesley compares the instantaneous nature of the new birth to a mother giving birth:

> And as in the natural birth a man is born at once, and then grows larger and stronger by degrees, so in the spiritual birth a man is born at once, and then gradually increases in spiritual statute and strength. The new birth, therefore, is

\textsuperscript{95} Cf. Wesley’s essay ‘The Character of a Methodist.’
the first point of sanctification, which may increase more and more unto the perfect day.\textsuperscript{98}

Here, Wesley says that in regard to a spiritual birth, one is “born at once.” This birth is only the first point of sanctification, which continues on after this first point in a manner that involves gradual growth.

In addition to being instantaneous, the first moment of the new birth is something that must be perceived and felt by the person experiencing it. First, a person perceives the impression of the direct witness of the Spirit mentioned above. In addition, such a person “feels the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him.”\textsuperscript{99} The new birth involves a “consciousness of our having received, in and by the Spirit of adoption, the tempers mentioned in the Word of God as belonging to his adopted children; even a loving heart toward God and toward all mankind.”\textsuperscript{100} It involves a feeling of happiness: “As soon as the Father of spirits reveals his Son in our hearts, and the Son reveals his Father, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts; then and not till then, we are happy. We are happy . . . in all the heavenly tempers he has wrought in us by his Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{101}

Although all perceive the new birth in some way, some people experience it in a way that feels vivacious, and others experience it in a way that feels more moderate. Wesley says:

There is an irreconcilable variability in the operations of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men, more especially as to the manner of justification. Many find Him rushing upon them like a torrent, while they experience ‘The o’erwhelming power of saving grace.’ This has been the experience of many; perhaps of more in this late visitation than in any other age since the times of the Apostles. But in others He works in a very different way: ‘He deigns His influence to infuse, Sweet, refreshing, as the silent dews.’\textsuperscript{102}

It is clear that Wesley is indicating in these comments that there is an “irreconcilable variability” corresponding to the varying degrees of vivaciousness that may be perceived by a person during the reception of the new birth.

\textsuperscript{102}Wesley, \textit{Letters}, 7:298.
As mentioned before, Wesley’s understanding of the timing of the new birth is comparable to the illustration of the flaming dart from chapter 2. This is because, like the impact of the flaming dart, the timing of the first moments of the new birth is unpredictable. In 1784, Wesley says:

> It is doubtless the peculiar prerogative of God to reserve the ‘times and seasons in his own power’. And we cannot give any reason why of two persons equally athirst for salvation, one is presently taken into the favour of God and the other left to mourn for months or years. One, as soon as he calls upon God, is answered, and filled with peace and joy in believing. Another seeks after him—and it seems with the same degree of sincerity and earnestness—and yet cannot find him, or any consciousness of his favour, for weeks, or months, or years. We know well this cannot possibly be owing to any absolute degrees, consigning one before he was born to everlasting glory, and the other to everlasting fire. But we do not know what is the reason for it; it is enough that God knoweth.\footnote{Wesley, ‘The Imperfection of Human Knowledge,’ Works (BE), 2:584.}

Wesley also references John 8:3 in regard to how the Spirit works in the new birth: “the wind bloweth where it listeth” of John 8:3 that it is “not by thy [human] power or wisdom.”\footnote{Wesley, ‘The New Birth,’ Works (BE), 2:191.} The unpredictability of when the first moments of the new birth occur underscores the passiveness (in a bare sense) of the new birth. In this way, for Wesley, the new birth is the work of God alone and is the effect of the free grace of God.\footnote{Collins, The Theology of John Wesley, 160-165.}

**Responding to Secondary Literature: More Debates**

There have been a number of debates concerning how to interpret Wesley’s view of the beginning of the way of salvation. One point of disagreement is briefly mentioned in chapter 1 above. This is in regard to William Cannon’s critique of George Cell in regard to how to interpret Wesley’s view of the role of the human active power in relation to God’s performance of justification. Here Cannon, unlike Cell, wants to emphasize a person’s role in salvation. Cannon said in regard to Wesley’s view of justification that “the deciding factor in its attainment does not lie with God but remains solely within the bounds of man’s own decision.”\footnote{Cannon, The Theology of John Wesley, 246.} While Cell interprets Wesley to allow for a role for human cooperation in salvation, Cell does not extensively examine the role of human actions before justification in Wesley’s thought. Cell’s concern is to show that Wesley’s
view of the events leading to justification is more like the view of Calvin than was commonly recognized at the time.

Since the time of Cannon’s critique of Cell on this point, another point of debate in secondary literature has arisen which has further complicated the context of the competing interpretations of Cannon and Cell in regard to justification. Recent scholarship has shown that there is ambiguity as to whether or not John Wesley intends for justification to be typically conjoined with the new birth. Wesleyan scholars widely agree that during the early part of his ministry, Wesley believed that these two events are normally conjoined. However, some Wesleyan scholars disagree on whether Wesley, in his older years, believes that justification can occur in a typical manner without being born of God. The discussion relates to Wesley’s view of the servant of God, a stage that precedes receiving the new birth.

Randy Maddox says in reference to the view of Kenneth Collins: “Collins argues that there is one other characteristic of the servant of God that remains consistent through Wesley’s thought—they are not yet recipients of God’s forgiveness (justification). I must disagree.” In support of this claim, Maddox cites how Wesley indicates that some are “accepted of God” before the new birth. For some interpreters, this language of “accepted of God” seems to hint at justification, but it is not fully clear. Maddox argues that the strongest evidence is Wesley’s statement concerning God’s wrath. Wesley clearly indicates that servants of God avoid God’s wrath before experiencing the new birth. Maddox says in reference to such servants of God that they “no longer have the ‘wrath of God’ abiding on them! What can this mean but that they are presently justified?”

In disagreement with Maddox, Kenneth Collins argues that for Wesley, both during his early ministry and during his latest years, justification and the new birth are normally conjoined. One piece of evidence that Collins uses in support of this argument is a letter that Wesley writes to Thomas Davenport in 1781. In this letter, Wesley implies that justification does not arrive until a person first receives the Spirit of adoption, which as discussed above, Wesley links to the beginning of the new birth. Furthermore, near the end of his life, Wesley makes some statements that indicate that Christian justification

107 Randy Maddox, “Continuing the Conversation,” Methodist History, 30, 4, (1992): 237. Also note that “justification” is not my addition but is quoted directly from the text of Maddox.
111 Wesley, Letters, 7:95.
and the new birth are normally conjoined. For example, in 1787, several years before Wesley’s death, he says in reference to any person: “For when he is justified he is ‘born again’, ‘born from above’, ‘born of the Spirit’; which although it is not (as some suppose) the whole process of sanctification, [it] is doubtless the gate of it.” Also, Wesley makes this claim earlier in his life, and he never retracts it. Furthermore, several years before his death, he claims that he has not contradicted himself between 1738 and 1788.

In his book *From Faith to Faith: John Wesley’s Covenant Theology and the Way of Salvation*, Stanley Rodes responds to the debate between Collins and Maddox regarding whether or not a servant of God is justified before the new birth. Rodes’ intention is not to underscore whether Maddox or Collins makes a better argument. Rather, Rodes’ purpose is to illuminate the bigger picture. A more crucial point of focus for Wesley is not whether a servant of God is justified before reaching the new birth. Rather, it is recognizing the power and centrality of Christ’s atonement and the resulting role of the Spirit in salvation. A servant of God does not have to make justification a top concern because such a servant knows that regardless of the status of current justification, he or she is “accepted of God” and the beneficiary of the “salvific sufficiency” of the Covenant of Grace. A servant of God is under God’s protection because the Covenant of Grace in all its dispensations is rooted in the victory of the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

For Rodes, unlike Cannon, the greater emphasis in Wesley’s view of the early stage of the way of salvation is not a person’s decision but rather is Christ’s atonement and how through the giving of the gift of faith, this atonement provides the power and means for “progression” or “augmentation” in the Christian life, i.e. moving forward in the way of salvation. This is not to deny that for Rodes’ interpretation of Wesley, fruitful actions are necessary if there is time and opportunity.

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113 In 1748, he says, “But though it be allowed that justification and the new birth are in point of time inseparable from each other, yet are they easily distinguished as being not the same, but things of a widely different nature.” This comment was republished multiple times without modification, including in 1787. Wesley, ‘The Great Privelege of those that are Born of God,’ *Works* (BE), 1:431. For an overview of this sermon’s published history, see Outler, *Works* (BE), 4:453.
115 Rodes says in reference to Wesley: “Yet, in concert with classic covenant theology, he centered everything on the mediatorial work of Christ as ‘the lamb slain from the foundation of the world,’ and affirmed the Incarnation and outpouring of the Spirit as the culmination of God’s saving activity in and for the world.” Rodes, *From Faith to Faith*, 76.
116 For a discussion of these points, see Wesley, ‘On Faith,’ *Works* (BE), 3:497.
117 Rodes, *From Faith to Faith*, 136, 139.
Rodes’ exposition of covenant theology in the thought of John Wesley appropriately brings Christ’s atonement to the centre of focus. For Wesley, the atonement is not confined to the gospel dispensation. It pertains to all dispensations after the fall and to all stages of the way of salvation. Christ is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” As Rodes says: “For Wesley, as for his Calvinist counterparts, every provision of grace throughout all ages flows only and always from the reconciling work of Christ.” Wesley says, “The death of Christ procured the pardon and acceptance of believers, even before he came in the flesh.’ Yea, and ever since. In this we all agree.” Rodes is correct in highlighting that for Wesley, every effect of the Spirit on a person regarding salvation flows from and is made possible by Christ’s atonement. In this way, Rodes’ work helps to show a connection between Wesley’s Christology and pneumatology.

For Wesley, the meritorious power of Christ’s atonement applies to the earliest effects of prevenient grace on a person and for the work of the Spirit during the entire way of salvation, including the earliest stage of being a servant of God. It is by the meritorious power of Christ’s atonement that the Spirit works in active and passive dimensions of a person, empowering a person to pursue the greatest end of Christian living. As we have shown in this chapter, the pursuit of the greatest end of Christian living is itself a gift, and this gift is the expression of the work of the Spirit rooted in the meritorious effects of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, as Rodes helps us to see. Thus, contrary to Cannon’s claim, for a follower of Christ in the early part of the way of salvation (and for anywhere in salvation for that matter), while Wesley always urges the importance of fruitful actions if there is time and opportunity, the greater emphasis is on what God does by Christ and not on a person’s decision.

In this chapter, we explored Wesley’s understanding of the path to the new birth and we have begun to consider Wesley’s view of the new birth itself. However, we have not yet fully considered his understanding of the moral agency of a newborn child. In the

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119Wesley, ‘Predestination Calmly Considered,’ * Works (BE)*, 13:268. Wesley also says, “But it is the covenant of grace which God through Christ hath established with men in all ages (as well before, and under the Jewish dispensation, as since God was manifest in the flesh).” Wesley, “The Righteousness of Faith,” * Works (BE)*, 1:203. See also footnote 2 on page 203.

120Rodes, *From Faith to Faith*, 64.

121Wesley, ‘Preface to a Treatise on Justification,’ * Works (Jackson)*, 10:318.

next chapter, we will carry on this task and other tasks as we continue to follow along Wesley’s “way of salvation” and the corresponding stages.
Chapter 7: From New Birth to Perfect Love and the Rewards of Heaven

In this chapter, we will continue the task of exploring John Wesley’s view of moral agency for each stage along the way of salvation. We finished the last chapter by beginning a discussion of Wesley’s view of the new birth. The new birth is a spiritual transformation that, in its first moments, involves having the faith of a child of God, the witness of the Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, the entering of Christ into the heart, and the love of God shed abroad in the heart. Also, all children of the new birth have received justification and power over sin. For this chapter, we will first consider more of Wesley’s view of the newborn child. After this, we will consider his view of the child of perfect love and the inhabitant of heaven. Last, in this chapter, we will consider some debates in secondary literature relevant to the later stages of the way of salvation. Over the course of this chapter, it will be argued that regardless of the stage, according to the view of John Wesley, a person’s pursuit of the greatest end of moral agency is an expression of God’s gift and that the giftedness of this blessing is illuminated by a critical examination of the work of the Spirit with respect to the active and passive dimensions of a human being.

The Child of the New Birth (Continued)

The Repentance of Believers

For Wesley, a newborn child is in need of repentance. The kind of repentance for the newborn is different from the kind that occurs before the new birth. This type of repentance is called the repentance of a believer.¹ In contrast to the repentance before the new birth, the second kind does not include a conviction of sin properly speaking. According to Wesley, “‘Sin, properly speaking’ is neither more nor less than a “voluntary transgression of a known law of God.”² It seems that all children of the new birth do not commit sin “properly speaking.”³ Therefore, this type of repentance does not apply for such people at this stage. But there is a second type of repentance. This is the “knowing

¹ See, for example, Wesley’s sermon ‘The Repentance of Believers,’ sermon 14, Outler, Works (BE).
ourselves sinners, yea, guilty, helpless sinners, even though we know we are children of God."

5 Wesley, ‘The Repentance of Believers,’ Works (BE), 1:337.
9 Wesley, ‘The Repentance of Believers,’ Works (BE), 1:337.
The repentance of believers also involves conviction of one’s “utter helplessness . . . to think one good work, or do one good work, than before they were justified, that they have still no kind or degree of strength of their own, no power either to do good or resist evil; no ability to conquer or even withstand the world . . . by their own strength.” But they know they “have power to overcome all these enemies” because of “‘the mere gift of God.’”

This point underscores the thesis of this project once again. Even the good works properly speaking that come after the new birth are an expression of God’s gift. The pursuit of the greatest end of moral agency, as it involves a resolution and a performance of such good works, is an expression of God’s gift.

**Virtuous Action**

For Wesley, virtue is possible only after possessing God’s love in the heart. It seems that in some cases, virtue has at least a passive aspect, such as when Wesley associates the virtues with humility, faith, hope, and charity. In other cases, virtue refers to a holistic scheme that clearly involves both a passive aspect and an active aspect. Such is the case for what leads to a virtuous action. For example, a virtuous action is a fruitful action that flows from a passive inclination of a holy heart of love. While before the new birth, no fruitful action is virtuous, after the new birth, all fruitful action is virtuous. While the impenitent sinner and servant of God are not capable of performing virtuous action properly speaking, such virtuous action is characteristic of a newborn child.

Virtuous action refers to the performance of any morally preferable action by a child of God (including newborn children). It includes following any part of Wesley’s guide for fruitful action. This includes the performances of good works properly speaking such as works of piety (prayer, taking the Lord’s Supper, studying the scriptures, and fasting) and works of mercy (feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, visiting those in prison, instructing the ignorant and more). It includes participating in forms of Christian fellowship such as attending church services, watch night-services, preaching services, classes, bands, and love feasts. It includes practicing

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14 Wesley, ‘An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,’ *Works (BE),* 11:45; Wesley, ‘An Israelite Indeed,’ *Works (BE),* 3:279-280; See also the discussion of virtue in chapter 1.
15 Wesley, ‘Circumcision of the Heart,’ *Works (BE),* 1:403.
16 Outler, *Works (BE),* 3:279-280; See also the discussion of virtue in chapter 1.
the means of grace, following the *General Rules* of the Methodist societies, and obeying the moral commandments of scripture.

Ultimately, for Wesley, virtue cannot last without free will, one’s power of liberty. As discussed in chapters 1 and 2, for Wesley, a system of necessity and absolute predestination, as he believed was exemplified in the thought of Jonathan Edwards, makes void the possibility of virtue and vice and moral agency altogether. This is because, according to Wesley, if fruitful action is only the result of necessity, then humans are no different from clocks and therefore, they cannot be virtuous or held accountable. If a child of the new birth does not use his or her liberty to perform virtuous action on a regular basis, then the effects of grace that have been received on prior occasions will be lost.

Indeed, in order to keep the status of being a child of the new birth and maintain the love of God shed abroad in the heart, it is necessary for one to perform virtuous action. In order to illustrate this point, Wesley uses the parable of the talents from Matthew 25:14-30. Wesley says,

> whoever improves the grace he has already received, whoever increases in the love of God, will surely retain it. God will continue, yea, will give it more abundantly; whereas whoever does not improve this talent cannot possibly retain it. Notwithstanding all he can do, it will infallibly be taken away from him.18

Wesley indicates that if a newborn child chooses to perform virtuous action, then more grace is received. If such a newborn does not perform virtuous action, then he or she will lose the grace that has already been given. That is, such a person will lose the effects of the new birth. Such a person will grow “dead and cold” and “destroy all the life of God out of their souls.”19

**The Moral Agency of the Newborn Child**

For a newborn child, the various features of the soul have been transformed by the Holy Spirit. This transformation involves an array of passive experiences. At the first moment of the new birth, the love of God is shed abroad in the heart. This involves receiving the Spirit of adoption and the Spirit of the Son entering the heart. It involves the transformation of one’s tempers and a replacement of one’s ruling inclination of the heart. Such a newborn also has the faith of a child of God, the witness of the Spirit, and the

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18 Wesley, ‘*An Israelite Indeed,*’ *Works* (BE), 3:284.
witness of one’s own spirit that one is a child of God. The newborn child also feels a second type of repentance. This repentance is a conviction that although sin does not reign, it remains. It involves a conviction of inbred sin and sin improperly speaking. Inbred sin involves the lingering influence of evil inward tempers, and sin improperly speaking involves involuntary transgressions of God’s law.

The moral agency of a newborn stresses the importance of virtuous action. For a newborn child, a holy heart makes the doing of right action come easily. The “springs” of the heart facilitate the doing of such good action. Wesley speaks of the love of the new birth as making one “constrained to love all men as yourselves; with a love not only ever burning in your heart, but flaming out in all your actions and conversations.”

For Wesley, a newborn child is subject to two types of spiritual growth. One is gradual. The other type involves an instantaneous transformation. In chapter 2 of this project, we explored analogies corresponding to each type of spiritual growth. The gradual process of growth is comparable to the illustration of the fit woman, and the other type is comparable to the illustration of the flaming dart. For the case of the newborn child, we will introduce the flaming dart as a second flaming dart.

For Wesley, gradual growth typically occurs in sanctification between the two major foci of sanctification, which are the first moment of the new birth and the first moment of Christian perfection. In the illustration of the fit woman, the act of exercising leads to a nurturing of one’s inclination for exercise. Similarly, in the life of a newborn child, the practice of good works leads to the nurturing of one’s tempers of the heart. As discussed in chapter 5, these good works are only possible by grace and are themselves co-operating action. The Spirit is the doer. The performance of such good works leads to reflexive Christian growth that occurs gradually. Such reflexive growth is only possible by grace.

For the newborn child, as for all other stages of the Christian life, the highest goal of Christian living is to love God and neighbour to one’s full potential. The newborn

22 For discussions of Wesley’s view of gradual growth, please see, for example, Outler, editor, Works (BE), 1:164, 1:520, 2:19, 2:43, 2:60, and 2:235.
already possesses Christian love and so in a sense has already partly reached the highest goal. Yet, for a newborn, there remains room for growth. Wesley has a notion of perfect love, i.e. Christian perfection, a state of being that is above being a newborn child. The first moment of Christian perfection marks a spike in spiritual growth. It represents a distinctively higher capacity to love God and other people. As a newborn child seeks the greatest end of Christian living, such a newborn is seeking perfect love, as this largely represents the fulfilment of this greatest end of Christian living.

The pursuit of perfect love is comparable to the illustration of the flaming dart from chapter 2, except now the illustration involves a second flaming dart. We considered the situation of the first flaming dart in the discussion in chapter 6 concerning the servant of God. The impact of the first flaming dart is analogous to a person’s experience of the first moment of the new birth, the point of time when a servant of God transitions to becoming a newborn child. In this chapter, the focus is on a second flaming dart, analogous to the first moment of perfect love, the point in time when a newborn child transitions to being a child of perfect love. For a newborn child, the situation is parallel to the situation of the servant of God. Like before, faith is the only indispensable condition for the spiritual change. Fruitful action is necessary for perfect love, only if there is time and opportunity.

Since the faith alone regarding perfection is sufficient for perfect love and is the only indispensable condition, it is fine for a newborn to hope for perfect love to come now. This is like in an illustration of a second flaming dart in which one hopes for the second dart to come now. Wesley makes the following remark in reference to perfect love:

> If by works, you want something to be done first, before you are sanctified. You think, ‘I must first be or do thus or thus.’ Then you are seeking it by works unto this day. If you seek it by faith, you may expect it as you are: and if as you are, then expect it now.\(^{23}\)

It is best to hope that perfect love (the second flaming dart) comes now, while also practising fruitful action as there is opportunity. This is more preferable than other approaches such as: (a) doing fruitful action while assuming that perfect love must come

later and (b) expecting perfect love to come now without doing any fruitful action.\textsuperscript{24}

According to Wesley, in all stages of human living, it is important for fruitful action to be constantly performed, even if such fruitful actions are never in themselves sufficient for gifts such as the new birth and Christian perfection. Anything less than a constant performance of fruitful action is bound to lead to spiritual laziness and backsliding.

The arrival of the first moment of perfect love (analogous to the impact of the second flaming dart) involves events that are passive in a bare sense. However, as discussed in chapter 2 of this project, when viewed in a larger context, the arrival of perfect love is “not altogether” passive. This is because, if there is time and opportunity, graciously-empowered fruitful action before and after the first moments of perfect love have bearing on whether or not perfect love is received and maintained.

Wesley never backs down from the importance that he gives in pursuing perfect love. He continues to encourage this pursuit in the 1760s until the end of his life.\textsuperscript{25} In 1779 he says, “exhort all the believers strongly and explicitly to go on to perfection,” and in 1791, the year of his death, he says: “Whenever you have opportunity of speaking to believers, urge them to go on to perfection.”\textsuperscript{26} His confidence arises in part from the multitude of cases he has observed in the Methodist revival in addition to what he considered to be an obvious teaching in the scriptures. As in the illustration of the second flaming dart, the timing of the arrival of perfect love is unpredictable. Nevertheless, if one maintains a constant pursuit of such perfect love, it will certainly come at an unknown future time. The pursuit itself of perfect love involves the performance of fruitful action.

For a newborn child, fruitful action is always virtuous action (and also a good work properly speaking), and it is the expression of God’s gift. This is because, in every instance of its occurrence, virtuous action must spring from a holy heart of love. Such a holy heart of love involves a passive inclination and is the effect of the work of God alone. God’s role does not cease after the transformation of the heart but is “flaming out”\textsuperscript{27} in all virtuous action. As always, the active nature of fruitful action is co-operating. The person is never acting alone but always in partnership with the Holy Spirit. Such co-operation is in response to the prior passive operations of the Spirit on the heart and soul (the love of

\textsuperscript{24} In response to approach b, consider Wesley’s comment, “God can give the end without any means at all; but you have no reason to think he will. Therefore constantly and carefully use all these means which he has appointed to be the ordinary channels of his grace” (Wesley, ‘The Nature of Enthusiasm,’ Works (BE), 2:59).

\textsuperscript{25} For example, see: Wesley, Letters, 4:242, 5:346, 6:343, 7:170, 8:258. The latest letter of this list was written in 1791.

\textsuperscript{26} Wesley, Letters, 6:343, 8:258.

\textsuperscript{27} Wesley, ‘The Marks of the New Birth,’ Works (BE), 1:428.
God shed abroad in the heart, the faith of a child of God, the witness of the Spirit). In this way, we observe how once again for Wesley, the pursuit of Christian love and the performance of fruitful action are the expressions of God’s gift.

The Child of Perfect Love

Throughout his life, Wesley maintained a scriptural doctrine of Christian perfection. As Henry Rack points out, holding this doctrine did not come without some controversy and disagreement.28 Nevertheless, Wesley supported this doctrine by insisting that it emerges from a careful reading of scripture, from how he observed the Holy Spirit to be working throughout the revival of his time, and from his experiences in dealing with the Methodist communities. In response to his critics, Wesley writes in regard to Christian perfection: “This perfection cannot be a delusion, unless the Bible be a delusion too; I mean, ‘loving God with all our heart and our neighbour as ourselves.’ I pin down all its opposers to this definition of it.”29 This is to say that Wesley finds confidence in this doctrine because he believes that it is simply obedience to the greatest commandment of scripture: Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37-39, etc.30 This is the greatest commandment of the Bible, as given in the Old Testament and from the mouth of Jesus himself.

Wesley also quotes Matthew 5:48: “Ye shall therefore be perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.”31 He also frequently cites many other scriptures in support of the doctrine of perfection.32 In addition to using scripture as a foundation for this doctrine of Christian perfection, Wesley shows that it fits what is observed in the real world. It fits the accounts of how numerous people in the real world have experienced the

29 Wesley, *Letters*, 5:102
31 Wesley, ‘A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,’ *Works* (BE), 13:189. Here he cites the Greek word for perfect, τέλειοι. For more discussion of this Greek term, see Wesley’s discussion of James 1:4 in his sermon *On Patience* (Wesley, ‘On Patience,’ *Works* (BE), 3:179)
work of the Holy Spirit. He says, “That perfection which I believe, I can boldly preach, because I think I see five hundred witnesses of it.”

As mentioned above, Wesley defines his scriptural doctrine of Christian perfection as loving God with all one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength and loving one’s neighbour. Harald Lindström describes love to God as the highest end in Wesley’s teleology. This is “perfect love.” He also describes it as “the mind which was in Christ,” “the renewal of the heart in the whole image of God,” and a full “circumcision of the heart.”

“Perfect” is the English translation of the Greek word from the Bible τέλειος. Some offer that “perfect” (or “perfection”) is a misleading translation and that one could also translate this Biblical term as “reaching an ideal” or “being made complete.”

We will use the phrase “perfected child” to refer to someone for whom God has given perfect love. At the moment that a person first experiences perfect love, this person shifts from being a newborn child to being a child of perfect love. A child of perfect love is still a “child” of God (not a newborn), but such a perfected child possesses some spiritual gifts that a newborn has not yet received. At the first moment of experiencing perfect love, a person possesses for the first time the faith of a perfected child, a pure heart, the freedom from evil thoughts, and the witness of a perfected child. As Geordan Hammond observes, for Wesley, Christian perfection also involves imitating Christ.

Faith of the Perfected Child, Pure Heart, and the Witness of the Perfected Child

The first moment of being a child of perfect love immediately accompanies the first moment of having the faith of a perfected child. Wesley believes that perfect love is the free gift of God, the effect of free grace, and is “is to be received by plain, simple faith.” This faith involves a belief that God has promised to save one from all sin and to fill one with all holiness; that God is able to save one to the uttermost—including giving perfect love—; that He is willing to do this; and that He is willing to do this now. God

33 Wesley, Letters, 5:20.
37 For Wesley’s discussion of this term, see Wesley, ‘A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,’ Works (BE), 13:189 and Wesley, ‘On Patience,’ Works (BE), 3:179. The plural form is used here because this is what Wesley uses when he quotes the scripture.
gives this faith so as to “enable you to believe, it [Christian perfection] is done.”⁴¹ There seems to be a passive aspect of this faith of a perfected child.

The first moment of experiencing perfect love also includes God’s creation of a pure heart. Although when a person becomes a newborn child, there is a partial transformation of the heart, a full transformation of the heart does not occur until experiencing perfect love. The hearts of newborns are “truly, yet not entirely, renewed.”⁴² “Sin is then overcome, but it is not rooted out; it is conquered, but not destroyed.”⁴³ While the newborn child continues to have passive feelings of inbred sin (including sinful affections and lusts⁴⁴), the child of perfect love has all inbred sin taken away.⁴⁵ For a perfected child, “no wrong temper”… “remains in the soul,”⁴⁶ “there is no mixture of any contrary affections,”⁴⁷ and there is no interruption of love.⁴⁸ In other words “inbred sin,” also known as the “being of sin,” is removed.⁴⁹ Love is already the ruling inclination before perfect love. Yet, perfect love also implies the implanting of more good dispositions.⁵⁰ All of this is why a perfected child has a “pure heart.” The heart is now completely full of love, not partly full of love. Unlike a newborn child, a child of perfect love is also rid of all evil thoughts.⁵¹

At the initial moment of experiencing perfect love, it is common for a person also to experience a witness that one is a child of perfect love. The witness of the perfected child does not exclude the type of witness that is found in a newborn child. A perfected child has all the witnesses of the newborn child (the witness of the Spirit that Christ died for me and that my sins are forgiven and the witness of my own spirit of this forgiveness that comes from observing in myself the love of God and fruits of the Spirit), plus an additional witness. The witness that is held only by a perfected child and not by a newborn child is what is being described here as a “witness of a perfected child.” In a sense, the latter is parallel in form to the former. In regard to form: like for the witness of

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⁴⁹ For citations concerning “inward sin,” “inbred sin,” and the “being” of sin, see above.
a newborn, the witness of a perfected child involves a certain testimony from two sources: (1) the witness of the Spirit of God and (2) the witness of one’s own human spirit.52

Unlike the witness of a newborn child, the witness of a perfected child is “‘an inward witness, that I am fully renewed, as that I am justified.’”53 The Spirit gives this witness of perfect love directly by means of performing an impression upon the soul. By contrast, the witness of one’s own spirit is an inference that one can make about oneself in regard to reaching perfect love. This inference is made by observing within oneself the perceivable effects of perfect love, such a fullness of love, the absence of the passive feelings of sinful tempers, and a stronger presence of the fruits of the Spirit. The witness of the Spirit is passive in a bare sense. In regard to the feeling of a fullness of love and the absence of evil tempers, the witness of one’s own spirit is also passive in a bare sense. The first occurrences of these witnesses are unpredictable and not fully subject to one’s active regulation.

In addition to the witness that one is a child of God and the witness that one is a perfected child, there are other forms of spiritual testimony in Wesley’s thought. For some, this may make Wesley’s view of spiritual testimony seem rather complicated. Wesley teaches that there is something called the “full assurance of faith” and the “full assurance of hope.” The full assurance of faith is possessed by someone who is at a spiritual stage no lower than a “young” person in Christ.54 Possessing this is what distinguishes a young person (spiritually speaking) from a newborn child. A perfected child, like a young person, will often have this type of assurance. The full assurance of faith is an abiding witness of the Spirit that one is a child of God, and it tends to exclude doubts and tormenting fear.55 This is a stronger and more continuous witness of the Spirit than what is given to a newborn child. Wesley says that the newborn child will have a less abiding witness and suffer more doubts and more tormenting fears.56

The full assurance of hope is different from the full assurance of faith. Only those who are no lower than a perfected child may receive the “full assurance of hope,” and this

52 For a discussion of the witness that one is perfected child, see Wesley, ‘A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,’ Works (Jackson), 11:420–421, 11:426. For a discussion of the witness that one is a child of God, see, for example, Wesley, ‘The Witness of the Spirit, II,’ Works (BE), 1:289.
53 Wesley, ‘A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,’ Works (Jackson), 11:398–399, 11:402, 11:426. Wesley also says, “In the Thoughts on Perfection it is observed that, before any can be assured they are saved from sin, they must not only feel no sin but ‘have a direct witness’ of that salvation.” Wesley, Letters, 4:269.
is not a gift possessed by all perfected children. The full assurance of hope is a confidence that one is not only saved but also sure that one will remain saved and reign with Christ in glory.

**Instantaneous, Perceived, and Unpredictable Beginning of Perfection**

Wesley’s view of the instantaneous nature of the first moment of experiencing perfect love is evident from the following comments concerning perfect love: “the gift itself is always given instantaneously. I never knew or heard of any exception; and I believe there never was one.” He repeats this view in various comments after 1758. In 1789 (two years before his death), he repeats this claim again: “full deliverance from sin, I believe, is always instantaneous — at least, I never yet knew an exception.”

For Wesley, the possession of perfect love is something that a perfected person perceives. The first moment of such perfect love is usually perceived. This point is clear from Wesley’s view of the witness of a perfected child discussed above. This may not be true for all people, but all people should at some point perceive the effects of having gained perfect love, if not at the first moment. The perceivable aspect of perfect love is also evident from how at the first moment of perfect love, the heart is transformed in a perceivable way. After experiencing perfect love, one then no longer feels the passive feelings of evil tempers. One now feels instead a fuller sense of the passive feelings of God’s love and other associated holy tempers. In the child of perfect love, there is “an experimental verity and a plenitude of the presence of the ever-blessed Trinity.” Another perceivable aspect of perfect love is happiness. Wesley says “according to the degree of our love is the degree of our happiness,” and he says when we are “‘complete in him’ . . . then we are completely happy.”

The first moment of experiencing perfect love is unpredictable. This is evident from many observations in the context of doing ministry. Wesley says,

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60 See, for example, Wesley, *Letters*, 5:39; Wesley, ‘On Patience,’ *Works* (BE), 3:178; and Wesley, ‘A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,’ *Works* (BE), 3:178. In the latter case, Wesley argues that perfection is instantaneous in some cases where the change in this instant is not perceived right way.
There is likewise a great variety in the manner and time of God’s bestowing his sanctifying grace, whereby he enables his children to give him their whole heart, which we can in no wise account for. We know not why he bestows this on some even before they ask for it (some unquestionable instances of which we have seen); on some after they have sought it but a few days; and yet permits other believers to wait for it perhaps twenty, thirty, or forty years; nay, and others till a few hours or even minutes before their spirits return to him. For the various circumstances also which attend the fulfilling of that great promise, ‘I will circumcise thy heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all they soul,’ God undoubtedly has reasons; but those reasons are generally hid from the children of men.  

Some receive perfection before they ask for it. Others, who work equally hard in seeking it, receive it at different times. Some wait a few minutes, some wait a few hours, and some wait many years. The reasons for variation in timing are unknown to a person. The lack of predictability concerning the instantaneous arrival of perfection is a point that Wesley makes on multiple occasions throughout the 1760s and 1780s. Such a lack of predictability underscores the passivity of the first moment of perfection. In this way, the first moment of perfection is comparable to the illustration of a second flaming dart that is discussed above.

**Not Absolute Perfection**

A perfected child is perfect in the sense that such a person does not commit sin properly speaking (a voluntary transgression of a known law of God), does not have “inbred sin” (the passive feeling of evil tempers), and has gained a fullness of love and associated holy tempers. However, Wesley teaches that there is not “absolute perfection” on earth. Even perfected children suffer from the following conditions that prevent them from reaching absolute perfection: ignorance, errors, infirmities and involuntary transgressions (sin improperly speaking).

“Infirmities” include involuntary failings such as inadvertently saying something is true when it is false and hurting a neighbor without knowing it. They also include inward and outward imperfections such as slowness of understanding, dullness of apprehension.

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irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination, and slowness of speech. They include what are called “bodily infirmities,” and a thousand other defects of conversation or behaviour. Wesley indicates that an infirmity can lead to a wrong judgment or wrong affection which leads to wrong words and actions. In this way, although perfected children do not have inbred sin, their infirmities can lead them to commit involuntary transgressions.

In addition to being subject to infirmities and involuntary transgressions, a perfected child is also subject to temptations. Some infirmities in fact lead to temptations. Here is where one may raise the question: if a perfected child does not possess inbred sin (the feeling of evil tempers or inclinations), how can such a person be tempted? On Wesley’s behalf, there are two possible ways to answer this question. One way is to offer yet again that a temper is different from a fleeting affection. An infirmity can lead to a temptation that is a clearly felt affection, but this is fleeting and short-lasting. All inbred sin—understood as tempers, which are more lasting inclinations and feelings—remains fully cleansed. Another way to answer this question is to say that when a perfected child suffers a “grievously” troublesome temptation, this is more descriptive of an external force than an evil feeling. Consider Wesley’s analogy of a man striking another man in the face. If the strike is somewhat hard, it is grievously troublesome. However, as the illustration goes, the reaction is for the recipient of the strike to feel nothing but a “heart that overflows with love.” The reaction does not involve a flare up of an evil feeling, which in this case would be anger. In this way, the temptation refers more to an external force and less to an evil feeling.

For Wesley, repentance is possible even for perfected children. It is clear that he believes that perfected children should be aware of ways that they fail to reach absolute perfection. Perfected children may have convictions of their involuntary outward

75 Outler, editor, Works (BE), 2:105 and 3:162; Works (BE), 9:54.
76 See the related discussion in chapter 4.
77 See Wesley, ‘A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,’ Works (BE), 13:151. He uses the word “grievously” in regard to temptation.
78 Wesley, ‘A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,’ Works (Jackson), 11:419. On some occasions, it is useful to cite the Jackson edition of this treatise since, unlike the bicentennial edition, the former edition quotes the whole text.
79 Wesley, ‘A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,’ Works (Jackson), 11:419.
80 See, for example, Wesley, Letters, 4:189-190.
transgressions of the moral law. Also, perfected children must continue to recognize that all good that is in them and done by them is only possible through the free grace of God that precedes, empowers, and accompanies for every good work. In this way, perfected children are aware that their fruitful action is nothing more than an expression of God’s gift.

The Moral Agency of the Perfected Child

The child of perfect love has all of the spiritual gifts of the newborn child, except that for a child of perfect love, the repentance of inbred sin is no longer necessary (see diagram 7.1). The perfected child has received some spiritual gifts that the newborn does not yet have. This includes having the faith of a perfected child, a pure heart, the full assurance of faith, and the witness (from God and oneself) that one is perfect in love. Perfected children sometimes also have a full assurance of hope. All of these gifts involve some degree of passive experience and the work of God alone. Having a pure heart means that a perfected child has a higher capacity for loving God and neighbour. A perfected child is now able to love God with all of his or her heart, soul, mind, and strength. This means that a perfected child has basically reached the telos, the greatest end of Christian living. However, one has only “basically” reached this greatest end because Wesley teaches that even a perfected child has room for further spiritual growth. Thomas Noble points out that given how perfection is dynamic rather than having a final arrival, it may be better to use the translation of “perfecting” rather than “perfection.”

For Wesley, a perfected child must continue to perform fruitful action (also known in this case as good works and virtuous action) or else this person will lose the grace that enables this person to be a perfected child. In regard to Christian perfection, Wesley says, “I do not include an impossibility of falling from it, either in part or in whole.” By following Wesley’s guide for fruitful action, which includes imitating Christ, practicing the means of grace, following the General Rules of the Methodist societies, and obeying the moral commandments of scripture, one removes any possibility of falling from perfect love. Such action also assists the gradual growth that takes place after Christian perfection. In regard to such growth of a perfected child Wesley says, “Yet he still

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82 Noble, Holy Trinity: Holy People, 24 and 95.
83 Wesley, Letters, 5:38.
84 For Wesley’s discussion of the gradual growth that takes place after perfection, see, for example: Works (BE), 11:126 and 13:175; Wesley, Letters, 5:39.
grows in grace, in the knowledge of Christ, in the love and image of God; and will do so, not only till death, but to all eternity.”

The kind gradual growth that takes place here in some way resembles the illustration of the fit woman in chapter 2. This is the same type of gradual growth that we observed for a newborn child that takes place between the first moment of the new birth and the first moment of Christian perfection. Yet, here, gradual growth is taking place for one who is at a higher spiritual state. In the illustration of the fit woman, the act of exercising leads to a nurturing of one’s inclination for exercise. Likewise, in the life of a child of perfect love, the practice of good works leads to the nurturing of one’s pure tempers of the heart. As discussed in chapter 5, these good works are only possible by grace and are themselves co-operating action. The Spirit is the doer. The performance of such good works leads to reflexive Christian growth that occurs gradually. Such reflexive growth is only possible by grace.

One may ask the question: if one already has a pure heart, how is there room for gradual growth? Wesley makes it clear in the above statement that one is growing in the knowledge and love of God. Thus, as a perfected child grows spiritually, this person becomes more knowledgeable and the magnitude of his or her inclination of love increases. Thus, as a perfected child grows in love, this person possesses even a stronger desire, a stronger “fire” so to speak, to love and serve God and neighbour.

Another factor to consider for the moral agency of a perfected child is a consideration of the rewards that one will receive in heaven in proportion to the good works that one performs on earth. Indeed, in agreement with his close associate John Fletcher, Wesley holds the doctrine of final justification by works. Here, there is not as much concern for whether there is time and opportunity. If there is not time and opportunity during normal life on earth, there will be time on the day of judgment, at which time a person will have the time do what needs to be done and say what needs to be said.

86 For discussions of Wesley’s view of gradual growth, please see, for example, Outler, editor, Works (BE), 1:164, 1:520, 2:19, 2:43, 2:60, and 2:235.
87 Wesley, ‘Of Hell,’ Works (BE) 3:37. This point will be discussed more later in this chapter. See the section “Final Justification and the Rewards of Heaven.”
88 Wesley, ‘The Great Assize,’ Works (BE), 1:363. This point will be discussed more later in this chapter. See the section “Final Justification and the Rewards of Heaven.”
However, usually, there will be time and opportunity for doing good works during normal life on earth, either as a newborn or as a perfected child. Wesley teaches that the rewards that a person will receive in heaven are in proportion to such good works. This is further reason for a perfected child to perform fruitful action. Nevertheless, the primary reason that a perfected person performs fruitful action is because this person’s heart is completely full of love and because he or she cares about God and neighbors. This love strongly motivates the perfected child to love God and neighbour, making such a way of living come easy. There does not need to be any promise of reward for this to happen. However, at the Day of Judgment people are rewarded according to their works, and so this is further reason for a perfected child to do good works all the more.

In summary of the moral agency of the perfected person, the fruitful actions of a perfected child are not possible because of anything inherent in the human doer. For this child of perfect love, the pursuit of higher levels of love and the virtuous actions that help constitute this pursuit are the expression of God’s gift. This is because, in every instance of its occurrence, virtuous action must spring from a pure heart of love. Such a pure heart of love involves a passive inclination and is the effect of the work of God alone. God’s role does not cease after giving the gift of perfect love but is “flaming out” with flames of perfect love in all virtuous action. As always, the active nature of fruitful action is cooperating. The person is never acting alone but always in partnership with the Holy Spirit in response to the prior passive operations of the Spirit on the heart and soul (a heart of perfect love, the faith of a perfected child, the full assurance of faith, the witness of the Spirit that one is perfected, etc.). In this way, we observe how once again for Wesley, the pursuit of Christian love and the performance of fruitful action are the expressions of God’s gift.

The Inhabitant of Heaven

For Wesley, when a saved person dies, he or she will end up in heaven for all eternity. Wesley refers to a person who makes it to heaven as an “inhabitant of heaven.” For this section, we will explore Wesley’s view of such an inhabitant and then consider the moral agency of such a person.

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90 The evidence in support of this point will be explored later in this chapter.
From Death to the Great Judgment

Wesley teaches that when a person dies, this person’s soul is immediately separated from the body,\(^93\) and the soul is sent to Hades.\(^94\) Even though the great judgment, also known as the “great assize,” does not occur until later, the person will usually know right away at death whether he or she is going to heaven or hell.\(^95\) Note that for Wesley, Hades is distinct from heaven and hell.\(^96\) Hades is where all souls of those who are dead go before the judgment, and heaven and hell are places where all people go after the judgment.\(^97\) In Hades, there is a great gulf separating the holy and unholy souls.\(^98\) All souls will remain in Hades until the great judgment.\(^99\) The great judgment occurs at the end of the world—the end of regular life on earth for all humankind—, when the throne comes down from heaven and Jesus the Son of Man comes with clouds to judge the living and the dead.\(^100\) Although most souls are aware in Hades of whether they are going to heaven or hell, there is only one judgment and this occurs when Jesus comes in the scenario just described.\(^101\) At the judgment, all the souls from Hades are reunited with their bodies\(^102\) and judged and rewarded “according to their works.”\(^103\) The holy people are given final justification and sent to heaven and the unholy people are sent to Hell.\(^104\)

Final Justification and the Rewards of Heaven

There has been some discussion and debate over whether or not Wesley’s eschatology (view of the end times) is best described as premillennialist, postmillennialist, or amillenalist.\(^105\) Regardless of any possible room for debate, some aspects of his view

\(^93\) Wesley, ‘The Good Steward,’ *Works* (BE), 2:292. This sermon was first published in 1768, with later publications as a single sermon in 1782, 1784, and 1788.
\(^94\) Wesley, ‘On Faith,’ *Works* (BE), 4:189
\(^95\) Wesley, ‘The Good Steward,’ *Works* (BE), 2:292. This sermon was first published in 1768, with later publications as a single sermon in 1782, 1784, and 1788.
\(^100\) Wesley, ‘The Good Steward,’ *Works* (BE), 2:293. The sermon was first published in 1768 and published later as a single sermon in 1782, 1784, 1788]. Wesley, ‘The Great Assize,’ *Works* (BE), 1:358. This sermon was first published in 1758, with later publications of this single sermon in 1782, 1783, 1784, 1785, and 1787.
\(^101\) Wesley, ‘The Good Steward,’ *Works* (BE), 2:292. This sermon was first published in 1768, with later publications as a single sermon in 1782, 1784, and 1788.
\(^102\) Wesley, ‘The Great Assize,’ *Works* (BE), 1:358. This sermon was first published in 1758, with later publications of this single sermon in 1782, 1783, 1784, 1785, and 1787.
\(^103\) This idea of being rewarded according to one’s works will be discussed more below.
\(^105\) Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 236.
of the end times remain clear. It is clear that Wesley believes the following concerning the end times: (1) God leads a judgment of all people after regular human life on earth has finished, (2) the gift of final justification will be given to certain people on this day of judgment, and (3) people will be rewarded or punished in proportion to their works during their previous life on earth. It is apparent that God gives the gifts of final justification and other heavenly rewards in a manner that is first passive with respect to the person. These are the works of God alone. However, fruitful action during life on earth has a relation to whether or not the Spirit will later give these gifts and the level at which heavenly rewards will be given. This is because the way God gives these gifts (or whether he gives them) is done “according to” what a person does during normal life on earth.

Consider Wesley’s view of final justification. This kind of justification means “acquittal at the last day.” The fact that Wesley believes there is a final justification in the first place is evident by his comment, “I do not deny that there is another justification (of which our Lord speaks) at the last day. I do not therefore condemn the distinction of a two-fold justification.” Yet, Wesley goes further than simply holding a doctrine of final justification: he adds that this final justification is by works. Final justification is not to be confused with first justification—something that Wesley believes the scriptures teach is by faith alone. Wesley claims that these two doctrines are not in conflict with each other and are faithful to what the Bible teaches in the writings of Paul, James, and the gospels. Justification by faith alone is evident from Paul’s teachings in Romans 4:5 and

106 Wesley, ‘The Great Assize,’ Works (BE), 1:359 (This sermon was first published in 1758, with later publications of this single sermon in 1782, 1783, 1784, 1785, and 1787). It should also be remembered that the basis of judgment is not necessarily quantity of works. Consider Wesley’s point about the poor widow and how Jesus did less works than some of the disciples (Wesley, ‘A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,’ Works (BE), 13:173).

107 John Fletcher, Wesley’s close partner and ally in religious discourse, has much to say on this subject. Wesley cautions his critics by saying that Wesley’s view could be different from Fletcher’s view on some matters (Wesley, ‘Some Remarks on Mr. Hill’s “Review,’” Works (BE), 13:476). Yet, in Fletcher’s “checks” to Antinomianism, Fletcher sees himself as defending Wesley’s view, particularly with respect to claims concerning human action made in the 1770 Minutes. Fletcher discusses the doctrine of final justification in many places in his writings. See, for example, John Fletcher, Logica Genevensis or a fourth Check to Antinomianism (Bristol: W. Pine, 1772), 58.


110 Wesley, ‘The Great Assize,’ Works (BE), 1:363; Wesley, ‘Remarks on Mr. Hill’s Farrago Double-Distilled,’ Works (BE), 13:509. Notice that, in his sermon ‘The Great Assize,’ Wesley adds here the words “as well as works.” This comment underscores the view that final justification is by works. The comment “as well as works” was included in every published edition of this sermon, including versions in 1758, 1784, 1785, and 1787. See also Fletcher’s affirmation that Wesley holds final justification by works (John Fletcher, A Second Check to Antinomianism (London, 1771), 2). In the following pages of the same work, Fletcher goes on to make a further defense of the view of final justification by works.

111 See, for example, Wesley, ‘Letter to Reverend Dr. Horne,’ Works (Jackson), 9:110 and 9:116; and Wesley, ‘Some Remarks on Mr. Hill’s Farrago Double-Distilled,’ Works (BE), 13:507. Note that in
Romans 3:28. One could argue that final justification by works is apparent from Paul’s teachings in Romans 2:13: “For not the hearers of the law are just with God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” Wesley argues that the doctrine of a final justification by works is evident from Matthew 12:36-37 and Matthew 25.

Besides the gift of final justification, on the Day of Judgment, God also makes available the gifts of other kinds of heavenly rewards. Not all people will be rewarded the same and not all people will be punished the same. In other words, among those who receive final justification, not all will receive the same heavenly rewards, and among those who are sentenced to hell, not all of these will receive the same degree of punishment.

The scriptures that Wesley uses as the basis of this view include the following:

Matthew 16:27, “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then shall her render to every man according to his work”; Luke 16:2, “Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou canst be no longer stewards”; 1 Corinthians 3:8, “every one shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour”; and Revelation 20:12 “the dead were judged out of the things that were written in the books, according to their works.”

All of these scriptures reflect the principle that there will be rewards in heaven and hell in proportion to works performed during one’s previous life on earth.

Influenced by these scriptures, Wesley speaks of “that reward in heaven which will be in proportion to our holiness on earth.” Wesley’s comments to the Rev. Dr. Horne concerning Abraham, it is difficult to see whether Wesley intends a third sense of justification (one after first justification but before final justification), one that is in addition to the two mentioned in this project. Cf. Wesley’s comments on James 2:24 in the Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament. One way or another, it is clear that Wesley does not see James, Paul, and the gospels in conflict with each other concerning first and final justification.

Wesley appears not to make much discussion of Romans 2.13. However, Wesley is supportive of his Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament that does comment on it some. See the commentary on Romans 2:13 in Wesley, Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament (Fifth Edition, London: 1788), 464.


Wesley’s reference to this scripture is found here: Wesley, ‘Of Hell,’ Works (BE) 3:37; Wesley, ‘God’s Love to Fallen Man,’ Works (BE), 2:432.

Wesley’s reference to this scripture is found here: Wesley, ‘The Great Assize,’ Works (BE), 1:358.

Wesley’s reference to this scripture is found here: Wesley, ‘Of Hell,’ Works (BE), 3:37; Wesley, ‘God’s Love to Fallen Man,’ Works (BE), 2:432.

Wesley’s reference is found in his own footnote—footnote o— of the The Great Assize. This sermon was first published in 1758 and later published as a single sermon in 1782, 1783, 1784, 1785, and 1787. Wesley, ‘The Great Assize,’ Works (BE), 1:359.

Wesley discusses this point in his sermon, “The More Excellent Way.” In reference to those Christians who are not as strict in doing good, he says: “Let it be well remembered, I do not affirm that all who do not walk in this way are in the high road to hell. But thus much I must affirm: they will not have so high a place in heaven as they would have had if they had chosen the better part.” He says that the variety of rewards and punishments will arise partly from the just judgment of God ‘rewarding every man according to his works’. For we cannot doubt but this rule will take place no less in hell than in heaven. As in heaven, ‘every man will receive ‘his own reward’, incommunicably his own, according to ‘his own labours’, incommunicably his, that is, the whole tenor of his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions; so undoubtedly every man in fact will receive his own bad reward, according to his own bad labour. It is explicit from these comments and from others that Wesley takes from scripture the view that God will give rewards at the judgment in proportion to what a person does during normal life on earth. But it is wrong to think of a person as owner of such works. Wesley says, ‘Neither is salvation of the works we do when we believe. For ‘it is’ then ‘God that worketh in us’. And therefore, that he giveth us a reward for what he himself worketh only commendeth the riches of his mercy, but leaveth us nothing whereof to glory.” So when a person is justified by works and given rewards in heaven according to such works, God is not rewarding a person for what the person had done alone but rather rewarding the person for the work that God did in the person. This point further underscores the co-operating nature of fruitful action as good works. It is because of the work of the Spirit in the active life of a person on earth that this person will later receive rewards in heaven.

**The Moral Agency of the Inhabitant of Heaven**

It is difficult to give an account of the life of an inhabitant of heaven because there is little Wesley can know about heaven. It is known that the inhabitant of heaven enjoys having been given final justification and the rewards of heaven. The nature of these rewards is not fully clear. Such rewards could in fact be higher expectations to do good

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123 Wesley, ‘Salvation by Faith,’ *Works (BE)*, 1:126.
works in heaven. See diagram 7.1 for an overview of Wesley’s view of the stages of the way of salvation.

Wesley indicates that an inhabitant of heaven “grows in grace, in the knowledge of Christ, in the love and image of God.” Thus, it seems that love remains a key feature of the life of an inhabitant of heaven. As discussed in chapter 5, for Wesley, such a love is in various ways a manifestation of the Trinity. This love has both a passive and an active aspect. The active aspect is fruitful action, also known in this case as good works and virtuous action. Since it appears that there is love in heaven, it seems likely that there will also be good works. In the above quotation, Wesley indicates that an inhabitant of heaven continues to grow in the image of God. If Wesley is correct in his portrait of the image of God (the natural image as understanding, will, and liberty; the moral image as the possession of righteousness and holiness; and the political image as governance over lower beings), then it is possible—if not probable—that human beings will in some way maintain these features in heaven as well.

In such an eternity of love, virtuous action (active force) flows forth from a person who is pure in heart and has had a number of passive spiritual experiences (purity of heart, faith of the highest degree, the witness of the Spirit, final justification, the rewards of heaven, etc.). In this way, such virtuous action is part of the complete fulfilment of eschatology and the reigning of God’s kingdom. Such love and good works are the highest fulfilment of the greatest end of Christian living. They are the expression of God’s gift, one that lasts for all of eternity.

We have now considered the final stages of Wesley’s view of the way of salvation. We will now turn to some relevant debates in secondary literature.

Responding to Secondary Literature: After Collins

In his book *Wesley, Aquinas & Christian Perfection*, Edgardo Colón-Emeric includes a chapter entitled “Wesley on the Way to Christian Perfection.” In this chapter, he recites much of the standard and widely-accepted view of Wesley’s view of this phase of the Christian journey. Colón-Emeric is correct in stating:

Wesley introduces an important caveat at this point—that we must seek and strive for perfection. God is not irrational or arbitrary in the dispensing of his gifts. “God does not, will not, give that [perfect] faith, unless we seek it with all diligence, in the way which he hath ordained.” The way that leads to perfection.

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consists of absolute obedience, zealous observance of the commandments, and self-denial.\footnote{Edgardo Colón-Emeric, Wesley, Aquinas & Christian Perfection, An Ecumenical Dialogue (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), 49.}

It is clear from this statement that for Wesley, seeking perfection, the greatest end of Christian living, requires some effort. As argued above, this effort and these actions, while active with respect to a person, are in fact the expression of God’s gift. No one in Wesleyan studies would deny that for Wesley, such fruitful actions are important and necessary for seeking perfection if there is time and opportunity for them.

However, in this same chapter, Colón-Emeric makes another claim that is more open to debate. He makes the following claim in regard to Wesley’s view of grace along the way of salvation:

> These various senses of grace do not represent actually different kinds or “flavors” of grace. Rather, they describe different effects of grace, effects that are suited to meet the needs of the person at the state of the journey in which they find themselves. As Luby avers, “grace in all is one; but the situation of the individual changes the specific way in which grace affects us.”\footnote{Colón-Emeric, Wesley, Aquinas & Christian Perfection, 43. See also Daniel Luby, “The perceptibility of Grace in the Theology of John Wesley. A Roman Catholic Consideration” (PhD diss., Pontifical University of St. Thomas, 1994), 81.}

This statement is in direct conflict with a statement by Kenneth Collins from a previous year. While Colón-Emeric says there are not different “kinds or ‘flavors’ of grace,” Collins argues there are “qualitatively distinct graces” in Wesley’s thought.\footnote{Collins, The Theology of John Wesley, 15 and 295.} Collins speaks of “two major qualitative transformations of the Christian life,” which are justification and regeneration (those events pertaining to the new birth) on the one hand and entire sanctification (the events pertaining to Christian perfection) on the other hand.\footnote{Collins, The Theology of John Wesley, 125.} Both transformations are the effects of free grace, a grace that is qualitatively distinct from responsible grace, something which pertains to gradual growth. As discussed in chapter 1 and chapter 5, for Collins, “monergism” pertains to the work of free grace, while “synergism” pertains to responsible grace.

For Colón-Emeric and Daniel Luby, Wesley’s view of grace is uniform and simply affects a person in different ways depending on the situation.\footnote{Luby, “The perceptibility of Grace in the Theology of John Wesley. A Roman Catholic Consideration,” 81.} For Collins’
interpretation of Wesley, grace is not uniform in all cases but has “qualitatively distinct”
types. Collins’ reason for claiming that there are qualitatively distinct types of grace is
rooted at least partly in his concern to argue that for Wesley, there is more emphasis on
what the Spirit does at the start of the two foci of salvation (the new birth and Christian
perfection) than what some interpreters acknowledge. Interpreters such as Colón-Emeric,
Luby, and Maddox acknowledge the variation in how the Spirit acts in salvation, but they
are not as concerned with highlighting that the older Wesley emphasizes a larger and
unpredictable impact of spiritual growth at the start of the two foci of salvation.

As Colón-Emeric notes, Randy Maddox interprets the late Wesley as placing more
emphasis on responsible grace and gradual growth and holding that such responsible grace
is “most characteristic” of Wesley. In opposition to this view, Collins argues that in
addition to responsible grace, Wesley also emphasizes the work of monergism and free
grace at the start of the new birth and Christian perfection, the two foci of salvation.

For Collins, this emphasis on free grace pertains to a kind of spiritual growth that is
different from the gradual type of spiritual growth that occurs at other periods in the
Christian journey. Collins believes that there is not enough evidence in the late Wesley to
conclude that Wesley retracts this emphasis during the latest years of his life.

Some earlier interpreters seem unaware of the underlying concerns of Collins
regarding a distinction between types of spiritual growth in Wesley’s thought. For
example, in his essay, “John Wesley as a Theologian of Grace,” Robert Rakestraw says
“there is a remarkable consistency in his synergistic view of both justification and
sanctification.” Rakestraw supports the interpretation of Cannon regarding the need to
emphasize a person’s role in salvation and holding that a person has the “final say.”
Rakestraw does not highlight the unpredictable nature of the first moment of Christian
perfection. He does not clarify the passive aspect of Christian perfection or the way in
which it is the work of God alone. Yet, many of these are points of focus for Collins.

\[131\] This point was discussed in chapter 1.
\[132\] For Collins’ discussion of free grace and perfection (entire sanctification), see: Collins, *The Theology of
John Wesley*, 162 and 293 – 296.
\[133\] Robert Rakestraw, “John Wesley as a Theologian of Grace.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological
\[134\] Rakestraw, “John Wesley as a Theologian of Grace,” 199.
Unlike Rakestraw, Collins underscores how synergism pertains only to gradual growth and responsible grace and not to the first moment of Christian perfection (entire sanctification). Collins says:

If, however, one fails to distinguish between the process of sanctification, that is, growing more holy in increasing **degrees**, and entire sanctification itself, being **now** pure in heart, a change in **quality**, and if one also operates almost exclusively out of a catholic synergistic paradigm, then one will likely (and mistakenly) conclude that entire sanctification is a process.

If entire sanctification occurs, if it is actualized, there will be a moment of its instantiation (whether that moment is recognized or not), for it marks a change not in degree but in quality; it is, for want of better terminology, a “threshold transformation.”

For Collins’ view of Wesley, the first moment of Christian perfection is not a change in degree according to the same rate of incremental growth observed earlier in the way of salvation (after the new birth and before perfection). Rather the first moment of perfection involves a vast change or change in quality, what he calls a “threshold transformation.” This is not the effect of responsible grace, a grace that Collins argues is in effect for gradual growth at other periods. It is the effect of monergism, what Collins calls “free grace,” a grace that is qualitatively distinct from responsible grace, the grace that pertains to synergy.

As mentioned above, the view of Edgardo Colón-Emeric and Luby that in regard to Wesley’s thought, there are not different kinds of graces is in conflict with Collins’ view that there are “qualitatively distinct” graces. We will not need to evaluate this debate here. Determining the best argument concerning Wesley’s ontology of grace is not required for the present purpose of this study. Nevertheless, the debate concerning the ontology of grace is relevant because one of Collins’ reasons for arguing for an ontologically distinct grace for the first moment of perfection is perhaps that he sees it relating to the **experience** of a specific kind of spiritual growth, one that has not been given enough attention in secondary literature. Rather than focus on the **ontology** of grace, we will consider the **experience** of grace by the recipient of salvation.

The crucial point here is that Collins has brought to the centre of focus in Wesleyan studies the need to analyse and clarify the experience of a kind of spiritual growth (i.e. the kind that pertains to the first moments of the new birth and first moments

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of perfection) that previously had not been given adequate attention. In other words, from the perspective of a recipient’s experience, there is something distinct and important about the first moments of the new birth and first moments of perfection that previous discussions in secondary literature have not clarified in a satisfactory way. What Collins has rightly diagnosed is that scholars in Wesleyan studies too often have blurred the difference between two distinct kinds of spiritual growth, particularly the gradual work of the Spirit on the one hand and the work of the Spirit at the start of the two foci of salvation on the other hand.

While Collins has been helpful in calling for more study of and attention to the different kinds of spiritual growth in Wesley’s thought, it appears that Collins has run into some difficulties in the use of terms. For reasons mentioned in previous chapters, Collins’ manner of using the terms “monergism” and “synergism” seems both unnecessary and risky. Also, as mentioned in chapter 1, his use of the phrase “free grace” in a specialized way also lacks clarity (As mentioned in chapter 1, Wesley appears to use the phrase “free grace” in a broader way than how Collins interprets). What is being suggested here as an alternative to Collins’ approach is that instead of distinguishing the types of spiritual growth by using terms such as “responsible grace” and “free grace,” it is more helpful to illuminate and distinguish kinds of spiritual growth in light of the concepts of active and passive. This is not to deny that “responsible grace” and “free grace” are helpful descriptions but it is to question whether Collins uses them in a way that is fair to Wesley’s thought.

What is being argued here is that a helpful way to capture and illuminate the important and neglected aspects of the new birth and Christian perfection is by considering the concepts of active and passive, including how they relate to one of the two kinds of spiritual growth mentioned in chapter 2. While Collins is helpful in identifying the deficiency in secondary literature regarding Wesley’s view of two kinds of spiritual growth, he does not quite go far enough in illuminating the two types of spiritual growth since for each type, he does not fully clarify what is occurring in regard to the active and passive dimensions of a person.

As mentioned in chapter 2, on the one hand, there is the kind of growth that is gradual and mostly reflexive. This is comparable to the illustration of the fit woman, who nurtures an inclination for exercise in direct proportion to how much she chooses to exercise. This type of spiritual growth is the gradual growth of heart that occurs when a person, by grace, performs fruitful action. Since this kind of growth is mostly reflexive, it
requires the use of the active power and the simultaneous nurturing of a passive inclination. Its occurrence is predictable for the doer.

On the other hand, there is the kind of growth that is comparable to the illustration of the flaming dart mentioned above. This involves a change of the tempers and affections of the heart that occurs at an unpredictable time. The change in heart that occurs is passive in a bare sense and involves a lesser amount of reflexivity. As mentioned above, this is the kind of spiritual growth that pertains to the first moments of the new birth and first moments of Christian perfection. In both cases, it involves often a detectable change in one’s heart and feelings, along with the direct witness of the Spirit. The experience of this kind of spiritual growth is not “altogether passive” because there are actions a person can take to block or quench the effects of the Spirit. Clarifying these aspects of spiritual growth is what has been deficient in secondary literature in the past.

Distinguishing these important kinds of spiritual growth is not meant to be an esoteric theological discussion but pertains to what people can expect normally to experience in the Christian journey. Although, for Wesley, there are a variety of ways people experience the new birth and perfection, the point is that, in most cases, each person does experience something rather than nothing and there is typically a degree of commonality in what is experienced. Distinguishing different kinds of spiritual growth in a way that relates to common experience and showing how they relate to the roadmap for the Christian life are core practical concerns for Wesley.

In this chapter, we explored Wesley’s understanding of the path from the new birth to Christian perfection and from Christian perfection to the rewards of heaven. We showed that there is even room for growth for an inhabitant of heaven. For each stage of Wesley’s “way of salvation,” his roadmap for the Christian life, we showed how a person’s pursuit of Christian love is an expression of God’s gift and that the giftedness of this blessing is illuminated by a critical examination of the work of the Spirit with respect to the active and passive dimensions of a human being. We will now offer a conclusion for this project by showing the connections that were made throughout this work.

136 As observed above, Wesley says that the first moment of Christian perfection is sometimes not detected but in such cases, the effects are typically detected later.
Chapter 8: Final Reflections

For this project, we explored John Wesley’s view of the pursuit of the highest goal of Christian living. When examining this topic, an important theme emerged. It was the theme of gift. The thesis of this project was to argue that according to the view of John Wesley, a person’s pursuit of the highest goal of Christian living is an expression of God’s gift and that the giftedness of this blessing is illuminated by a critical examination of the work of the Spirit with respect to the active and passive dimensions of a human being. In order to support this thesis, we carried out two tasks. The first task was to clarify the features of the soul as understood by Wesley. In order to clarify the graciousness of God in human agency, it helps first to show what the features of the soul are and how they work. The second task was to consider in more depth how the features of the soul relate to each other as an agent performs right action and pursues the highest end of Christian living. This task required a consideration of Wesley’s view of the various stages of the Christian life.

As the thesis of this project involves both Wesley’s view of human agency and his view of the work of the Spirit, it brings the subject of the divine-human interaction to the centre of consideration. In chapter 1, we considered some of the discussions in secondary literature concerning “monergism” and “synergism,” terms relating to some competing interpretations of Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction. While Cell favours using the term “monergism” and emphasizing Wesley’s resemblance to Calvin, Cannon recommends using the term “synergism” and stressing the role of human decision and action in salvation. A host of others contribute in some way to this debate.

While Kenneth Collins argues that it is helpful to use both terms “monergism” and “synergism” to describe Wesley’s thought, Randy Maddox suggests that it may be best not to use these terms at all. These terms were not used to describe Wesley’s thought in this project because: (a) these terms have links to complex theological discussions and can lead to confusion and disagreement, (b) they are not necessary for Wesley’s chief concern of explaining the divine-human interaction for the purpose of providing a practical guide for Christian living, (c) academic writers both inside and outside the Wesleyan tradition tend to have preferred views of what these terms should mean, and these views conflict and (d) these terms are not in Wesley’s writings. It was proposed that a more effective
way of exploring Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction is by regarding carefully the active and passive dimensions of a person.

Reflections on the First Task of This Project

As shown in the thesis above, a core focus for this project is illuminating God’s graciousness in human agency. In order to clarify properly the graciousness of God in human agency, it was helpful first to elucidate the features of the soul and how they work. Thus, we began with what we described as the first task of this project, which is to clarify the features of the soul. These features of the soul are the essential constituents of the spiritual nature and natural image of God. Since Wesley’s view of the soul involves a conceptual distinction between active and passive, we began by illuminating exactly what is meant by active and passive. Illustrations were used to clarify the meaning of each of these concepts.

In chapters 2-4, we clarified Wesley’s view of the features of the soul, which includes understanding, will, and liberty. The will properly speaking is passive in nature. It includes the affections and passions and is an important part of the heart. The heart is passive in nature and consists of one’s ruling inclination and the other tempers that may flow from it. Moral action flows from the tempers of the heart.

“Liberty” refers to the human active power, which is a power of choosing. This type of liberty is to be distinguished from other meanings of liberty that Wesley uses. This former meaning of liberty, understood as the active power, is a “self-moving,” “self-governing,” and “self-determining” power. It is a power to open or shut one’s eyes, speak or be silent, rise or sit down, stretch out one’s hand or withdraw it, etc. For moral matters, it concerns the power to choose to do good or evil. In this way, it concerns the power to “choose whom I will serve, and if I choose the better part, to continue therein unto death.”1 When one is serving God, liberty refers to the power by grace to perform fruitful actions, which is action that is good or in some sense good. Liberty appears equivalent to Wesley’s second meaning of will, which is at times described as “free will.”

In chapters 2 and 3, it was argued that several scholars have offered interpretations of Wesley’s view of liberty that are misguided or off target. D. Stephen Long wrongly portrays Wesley as holding the liberty of indifference and having an internal conflict in his thought. Wesley’s view of liberty more closely resembles what James Harris calls a

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“middle way,” a view that is in between the liberty of indifference on the one hand and necessity on the other hand. In addition to Long’s misrepresentation of Wesley’s view of liberty, Albert Outler also offers an interpretation of Wesley’s view of liberty that is at the least misguiding. Outler claims that Wesley’s view of moral liberty “had been directly influenced by Locke.” It was shown that Wesley has read many people’s views of philosophical liberty and that his view of liberty resembles the views of some other thinkers more than that of Locke. Outler does not make this clear.

In chapter 4, the main focus was to explore Wesley’s view of the heart in more depth. As mentioned, the heart is composed of a ruling desire, which is either the love of God or the love of the world. The target of the heart’s ruling desire is happiness. In the case of a Christian believer, the heart also has other tempers such as longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, and temperance. In the case of an impenitent sinner, the heart has tempers such as anger, hatred, malice, revenge, and envy. For Wesley, the heart undergoes transformations throughout the way of salvation, especially at the first moments of the new birth and the first moments of Christian perfection.

We observed that in secondary literature, there is some disagreement concerning how to interpret Wesley’s view of the tempers and affections of the heart. While Kenneth Collins and Randy Maddox argue that for Wesley, the tempers are distinct from the affections, Gregory Clapper argues that for Wesley, these terms are basically interchangeable. In response to this debate, it was offered that there is a degree of insight in both views but that neither view is quite complete. The evidence suggests that for Wesley, a temper is more enduring than a short-lasting affection but that a temper itself is a kind of affection. In other words, the concept of affection is a broader concept than the concept of temper. For Wesley, it may be that all tempers are affections but not all affections, particularly the short-lasting ones, are tempers.

In chapter 4, we also explored Wesley’s view of the understanding. For Wesley, the faculty of understanding presumably pertains to all instances of consciousness. It is also the faculty that is associated with reason. When it comes to matters of salvation, the heart has a higher priority than reason and liberty. For example, it is possible for one to be a highly intelligent expert of divinity who is an impenitent sinner and by prevenient grace, able to perform morally preferable actions (such as serving the needy, etc.) without a heart of love and without ever going to heaven. In this case, one uses one’s power of reason well but is not saved. On the other hand, one may be a poor and sick person of low intelligence who uses his or her reason poorly and still can be justified, have a heart full of...
love, and go to heaven. Yet, for Wesley, reason does play a role in moral agency. One of its chief functions is to help one determine how to use the resources available in one’s life in order to perform fruitful action and best pursue the highest levels of Christian love.

**Reflections on the Second Task of this Project**

In chapter 5, we began the second task of this project. The second task was to consider in more depth how the features of the soul relate to each other as an agent performs right action and pursues the highest end of Christian living. For Wesley, God has a foundational role in moral agency. Wesley teaches that owing to the fall, people are left in a state of total depravity. They are not capable of performing fruitful action of any kind but only to sin. However, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God offers to humankind a way to escape the deadly effects of sin and the fall. Salvation is possible because God sent his Son Jesus to provide the meritorious cause of salvation. Through Christ’s atonement, God provides for a person the two great branches of salvation, justification and sanctification. As God brings a person into the life of salvation, God displays His eschatological era and kingdom on earth.

Because of God’s work on the human soul in salvation, one is able to perform fruitful action. By God’s free grace, every person on earth has some knowledge of the moral law and a power to do good. Fruitful action is simply responding to God’s grace by choosing to do what is right as opposed to neglecting this or doing what is evil. It is something that every person is encouraged to do regardless of where he or she is along the way of salvation. As explored in chapter 5, fruitful action is never something that a person does alone. Each fruitful action is a co-operation between God and the person. For each fruitful action, God acts on the heart of the person before the action, affecting it by prevenient grace or sanctifying grace, and assists during the entire act. Fruitful action flows from a spiritually-affected heart.

In chapter 5, we revisited again the debate in secondary literature concerning the terms “monergism” and “synergism” used in reference to Wesley’s thought. Various ways of defining monergism and synergism were considered but it was shown that there are advantages in an approach that avoids using these terms in reference to Wesley. It was argued that a more helpful way of illuminating Wesley’s view of the divine-human

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interaction is to use concepts such as “passive operation,” the work of the Spirit with respect to the passive dimension of a person and “fruitful action,” the work of the Spirit with respect to the active dimension of a person. It is also important to distinguish passive operation and fruitful action from two kinds of spiritual growth found in Wesley. These two kinds of spiritual growth were elaborated in chapter 2, and each kind involves at some degree both elements of active and passive work of the Spirit. While the type of spiritual growth comparable to the fit woman described in chapter 2 has a larger degree of fruitful action, the type of spiritual growth comparable to the flaming dart typically has larger effects of passive operation.

Based on his interpretation of scripture, Wesley offers a “way of salvation,” a roadmap for seeking the highest goal of Christian living. This roadmap provides a sincere follower with a guide for what to expect in the future in regard to experiencing salvation and growing in one’s relationship with God. The way of salvation involves a number of spiritual events that correspond to successive stages of the Christian life.

In chapters 6 and 7, the stages of the Christian life were explored. They may include, in order from beginning to end, all of those stages that follow being an impenitent sinner: servant of God, newborn child, perfected child, and inhabitant of heaven. An impenitent sinner is one who has rejected God’s convincing grace and is on track for hell. Yet, by grace, an impenitent sinner may choose to fear God and work righteousness with a single eye, marking the transition to the stage of being a servant of God. A servant of God is “accepted” by God and is free from God’s wrath.

In chapter 6, we briefly considered the debate regarding whether Wesley believes that a servant of God is justified before reaching the new birth. Collins argues that for Wesley, justification and the new birth are normally conjoined and thus, a servant of God is typically not justified before reaching the new birth. In disagreement, Maddox argues that servants of God typically are justified before the new birth. We then considered the contribution of Stanley Rodes to this matter.

Rodes’ purpose is to highlight Wesley’s covenant theology. Wesley’s covenant theology shows the centrality of Christ’s atonement in the Christian life, including how the atonement relates to the state of being a servant of God. It is clear that for Wesley,

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3Rodes says: “in concert with classic covenant theology, he centered everything on the mediatorial work of Christ as ‘the lamb slain from the foundation of the world,’ and affirmed the Incarnation and outpouring of the Spirit as the culmination of God’s saving activity in and for the world.” Rodes, From Faith to Faith, 76.
Christ’s atonement is salvifically sufficient for a servant of God, even though such a servant has not reached the new birth. This is clear regardless of the winner of the Collins-Maddox debate regarding the servant of God and justification. Rodes’ work illuminates how Christ’s atonement is the source of power for all work of the Spirit in salvation and even preceding salvation, in the earliest effects of prevenient grace. From the very beginning of a person’s spiritual journey, the pursuit of the greatest goal of Christian living is an expression of God’s gift, and the work of the Spirit in the active and passive dimensions of a person during this pursuit always flows from the power of Christ’s atonement.

We considered the moral agency of the servant of God. Servants of God fear God and work righteousness. For those committed to the Christian tradition, a servant of God intentionally seeks the greatest end of Christianity, which is to love God and neighbour. In pursuit of this end, a servant of God seeks Christians love and performs fruitful action, if there is time and opportunity. We observed the theme of gift that is evident in the pursuit.

According to Wesley’s thought, the pursuit by a servant of God of the greatest end of Christian living is an expression of God’s gift and that the giftedness of this blessing is illuminated by a critical examination of the work of the Spirit with respect to the active and passive dimensions of a human being. It is through fruitful action (the work of the Spirit with respect to the active dimension as explained in chapter 5), flowing from passive operation (the light of conscience, spiritual touches on the desires of the heart, and the feelings of the arrows of repentance) that a servant of God is able to pursue the greatest goal of Christian living.

It was observed that the situation of a servant of God is comparable to the illustration of the flaming dart from chapter 2. God can give now the gifts of the new birth. However, if God does not give these now, as Wesley observes is often the case, it is necessary for a servant of God to continue performing fruitful action as there is time and opportunity.

The onset of the first moments of the new birth (analogous to the impact of the flaming dart) involves events that are passive in a bare sense. However, as discussed in chapter 2 of this project, when viewed in a larger context, the arrival of the new birth is not altogether passive. This is because, if there is time and opportunity, graciously

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empowered fruitful actions before and after the first moments of the new birth have bearing on whether or not the new birth is received and maintained. Such fruitful actions themselves are a reflection of God’s gift.

At the time when a person receives the new birth and associated spiritual gifts, he or she transitions from being a servant of God to being a child of the new birth, also known as a newborn child. This transformation of the new birth involves an array of passive experiences. At the first moments of the new birth, the following occur: (a) the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, (b) the transformation of one’s tempers and a replacement of one’s ruling inclination of the heart (c) adoption, (d) receiving the Spirit of the Son entering the heart, (e) receiving the faith of a child of God, and (f) the receiving of the witness of the Spirit and the witness of one’s own spirit that one is a child of God.

The newborn child also feels a second type of repentance. This repentance is a conviction that although sin does not reign, it remains. It involves a conviction of inbred sin and sin improperly speaking. Inbred sin involves the lingering influence of evil inward tempers. As Mark Olson observes, for Wesley, sin improperly speaking involves involuntary transgressions of God’s law.5

With respect to a newborn child, fruitful action is always virtuous action (and also a good work properly speaking), and it is the expression of God’s gift. This is because, in every instance of its occurrence, part of what is required for an action to be “virtuous” is that such action must spring from a holy heart of love. Such a holy heart of love involves a passive inclination and is the effect of the work of God alone. God’s role does not cease after the transformation of the heart but continues in all virtuous action. As always, the active nature of fruitful action is co-operating. The person is never acting alone but always in partnership with the Holy Spirit.

A newborn child performs fruitful action (the work of the Spirit with respect to the active dimension) in response to the passive operations of the Spirit on the heart and soul (the love of God shed abroad in the heart, the faith of a child of God, the witness of the Spirit, etc.). In this way, we observe how once again for Wesley, the pursuit of the greatest goal of Christian living, as this pursuit involves the performance of fruitful action flowing from the passive effects of the Spirit on the heart and soul, is the expression of God’s gift.

According to Wesley’s thought, a newborn child is subject to two types of spiritual growth. One is gradual. The other type involves an instantaneous transformation. In chapter 2 of this project, we explored illustrations corresponding to each type of spiritual growth. The gradual process of growth is comparable to the illustration of the fit woman, and the other type is comparable to the illustration of the flaming dart. For the case of the newborn child, we considered a second flaming dart.

For Wesley, gradual growth typically occurs between the first moments of the new birth and the first moments of Christian perfection. A different kind of spiritual growth occurs in regard to the arrival of Christian perfection. The pursuit of Christian perfection is comparable to the illustration of the flaming dart from chapter 2, except now the illustration involves a second flaming dart. The impact of the first flaming dart is analogous to a person’s experience of the first moments of the new birth. The impact of the second flaming dart is comparable to the first moments of perfect love, the point in time when a newborn child transitions to being a child of perfect love.

The onset of the first moments of perfect love (analogous to the impact of the second flaming dart) involves events that are passive in a bare sense. However, as discussed in chapter 2 of this project, when viewed in a larger context, the arrival of perfect love is “not altogether” passive. This is because, if there is time and opportunity, graciously-empowered fruitful action before and after the first moments of perfect love have bearing on whether or not perfect love is received and maintained.

At the time when a person receives Christian perfection, he or she transitions from being a newborn child to being a child of perfect love. The child of perfect love has all of the spiritual gifts of the newborn child, except that for the perfected child, the repentance of inbred sin is no longer necessary to the same degree. The perfected child has received some spiritual gifts that the newborn does not yet have. This includes having the faith of a perfected child, a pure heart, the elimination of evil thoughts, the full assurance of faith, and the witness (from God and oneself) that one is perfect in love. A child of perfect love has basically reached the telos, the greatest end of Christian living. However, one has only “basically” reached this greatest end because Wesley teaches that even a perfected child has room for further spiritual growth. As mentioned earlier, since perfection is dynamic rather than having a final arrival, it may be better to use the translation of “perfecting” rather than “perfection.”

According to Wesley, a perfected child must continue to perform fruitful action or else this person will lose the grace that enables this person to be a perfected child. Since
this kind of fruitful action flows from a holy heart, Wesley views it as virtuous action or good works properly speaking. The kind of gradual growth that takes place after perfection resembles the illustration of the fit woman in chapter 2. A perfected child must also remain mindful that the rewards that one will receive in heaven is in proportion to the good works that one performs on earth.

God’s role does not cease after giving the gift of perfect love but continues in all virtuous action. As always, the active nature of fruitful action is co-operating. The person is never acting alone but always in partnership with the Holy Spirit. A perfected person performs fruitful action (the work of the Spirit with respect to the active dimension of a person) in response to the passive operations of the Spirit on the heart and soul (a heart of perfect love, the faith of a perfected child, the full assurance of faith, the witness of the Spirit that one is perfected, etc.). In this way, we observe how once again for Wesley, the pursuit of the greatest goal of Christian living, as this pursuit is shown in the performance of fruitful actions flowing from the passive effects of the Spirit on the heart and soul, is the expression of God’s gift.

It is clear that according to Wesley’s thought, there is always further room for growth both in this life and in eternity. After death and the great judgment, a Christian becomes an inhabitant of heaven. Such a person has received a second justification and rewards of heaven. Although there is much Wesley cannot know about the existence of an inhabitant of heaven, he indicates that such an inhabitant still grows in grace, the knowledge of Christ, the love of God, and the image of God.

In chapter 7, we observed that there are conflicting views between Colón-Emeric and Collins regarding Wesley’s view of the nature of grace. Colón-Emeric and Luby argue that Wesley does not have different kinds or flavours of grace while Collins argues that there are qualitatively distinct types of grace. Yet this debate is tangential to the efforts of this project, other than to bring to focus one of Collins’ concerns. The point argued was that Collins is helpful in identifying that there is a deficiency in secondary literature regarding the importance of identifying and clarifying Wesley’s view of different kinds of spiritual growth, especially that which relates to the first moments of the new birth and Christian perfection. At the same time, it was argued that some of Collins’ use of terms, particularly regarding “free grace,” “monergism,” and “synergism,” were not helpful. While Collins is correct in showing that discussions in secondary literature have not adequately regarded the different kinds of spiritual growth in Wesley, his own account
does not go far enough in explaining them because he does not fully consider Wesley’s thought in light of the active and passive dimensions.

**Conclusion of this Project**

In conclusion, this project showed new insights regarding Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction and moral agency, as moral agency is concerned with the forces that are involved as a person pursues the greatest goal of human living. All human actions with positive moral value are called “fruitful actions.” They are made possible by God’s grace and are an expression of God’s gift. In this way, it is difficult for someone to charge Wesley’s thought with being Pelagian, as this term is commonly understood in the Western tradition.

In the first task of this project, we explored in depth Wesley’s understanding of how the features of the soul relate to each other in moral agency. The performance of fruitful action flowing from a spiritually-empowered heart and soul is much of what makes up a person’s pursuit of the highest goal of Christian living. For the second task of this project, we showed how for each stage of the Christian life, the pursuit of the highest goal of Christian living is an expression of God’s gift and the giftedness of this blessing is illuminated by a consideration of the work of the Spirit with respect to active and passive dimensions. By considering the active and passive dimensions in a careful way, we carried out a task that has never been done before, and in this way, we contributed to the ongoing discussion in secondary literature relating to Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction. It is expected that the results of this project will help scholars in the future handle Wesley’s practical theology in a more precise way, a way that carefully illuminates the spiritual realities that Wesley observed and valued in ministry. In the future, it can also help scholars steer away from discussions regarding Wesley’s view of the divine-human interaction that lead to entanglement, confusion, and disagreement.
### Diagram 2.1
**Meanings of Passive**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Human Consciousness</th>
<th>Libertarian View(^2)</th>
<th>Necessitarian View</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Choice                      | Active                  | Active in one Sense  
Choice is active in the sense that from the standpoint of human consciousness, it is different in nature from other forms of consciousness such as inclination. As one necessitarian acknowledges: choosing to eat an apple is itself different from the feeling of hunger for the apple.  
Passive in another Sense  
*Choice is passive in the sense that each choice is fully caused by the strongest motive, which is the effect of a chain of causes and effects that originates from external forces of one path of history*  
*“typeX” meaning of passive* |
| Inclination                 | Passive ("the first meaning of passive") | Passive ("the first meaning of passive") |
| (Also called a motive. Examples include a feeling of hunger or a feeling of love) | | |
| Affections and Tempers that Spring from an Inclination | Passive | Passive |
| (Joy, meekness, anger, hatred, envy, jealousy, etc.) | | |
| All Remaining forms of Human Consciousness that are Not Active | Passive | Passive |
| (Feelings of hotness or coldness, all sensations of five senses, all sensations from spiritual sense such as the direct witness of the Spirit) | | |

\(^1\) It is offered that the libertarian example of this chart characterizes the view of John Wesley. For other libertarians such as Andrew Michael Ramsay, some choices are in a sense fully passive while others are not. For example, for Ramsay, when a person is presented with two options and one of these is a clearly known greater good, a person must by necessity choose the clearly known greater good.
# Diagram 3.1

## Views of the Will

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Thinker</th>
<th>Name for the Affections, etc. <em>(passive dimension)</em></th>
<th>Name for the Power Of Choosing <em>(active dimension)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Wesley</td>
<td>will (properly speaking)</td>
<td>Liberty (properly speaking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* = Wesley’s second meaning of will, which is used colloquially not in formal definitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* = “free will”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Note: Although “free will” and liberty appear equivalent, Wesley seems to prefer the language of “liberty” instead of “free will” after 1774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* is “neither more nor less than” the will, as understood by Wesley in his old typology of “understanding, will, and affections”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* is so broad that it even applies to animal Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Edwards</td>
<td>will</td>
<td>Will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augustine</td>
<td>will</td>
<td>Will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Duns Scotus</td>
<td>will</td>
<td>Will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Burlamaqui</td>
<td>will</td>
<td>Will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Clarke</td>
<td>will</td>
<td>liberty/will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Reid</td>
<td>affections, etc. * Reid clearly rejects using the name “will” for this. This is a growing trend in modern philosophy.</td>
<td>Will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* For Reid, the will pertains to the active power, both in animals and humans. Liberty requires reason, and so only humans have liberty. Also, liberty does not apply to all instances of human action such as choice that follows from the force of habit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Although “free will” and liberty appear equivalent, Wesley seems to prefer the language of “liberty” instead of “free will” after 1774.*

*Is “neither more nor less than” the will, as understood by Wesley in his old typology of “understanding, will, and affections”*

*Is so broad that it even applies to animal Action*

*Describes himself as an opponent to free will in the libertarian sense*

* = free will, but opposes free will in the libertarian sense?*

* = free will (in libertarian sense)*

*The will clearly includes the active power. Liberty does not apply to all instances of the will (action), such as when there are two options with one being a clearly-known greater good.*

*For Clarke, liberty and the active component of the will appear completely interchangeable in most if not all contexts.*
Diagram 4.1

The Heart
(Passive in Nature)

Affections
?

Tempers
“Transient Feelings”

Enduring
Inclination/Desire

Other Holy Tempers: Joy, Longsuffering,
Meekness, Gentleness, Fidelity, Goodness
Temperance, etc.

OR

Other Evil Tempers: anger, hatred, malice,
revenge, envy, jealousy, evil surmisings, etc.

Christian
Love

Love of
World
### Diagram 5.1
Contrasting Two Views of Fruitful Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Choosing/Acting</th>
<th>John Wesley’s View</th>
<th>Necessitarian View</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fruitful action</td>
<td>Active with respect to consciousness</td>
<td>Active in one sense (see Diagram 2.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does not demonstrate “typeX” meaning of passive</td>
<td>Passive in another sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The choice to perform fruitful action does not have to follow the strongest motive</em></td>
<td>Demonstrates the “typeX” meaning of Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does not demonstrate absolute necessity</td>
<td>*Choice is passive in the sense that each choice is fully caused by the strongest motive, which is the effect of a chain of causes and effects that originates from external forces of one path of history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*History has many possible trajectories</td>
<td>Demonstrates absolute necessity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>God co-operates in fruitful action, unlike for sinful action</td>
<td>*History has only one possible trajectory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Perhaps one could argue that this is yet another sense of passiveness. In any case, it does not demonstrate the typeX meaning of passive</em></td>
<td>God is the doer of all human action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>An agent has liberty, which is a power that is in some ways mysterious and beyond human understanding</em></td>
<td><em>God determines human action by determining external forces, which determine the strongest motive, which determines human action</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(A person, without God, is the doer of sinful action. A person is accountable for sinful action)</td>
<td>(Since there is only one possible path of history, God is implicitly the author of sinful human actions. Humans are not accountable for sin. There is no possibility of virtue or vice.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Diagram 6.1
“The Way of Salvation”
According to John Wesley

- **Work of the Holy Spirit**
  - Final Justification and Inhabitant of Heaven
  - Perfection and Child of Perfect Love
  - Repentance of Believers
  - New Birth and Newborn Child
  - Repentance
  - Prevenient Grace and Impenitent Sinner

- **Stage**
  - Final Justification and Inhabitant of Heaven
  - Perfection and Child of Perfect Love
  - Repentance of Believers
  - New Birth and Newborn Child
  - Repentance
  - Prevenient Grace and Impenitent Sinner
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Spiritual Gifts</th>
<th>Type of Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impenitent Sinner</td>
<td>*Prevenient grace</td>
<td>*Fruitful action in a weak sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Conscience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Some awareness of moral law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Conviction of wrong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Slight touch on the heart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Power to choose right or wrong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Fruitful action in a weak sense</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant of God</td>
<td>*All the gifts from the previous stage</td>
<td>*Fruitful action, also known here as works of righteousness that are accepted by God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Fear of God</td>
<td>*God does not recognize this action as good works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Faith of a servant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Accepted by God</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*No wrath of God</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Sustained repentance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Fruitful action, also known here as works of righteousness that are accepted by God</td>
<td>*God does not recognize this action as good works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child of the New Birth</td>
<td>*Conscience</td>
<td>*Fruitful action, also known here as good works, also known as virtuous action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Power to choose right or wrong</td>
<td>*Good works are acceptable to God as good works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Justification and new birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Sanctification Begins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Faith of a child of God</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Spirit of Son and of adoption</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Love shed in heart</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Witness of the Spirit and witness of one’s own spirit that one is a child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*A second type of repentance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child of Perfect Love</td>
<td>*All gifts from the prior stage, except repentance of inbred sin</td>
<td>*Fruitful action, also known here as good works, also known as virtuous action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Faith of a perfected child</td>
<td>*Good works are acceptable to God as good works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Pure Heart and Perfect Love</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Witness of the Spirit and witness of one’s own spirit that one has perfect love</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Elimination of evil thoughts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Full assurance of faith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Maybe full assurance of hope</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Lacks “absolute perfection”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitant of Heaven</td>
<td>*Probably all of the gifts of the previous stage, except this person is nearer to absolute perfection</td>
<td>*Probably similar to the perfected child but at a higher level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Final Justification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*The Rewards of Heaven</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix: Consistency In Wesley’s Thought

When carrying out a study of the thought of Wesley, it is helpful first to consider the question of whether or not Wesley’s thought is consistent throughout his life. In answering this question, a first point to consider is what Wesley himself thought on this matter. Throughout his ministry, Wesley dealt with numerous people who were attempting to understand his thought and whether or not it was consistent. Wesley repeatedly claimed throughout his life that his thought is in fact consistent after 1738. Within several years of his death, Wesley says, “I have been uniform both in doctrine and discipline for above these fifty years.”¹ Several months before this, he says, “To conclude, I defy any man living to prove that I have contradicted myself at all in any of the writings which I have published from the year 1738 to the year 1788.”² These are some of the latest statements that Wesley makes regarding his consistency, but he makes many other such statements all throughout his adult ministry after 1738.³

Wesley argues that his view on justification is consistent after 1738. In March 1790, Wesley says, “Only about fifty years ago, I had a clearer view than before of justification by faith: and in this from that very hour I never varied, no not an hair’s breadth.”⁴ Throughout his entire adult life after 1738, Wesley continues to affirm the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone (sola fide) as expressed in the scripture by Paul in Romans 4:5. As we will explore more in chapter seven of this project, Wesley understands this view to be in harmony with his view that there is a second justification. This second justification is by works as mentioned in James 2:24 and Matthew 12:36-37.

Of course, Wesley’s claim that his thought is consistent after 1738 does not deny that he adds many clarifications and important nuances after 1738. For Wesley, these added nuances are not contradictions to what he has said after 1738.⁵ For him, such

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¹ Wesley, Letters, 8:196.
² Wesley, Letters, 8:179.
³ For some of the most notable attempts by Wesley to show consistency in his own thought, see “Some Remarks on Mr. Hill’s ‘Review of all the Doctrines Taught by Mr. John Wesley,’” and “Some Remarks on Mr. Hill’s ‘Farrago Double-Distilled,’” Works (BE), 13:429ff and 13:488ff.
⁵ Wesley, Letters, 8:179. In 1768, Wesley says, “During these last thirty years, I may have varied in some of my sentiments or expressions without observing it.” He cites the difficulty of having to respond to so many different objectors. He says in the same letter, “I believe there will be found few, if any, real contradictions in what I have published for near thirty years [between 1738 and 1768].” Wesley, Works (BE), 9:375.
additions generally show an expansion of his thought (a sort of development) rather than a retraction of any of his previous views.

Several prominent Wesleyan scholars have made comments regarding Wesley’s consistency. Albert Outler says, “Between ‘Circumcision of the Heart’ and ‘On the Wedding Garment’ lie six lively decades of theological development. And yet, when they are read together, these two descriptions of the Christian life do not differ on any essential point.”6 Randy Maddox says, “Moreover, the dynamic theological consistency that I believe unites the phases of Wesley’s life and ministry is often most evident in his very process of nuancing disputed issues. As such, consideration of the whole Wesley is necessary to understand his mature position adequately.”7 Maddox and Outler offer that it is possible to consider three periods in Wesley’s thought: the early Wesley (1733-1738), the middle Wesley (1738-1765), and the late Wesley (1765-1791).8 It seems that they offer this three-stage model as a guide for nuancing rather than as a guide for arguing against consistency in Wesley’s thought. Choosing 1765 as the division between the middle and late Wesley is debatable because there are many significant developments all throughout Wesley’s ministry after 1738.9

In regard to a model that tests the consistency in Wesley’s thought, Wesley’s own self-understood model of having general consistency from 1738 onwards probably remains as authoritative for his theological interpretation as any other model available. For example, many of Wesley’s theological views—including his view of many of the features of the way of salvation such as prevenient grace, repentance, the new birth, justification by grace through faith alone, the faith of a child of God, the witness of the Spirit, Christian perfection, the encouraged role of fruitful action throughout the entire course, etc.—are consistently held after 1738.

One of the most research-intensive essays regarding Wesley’s nuances is “Great Expectations: Aldersgate and the Evidences of Genuine Christianity” by Richard Heitzenrater. In this essay, one of Heitzenrater’s conclusions is that in regard to Aldersgate, Wesley modified “nearly every aspect of his perception and explanation of

6 Outler, editor, Works (BE), 1:66.
7 Maddox, “Reading Wesley as a Theologian,” 25.
8 Outler, editor, Works (BE), 1:42, footnote 55; Maddox, “Reading Wesley as a Theologian,” 23; Maddox, Responsible Grace, 20.
9 In an email sent to me, Randy Maddox indicates that the year 1765 is chosen as a division between stages because this was the year of Wesley’s publication of the “Scripture Way of Salvation.” However, as Maddox is of course aware, there are many other important points of theological nuancing for other years after 1738.
the event at the time.”\footnote{10} Although this may be a bit of an overstatement (especially in Wesley’s eyes!), Heitzenrater has helpfully shown that Wesley added some important nuances after his Aldersgate experience between 1738 and 1740. These include the following views: there are degrees of faith and degrees of assurance, the means of grace should be encouraged prior to assurance, assurance of justification does not necessarily entail constant freedom from doubt and fear, assurance of justification does not necessarily accompany fully developed loving tempers of the heart, and assurance is not final salvation.\footnote{11}

However, there are some major points regarding Wesley’s view of Aldersgate that remain fixed from 1738 onwards. One such point is Wesley’s inextricable conjoining of the first experiences of the following: the new birth, the entering of Christ into the heart, the love of God shed abroad in the heart, the Spirit of adoption, the witness of the Spirit that one is a child of God, and the faith of a child of God.\footnote{12} Furthermore, some scholars have argued that throughout the rest of Wesley’s life, Wesley consistently claims that other spiritual events are also inextricable with this package. These include justification in a Christian sense and the fulfilment of what it means to be a “real Christian.”

In this project, we are in fact assuming, as Wesley did, that there is a general consistency in Wesley’s thought after 1738. Wesley continues to maintain throughout his life that the way of salvation is a universal model for Christian living.\footnote{13} Yet, from Wesley’s perspective, there is much mystery involved and such a model is far from an exhaustive explanation of the Christian life. Also, Wesley teaches that from person to

\footnotetext[10]{Heitzenrater, “Great Expectations,” \textit{Aldersgate Reconsidered} (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1990), 149.}

\footnotetext[11]{Heitzenrater, “Great Expectations,” 147.}

\footnotetext[12]{See paragraph II:4 and II:7 of the sermon “Salvation by Faith,” published in June 1738 and compare this with paragraph I:12 of ‘On Faith’ published in 1788 and paragraphs 13 and 14 of ‘On the Discoveries of Faith’ published in 1788. Wesley also makes the point in 1772 regarding his comments in 1738: “Although I did not clearly see that we ‘are saved by faith’ till the year 1738, I then published the sermon on ‘Salvation by Faith,’ every sentence of which I subscribe to now” (Wesley, ‘Remarks on Mr. Hill’s “Review,’” \textit{Works} (BE), 13:474). In regard to Wesley’s view of assurance, Heitzenrater rightly points out that Wesley says that some who have not yet experienced the new birth experience a consciousness of God’s favor (“Great Expectations,” top of page 144). However, such a consciousness of God’s favor is something different from the witness of the Spirit that one is a child of God. This latter kind of witness involves the impression “that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God” (Wesley, ‘The Witness of the Spirit, I,’ \textit{Works} (BE), 1:274). There is no evidence that for Wesley, the former type of consciousness of divine favor includes this.}

\footnotetext[13]{See, for example, see Outler, editor, \textit{Works} (BE), 2:155-169, 3:497-498, 4:34-38.}
person, there is diversity in how people experience the Christian life. While there is diversity in experience, there is also a common sharing in experience. For example, Wesley appears to hold that to an important degree, his experience of Aldersgate holds true for people in general. This includes how the following aspects of the new birth first occur together: the entering of Christ into the heart, the love of God shed abroad in the heart, the Spirit of adoption, the witness of the Spirit that one is a child of God, and the faith of a child of God.

Clearly in this way, for people in general, there is a potential to have a perceptible experience of God’s love. Every aspect of the experience of God’s love is not the same for all people but there is something in common in the experience for everyone (just as the taste of sugar is not identical for everyone, but everyone has a common aspect of the experience). For some people, the new birth is experienced strongly and energetically while others experience it faintly and calmly. Nevertheless, in every case—except perhaps for people with certain psychological abnormalities—something is perceivable at the new birth.

For Wesley, there is a commonality of perception, not only in the first moments of the new birth, but also in other features of Wesley’s way of salvation. It is Wesley’s view that the consistency of human experience, in agreement with the authority of scripture (and secondarily other sources), allows for his model of the “way of salvation” to serve as a general guide for all sincere followers of Christ. As we show more in the chapters of this project, this point has relevance for Wesley’s moral agency.

In his essay, “The Imitatio Christi and the Great Commandment: Virtue and Obligation in Wesley’s Ministry with the Poor,” Heitzenrater claims that Wesley changes his mind with respect to his view of the role of good works before justification. Heitzenrater says that Wesley transitions from the “denigration of good works prior to justification” in the 1740s to “proclaiming the necessity of good works for salvation, even good works prior to justification, if given the time and opportunity” in the 1760s. He cites p. 163 of Outler’s Sermons as the evidence for this. However, it appears that there is a mistake in Heitzenrater’s claim. There is not a place in Wesley’s writings where Wesley argues that good works are necessary for justification if there is time and

opportunity. The key word is the adjective “good” in reference to the works in themselves. Wesley consistently argues that good works are only after the new birth and justification. This allows him to remain consistent in his commitment to article 13 of the Articles of Religion of the Church of England, “Of Works Before Justification.” Heitzenrater is correct that for Wesley in the 1760s, fruitful action (fruits meet for repentance) are necessary prior to justification if there is time and opportunity. But such fruitful action is not good works. Furthermore, this point about fruitful action is not a new development. Wesley makes this point clear in his disagreement with Molther in 1739 and also in his A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion in 1744. These distinctions are investigated in more depth in chapters 5 and 6 of this project.

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16 Wesley, Works (Jackson), 8:54, 10:432 and 10:444.
17 Wesley, Works (Jackson), 1:258, 8:47.
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